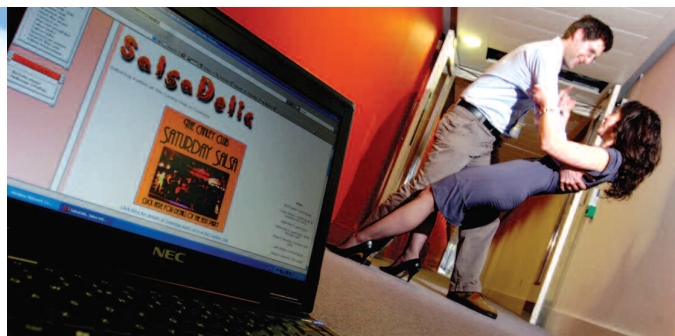


SalsadDelic

Paul Briskham with Elizabeth Rowe



Paul is dancing with delight thanks to e-business

Paul Briskham had never danced salsa in his life until a holiday to Spain in 2002.

The Coventry-based lecturer ventured into a small salsa bar and was immediately hooked. Not only had he found a new hobby for which he had a passion, he also spotted a business opportunity to run salsa holidays to Spain during the vacations from his day job.

When he got back home, he looked into the idea and realised this was an emerging market with no existing salsa holiday organisers operating in the West Midlands. He also realised that with the growth of low cost flights, there would be a bigger market for specialist holidays.

Objectives

Because of the nature of the business idea, Paul's immediate plan was to launch a website to act as a sales and marketing tool.

He designed his own site but admits it wasn't up to the standard that he was looking for so contacted the National B2B Centre – the West

Midlands' e-business centre of excellence – to get help.

Not only did Paul want the website to look good, he wanted to have overall control of the site and be able to update and change it regularly.

Open Source Software

The National B2B Centre introduced Paul to Open Source software and it was the perfect tool for the creation of his site – www.salsadelic.com.

He said: "The software was free and allowed me to create the site just as I wanted it. The National B2B Centre also gave me some training and it meant I could control the site on a day-to-day basis.

"I was responsible for the look, feel and content and they helped me with the technical side of things such as uploading the site."

Paul started by taking a few salsa friends to Spain to gain experience and create an attractive holiday schedule. He then started advertising two trips a year for small groups on the web.

Paul realised that businesses thrive by selling in volume and that running two small holidays a year, while being great fun, was never going to generate much income.

Having established the holidays, Paul decided to work with DJ Graham Grimmett to create a more vibrant salsa scene in Coventry with weekly classes and a monthly party night.

Results

The Open Source software really came into play once Paul started to push local events and classes.

As soon as an event happened, he was able to access the site and remove the previous event to give it a fresh, up-to-date feel on almost a daily basis.

Also, with more classes and events coming on stream, he could add them to the website instantly to attract more people.

Now, Salsadelic is the largest organisers of salsa events and classes in Coventry and the website is its main source of information.

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Paul is now a qualified teacher of salsa and, through his website, has a database of hundreds of people interested in the dance who he regularly updates on events.

He said: "This is never going to be a big money making corporation. But, thanks to help from the National B2B Centre and the launch of the website, the business largely pays for itself and is a great hobby."

Paul said: "My personal goal was to recreate the electric atmosphere of a Barcelona salsa club in Coventry and I am proud to say that we have achieved this at our monthly Canley Club parties.

"Dancers from all over the UK are coming to the monthly parties and we have seen a great deal of enthusiasm from local people.

"The website and e-marketing facilities are very important tools in getting the message out there. It is impossible to keep people up to date by distributing paper flyers every week; maintaining a good website and sending out regular email newsletters are vital."



The Future

Paul would like to improve his search engine optimisation to drive more traffic to his website as he looks to continue to build the Coventry salsa scene.

If you were to type in 'salsa Coventry' on Google's international service then Salsadelic comes out top of the list. But on Google's UK search – the company does not yet feature very highly and he believes most people in this country select a UK search.

He said: "I went for dot.com when I first set up the company and later realised that a .co.uk is more effective for a UK focused business.

"We are planning to change the website over to a new more powerful software package later this year and have been speaking to the National B2B Centre about the new Open Source software that is available. We will also change the main site over to a .co.uk to improve our search engine performance when the new website goes live."

Do you want to discover the benefits of open source? Do you want to take control of your website content or update it regularly? If you would like advice on open source please contact the National B2B Centre using the details below.

If your business is in the West Midlands and has been transformed by e-business then contact the National B2B Centre for details on how to become a Showcase.

Open Source: Did you know...?

- Open Source software is free; there are no licence fees to use this software.
- Using an Open Source content management system empowers businesses with complete control of their website content, including text and images.
- Nearly 70% of web traffic is made possible by the Open Source web server: Apache. So, in the majority of cases every time we use the web, we use Open Source. (www.openadvantage.org)
- Open Source software provides many alternatives to proprietary software; as well as web content management systems, software includes customer relationship management systems, web browsers, email clients, photo editing, word processing and spreadsheet creation.
- On a global scale the list of businesses and organisations using Open Source in IT is endless including NASA, Google, Amazon, PayPal, West Yorkshire Police, NHS, Allied Irish Bank and Birmingham City Council. (www.openadvantage.org)
- Open Source software is supported by major industry vendors, such as IBM, HP, Novell, Computer Associates, Sun Microsystems and Oracle. (www.openadvantage.org)