

first friday **NETWORK**

NETWORKING : BUSINESS : LEARNING : MARKETING : SOCIAL MEDIA

**GROW
YOUR**

BUSINESS

WITH

**first friday
NETWORK**

**Word of mouth introductions can lead
to huge amounts of profitable business.**

**Building longterm and effective relationships through
your business network takes time, patience and skill.**

**Start running your own First Friday meetings
and you'll soon be reaping all the rewards
local networking has to offer.**

**YOU CAN GET
EVERYTHING
IN LIFE YOU
WANT
IF YOU WILL
JUST HELP
ENOUGH OTHER
PEOPLE GET
WHAT THEY
WANT.**

Zig Ziglar

The challenges of networking since the pandemic

Face to face networking is not dead... it's just a little fragile! When we are past this uncertain stage there will be a rush of people wanting to get together and network!

With the announcement that we will be able to get back into pubs and venues in larger groups, now is probably the perfect time for you to start a new network group in your area.

You may also wish to set up a monthly online meeting to supplement your face to face event. Online networking is now completely accepted and it is not going to disappear, people are keen to meet others and continue to network as much as they can and some have found that the absence of geographical boundaries has helped them spread their message to a wider audience.

Running an online meeting is easy – no need for lots of techie experience – you just set up your monthly meeting and invite people. Keep the meetings to around 40 minutes to start with so they fall within the free time allowance on Zoom and keep your costs to a minimum. We have a Zoom guide you can have to help you set things up if you need it.



Depending on how many people you get attending you can create small “break out rooms” for people to chat more intimately or if there are only a few on the call keep everyone in the meeting and take turns talking. You could run the online Zoom meetings on another Friday perhaps or one evening or morning, or turn it into a select “Mastermind” meeting that people could pay a small fee to be part of and attend regularly. This will depend on your time and willingness to run the extra meetings. It’s your decision!

We have reduced our fees since the pandemic to make it even more affordable to start a group, see page 7 for details. We’ll help you through the initial stages and be there to support you and help promote the meetings as you get them up and running. **It really is a brilliant way to promote YOUR business.**

This is what one of our organisers said about running meetings:

“I’m an accountant and generally when I call someone to introduce my services they switch off straight away and I don’t get past an initial hello, but when I call inviting them to attend a free network meeting they are open and chatty because I am offering them something for nothing!

Once they have attended a meeting or two and get to know me I am trusted and become the first person they think about whenever the discussion comes round to *do you know any good accountants?* It has brought in more new clients than any other marketing I have ever done in the past.”



“Steve not only recognises the power of business networking, but has created a powerful, enjoyable and very successful model in First Friday. As an active participant, I thoroughly recommend both Steve and the First Friday network.”

Paul Dallibar, Gordian Solutions Ltd

“Steve is a very inspirational person. We worked together on setting up a successful breakfast networking group – TBI. He is very trustworthy, reliable and fun to work with. He has artistic flare and is also full of suggestions and ideas to make the group more fun and work more efficiently. He went on to set up the First Friday group which again has also been very successful.”

Shirley Barnes, Dinamiks Ltd

When did First Friday Network start?

The First Friday Network was started by **Steve Wilson** of **Wilson Design Associates** in Chichester, West Sussex in March 2003. After moving his business from London he was doing the rounds of network meetings and decided there was a gap in the market for those people who didn't want an early morning breakfast meeting or a weekly commitment, or indeed to pay a subscription to a large organisation.

First Friday was created to provide the local business community with a venue to network, meet, promote, share and exchange ideas – for free!



The initiative was supported and promoted by the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Service at the Council and soon proved to be a very popular event on the networking calendar. So much so, that people started to approach Steve asking if there were plans to start meetings in other locations!

The success of the format has captured the imagination of local small businesses and support organisations. New groups are constantly starting, expanding the network ever wider. All of the groups are part of the wider network but are run by **local** business people, with **local** knowledge and **local** contacts.



What is First Friday Network?

It is a cost effective marketing tool for you and your business.

Every business person that runs a First Friday group is a keen networker and understands the benefits of being known locally, reaping the rewards of the extra exposure to the business community.

The First Friday Network is a free to attend business networking event held monthly on various Fridays, currently with meetings across the South East and spreading across the country. The network is looking to continue its expansion nationally. The concept is: free entry, no pre-booking, no 'lock-outs' – just an informal gathering in a welcoming environment – where people feel relaxed and under no pressure to perform a '60-second elevator pitch'.

Most network companies charge the attendees to meet each other – pressurising members to achieve value for money against the clock whilst frantically looking to make that elusive contact. At First Friday there is no cost to attend the meeting so the visitor can relax and be themselves. This is much more productive than delivering a desperate sales pitch in the hope of getting an immediate response and closing the deal!

However, we do have online membership which we encourage businesses to take out and join so they can benefit from the extra promotion they can get on the website to the wider online community.

Why should you run a First Friday Network meeting?

Whether you are a new or established business the exposure of being the organiser of a busy network event like First Friday will raise your local profile and credibility.

Your company details appear on marketing material and it is your name that will be mentioned when people refer new guests to visit. The cost of gaining this level of exposure would normally be prohibitive, especially if you had to buy advertising space, but the network acts as your word-of-mouth sales force! Becoming an organiser boosts your image as a trustworthy individual to do business with. My own experience is that my name was given to new businesses looking to enter the network arena by the local support agencies such as The Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Services at the Council.

See what Susan from the Brighton and Hove meetings has to say below:

“I have been running First Friday Lewes and Third Friday Brighton for several years, and also started Second Friday Hove. Managing these events is as enjoyable as it is productive.

As a result of meeting so many business people over a regular period of time, my reputation as a copy and content writer proceeds me. I’m often the first person they think of when a copywriter may be required, which is great, as I’m known and trusted. Additionally, it gives me great pleasure to see attendees forging mutually profitable and useful working partnerships. It’s a great concept: free, informal and a great way to develop your business.”

How do you promote the meetings?

We will promote your meetings by including the details on the website and monthly enewsletter and through social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and on the FindNetworkingEvents.com website, but **you need to promote it locally** as much as you can. You can promote your meetings on social media, eventbrite.co.uk, meetup.com and other event websites.

Contact your Chamber of Commerce, Council Economic Development Team and other network groups like 4Networking or BNI. If you already attend network groups take some business cards and promote the First Friday Network; keen networkers are always looking for new meetings to attend!

Try to get some press coverage by writing to the business editor of your local paper, or the business newsdesk at the local radio station – they are always on the lookout for **great local business stories**.



How do you get started?

Once you have signed the Licence agreement and paid your set up fee you would need to find a venue that can hold the meeting comfortably at no cost to you. Generally a pub or hotel will be more than happy to allow you to hold a meeting there – for them you are bringing in regular customers who will not only spend money at the bar but may well start using the venue for business meetings or socialising. Once you have secured a location you need to promote the meeting with the marketing material we will give you.



Ashley

Ashley Price • First Friday (Lewes) has been the biggest source of new clients from face-to-face networking! This is why I was happy to take over organisation of the group. And then of course I went to take on organisation of Third Friday Brighton and have got work from there.

Cannot see me stopping any time soon. And now I've launched a new business (see www.bananaoffice-networking.com) I hope to get even more work in the coming months and years.

3 minutes ago • Like • Reply privately • Delete



What other Licensees have said over the years

Lewes

"I heard about Steve's First Friday Network from a colleague who had attended some of the meetings and raved about them. When I approached him about setting up a First Friday in Lewes, he was extremely helpful and offered all the support and advice I needed to start the group. Other networking groups come and go but the First Friday concept remains as strong as ever, much of which has to be down to Steve's selfless direction and hard work behind the scenes."

Eastbourne

"As an Enterprise Agency, running First Friday enables us to encourage new businesses who attend our start up workshops to get involved in networking at the very start of their business journey. We encourage them to come along and network with like minded start-ups and established businesses. With the relaxed informal way First Friday is run, it is a great introduction to networking."

The Chamber of Commerce members also attend as they like the concept, they don't have to book and can just turn up. Very often businesses who attend First Friday do go on to join the Chamber, so First Friday is a great place to come and find out more about what the local chamber are doing for the business community together with the business support initiatives provided by the local councils, which is something we always make a point of mentioning at every meeting."



You already know networking works, so why not ramp it up a gear and become a First Friday Network organiser so that your profile is raised and you become the 'go to' person in your area.

Really, it's easy and cheap to be involved, don't delay anymore, get in touch now.

What will it cost you?

The cost of setting up a First Friday Network group is just £199 plus £20 a month.

No long tie-in, just a rolling monthly licence. All fees/costs are subject to VAT.

We will supply you with everything you need to get started in marketing your event as part of your set up fee:

- Online membership
- Your own meeting page on the First Friday website
- Marketing/Social media graphics
- Roller banner
- Business cards
- Leaflets
- Postcards

Current Licensees have stated that the cost of setting up and running a First Friday event has been recovered many times over from the contacts and business they have gained through their meetings – ***It works!***

See what Tony from Worthing had to say:



"I set it up as a good way to gain entry to the local business community as a new business in the professional sector. I view it as a marketing tool for my business, as I do all types of networking that I undertake, the only difference is that I am the only person there that has had a direct financial cost for attending, which is offset by the people who actively target you and the promotion that being the event organiser gives you. I have seen the benefit of running the events in quickly gaining brand awareness in the local business area. It has helped me gain business from companies that would have taken me longer to build relationships with had I not set up the First Friday Networking event. It has also helped my business find clients and I can say that the direct cost of setting up a First Friday event has been recovered many times over! We had 40 different businesses at the first event from a number of different industries and I know that I made connections at that first meeting that have produced business for me."

The events are so successful for Tony he also ran a second group in Crawley for several years.

So what now? Time to make your decision and get in touch!

Just remember this is not a revenue stream, it's a marketing tool for your business!

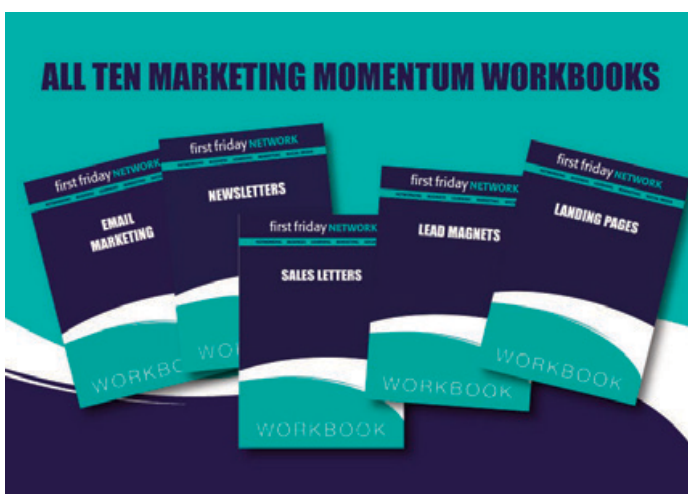
If you feel you are the right kind of person to run a group and grow your business through networking more effectively then give me a ring or send an email and we'll get you started... it's that easy!

Steve Wilson: 01243 276073 / steve@firstfriday-network.co.uk

Marketing items we give you

We will provide you with a Brand Guide and all of the marketing items you need to promote your event within the cost of your set up and monthly fees.

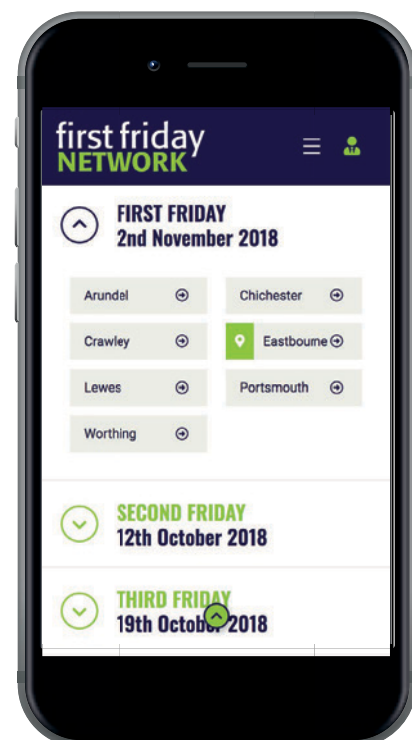
This should help you raise YOUR profile as well!

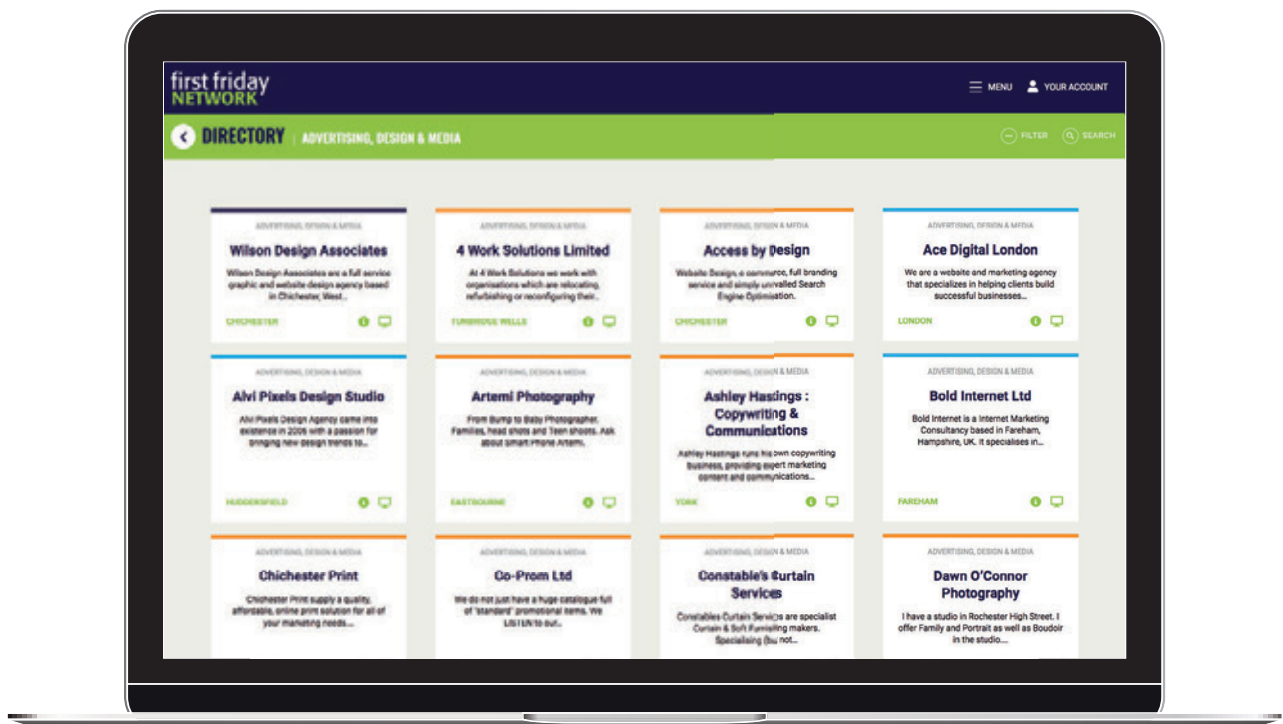
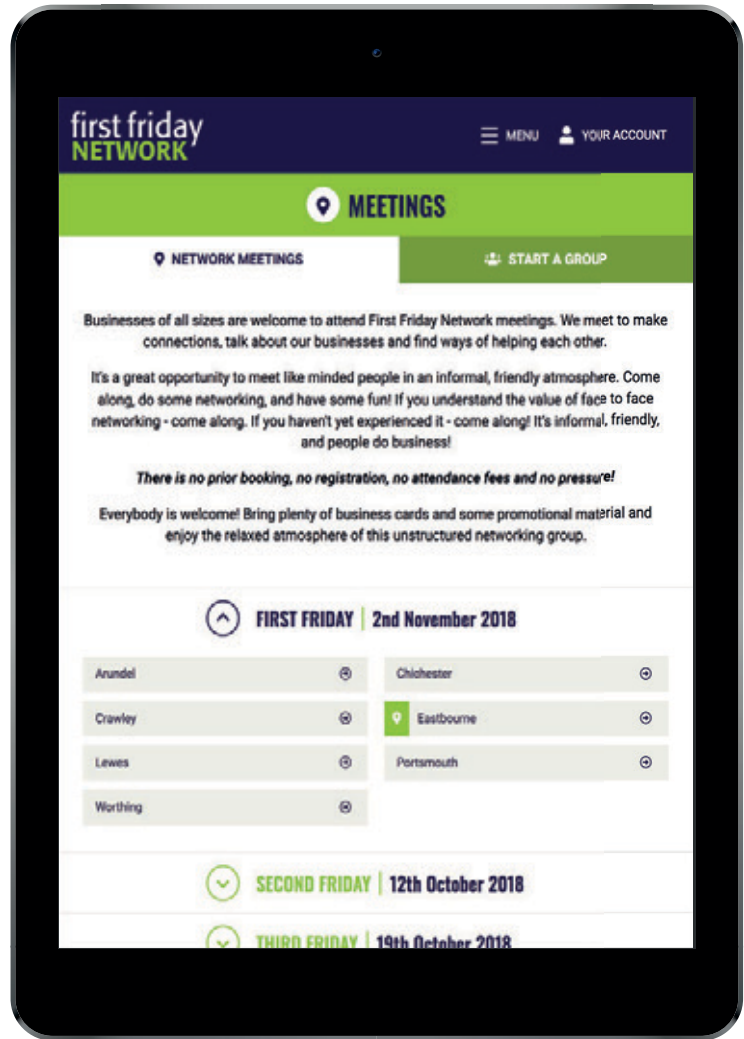
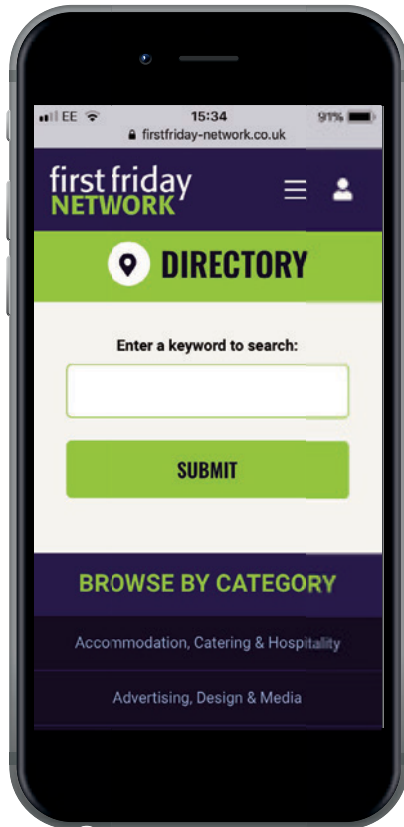


The website

The website is clear and easy to use and works on all devices and has lots of information for visitors and members alike.

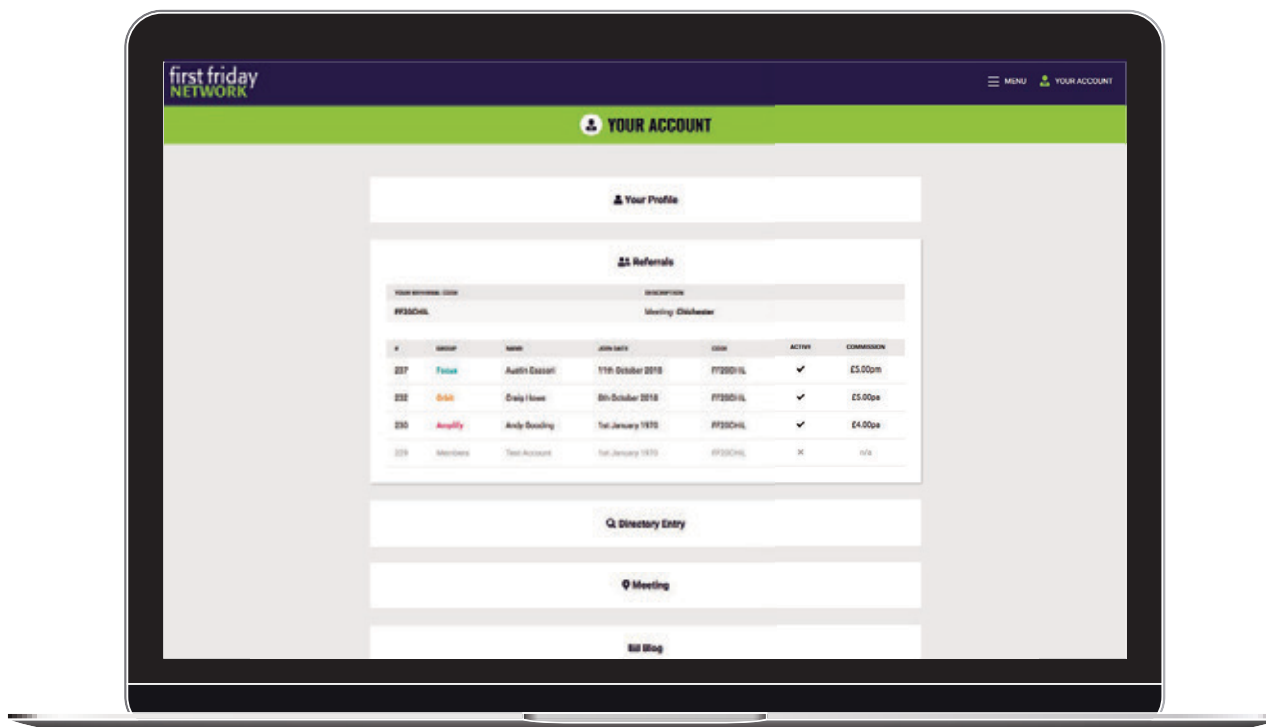
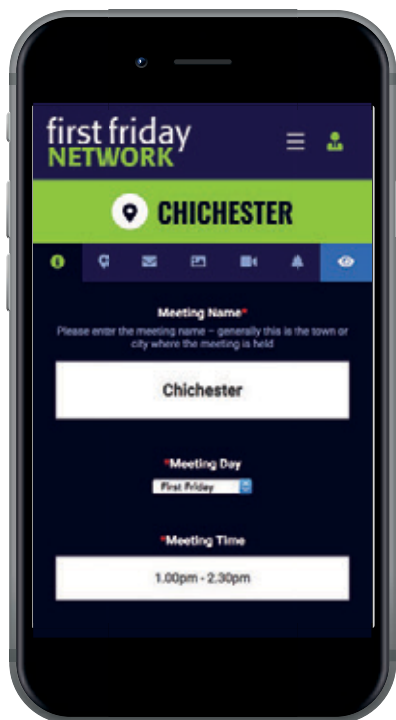
There is a business directory and a members blog, as well as individual pages for each meeting.





Your local meeting page

Your meeting page is your chance to keep local information fresh and relevant. You can edit content on **your account page** and add photographs and videos that will help your network grow, as well as your own business!



Social Media

We actively promote the network through social media.

We have a large following on **Twitter**, **LinkedIn** and **Facebook** and also have a **Facebook Group** so that members can continue to communicate with each other outside of meetings.

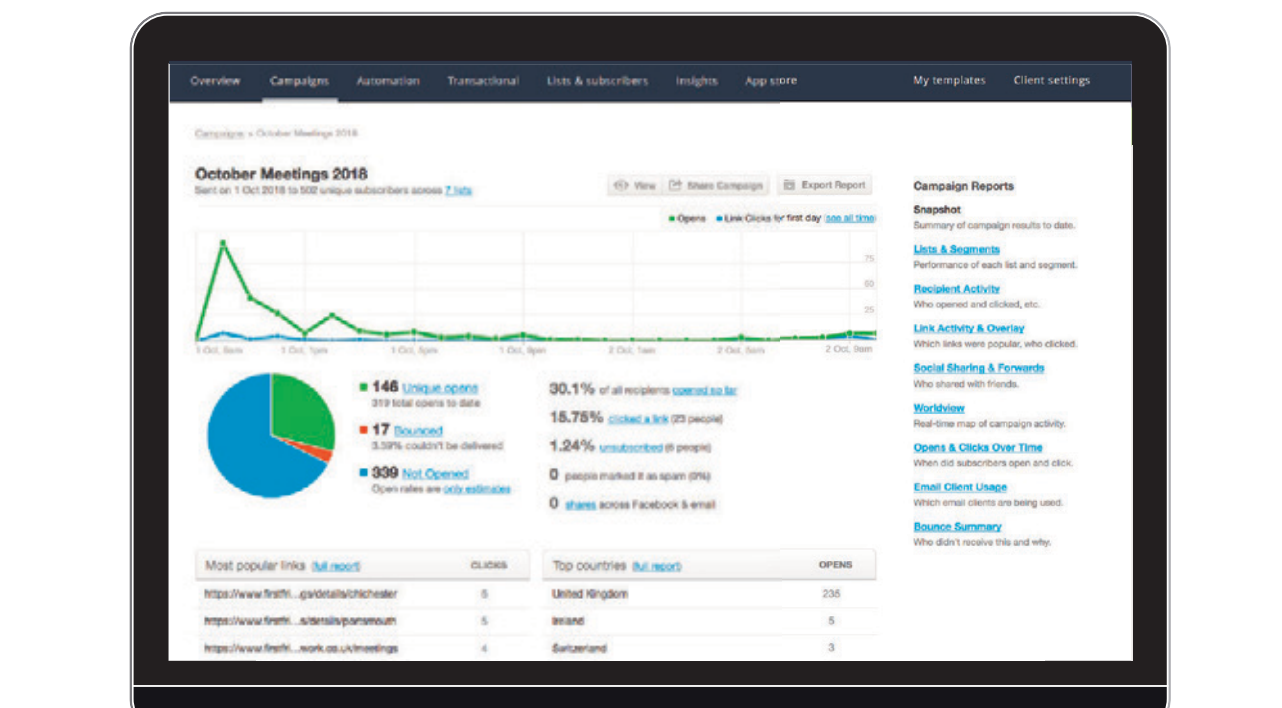
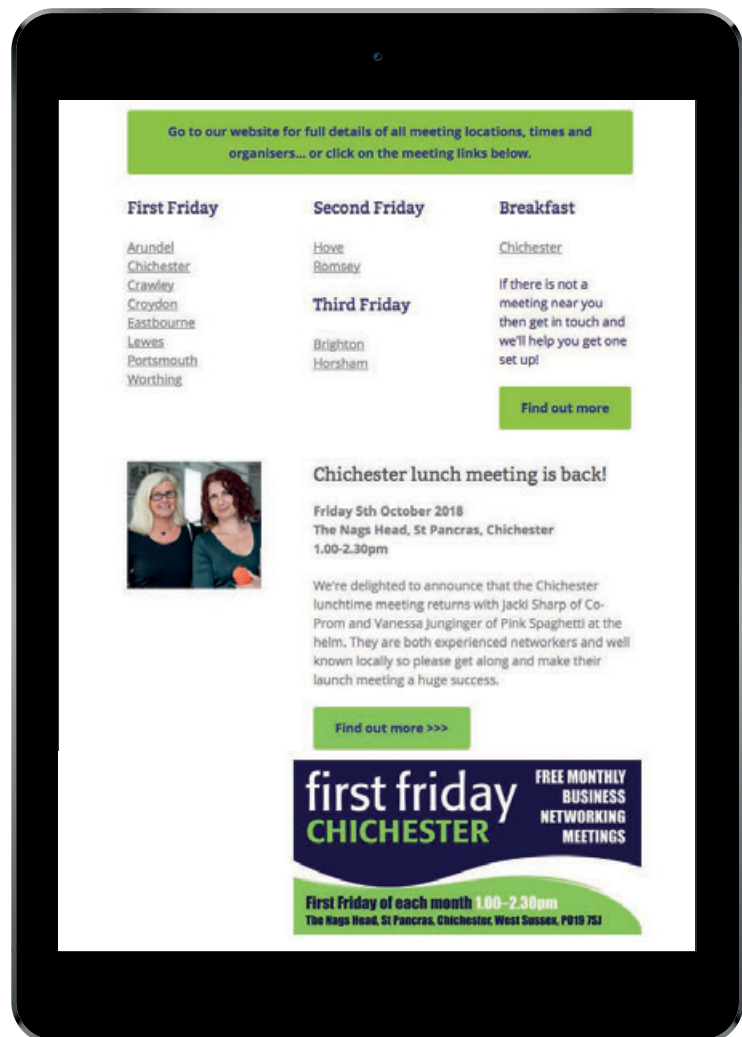
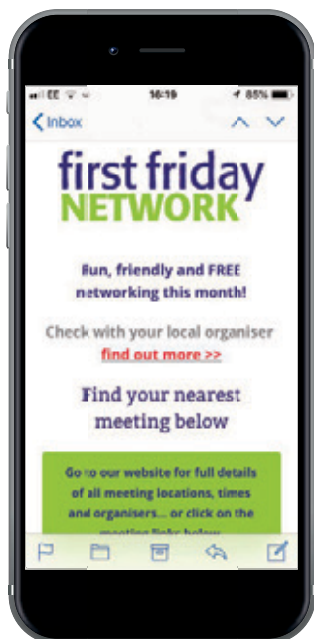
You could create your own groups as some other Licensees have done to communicate locally if you want or just join in with our conversations online!



Email marketing

We send a monthly newsletter reminding people of the meetings and any other events or promotions we think may be of interest. We track open rates and click-throughs to measure engagement.

We can help you set up your own newsletter to promote to your local attendees if you wish.



Setting the scene at your meetings

Try to make it obvious where you are and who is at the meeting.

The roller banners are a great way to immediately set the scene and welcome people.

You can have a table where people can display their promotional literature and cards. It allows people to browse at their leisure and pick up details of people they may not have managed to meet.

This can become cluttered so control how much is put out if you can and make sure they take it all with them when they go!

You could also consider t-shirts, name badges or lanyards if you feel it might be useful. Just ask and we can help provide them.



Thanks to all you red hot networkers who rocked up in RED to First Friday meetings today to help raise life-saving funds for the British Heart Foundation's Wear It, Beat It campaign. Brian Park of Business Doctors won first prize at the Chichester meeting for guessing how many feathers were in a four foot feather boa.



Promoting charity events like BHF Rock up in Red, or Comic Relief helps promote your meetings and also gives an incentive to attend, along with credibility and focus.

Promoting the network

Promoting the First Friday Network at the Business Network Show 2014, 2015 and 2016 in Wolverhampton. Pictured with Brad Burton of 4N, the organiser of the show.



At the Business Network Show in Wolverhampton 2014, with Stefan Thomas (ex 4N director and author of the Business Networking for Dummies book), and also at the Chichester First Friday meeting.





Promoting the network at the Business Show in London with our friends *Find Networking Events*.



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GROW YOUR BUSINESS BY JOINING YOUR OWN

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Chichester Print

BUSINESS CARDS LETTERHEADS BROCHURES LEAFLETS

WITH COMPLIMENT SLIPS

Chichester Print

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WHO YOU HANG AROUND WITH MATTERS... IT MATTERS A LOT.

Nigel Botterill



Nigel runs the Entrepreneurs Circle, take a look at what they offer to support small businesses:
www.entrepreneurscircle.org



“Steve’s passion for networking and the importance of building business relationships is the key to why the First Friday Network is such a huge success. His understanding that small companies need to get out there and network without being tied into a monthly payment – or penalised if unable to attend – filled a gap in the market. His drive and ambition for empowering and enabling companies to build their networks has become a tremendous success. I would recommend Steve and the First Friday Network to anyone.”

www.firstfriday-network.co.uk

steve@firstfriday-network.co.uk



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