

the Connector

April 2006

A Newsletter for Members of the Professional Business Women's Association

Vol. 06/Issue 4

networking notes

MONTHLY NETWORKING MEETING

Wednesday, April 5, 2006
The Purple Iris at Hartwood
12 noon • Cost: \$12.00 per person.
Topic: Networking!

MONTHLY NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Wednesday, April 19, 2006 • 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.
Shepherdstown Breakfast networking Meeting
Shepherdstown Sweet Shop
German Street, Shepherdstown
Phone: 304-876-2432

MONTHLY NETWORKING MEETING

Wednesday, May 3, 2006
The Purple Iris at Hartwood
12 noon • Cost: \$12.00 per person.
Topic: Time Management!

MONTHLY NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Wednesday, May 17, 2006 • 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.
Shepherdstown Breakfast networking Meeting
Shepherdstown Sweet Shop
German Street, Shepherdstown
Phone: 304-876-2432.

CONNECTING WITH THE CONNECTOR

To have your news items included in the next issue of The Connector, enclose them in the body of an email or as a Microsoft Word attachment and send by the 20th of each month to: terry@thewritemarket.com

2006 MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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NEW MEMBER CORNER

Christine G. Librizzi
CGL Consulting • 703-772-3235
Executive consultant and trainer specializing in leadership and management training and organizational development for the public and private sectors.

APRIL MEETING

The upcoming meeting will focus on Networking. Bring your business cards and brochures to share. Also be prepared to give your 30 second elevator speech (introduce yourself and your business).

MONTHLY 50/50 RAFFLE

To date, we've collected \$144.00. Bring those extra dollars to lunch! At the end of the year, all monies raised will be donated in PBWA's name.

MEETING TOPICS

Meetings: Based on the responses at the January meeting, the 2006 Management Council has planned the following events for the year:

- April: Your 30 second "elevator" introduction
- May: Time Management
- June: Evening Luau
- July: Health and fitness panel
- August: Meeting in Shepherdstown at The Clarion
- September: Open
- October 4- 4th Annual Women in Business Expo
- November: Open
- December: evening Holiday Gala

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Chris Lundberg is looking for other golfers to participate in the 2006 Berkeley County Meals on Wheels golf tournament on Monday, April 24th at Stonebridge. Starts at 1:00 and fee is \$50. Call Chris at 260-4382 if you are interested.
- On April 7th, the SBDC will be offering "Managing Your Business Finances: Using QuickBooks Simple Start", from 9 to 11 am, at CTC, Martinsburg for \$35. Go to the SBDC website: www.shepherd.edu/sbdcweb and click on Form

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to get a registration form or call the SBDC at 260-4385 for registration information.

- We have had many generous members that have donated door prizes over the past months- Joan Brooks, Susan Dudics-Dean, Catherine Silver-Riddell, and others. Think about something you could bring as a door prize.
- Thanks to Karen Coyne for the information on financial planning she shared with us at the March meeting.

NETWORKING TIPS

By Christina Lundberg

At our April 5th luncheon meeting, we will spend some time practicing our "30 second elevator speech" that introduces yourself, tells our business and some fact that will help the listener connect with us.

Some additional networking ideas from Anne Barber and Lynne Waymon's book "52 Ways to Re-Connect, Follow Up & Stay in Touch"

At any meeting, make notes about the people you meet: on a piece of paper or on the back of their business card. Write about their interests, common concerns, etc. so when you send a follow-up note you can include an article, mention a name/resource, or remind them of an event- to help them make the connection to you. Then they will make the connection that you are a valuable resource for them.

Set up e-mail lists to send out reminders of meetings, events, etc.

As you read newspapers, cut out articles of interest and send them to the person with a personal note.

Keep thank you notes, networking cards and congratulations cards in your desk- so when you read about someone getting a promotion, their business being mentioned you can take a minute or 2 and write them a personal note.

Look for advertisements of businesses you know- clip them and send it with a note telling them what made the ad leap off the page and grab you.

What events or meetings are you going to in the next two weeks? Could you call someone and offer a ride so that you can use that time to get to know each other better.

Be on the lookout for ideas and resources to share. Listen generously to see how a fresh perspective or unique resource might help someone solve a problem. Creativity draws people to you.

At meetings, listen for commonalities so you can introduce people to each other.

Build your reputation as a do-er. Serve on a committee, task force or board- but choose your involvement carefully to allow you to exhibit your expertise.

Find a reason to celebrate.

Christina Lundberg is the Center Manager at the Small Business Development Center of CTC Shepherd which provides free counseling and information to start-up and existing businesses, including women and minorities. Chris can be reached at: 304-260-4382 or clundber@shepherd.edu.

KNOWING THE LAW CAN SAVE YOU MONEY

By Donna Reeves

I'm not a lawyer, but I work for one so I can quote with accuracy some information about what the law is regarding payment of wages to terminated employees.

The West Virginia Wage Payment and Collection Act requires that an employee be paid all wages due to him/her no later than the next regular pay day following the termination of his/her employment. W.WV. Code § 21-504(c).

Failure to comply with the requirements for payment of final wages renders an employer liable for the unpaid wages plus statutory liquidated damages of one days' wages for each day the wages remain unpaid, up to thirty days. W.Va. Code § 21-5-4(e). Assessment of the liquidated damages is mandatory.

In addition, the employer is liable for prejudgment interest on both the unpaid wages and liquidated damages at the rate of 10% per annum. W.Va. Code § 56-6-31.

Further, the employer is liable for the costs and attorney's fees incurred by the former employee. W.Va. Code § 21-5-12(b).

An important part of being a business owner is knowing what your responsibilities are in regards to wages. It should not have to be said that it is also required that the employer withhold and pay to the applicable agencies, federal withholding tax, state withholding tax, unemployment tax, worker's compensation, social security and medicare tax.

As one can see the cost of not knowing the law can be very costly.

Aside from working in a law office, Donna Reeves does mending, alterations, and custom creations. She can be reached at 304-274-0688 or tigerlily1949@hotmail.com

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT DEVELOPING A WEB SITE

by Terry Kent

As a web designer who practically spends their entire day online, I realize there is a lot of misinformation about the Internet and many false expectations of what it can accomplish. I thought I'd share some of the comments I've received from people and try to clear up some of the myths

about the internet.

I don't want or need a web site because I don't want to be overwhelmed with sales/orders/requests.

That's not going to happen. There is a common misconception that if you build it, they will come. Not so. Just like getting a bunch of business cards printed, they look nifty sitting on your desk, but if you don't hand them out, they aren't helping you.

The same applies to a web site, just because you have a presence online doesn't mean people will see it. It doesn't just magically propagate itself to all the people that may possibly be interested in your specific product or service. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to promote one's business online. It's like those old Mail Pouch Tobacco ads painted on the sides of barns. They're really neat, but unless the road goes by the barn, nobody will see the billboard.

One of my long term clients is an excellent example of how it takes time and effort to promote online. He sells kettle corn, popcorn, nuts, jams and jellies. It's taken 5 years for him to approach being 'overwhelmed' with orders, and that only happens around Christmas time. This has, in part, been due to a continuous effort of trading links with other similar businesses, keeping the site up to date and adding products on a regular basis. This way, each time the search engines come around and 'index' his site, they can see the site is busy, changing, growing. This helps keep his ranks high in the search engines for keywords that are relevant to his business. While there is no guarantee of being at the top in search results (regardless of what some claim), a constant effort will help make sure you get hits from relevant keywords. Think of keywords as your target audience. You bring the right keyword hits, you get the sales.

I have all the business I can handle so why do I need a web site? I don't need or want to sell my product or service online.

You may have all the business you can handle today, but markets and economies can and do change. A web site can be useful in helping you spread the word about your business as well as working as an educational tool to teach your potential clients. It can go into more detail about what you provide than even a brochure can do.

It can come in handy when you are pressed for time and someone asks you about a specific service you provide. It's also more reliable than you! It won't forget and leave out a crucial detail that may be important to a potential client. Perhaps you're a massage therapist. While you may not be interested in actually 'selling' your services online, a web site could be used to list any certification or training you've had. It could go into detail about each type of massage you provide. It could even show photos of your

facility to show people what a professional operation you run. This can free you up to do what you do, give quality massages.

A web site is also handy because it's never written in stone. You had 1,000 brochures printed up and now your address or prices have changed? Now you've got 1,000 brochures that need to be recycled. A web site is a quick fix if anything about your business changes.

I've got a web site, how come I'm not getting rich?

As a web designer I repeatedly run into clients who just can't be sold on long term marketing maintenance for their site. They have a hard time justifying such a monthly expense. While the technology surrounding search engines changes at the speed of light, one thing remains constant: Content is King. Yes, it's a cliché phrase, but true. Just as those old barn billboards are fading into obscurity because the highway now takes all the traffic away from those rustic back roads, you need to keep up to compete.

In order to successfully promote online, you must continually be adding to your site, whether it's adding updated articles, trading links with similar businesses, or archiving your monthly newsletter online, it takes an ongoing effort. Sure, you might be able to do these things yourself. However, sometimes you need to decide when to concentrate on what you do best, which is run your business and let a web designer or internet marketer do what they do best, which is promote your site.

It's also essential that you promote your web site off-line as well. It takes everything from putting your web address on your business card to sharing the address in conversation, to including it on any and all advertising you do.

Remember the popcorn vendor I mentioned earlier? This gentleman also spends a great deal of time and effort promoting his site off-line. He literally stands on the street corner to do it! You may have seen his tent on Route 340 heading into Virginia towards Maryland. He's out there EVERY weekend. He runs another tent on Route 15 in Maryland and has a storefront in Frederick, MD. So, he's obviously busy promoting his business off-line! His web site address is www.catotinkettlekorn.com. You should check it out. His popcorn is delicious and I'm told the kettlekorn is pretty healthy, too! See, I just promoted him! It takes all kinds of promotion, from paid advertising to word of mouth, to make a business a success.

I don't need a professional web site designer, my uncle's friend knows some html.

While that ultimate decision is up to you, it's important to keep in mind that your web site is an extension of your business. It should appear just as professional as your business. It should also be targeted towards your specific audi-

ence just as any printed marketing collateral should be. While little animated kitties are cute, do they help sell your product or service? Maybe they do if your business is related to animals, but otherwise, probably not. Using professional graphics is very important. There's a trick to saving graphics for the web to allow for a nice looking image, while still providing something that is quick to download. Will the graphics match any off-line imagery used? Can someone who knows a little HTML create them, as well? Maybe, but not always.

In this day and age, in order to compete, every marketing tool at your disposal should be used to its fullest potential. It takes more than HTML to create a successful web site. A successful web site takes not only a coder who knows HTML, XHTML, PHP, CSS and a bunch of other acronyms, but a graphic designer and a marketing expert to pull it all together. The most successful sites will blend seamlessly with your off-line materials.

My market is local, I don't need or want to sell to the world.

Just because your market is small or local doesn't mean a web site can't work for you. It's all in how the search engine promotion is handled. You can certainly gear your site towards a region as well as a specific target audience. Again, the fear that you'll be overwhelmed with inappro-

priate orders is groundless.

I can't afford a web site.

Yes, a professionally designed web site isn't necessarily cheap. However, it doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg either. It most definitely should be planned into your marketing budget as any other marketing tool would be. Today, a web site is as necessary as a business card, brochure or a yellow pages ad. In fact, it may be becoming more so. You can certainly share much more information about your products and services on a web site than a yellow pages ad can. In some locations, a web site can even be cheaper than a phone book ad!

By being able to quickly share information like testimonials from satisfied clients, your history or philosophy, experience, a showcase of your work, contact information, your prices, or your personnel, half the job of selling can be done for you, online.

It then just becomes a matter of how can you afford NOT to have a web site?

Terry Kent is owner and operator of The Write Market, LLC, a web design firm. The Write Market (TWM) specializes in growing existing businesses' online presence. She can be reached at 304-876-2320 or terry@thewritemarket.com

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