

To: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: NORTH LANARKSHIRE BUSINESS DIRECTORY: EVALUATION
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT		
Date: 26 November 1998	Ref: SC/LC/REP.486	

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform the Committee of the work undertaken to evaluate how the North Lanarkshire Business Directory has been used by the local business community.

2 Background

- 2.1 The business directory was launched in June 1997. A complimentary copy was then forwarded to all the companies listed within it. This amounts to around 3,300 companies. Since June 1997 a steady stream of requests for the directory has been received from companies relocating to the area and new start-up businesses as well as companies from outwith the area. Companies from outwith the area are generally charged £10 per copy of the directory.
- 2.2 Before embarking on production of the second edition of the directory an evaluation was proposed. The evaluation aimed to establish how future directories could be tailored to meet the needs of local businesses, and indicate how the current edition has been received by the local business community.

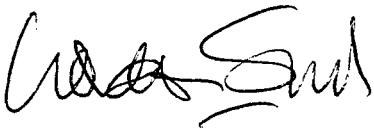
3 The Research Framework

- 3.1 The actual business directory document was used as the basis for generating the sampling framework. A 20% sample was the target for questioning. To achieve this, 1 of the first 5 companies listed in the Directory was selected and contacted; every 5th entry after this was also then contacted. In this way a 20% random sample of companies was contacted for questioning.
- 3.2 A structured questionnaire was used to extract information from companies. This was designed by Economic Development Unit staff in collaboration with staff from Forgewood Market Research (FMR). The questionnaire survey was undertaken by FMR who conducted the exercise by telephone. The survey took place during September 1998.

4 Findings of the Evaluation

- 4.1 The findings of the evaluation are summarised in the following tables. Overall it seems that the directory is one of a range of company listings used by the business community. The companies surveyed appear to be using the directory regularly and are happy with the overall layout and content of the document.
- 4.2 A total of 692 local companies were contacted during the survey, 21% of the 3,300 listed in the directory. Of these, 469 (68%) responded to the questionnaire. Most of the companies responding employed less than 25 employees and the majority (61%) were familiar with the directory. Of the companies contacted, the majority were in the services to business sector (20%) and other services sector (19%); the next highest concentrations were in transport & communications (16%) and manufacturing (15%).
- 4.3 The directory appears to measure up well to other sources of company information, although it is apparent that the directory is only one of a range of sources used by the local business community. Of those responding, 45% thought that the directory couldn't be improved. This finding is particularly encouraging. Furthermore, 20% of respondees maintained that the standard of data contained within the directory was better than that found in other reference sources.

- 4.4 A question was asked about preferences for the provision of local company information in different formats in future. Those companies responding indicated that CD-ROMs were most favoured ahead of computer disks and Internet formats. (The directory has been produced on disc format).
- 4.5 Overall the results of the survey are encouraging. A 20% sample is significant enough for the results to be reliable. It appears that the directory is being well used by the local business community and that the contents, structure and layout of the document appear to suit the needs of local businesses. As this was the first edition of the directory, and the evaluation feedback has been encouraging, it provides a good framework on which to develop future editions of the directory and to utilise technology to develop more interactive business information systems.
- 4.6 A copy of the research findings is held within the Economic Development Unit.
- 5 **Costings**
- 5.1 The cost of evaluation was £724.
- 6 **Recommendations**
- 6.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report and the actions that have been taken.



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NORTH LANARKSHIRE BUSINESS DIRECTORY 1997-98: SUMMARY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Table 1: Companies Contacted and Responses

Type of Response	Number	% of Responses
Answered questionnaire	469	68
Refused to answer	59	9
Phone dead	62	9
Company moved	5	1
Company closed	5	1
No response	92	13
Total company contacts	692	100

Table 2: Companies Responding (by Number of Employees)

Number of Employees	Number	% of Responses
0-25	384	82
26-250	78	17
251-999	3	1
1000+	4	1

Table 3: Companies by Economic Sector

Economic Sector	Number	% of Responses
Services to business	139	20
Other services	129	19
Transport & communications	111	16
Manufacturing	105	15
Construction	88	13
Wholesale	58	8
Leisure & tourism	33	5
Distribution	21	3
Primary industry	4	1
Public sector	4	1

Table 4: Companies by Geographic Location

Economic Sector	Number	% of Responses
Airdrie	107	15
Motherwell	98	14
Cumbernauld	93	13
Coatbridge	93	13
Wishaw	76	11
Bellshill	66	10
Shotts	28	4
Kilsyth	21	3
Uddingston	13	2
Others	73	15

Table 5: How is the Directory Used by Companies

Question	Yes		No	
	Number	% of Responses	Number	% of Responses
Are you familiar with the Directory?	284	61	185	39
Have you used it to source goods & services?	100	35	183	64
Have you used it to identify potential customers?	48	17	235	83
Have you used it to market your business?	24	8	259	91
Have you used it to develop mailing lists?	15	5	268	94

Table 6: How Often is the Directory Used (those answering yes in the above table)

Period	Number	% of Responses
Daily	3	1
Weekly	54	23
Monthly	101	43
Less than monthly	57	24
Never	18	8

Table 7: How Could the Directory be Improved

Suggestion	Number	% of Responses
It couldn't be improved	121	45
Don't know	85	32
Cost	13	5
Other	38	14
No opinion	10	4

Table 8: Using Other Sources of Local Company Information

	Yes		No	
	Number	% of Responses	Number	% of Responses
Do you regularly use other business listings?	390	83	79	17
If yes, which sources:				
Yellow Pages	378	97		
Thomson's Directory	134	34		
Trade Directory	21	5		
Other	12	3		
BT Phone Book	19	5		
Directory Enquiries	7	2		
Business Pages	7	2		

Table 9: How Does the NL Directory Compare in Terms of Layout

	Number	% of Responses
Far better	7	3
Better	58	24
About the same	166	70
Not as good	2	1
Much worse	0	0
No option	5	2

Table 10: How Does the NL Directory Compare in Terms of Ease of Use

	Number	% of Responses
Far better	9	4
Better	102	43
About the same	120	50
Not as good	2	1
Much worse	0	0
No option	5	2

Table 11: How Does the NL Directory Compare in Terms of Level of Information

	Number	% of Responses
Far better	8	3
Better	48	20
About the same	175	74
Not as good	2	1
Much worse	0	0
No option	5	2

Table 12: Would You Like to see NL Company Information in Other Formats

	Yes		No	
	Number	% of Responses	Number	% of Responses
Would you like company info. in other formats?	83	29	59	21
If yes, which sources:				
CD-ROM	64	77		
Computer disks	22	27		
Internet	25	30		
Other	2	2		

Table 13: Advertising in the Directory

	Yes		No		Don't Know	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Did you advertise in the Directory	27	10	241	85	16	6
If yes, would you advertise in the next edition	8	30	4	15	15	56