

# Small Business Success

December, 2010



**Loans  
Advice  
Support**



**Seasons  
Greetings**



## The Challenge 4 Business

*In the month of November, Community Futures Newsask hosted an online community project competition... and the winner is: The Nature Trails Volunteer Group with the project, "Nature Trails Rejuvenation (Kipabiskau)".*

**Check out our website and click on the "Voting Has Ended" link to read all about the submissions.** Each project submitted a 500 word (or less) essay by Nov 1 and then each week for the following 3 weeks the groups each submitted their next challenge: a Facebook link; a YouTube video; written copy for a radio ad.

- \$3,000.00 Nature Trails Volunteer Group – Nature Trails Rejuvenation (Kipabiskau) – 925 votes.
- \$2,000.00 SK Regional Gateway – In the Comfort of our Food – Comfort Food from Around the World. – 351 votes.
- \$1,000.00 Town of Hudson Bay – Marketing Strategy. – 75 votes.
- \$500.00 Northeast Newcomer Service – Driving for Change. – 47 votes

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## Video Conferences Available at the Newsask Office

*Newsask is committed to offering citizens in the region video conference training, seminars and workshops that are made available through the Saskatchewan Video Conference Network. There are many sponsoring entities including: Canada Business Infosource, Women Entrepreneurs, Canada Revenue Agency, and the Province of Saskatchewan. An amazing variety of video conferences are available to anyone interested but they must register in advance with the Community Futures Office. Learn from professional and experienced presenters in a casual classroom environment, via video-conference to our boardroom here in Tisdale. There is a \$10.00 charge for each session to cover costs and any handouts. The facilities are also available to community groups for a reasonable rental fee.*

*Newsask is utilizing a Facebook page to list the Video Conferences available, the dates and a short description. To access the information, log onto Facebook and search for "Community Futures Newsask."*

*For information or to register, contact our office at 306-873-4449 OR 1-888-586-9855.  
E-mail: [admin@newsaskcfdc.ca](mailto:admin@newsaskcfdc.ca) or checkout the website at [www.newsaskcfdc.ca](http://www.newsaskcfdc.ca)*

2-Dec	12:00-1:00	The Business Marketing & Sales Mind - Dump Series Part 3	SVCN
7-Dec	10:00-12:00	Your Small Business Website - How to Write for the Web	C/MBSC
7-Dec	12:00-2:00	Strategic Marketing	SVCN
8-Dec	12:00-2:00	Microsoft Office Word 2007 - Tips for Small Business	C/MBSC
8-Dec	2:30-4:30	Microsoft Office Excel 2007 - Tips for Small Business	C/MBSC
9-Dec	2:00-4:00	PowerPoint 2007-Tips for Powerful Professional Presentations	C/MBSC
9-Dec	12:00-2:00	Strategic Marketing	SVCN
14-Dec	1:00-3:00	Introduction to Income Statements	C/MBSC
15-Dec	1:30-4:30	CRA-Small Business Tax Information Workshop	C/MBSC
16-Dec	10:00-12:30	Tax Issues for Small Business (Meyers Norris Penny)	MNP

16-Dec	1:00-2:00	Selling your Product or Service to the Government of Canada	C/MBSC
4-Jan	1:00-4:00	Are You Ready to Be an Entrepreneur?	C/MBSC
6-Jan	12:00-1:00	Saskatchewan Provincial Sales Tax (PST) Seminar	SVCN
6-Jan	1:00-3:00	Pricing Through the Supply Chain	C/MBSC
6-Jan	6:00-8:00	Business Opportunities & Ideas - Choosing the Right One	C/MBSC
10-Jan	10:00-12:00	Intuitive Sales Part 1: Relationship Based Sales & Improve Communication	C/MBSC
11-Jan	2:00-4:00	Developing Proposals	C/MBSC
12-Jan	1:00-4:00	Your Business Plan - Getting Started	C/MBSC
13-Jan	10:00-12:00	Knowledge Building Cluster, Marketing part 1 - Marketing Basics	C/MBSC
13-Jan	12:00-2:00	knowledge Building Cluster, Marketing part 2 - Marketing Research	C/MBSC
14-Jan	10:00-12:00	Knowledge Building Cluster, Marketing part 3 - Advertising and Promotion	C/MBSC

Check out **Community Futures Newsask on Facebook** to access detailed descriptions of our workshops & seminars.



## Coming Events

*December 16 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: "Tax Issues For Small Business" facilitated by an accounting professional from Meyers Norris Penny. \$10.00 per person. Seating is limited. Register soon.*

**Check out our website and click on the "Events" link for more information**

Learn what expenses are considered legitimate for your business and exactly what type of documentation you will need to back up your claim.

## Tips for Hiring a Great Salesperson The Right Fit That Will Make or Break Your Business

*Your sales staff is a key ingredient to growing your business. Without great people selling your product or service, you're dead in the water. But good sales people are hard to find, and many small business owners are tempted to simply fill the space with anyone willing to work, instead of being patient and finding the person who will be the best fit. This is a critical and costly mistake, as more often than not, making a quick and desperate hire will cost you far more than waiting to find the right person. A few months without a sales person is costly, but not as costly as hiring, firing and retraining as a result of a bad hire. Don't settle for an immediate fix – be willing to look at what's best for your business in the long term. Here are some things to consider when you're looking to hire your next sales person.*

### Understand what you need.

Before you hire, outline the needs of your business and of this specific position. Decide what area of expertise the candidate should have as well as the level of education and experience needed. Do you need someone with skill selling your specific product or with specific industry knowledge, or can you hire someone with excellent sales skills and teach them how to sell your product and learn about your industry? Where can you compromise? Where should you not?

### Advertise in the right places.

Attracting the right talent requires fishing in the right pond. Using online networks that gather sales resumes specifically will generate more qualified candidates than a general website. There are several sales/marketing organizations that have local chapters – check if there's one in your town and post your ad with them. Decide if you want to keep your job open to local candidates only, or whether you want to open it up nationally. Targeted advertising will get you a better fit than casting a wide net.

### **Know your compensation limits.**

Decide on a compensation package before you interview. Include things like salary or commission or a combination of the two, compensated time off, hours per week, health insurance, pension plan, and bonus incentive. Other perks to consider are reimbursement for further education or a company vehicle. Sales people are accustomed to negotiating, and they'll likely want to bargain over compensation. Know how far you are willing to stretch. Too many business owners have been sweet-talked into hiring someone who promised the world and asked for compensation to match their claims, only to be stuck paying too much for someone who didn't deliver.

### **Take the time to properly evaluate applications and resumes.**

Separate your applications into three categories. Those that meet all the qualifications (the yes pile), those that meet most of the qualifications but may have potential (the maybe pile) and candidates who meet few or none of the qualifications (the no pile). It's obvious you get rid of the "no" pile. If you have enough applications in the "yes" pile, get on with the interview process and come back to the "maybe" pile only if none of your "yes's" turn into a hire. If you don't have enough "yes's", go to the "maybe" pile and review them again. Which ones are really close but are only missing one or two things? Are the things missing, things that can be easily taught? Select some from this pile to add to your interview list.

### **Be strategic in your interview.**

It can be helpful to have an interview team or panel consisting of the owner or manager and the person they will work with or under. Try to stay away from the standard, expected interview questions (what are your strengths and weaknesses, what do you feel you have to contribute to our company, etc.). Take time to come up with questions that will provide answers to the things you really care about. How will they fit in with your current culture and team? Do they fit with the company's ethics and values? What sales experiences have they enjoyed in the past, and what sales experiences have been difficult for them, and why? How have past experiences prepared them for this role? What do they still need to learn? Get your interview team involved - have them contribute some questions as well. Be creative as this is your opportunity to find a good fit. Be sure to check references carefully.



### **Give it a day.**

Try not to make a decision the day of the interview. Often, sleeping on that decision brings about greater clarity the next day. Also, consult with others on the panel and make sure you've taken everything in to consideration. Meeting the following day means everyone's had a chance to think about and reflect on their interview experiences, and they may in fact come to different conclusions.

### **Make a clean, concise offer.**

If you believe you've found the right person, invite them back to make them an offer outlining all the elements of employment. Be clear about all aspects – hours, expectations, compensation, etc. Make sure the person understands the terms to which they are agreeing. Always include a probation period. Have a clear outline of what this looks like: timeline, how the person will be evaluated, and what conditions must be met in order for employment to continue. Have these terms in writing in the form of an employment agreement, and have the person sign it. Allow them some time to think about the offer if they need to, but make sure you give them a deadline so that you can move on if they turn you down. Hiring a sales person is an important part of your business plan, and hiring the right person can make or break your ability to meet your business goals. Be smart, be creative, be patient, and you'll find the best fit for your business.

## Dealing With Spyware

*Most people who use a computer have accepted the fact that spyware and/or malware are annoyances we just have to deal with. For many years now, marketing companies have been taking advantage of computer users by writing programs and sneaking them into software downloads, forcing people to view advertisements. Not only are users forced to view these advertisements, they actually slow down the way computers run, causing screens to freeze up, or rebooting suddenly for no apparent reason (most often when you're in the middle of an important project you've been working on for 3 hours and forgot to save!). Paul H. Gil, professional project manager, certified computer instructor and Canadian internet guru says, "Spyware is now the single largest problem facing internet users today. These rogue programs have become so widespread and so infectious, their volume far outstrips spam and regular viruses. Because the spyware problem has mutated so much, spyware is now described as part of a much larger category of rogue software called 'malware' (malicious software programs)."*

### **The most common ways that malware affects your computer are:**

1. Stealing your personal information and address book (identity theft and keystroke-logging).
2. Flooding your browser with pop-up advertising.
3. Spamming your inbox with advertising email.
4. Slowing down your connection.
5. Hijacking your browser and redirecting you to an advertising or a phishing-con web page.
6. Using your computer as a secret server to broadcast pornography files.
7. Slowing down or crashing your computer.

According to Gil, spyware/malware programs are authored by clever programmers, and then delivered to your computer through covert Internet installs. "Usually, malware will piggyback on innocent-looking web page components and otherwise-benign software such as game demos, MP3 players, search toolbars, software, free subscriptions, and other things you download from the web." says Gil. Subscribing to online services is especially bad for getting malware. In particular, whenever you sign up for a so-called "free" service or install new software, you must accept an "end user license agreement" (EULA). The fine print of the EULA will often include the phrase "the vendor is allowed to install third-party software on your computer". Since most users don't bother to read this EULA fine print, they naively click "accept", and install malware.

Gill offers the following advice for getting rid of spyware from your computer.

### **Install two or three different anti-spyware programs ("spyware cleaners") on your computer, and update their definition lists regularly.**

Because every anti-spyware cleaner is imperfect, it is necessary to use combinations of these programs to catch the greatest breadth of malware. Also, the anti-spyware manufacturers regularly add new entries to their "definition" lists, just like anti-virus software. Make sure to keep your spyware cleaners updated with these lists.

### **Build a weekly habit of "scan and detect".**

Like cleaning house, this should be done every few days. At the very least, this should be done whenever you install new software. Many anti-spyware programs can be set to automatically perform scan-and-detect nightly.



## Carefully read every EULA (end user license agreement) before clicking "accept".

If you see the phrase "3rd-party software may be installed", make sure to follow the software install with a spyware cleaning.

## Educate yourself on the latest strains of malware.

In particular, start visiting anti-spyware sites, and update yourself on the latest malicious programs. Also, educate your staff on how spyware is contracted and create policies around what they can and cannot download on workplace computers.

As a business owner, the result of not understanding and being vigilant against spyware could be disastrous. Use these strategies to protect your business from a painful and costly computer failure.

## Using Articles to Increase Traffic to Your Website

*So you've created a business website. It looks really great – simple, clean, crisp, well optimized – but these days, just having a great looking website isn't enough. You've got to get customers coming back again and again and a traditional, static website just won't get it done. Many businesses are using social media to get people to their websites more regularly; sending out special offers or information on Twitter or using Facebook to draw people to the website with offers or events. Another way to increase traffic and visitors to your website is to provide information in the form of articles on your website. You are an expert in your industry – at least your customers think you are – and you have information they will find valuable. If you keep providing useful information, they'll keep coming back.*

If you haven't already done so, you should be keeping an email database of your customers. Email is still an effective way to get messages out to customers. Send out an email letting your customers know they can find valuable tips and tools on your website. They'll likely visit the first time just out of curiosity, but if they like what they see, they'll come back again. Think you have nothing to say? Here are some ideas.

- Retail hot tub store: 10 Tips to Keeping Your Hot Tub in Tip Top Shape
- Cabinet shop: 5 Ways to Increase Your Cupboard Storage Space
- Landscaping service: How to Keep Your Lawn Healthy Over the Winter
- Accounting services: 7 Things You Should Do to Decrease Your Accounting Costs
- Day care: 3 Ways To Prevent Colds and Flus for Your Kids
- Septic service: 5 Tips to Staying Out of Septic Trouble
- Financial advisor: Top 10 Things You Should Know When Choosing a Financial Advisor
- Chiropractor: How to Keep Your Back Healthy Between Appointments
- Retail jewelry store: How to Safely Clean Your Jewelry at Home

You get the gist. You can probably come up with dozens of topics. The keys to success are making the information practical and useful to your customers, keeping it short enough to read in just a few minutes, and keeping your product or service top of mind. Also, archive the articles so people can go back and find older ones, or send their friends to your website, so that when Joe is talking to Bruce three months from now about his septic tank woes, Bruce can tell him about the great article on your website. Now that you've enticed them to visit your website, make sure you have some kind of call to action that they can respond to. A special deal, an event you'd like them to attend, a two-for-one offer, etc. Make it big and noticeable so they can't miss it when they go to your website. Make it easy for them to respond. Work with a web designer to ensure the articles are presented in a way that's easy for customers to access and that is pleasing to the eye. Often an introductory sentence or paragraph and link to the rest of the article can be an effective way to present your information without taking up too much space on your web page.

Some additional ways to create value for your customers:

- Put links at the end of your article to other interesting and related sites
- Provide an incentive at the end of the article that will encourage customers to take advantage of the offer on your website (e.g. 10% off if you order today, bring in this coupon to get 2 for 1)
- Put a teaser for next week's or month's article (Visit us next Friday for 5 Tips to.....)

You don't need an English degree to write a simple article like this, however, if writing isn't your strong suit, don't hesitate to enlist the help of others who find writing easy. Perhaps your admin assistant is great with words, or one of your sales people has writing experience. Get them to read your efforts and offer suggestions, or even ask them to write the article for you. Don't let a lack of expertise in this area prevent you from using this great marketing tool.



Do a bit of research and find some websites that use articles to attract traffic to their site and learn from them. This is a relatively easy way to make your website more interactive and get people to engage with your business.



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