

Transcription

LEARNING TO WORK DIFFERENTLY

A story told by Sam, a business owner from Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, UK

So as a child, I first came to Lower Lode at about 8 years old and the holiday home that we stayed in was on stilts, and we heard stories about previous flooding in 1947 and the 1960s, and also became very aware of the fact that the public was quite a seasonal one - lots of holiday makers in summer and very quiet winters.

In 1993-1994 started working at Lower Lode, it was my main source of income, obviously and I was trying to support my son. Became very aware of the problems they had during the winter of 2000 where they had a period of closure over about 6 months so I became very aware that flooding was a big problem and very expensive issue.

But then in 2001-2002, I decided to take the business on. 2007 changed the whole ballgame. The pub had always had a strong caravan trade from static caravans from behind the pub, but when they were washed away in 2007 it became more important to optimise on the summer trade that was there and new aspects to the trade by promoting functions more, trying to make sure the income would still be in place to carry the pub through the quiet time in the winter.

Following 2007, it was also necessary to actually keep in place a back-up plan with regards to catering as the pub kitchen was actually closed for 9 months during 2007-2008. So, we now keep a catering van on site which is very handy for functions.

You have to be very sensible with the staffing and make sure basically that all your staff know that you can't offer them the security of a 12 month position. Students are very useful employees during the summer because they arrive just at the time when we need the help, and they are quite happy just to work for the summer season. Other members of staff have main jobs elsewhere and work for us as a second job. It means sometimes that we may be a bit short staffed during weekdays but at weekends we can generally call on people to come and help us with our functions.

It does also mean that you have to be very careful how you handle your budget as a business. You can't look at it from week to week as such and look at investment to put back into your business. It does mean you can't make massive drawings for yourself; you've got to have quite a modest living and look at the whole picture as a case of survival rather than a lucrative business that's going to make you millions.

It's paramount, particularly with no insurance cover for the property that money has to be put by for the low times during the winter and for repairs. You know to keep a business surviving, you've got to try and make sure you keep some money by for a worst case scenario. If business cannot trade evenly in a normal year without floods then you've got no chance if you end up with a bad winter.