

First LinkedIn Malta group seminar is well attended

The organisers of the first ever seminar and structured networking event for the local on-line LinkedIn community had to start refusing requests to attend the event, it was so well patronised.

LEAD Events, the innovative, special events organiser, teamed up with Malta's largest LinkedIn Group, Business Professionals in Malta (BPiM), and conceived Brand You, an opportunity to meet away from the virtual world.

Attendance at last month's event at the Black Pearl, Ta' Xbiex, was fairly balanced between locals and foreigners.

James Grech, managing director of LEAD Events, welcomed the participants, who were then informed by Jeffrey Romano, Moderator of BPiM, that the LinkedIn Group had 2,600 members and was growing at the rate of 40 a week.

The group brought opportunities for organisations that they may not have had access to before, enabling them to benefit from LinkedIn's directness. It was valuable both for organisations and individuals, who could better establish themselves in the local business community.

There were two expert presentations during the event. Mark J. Galea, Managing Director of Quad Consultancy, addressing the theme Know Thyself, said there were two facets: how you behave socially, your outer self; and your image on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Through social media anyone anywhere in the world can now see what you do, so it is important to manage your profile and who your friends are. "One in three employers rejected good, valuable candidates after seeing a Facebook profile," Mr Galea said, adding that sites like pipl.com might provide a perfect match.

Personal Branding (PB) is the way we tell the world who we are. Among the benefits are: understanding yourself better; increasing self-confidence; knowing your strengths; increasing your visibility; and differentiating yourself from your peers through your unique selling proposition. This enables people to be assigned tasks that play to their strengths and to deliver good results through better performance.

“There is a whole world outside your bubble,” Mr Galea said, concluding by listing six steps to PB: obtaining a realistic snapshot of yourself by asking people for feedback, if necessary taking a psychometric test and reading the feedback from appraisals; listening with your eyes to see how people react to you; basing your brand on the above; being the brand; living the brand; and managing the brand.

Deborah Marshall Warren, an interactive hypnotherapist and trainer, addressed the theme, Nurturing your Inner Brand, stressing the need to identify the subconscious drivers, knowing your personal branding from within, designing your own label to connect with yourself and polishing your inner jewels.

By owning your success you overcome fear, insecurity, anxiety and low self-worth. She spoke about the conscious mind as our front office and compared it to the part of the iceberg that is visible with the back office occupying the part that is below the surface.

Ms Marshall Warren urged those present to become more conscious of what is happening at a deeper level, to look into the context of your brand and to listen more to your heart to have more balance. “The language we use to describe ourselves is as important as nutrition,” she said. It is important to choose words that celebrate yourself, you self-worth and self-esteem.

“When you are positive, people are happy to be around that brand. Work on yourself so that the back office is full of calm, courage and self-belief,” she concluded.

Malcolm J. Naudi, Managing Director of Know Now Ltd, a local PR consultancy, then moderated a lively panel discussion made up of Helga Ellul, CEO of Playmobil Malta Ltd; Angelo Xuereb, Chairman of AX Holdings; Joseph F.X. Zahra, Managing Director of Misco; Edward Muscat Azzopardi, Director of Brand Strategy at Switch; and Sue Pisani, CEO of Studio 7 Ltd.

In the course of the discussion, the panel members and the audience were invited to vote in real time on four key branding questions:

- Would you agree that social media can both build and dissipate the value of a brand?
- Have you set a clear, long-term vision for your brand?
- Improving one’s brand entails a hefty financial investment. Do you agree?
- Do you think your Facebook activity affects your professional brand?

The majority of those present answered positively to three of the questions with the majority voting ‘no’ to the third question.

Unfortunately, Twitter had an outage at the very time that the seminar was being held, so there was no Twitter wall to promote further conversation, but the trusty pen and paper was used for the social bingo that enabled those present to network after the discussion, with prizes given to those who successfully filled in their cards.

“This was a highly successful first event for the LinkedIn Business Professionals in Malta group,” Mr Grech said, “and we will certainly be looking for opportunities to follow this up in the near future.”

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Malcolm J. Naudi moderating the Business Professionals in Malta panel discussion during the first LinkedIn event in Malta. The panel members were (from left) Edward Muscat Azzopardi, Joseph F.X. Zahra, Angelo Xuereb, Helga Ellul and Sue Pisani. For more photos of the event visit www.leadevents.com.mt/work/brand-you/