

## Email report – meeting 13/06/2011 at Stowupland School

### Agony Corner:

This week was all about recommendations by members of various money saving sites they'd found useful.

#### 1) "Say no to 0870"

- We've all had the frustration of dialling an 0870 number, going through menus and listening to music while the costs mount up. The same applies to 0844, 0845, 0870 and 0871 numbers.
- Worst still some companies that use these numbers are actually receiving a cut of the phone call costs.
- BT and some other companies are starting to include 0845 and 0870 for free, but this only applies to certain packages, and does not apply to 0844 and 0871
- The site lists many well known companies, and their equivalent geographical numbers, and you may even get directly through to a 'real person'. Check it out at <http://www.sayno0870.com/>

#### 2) "Martin's Money Tips"

- Martin Lewis is regularly seen on television giving money saving advice, most recently on how to counter the rises in electricity and gas prices. His website is <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com> (this has been on the Stowmarket U3A web site 'Links' page for the past year or so) and you can find unbiased advice here on a multitude of money saving ideas.
- On the RHS of the home page you can sign up to his weekly newsletter. This is sent out each week on a Tuesday and lists all the latest deals including those submitted by readers who've see something others may have missed. You can't afford not to get this!
- On fuel bills, one of Martin's regular tips is to check the prices you pay a year after you've signed up to 'the best deal'. They can rise significantly without you realising.

#### 3) "Groupon (Group Coupon)"

- This is a deal-of-the-day website that features discounted gift certificates usable at local or national companies and has been running since 2008 in America coming to the UK (I think) about 18 months ago.
- The Groupon works like this. If a certain number of people sign up for an offer, then the deal becomes available to all; if the predetermined minimum is not met, no one gets the deal that day. This reduces risk for retailers, who can treat the coupons as quantity discounts as well as sales promotion tools. Groupon makes money by keeping approximately half the money the customer pays for the coupon.
- Owing to Groupon's target market being primarily composed of young, educated, female customers living in London, the deals are often focused on the health, fitness and beauty markets (!). However, a least one of our members has found it very useful for a variety of things.
- It is possible to select national deals or those available in this area. Take a look at <http://www.groupon.co.uk/deals/ipswich>
- Health warning! Please be aware, if you do sign up you'll get a lot of emails, plus there has recently been some adverse publicity about some deals not being available when trying to redeem the certificates.

#### 4) "KGB Deals"

- This is a UK based site launched last year and works in a similar manner to 'Groupon' in offering 'flash sales' (offers available at high discount) for a limited number of days.
- They have recently started to advertise on TV and can be found at <http://www.kgbdeals.co.uk>
- Again, be aware they also send out a lot of emails.

#### 5) "Petrol Prices"

- <http://www.petrolprices.com/> . This site will give you the highest, lowest and average prices in your area.
- Sign up and they will send you, once a week, the location of the cheapest fuel within 5 miles of your address.
- Tip. For a wider area sign up again and register for a different area, Ipswich, say, instead of Stowmarket.

#### 6) "Voyage Prive"

- This site offers flash sales (each available only for about 4 days) of 4 - 5 star holidays at discounts ranging from 30% - 70% on sale only to members.
- You're not tied to a specific date, there's always plenty of choice.
- We used it last year for a holiday in Austria and are going away this week to Switzerland on a very good deal.
- I did say that to join it was by invitation only, but I've discovered that they are running a promotion at the moment where you can join up directly, just follow this link <http://www.voyage-prive.co.uk/membres/inscription>
- Before you commit to a holiday, just make sure you check the 'what's included' in the deal. Many include flights and transfers but some do not.

### Exploring Skype:

Our talk for today was due to be given by Wendy Kemp, but she'd arranged instead for the husband of Sophie Crooke the subject leader for ITC at the school, Steve Crooke, himself an experienced IT consultant, to show us all about Skype.

About half of us brought laptops with the rest sitting alongside. Some already had Skype installed but others needed to download the programme.

As Steve started his introduction, Wendy dashed around the room logging everyone onto the wireless network.

The meeting progressed with much enthusiasm all round as people grappled first to download and then install the programme. Steve then demonstrated how to set up an account .... and much more! There's no need for me to go into any more detail here since Steve has kindly given us a copy of the lecture notes he used, and everything is there. Please find pdf <http://u3astowmarket.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/skype-handout-notes.pdf> which includes some very helpful notes at the end.

Web cams at the ready, the icing on the cake was when we were able to call up each other on Skype and have audio visual conversations. There were some very animated exchanges and, as they say, a great time was had by all!

This was a most successful session and many thanks go to Steve and to Wendy for setting it up.

### Next Meeting:

We will still be at the school for the meeting on July 11th and it will be my turn to give you an 'Introduction to Windows Movie Maker'.