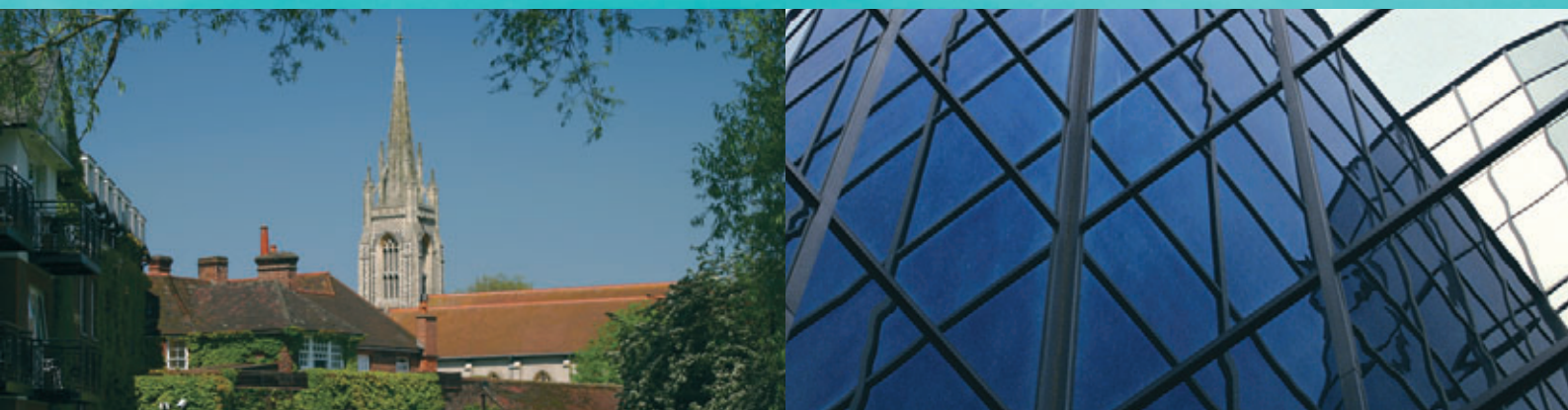


*integrity • insight • innovation*



T O W N C E N T R E S E R V I C E S



BIG IDEAS FOR SMALL TOWNS

# Town Centre Services

There are over 1,200 market towns in England, each acting as a focal point for local trade and services. All of these varied market towns face increasing challenges as their traditional role as local centres to live, work and play is being eroded. More people are choosing to live in rural areas, yet they are out-commuting to urban localities for work and leisure.

To help combat the threat of becoming dormitory communities, market towns need to provide a diverse and modern range of shops and services, a lively night time economy, and vibrant, safe and well planned town centres.

Market towns struggle to manage town centre activities, because unlike larger towns they have few multiple retailers to support and fund initiatives, and they lack the resources to employ town centre managers to supervise lasting positive change.

As a division of Action for Market Towns, amt-i has recognised the need for the provision of practical help for those working to manage market town centres. amt-i has pulled together a range of services and products which can be purchased directly to ensure that market towns retain their vitality and meet the needs of their local communities. Members of AMT can enjoy healthy discounts on these products and can benefit from further free advice and support for their activities.

The services and products can be used as stand-alone projects, or alternatively a number of the packages can be purchased for a tailored holistic town centre review. To discuss your ideas and learn more about Town Centre Services, amt-i and Action For Market Towns simply contact:

**Mike King on: 07818 068982**  
or email: [mike.king@towns.org.uk](mailto:mike.king@towns.org.uk)



amt-i is truly a next generation consulting business, existing solely for the benefit of small towns and their rural hinterlands. The "i" stands for integrity, and this is the guiding principle in everything we do, from designing services which benefit small towns, to pricing in a way that maximises value for our clients.



Action for Market Towns (AMT) is a membership organisation and national charity dedicated to promoting the vitality and viability of small towns

## Business Training

A vibrant high street needs a diverse range of shops and services, but independent business people in market towns and villages are finding it hard to make a profit.

Competition is stiff. Bigger businesses can offer wider choice and lower prices, out of town shopping centres have free and copious parking facilities and from the comfort of their armchairs, consumers can browse catalogues and shopping sites on the internet to have goods delivered to their homes.

AMT launched the Base Initiative in 2006 to help independent businesses fight back. Base provides short, snappy and totally relevant business training courses, seminars and workshops tailored to meet the needs



of anybody who owns or works in an independent business in a market town or village in the UK.

Courses are held in local venues, largely in the evenings, in a relaxed environment with refreshments. Trainers are field experts, who run their own businesses, and deliver their own course material.

Base has trained in excess of 1000 people from over 25 towns across the country. Delegates can learn how to save a life, write an employment contract, design the perfect window display, create an effective pricing strategy, motivate staff, develop a website, apprehend a shop thief (legally) and so much more...



## Retail Skills Competition

Retail is often cited as the easiest occupation to enter, yet it is one of the hardest to do well. It is essential that retail and service staff in small town centres provide consistently excellent customer service and product knowledge to keep people shopping locally.

amt-i has designed a competition to help you raise and then celebrate the standard of customer service and retail skills in your town, and anybody working in your local shops and service industries could be invited to enter.

After attending a series of short skills workshops, competitors complete six industry related tasks over a one week period, being tested on 25 retail skills such as customer service, visual merchandising, product demonstration, basic accounting, shop floor layout and marketing.

Local residents and dignitaries can be enlisted to help with judging, and the whole community is invited to support the competitors as they prove just how valuable they are to a town's economic success. The competition ends with a celebratory gala dinner as the overall winner is announced. Local publicity is guaranteed!



## Mystery Shopping

Using our team of mystery shoppers, amt-i will help you to identify weak points in local service delivery. We will provide evidence to help you facilitate co-operative networking between businesses, which will improve the level of customer service offered in your town.

amt-i will work with you to identify what you wish to know about the retail and service providers in your town, and then design a customised survey to gather that information.

A team of mystery shoppers will act as prospective consumers either through visiting, telephoning or e-mailing retailers, businesses and service providers to test performance. After completing their surveys, the trained mystery shoppers enter the results into an on-line database, with the client able to monitor the results within three days. amt-i will supply a full mystery shopping report at the end of the exercise to explain the results in clear and simple terms.

amt-i is able to mystery shop a sample of the whole town centre, a neighbourhood or sector based industries.

## Loyalty Cards

Businesses really benefit when residents regularly use local shops. With so much choice available however, consumers find it hard to be loyal to the locals. Town loyalty cards can help independent shops and services attract regular custom from people living and working in that town.

amt-i has joined forces with Melanie Odell, one of the founders of the award winning Haslemere rewards scheme, to provide a consultancy service for towns considering a scheme of their own. We will show you how to use advanced technology to provide a low cost loyalty scheme that independents will want to be part of.

### We can help you to understand:

- What technology is available and how to access it
- How to 'sell' a scheme to independents and local consumers
- How to run a campaign to keep the scheme visible



## Car Parking Studies

A significant proportion of town centre customers arrive by car. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. amt-i has developed a highly sophisticated research package which gathers the views and opinions of:

- Residents
- Visitors
- Local employees
- Local employers
- Car park users
- Non car park users

Information and data is gathered by a variety of methods and amt-i will work with you to tailor a parking survey to meet your town's needs. Surveys can be completed on-line, with information being stored on a database allowing amt-i the opportunity to analyse the data, produce a written report and present the results within 2 weeks of the closure date. Allied to this innovative approach, face to face and postal surveys are conducted in your town to ensure widespread coverage. A complete audit of road, street and car parking signage

in a designated area is also performed by two trained amt-i research consultants.

### Results of the Car Parking Survey

amt-i will provide a comprehensive review of car parking in your town, including analysis of:

- Access
- Signage
- Reasons for car park usage
- Length of stay
- Charging policies
- Options for modal shift
- Future developments

Each of these factors will be broken down to compare and contrast the views and opinions of the various groups in a comprehensive research report and accompanying dissemination event.



## Signage Audits

Street and road signs are imperative to the success of a town centre, ensuring that businesses, attractions and services are easy to find for both local residents and visitors. Signage however, is a problem in many of our towns, ranging from lack of clarity to out of date and unnecessary signs.

### Solving Signage Issues

amt-i will help you solve your town centre signage issues by offering a detailed qualitative research schedule and analysis. Following agreed designated routes from town centre maps, trained research consultants will evaluate key signage aspects including:

- Visibility
- Clarity
- Need
- Consistency of design
- Relevance
- Signposting to attractions and services

A full report, highlighting problems, case studies of national best practice, detailed notes from the consultants' audit and recommendations will be produced within two weeks.

## Visitor Research

Understanding the views, opinions and needs of visitors is imperative to the success of your town centre. By consulting only with key stakeholders and residents, a rather narrow picture is offered, as often local people are 'too close' to the subject to comment on the positives and negatives of where they live. Thus, it is vital to discover the views of both regular and infrequent visitors to provide a more balanced and valid review of the town.

Using face-to-face, postal and on-line surveying techniques, augmented by focus group consultation, amt-i will produce a holistic visitor analysis of your town.

### The report will include information on:

- Frequency of visits
- Purpose of visit
- Mode of transport
- Accessibility
- Retail offer
- Leisure and recreation provision
- Tourism opportunities
- Future developments

A full report, analysed by visitor type will be produced, with the opportunity for longitudinal studies to benchmark town centre changes.



## Town Benchmarking

### “Measuring the success of your town and region”

Benchmarking is a web based system which has been developed by market town partnerships to address the real issues of how to develop thriving communities. Benchmarking provides towns with a method to capture key data. It will help them measure important aspects of their town centre including:

- The variety of shops and range of services
- A balance of comparison and convenience retail units
- The mix of multiple and independent retailers
- The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities

Information is collected on twelve key performance indicators which have been rigorously tested by those involved in town centre management. The data is collated using an on-line recording system.

By collecting data in a consistent manner, towns have the opportunity to compare their results with those in the region by the simple click of a button. Such working practices allow towns to widen their horizons and learn from others.

Only £200 will provide access to Benchmarking, and amt-i offers further bespoke training and support to guide users through the system.

**For further information and quotations on any of these products and services, please contact:**

**Mike King**  
Telephone: 07818 068982  
Email: [mike.king@towns.org.uk](mailto:mike.king@towns.org.uk)

**Sally Williams**  
Telephone: 07881 827600  
Email: [sally.williams@towns.org.uk](mailto:sally.williams@towns.org.uk)

We will be adding to our town centre product offer. Please keep updated by logging on to our Market Town Centre Activities page on [www.towns.org.uk](http://www.towns.org.uk)



PO Box 299,

Bury St Edmunds

Suffolk IP33 1UU

Mobile: 07818 068982

Telephone: 0845 644 6202

Email: [mike.king@towns.org.uk](mailto:mike.king@towns.org.uk)

[www.amt-i.co.uk](http://www.amt-i.co.uk)

*integrity • insight • innovation*