



Business Source

INFORMATION AND NEWS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE ST. CHARLES/ST. LOUIS REGION

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"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failures."

– Colin Powell

Quick and Easy Ways to Boost Sales

Are you looking for some new ways to build your bottom line this month?

First of all - keep in touch with your customers! One of the best ways to do this is with a newsletter. Today it's easier than ever to have a newsletter – use email. If you don't have your customer's email addresses already, start asking for them when they pay for something at the cash register. Give them an incentive for signing up for your free newsletter – maybe a free gift or a small discount or even a prize draw they can be entered into. Use your newsletter to let customers know about sales in advance, extend special invitations to past customers only and open the store during non-regular hours. A popular sporting goods store where I live does this twice a year - and the lineups to get in weave through the store parking lot and people talk about the sale for weeks – before and after it happens! This is a **great** publicity and sales tool. Add other incentives in the newsletter like: a 10% discount for past customers on a new product line, or offer an old customer a 5% discount on their next purchase if they bring a new customer to a special sale. Give customers a gift for every referral they send to you.

Can you team up with other businesses in your area to offer a "package"

promotion? If you are a make-up artist can you team up with the high end dress shops in your community to offer a "bonus" make up package for prom or other special events? By combining services both businesses win and customers love it because they save time since they don't have to run all over town! This would work well if you gave manicures, pedicures or did hair as well. Professional photographers can also find unique ways to team up with all of these businesses as well. Think "strength in numbers"! If you save the customer time and effort running around **they will buy from you** and very much appreciate you.

Can you offer a "deal of the month" package? Let's say you own a restaurant on a beach and October through February are always very slow – and so is your cash flow! Due to construction delays you didn't open until September which means you are going to be struggling this winter unless you get an influx of cash and **fast!** How about selling a twelve month package of meals? Set a price for a 3 course dinner (starter, entrée and dessert), multiply by twelve and then take off a small percentage since the customer pays all at once. Selling these packages allows you an instant influx of cash.

You can encourage people to use them as gifts (one gift certificate at a time

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2005 Client Showcase

Missouri's entrepreneurial community is thriving!

And there is no better evidence of that than the 25 firms that were featured in the first Client Showcase sponsored by the Missouri Small Business Development Centers (MO SBDC), the Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (MO PTAC) and the Missouri Federal and State Technology Partnership (MoFAST), which was held on Thursday, February 10, 2005 at the Missouri State Capitol.

That morning, business owners representing all regions of the state and all business sectors were on hand to visit with legislators and state officials regarding their success — and their contribution to the economic development of their communities and the state. All of the businesses

featured are clients of one of the above-named programs, which are housed within University of Missouri Extension and its partner institutions of higher learning across Missouri.

The goal of the showcase was to demonstrate the important contribution entrepreneurial firms make to the creation of businesses, jobs, wealth and enhanced quality of living in their communities.

“Companies such as those participating in our showcase create more than 90 percent of the jobs in our nation,” says Mary Paulsell, assistant state director of the MO SBDC and director of communications for the sponsoring agencies. “We offered legislators the opportunity to meet



with these entrepreneurs, hear their stories and come to understand the need for the kind of technical assistance and education our programs provide.

“The diversity among the companies in both scope and mission is amazing. And we deal with more than 5,000 companies like these each year. The contribution they make to our state is very significant.”

This article taken from the web site <http://missouribusiness.net>.



Award presentation at 2005 Client Showcase. Pictured left to right: Virginia Wilson, Business Development Specialist; Brenda Newberry, owner of The Newberry Group of St. Louis; Senator Chuck Gross, Missouri State Senate, District 23.

St. Louis area clients included:

- BRK Electric of St. Louis, an electrical contractor
- Global Solutions Group of Fenton, a network solutions, IT telephone and systems management firm
- Luminomics of St. Louis, a firm developing regenerative treatments for neurological diseases, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/luminomics.asp>
- The Newberry Group of St. Louis, a developer of computer security systems, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/newberry.asp>
- Pogue Label and Screen of St. Louis, a specialist in printing labels on plastic containers, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/pogue.asp>
- Premier Foods of Milan, a poultry processing plant
- Sigma Aldrich of St. Louis, chemical manufacturer, http://missouribusiness.net/success/sigma_aldrich.asp
- TechGuard Security of Chesterfield, a provider of information network security products, http://missouribusiness.net/success/tech_guard.asp

Other 2005 Client Showcase Participants

- Able Products of Joplin, a furniture manufacturer
- Big Vision Design, LLC, of Platte Woods, designer and developer of web sites, http://missouribusiness.net/success/big_vision.asp
- DGR Associates of Belton, a supplier of facility and housing maintenance, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/dgr.asp>
- Feather Light Lamp Manufacturing of Kennett, a maker of high-quality lighting
- Flexible Staffing of Chillicothe, a provider of temporary workers <http://missouribusiness.net/success/flexible.asp>
- Fundraiser Software of West Plains, a developer of donor management computer programs, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/flexible.asp>
- H2OVER Beverage Company of Columbia, a distribution of canned drinking water, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/h2over.asp>
- ISW Group, Inc., of St. Louis, manufacturer of a skin-care product for African Americans suffering with dermatological problems
- OCCU-TEC, Inc., of Kansas City, a firm specializing in safety and environmental training, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/occu-tec.asp>
- Paternity Testing Corporation of Columbia, a firm specializing in forensic investigations, DNA profiling and parental identification, http://missouribusiness.net/success/paternity_testing.asp
- P/Strada, LLC, of Kansas City, a consultant in bio-terrorism and homeland security, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/pstrada.asp>
- Renewable Alternatives of Columbia, a firm specializing in the engineering of phase change materials to ensure consistent temperatures, http://missouribusiness.net/success/renewable_alternatives.asp
- sComm, Inc., of Kansas City, a developer of devices to assist the deaf and hearing impaired
- Stealth Garments of Independence, a manufacturer of clothing for law enforcement personnel
- Uncle D's Sports Bar and Grill of St. Joseph, a dining establishment
- The Vacation Channel of Branson, an independent television station providing tourism information, http://missouribusiness.net/success/vacation_channel.asp
- Wren Associates, Ltd., of Jefferson City, a provider of retail fraud detection systems, <http://missouribusiness.net/success/wren.asp>



Award presentation at 2005 Client Showcase. Pictured left to right: Michael Meuser, owner of Pogue Label and Screen of St. Louis; Representative Maria Chappelle-Nadal, Missouri State Representative, District 23; Greg Tucker, SBDC Counselor.

"...we deal with more than 5,000 companies like these each year. The contributions they make to our state is very significant."

Business Spotlight: *Forum Home Health Agency, LLC*

Nellie Tsimerman, owner of Forum Home Health Agency, has reached a milestone in her business venture. She closed on a SBA 504 loan to purchase commercial property in South St. Louis City and will expand her business with a center for seniors. Nellie will move her business out of the St. Louis Enterprise Center business incubator where she was a tenant for more than two years. The center for seniors, as with her in-home services business, will be a Medicaid provider with a focus on elderly from various ethnic backgrounds - Russians, Bosnians, Ukrainians, Somalis, Afghans, Vietnamese, Chinese, to name a few.

Forum Home Health Agency services include basic and advanced personal care, respite and advanced care, nurse respite care, skilled nursing, physical therapy. Sales in 2004 were \$220,000, and the company has 24 full- or part-time employees, most of them capable of communicating in the client's native language. With the new expansion, Nellie's son Edward, who holds an architects degree from Washington University-St. Louis, is planning to manage the family business.

Nellie, a refugee from the former Soviet Union, arrived in the United States in 1996 with her son. They had no relatives or friends awaiting them. Their support came from the St. Louis International Institute, a non-profit organization that helps immigrants and refugees with basic needs while they settle into their new country. Fortunately, Nellie also found support from the Institute's business development specialist Mary Fischer-Gobble for her desire to become a business owner – she just needed time.

Nellie's experience is common among immigrants – no matter how high their entrepreneurial energy, they need time to acclimate to the community, to take care of basic needs and to cross the language barrier.



Nellie Tsimerman, owner of Forum Home Health Agency, LLC.

Some people suggest that immigrants and entrepreneurs share similar personal characteristics – higher tolerance for risk, ability to function in very uncertain situations, refusing to give up easily and trying to make the best out of what's available. For many American immigrants entrepreneurship is an alternative to poverty and social isolation. The more hardships and frustrations immigrants experience in the mainstream economy, the more they seek alternatives in self-employment.

Dr. Carl Schramm, President and CEO of the Kauffman Foundation, states that “entrepreneurship offers a way for millions of Americans, including immigrants, minorities and women to enter the mainstream of American economic life.” Often the most significant obstacle and disadvan-

tage for immigrants on their way to achieving the American Dream is the language barrier.

Nellie was referred to SBDC in March 2002 by St. Louis International Institute's Business Links program. She needed financing for her start-up business and to learn about the lending process, developing a business plan and budgets. Aldis Jakubovskis from SBDC collaborated with RMI, an SBA micro-lender, to secure startup funds, and he recommended applying for office space at the Washington Avenue business incubator. Nellie followed the recommendation and has since approached SBDC with a multitude of requests. She is very appreciative of the public assistance that has allowed her dream to come true.

Forum Home Health Agency
Ms. Nellie Tsimerman
3830 Washington Ave Suite 116
Saint Louis, MO 63108
<http://slcec.com/SLEC/Midtown/ForumHomeHealth/ForumHome.htm>

Between 1997 and 2004, the estimated growth rate in the number of women-owned firms was nearly twice that of all firms (17% vs. 9%), employment expanded at twice the rate of all firms (24% vs. 12%) and estimated revenues kept pace with all firms (39% vs. 34%).

- Center for Women's Business Research

MoFAST Advances Grant Participation

Authorized by congress in 2000 to encourage greater participation in the SBIR/STTR grant programs, the Federal And State Technology (FAST) Partnership Grant organization in Missouri (MoFAST) has registered several successes since their inception in 2002. Among these successes are the following milestones:

■ In 2002, the State of Missouri received 40 awards compared with a pre-MoFAST total of 16 awards in 2001, which resulted in the infusion of \$8,073,463 federal dollars into Missouri's entrepreneurial high-technology, start-up companies.

■ Up to the third quarter of 2003, Missourians received another 45 awards, bringing in an additional \$6,999,437 to the state through SBIR/STTR grants.

■ Only 30% of the states receive more than 50 awards per year with Missouri now being poised to enter that select group.

■ In addition, companies who worked with the MoFAST program on SBIR/STTRs received additional

outside revenues of \$67 million through venture or angel capital, ATP awards, commercial contracts and acquisitions.

■ Missouri high-technology companies submitting proposals with experienced MoFAST counselors have more than *four times* the probability of being funded compared with pre-MoFAST applications.

■ The program has also targeted and incorporated women and minority-owned business into the SBIR/STTR delivery process, increasing the number of applicants of women-owned firms from seven to 15 and applicants of minority-owned firms from two to 18 during the funding period. This represents 24.6% of the proposals submitted.

In addition, during the first half of 2004, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), only one of the 11 agencies in the grant program, has awarded 13 SBIR/STTR grants in Missouri. Twelve of these grants have gone to eight companies in the St. Louis region. Five of the eight St. Louis-based, and six of the nine

companies receiving awards are MoFAST clients. Total funding to date for 2004 has exceeded \$2.4 million, which is already 71% of the total NIH funds awarded to Missouri during all of 2003 through the SBIR/STTR grant program.

The MoFAST SBIR/STTR Assistance Centers (www.mofast.net) are located in St. Louis, Columbia, Rolla and Kansas City provide assistance to small, high technology-based, companies in identifying grant opportunities, proposal preparation, post submittal analysis, resubmittals and post-funding account setup. There are 11 federal agencies that participate in the program; which is expected to distribute approximately \$2 billion to qualified companies during FY 2004. In addition, the SBIR/STTR grant programs do not create debt or dilute equity, which is a significant advantage to small entrepreneurial high-tech companies.



Written by Wayne Harvey
SBDC
SBIR/STTR Specialist

Boost Sales continued from page 1

or the whole book) or they can keep them for themselves to use when they're low on cash. This idea can be used in many industries, not just food. How about for pet grooming, house cleaning, yard care, car detailing, hair cuts, manicures – any product or service that is bought more than once!

Is there a time of day, or day of week that is slowest for your business? That's when you have a sale! In the area I live Tuesdays are "cheap movie nights" and

all tickets are half price – it's because historically Tuesdays are the slowest nights at the theatre. Now most Tuesdays the theatres are full! Think about ways you can make this work for your business. I've heard of tax accountants who offer a discount to people who bring their taxes in to be done before February 1. This gives the accountant some much needed cash after slow season, and helps ease some of the crazy rush around tax time.

Open up your mind – see what other industries are doing to generate quick cash – **don't** just look at what's been done in your industry before – try something new – become an innovator in your industry. When you do something different you'll stand out – by being unique your business can really grow!

Reprinted with permission from Think Without Boundaries, a newsletter published by Wendy McClelland. She is a business consultant and motivational speaker from British Columbia. wmcclelland@shaw.ca.

Small Business Training

FastTrac NewVenture for Dislocated Workers

Participants will develop a feasibility plan for starting a business. *Five-day course – each month's dates comprise one course.*

St. Louis

May 10, 12, 17, 18, 19
Call: 636-970-3000

SBIR/STTR Grant Writing

Gain the extra edge to make your firm's grant proposal as competitive as possible. *Six-hour workshop.*

St. Louis

Friday, Jun 3
9 - 3 p.m.
Call: 314-631-5509

Writing a Business Plan

Learn the key components of a simple business plan. Time allowed for practice writing. *Three-hour workshop.*

St. Charles

Apr 26; 5:30-9 p.m.
Call 636-928-7714

St. Louis

Apr 27, May 25, Jun 22; 1-4 p.m.
Call: 314-539-6600 x 227

Understanding Financial Statements

Turn financial statements into useful management tools by identifying key business information. Learn to understand ratios and interpret financial documents to drive business decisions. *Three-hour workshop.*

St. Charles

May 24; 5:30 p.m - 9 p.m.
Call: 636-928-7714

Starting A Business in Missouri

Learn essential information for starting your own business. *Three-hour workshop.*

St. Charles

Apr 12, May 10, Jun 14; 5:30-9 p.m.
Call: 636-928-7714

St. Louis

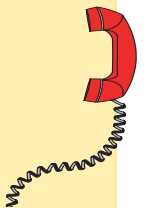
Apr 13, May 11, Jun 8; 1-4 p.m.
Call: 314-539-6600 x 227

QuickBooks – Beginner

Learn the basics of QuickBooks, an accounting software program for small business. *Six-hour workshop.*

St. Charles

Apr 12, May 17; 9-3:30 p.m.
Call: 636-970-3000



Call the phone number listed for registration information or register at <http://missouribusiness.net>.

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Small Business Assistance

For business counseling, training opportunities or more information contact a Specialist with the Small Business Development Center or University of Missouri Extension.

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Internet Resources

- Missouri Business Resource Center combines the best of State and University business resources into one easy-to-access network at <http://missouribusiness.net>
- University of Missouri Extension – St. Charles at <http://extension.missouri.edu/stcharles/business.shtml>
- University of Missouri Extension – St. Louis at <http://extension.missouri.edu/stlouis/biz.shtml>
- Small Business Development Center – St. Louis at <http://missouribusiness.net/sbdc>



In 1980, Congress created the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) in cooperation with the U.S. Small Business Administration to stimulate economic growth and to provide management assistance. Missouri SBDCs provide assistance to clients according to SBA-defined standards for the size of small businesses. The SBDC is a part of University of Missouri Extension.

University of Missouri's Business Development Program in the St. Charles/St. Louis region includes two UM Extension Specialists and five SBDC Business Counselors. It is the local link between the resources of the four UM campuses and people throughout the state. Counselors and specialists use their expertise to help startups and existing businesses in business planning, management, marketing and finance. There is no fee for individual counseling.