

Small businesses speak out about the impact of snow

January 8, 2010 by James Ainsworth

Traditionally, we think of the New Year as a time to approach life and work with renewed enthusiasm after a good rest at Christmas. The widespread snowfall in the UK soon put an end to that. As a result of the drop in temperatures and significant snowfall, a week of unsettled working arrangements has ensued. The Federation of Small Business estimates that lost productivity due to the snow could result in losses of at least £1.2bn to UK businesses.

The 40% level of absenteeism has been crippling to some businesses, with closures up to a week long due to an inability to access premises or as a result of the knock-on effect of closed schools and subsequent emergency childcare needs. The Forum of Private Businesses has estimated that staff absenteeism alone could cost UK SMEs £230m.

Some businesses have profited nicely from the weather. Percentage of sale increases in various stores on products such as soup, cooking salt and cat litter have risen 80%, 500% and 55% respectively. Around the corner from our own office (where it's so cold I'm typing with fingerless gloves on) the local pub has been running an impromptu BBQ stand on the street in order to provide hot food to the public. Only when it snows in the UK can you be guaranteed that the Butcher, the Baker, the Candlestick Maker will be able to sell you a sledge.

We asked our Marketing Donut Twitter followers for their input on how this week's weather had impacted on their small business activities. The responses were mixed and perhaps it is a pointer towards the increasing work-from-home-culture afforded by the Internet, that for some, productivity may even have increased.

- Photoshoots cancelled or postponed all over the UK as people either can't get there or don't want snow in pix. www.twitter.com/simonapps
- More buying for the eCommerce web site www.twitter.com/kris_card
- Worked at home most of week and probably achieved twice as much www.twitter.com/chrish10
- A filming job cancelled today! As yet not rescheduled... www.twitter.com/Snowlinefilms
- None... the Internet & phone still working so service not interrupted! www.twitter.com/LucyWhittington
- For me, a great impact. Difficult getting around for B2B sales. I'm in the downriver area of MI, so snow fall is greater. www.twitter.com/cpcllerret

- Poor - try working with three kids under 5 at home! www.twitter.com/bwebsites
- The snow has stopped me from getting to photoshoots this week...not happy!
www.twitter.com/STYLISA
- I had meetings for this morning cancelled, but moved them to phone/Skype and been just as productive. The net saves the day! www.twitter.com/EmilyCagle
- I find bad weather slows website sales down as people worry about postal service On the upside @ home all day production up www.twitter.com/CharlieMoos
- 'Impact of snow' postponed meetings & no milk in garage next door (disastrous!) - no deliveries coz of bad rds! www.Twitter.com/SaraJBrown
- Real pain. Schools/nurseries closed in Harrow so wrkg in between looking after kids, had to stay up to 3am to catch up :(www.twitter.com/VickyVella
- None really, being dynamic and nimble has meant that I've been able and adapt to deliver and meet clients as planned! www.twitter.com/Harrisment_UK
- We all found working from home (offices) most productive, esp with the delights of Skype. Given us a right lift this weather. www.twitter.com/JackTheCar
- The weather has affected us a bit this week, not all of us have been able to make it in - but can access emails at home! www.twitter.com/AztecMarketing
- None for my small business - that's the power of socialmedia, telephone and a PC!
www.twitter.com/coachclaire

Please do add your experiences from this week's snow disruption.