

☒ **Informal business groups are an emerging marketing strategy in the UK which has been greatly assisted by the harnessing of social media. Throughout the UK there are hundreds of chambers of commerce and similar organisations, but these are often considered prohibitive by SMEs and those embarking on new ventures. Among the various costs involved in starting a new business the cost of an annual membership might well be low on the agenda. There is also often a presumption that these more formal systems might be able to have pre-existing trading infrastructure.**

Informal business groups offer members the opportunity to meet, often for breakfast and a hot drink to network and exchange ideas, which assists in keeping trade and business within a local economy where possible. If you can buy a service locally from somebody whom you can deal with face to face this is often a much more appealing and cost effective solution. Why use an anonymous national corporation with the embedded additional cost, when you can buy the same or a better level of service from a business in your local area?

Selby Business Buddies is an example of this new form of business networking. They meet every couple of weeks over breakfast and a hot drink to chat informally amongst themselves. There is a minimal fee for each meeting which covers the cost of your breakfast and the meetings are arranged through the Facebook group <http://www.facebook.com/groups/828488790498497/> This is a fledgling group but there are already testimonials on the group page proving that deals have been struck between local businesses who might otherwise have not been aware of each other's existence.

**Long may this continue.**

**If there's no such group in your locality, why not start one?**