

**by Matt Powell, Business Growth Manager,
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My Heart of Cornwall Card Update

We are now over two months in to the pilot period of the My Heart of Cornwall Card and, post -Christmas, now feels like a good time to update everyone on how things are going.

I'll start with a few facts and figures: To date, we have seen over £6,000 of sales "swiped" on the loyalty cards. 10% of the cards have been used at least once and there have been over 200 individual transactions.

All of this is really positive. However, the vast majority of business on the scheme is coming from just a few shops. This is for a variety of reasons, but there are businesses that have signed up to the card who are not even advertising the fact!

I have heard many, many opinions of this card scheme, and of loyalty cards in general over the last few months. I fully understand concerns about "giving away" discounts when margins are already tight, but ask yourself this: *is it better to get 90% of a new sale or to lose 10% of a new sale?* That is the purpose of the card - to generate new sales, to get more customers coming through your door. (And, as another reminder, this loyalty card scheme is about much, much more than just discounting sales in any case.)

At the end of the day, it is no more than one of a number of ways that businesses should be looking at to generate more sales and profit, especially in what will be an increasingly difficult year for small businesses.

And now for some more good news - the "pilot" is being extended! This is for a number of reasons, none of which are related to our scheme in Camborne, but it does mean that if your business hasn't signed up yet, there is now time to take advantage of My Heart of Cornwall Card for free for a couple of months longer yet.

Also, we are now beginning to roll out the card across the CPR area, so you can begin to take advantage of reaching potential customers in Pool and Redruth as well as those in Camborne. Since My Heart of Cornwall Card was launched back in November, I have had enquiries from businesses in Penzance and St Ives about signing up to the scheme. This obviously negates the purpose of the card which is to encourage people to support independent businesses in Camborne, Pool and Redruth, but that along with the fact that towns such as St Austell and Penzance are launching their own projects that reward customer loyalty and encourage shopping locally clearly demonstrates that the business community across Cornwall is switching on to managing and rewarding customer loyalty.

What are you going to do to keep your business ahead of the game in 2009? My Heart of Cornwall Card really does offer the opportunity to get new customers and make more profit, so why not try it for free while you still can?

