

Small Business Success

August, 2011



Community Futures Newsask



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 or checkout the website at www.newsaskcfdc.ca

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9-Aug	12:00-3:00	CRA- Small Business Tax Information Workshop	C/MBSC
10-Aug	2:00-4:00	Les réseaux sociaux bases sur la géolocalisation	C/MBSC
16-Aug	12:00-3:00	Your Business Plan- Getting Started	C/MBSC
17-Aug	9:00-12:00	CRA- Payroll Information Seminar	C/MBSC
22-Aug	9:00-11:00	Knowledge Building Cluster, Marketing Part 1- Marketing Basics	C/MBSC
22-Aug	11:00-1:00	Knowledge Building Cluster, Marketing Part 2- Marketing Research	C/MBSC
23-Aug	9:00-11:00	Knowledge Building Cluster, Marketing Part 3- Advertising and Promotion	C/MBSC
23-Aug	11:00-1:00	Knowledge Building Cluster, Marketing Part 4- Developing a Marketing Plan	C/MBSC
24-Aug	12:00-3:30	CBSA Customs Workshop	C/MBSC
30-Aug	12:00-2:00	Business Opportunities and Ideas- Choosing the Right One!	C/MBSC
31-Aug	12:00-3:00	Your Business Plan- The Home Stretch: Operations and Financial Summary	C/MBSC
1-Sep	4:30-8:30pm	Writing Clear Job Descriptions	C/MBSC
6-Sep	9:00-12:00	Cash Flow is King- Cash Flow & Financial Ratios	C/MBSC
6-Sep	1:00-2:00	LinkedIn for Business	C/MBSC
14-Sep	9:30-12:30	GST/HST Seminar- New HST Rules and Information Seminar for New Registrants	C/MBSC
14-Sep	1:00-2:30	PST: An Introduction to Provincial Tax	C/MBSC
15-Sep	1:00-3:00	Branding Basics	C/MBSC

20-Sep	9:00-11:00	Business Opportunities and Ideas- Choosing the Right One!	C/MBSC
20-Sep	12:00-2:00	The Basics of Exporting	C/MBSC
22-Sep	7:15-3:15pm	Managing Workplace Violence	C/MBSC
27-Sep	12:00-3:00	Are You Ready to Be an Entrepreneur?	C/MBSC

Check out Community Futures Newsask on [Facebook](#) to access detailed descriptions of our workshops & seminars.



3 Minute Impact Movies for Marketing

This past week, Newsask had an opportunity to watch a webinar by a company called AngelVision. This is what they told us...

*People remember 20% of what they hear
 60% of what they see*

A three minute "Impact message" is optimum time to get information out to convince people that they need what you sell. Vocal inflection can be incorporated into a movie but not an email message or newsletter article. (The strongest message is less than 3.5 minutes.)

They told us

- 87% of people have researched a product online before they make a purchase
- 84% have viewed an online movie.

So.... make yourself a 3 minute movie! [They have a sample at www.ImpactMovies.com]

Present your information:

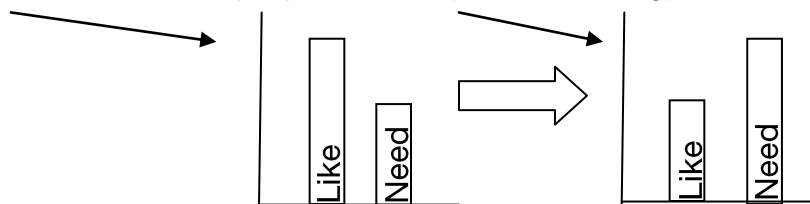
- What are the needs of the prospective client
- What's your solution

So that people can understand what you do and what you offer.

Start with what people LIKE..... move to what people NEED (Neuromarketing)

INCLUDE

- Photos
- Audio
- Graphics
- Text



Your video/movie should lead customers to

1. Listen
2. Understand
3. Forward the movie to others (viral effect). Add a note like: "If you think our services might be useful to others, please forward this link to them".

How do you get prospective customers to watch your movie?

Send an email identifying your 3 minute movie (if you tell people it is short, they may go to it more readily) and provide a weblink for them to watch it.

Highlight the link in a newsletter

List the link on your brochures

Leave a voice message with the web address of your movie link

Place a "click here" button in the signature line of emails

Put it on Facebook and other social media

Place on message boards and blogs

Put in on your website
Run it in a loop at tradeshows – let your movie tell your story
Put it on flash drives or CD's to hand out

There are companies like AngelVision that make videos for a fee but you can use YouTube FREE. Consider what a short movie might do to help marketing for your business. If you have a computer and want to try a simple home-made version, just access the information about Windows Movie Maker on our website at: <http://www.newsaskcfdc.ca/FacebookYouTube.html> Then upload it to YouTube. You can also access this by clicking on our website at www.newsaskcfdc.ca, then clicking on Challenge 4 Communities (on the left), then scroll to the bottom and click on “Click here for help to create a Facebook page or YouTube video”

Blogging for Business

Does your Small Business Need a Blog?

Blogging has become a social media business tool that has far-reaching effects, but will your business benefit from having one? Many businesses do it incorrectly, and often for the wrong reasons. A blog should have a clear focus, goals, and actionable metrics. You should know why you are writing the blog, and understand the blog's audience. Here are a few of the reasons your business might consider having a blog.

This article provided in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

Connecting with Customers

Blogs can be an informal, effective way to communicate with your potential and current customers. They allow you to position yourself as a trusted resource in your industry by addressing your customers' needs, desires, questions, or concerns.

Engaging Employees

Blogs can be a vehicle through which your employees share and contribute information. When employees are engaged in contributing to your company through social media strategies, they are invested in your success. A blog is also a good way for potential employees to get to know your company and determine if they might want to work for you.

Success with SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Blogs can be a great way to attract search engine attention and bring traffic to your web site. Your blog posts, and any user-submitted comments, are likely to contain keywords and phrases that will help you achieve better ranking in the search engines, and more traffic to your site translates to more potential business.

Exemplifying expertise

Blogging is one of the most critical social media activities for service providers. Many service-based businesses thrive by creating great content that sets them apart from the crowd. If you can continually demonstrate that you're an industry leader, that you have something special or unique to contribute, and that your conversations are interesting and informative, you'll find people returning again and again to hear what you have to say.

To Blog or Not to Blog - The Checklist

While blogs can provide the benefits mentioned above, they do require regular work and maintenance. People who read blogs have no patience for static sites and will strike your blog off their list pretty quickly if they're not feeling engaged by new and interesting content. So, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are you a decent writer and do you have the interest and capacity to regularly write unique and revolutionary content?
- Do you have a website that will support the blog, technically?
- Do you have time to read and respond to the interactions generated by your blog?
- Do you have the time, interest and energy to keep it up to date on a regular schedule?
- Does your website have a clear SEO (Search Engine Optimization) strategy and/or the need for SEO?
- Do you have a clear picture of who your blog audience is, and how to speak to them in a way that will engage and interest them?
- Will your blog be something you look forward to doing, or just another chore on your "to do" list?
Whether you're just going to start posting some company news, or plan on becoming a recognized expert in your industry, blogging can be a great way to market your business and build a connection with your customers, stakeholders and your community.



Tips for Writing a Professional Bio

I've never met a person who loves writing bios. Not many people are comfortable talking about themselves. In fact, for some people, the thought of writing their own bio can be paralyzing. How do you create credibility without sounding pompous? Entrepreneurs in particular are more interested in getting out there and 'doing' something, than talking about it. And yet, whether it's on a website, a trade show program, a speaker's bureau, or a newspaper article, most small business owners at some point will need to write their bio. Here are some quick tips for making a daunting task more manageable.

This article provided in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

Less is More

Keep it short. Remember this simple rule:

Bio = short. Biography = long.

If you've been asked for a biography, you may be required to write something more detailed, however, a bio should be limited to three or four sentences. If it's too long people won't read it.

Focus on Achievements

A bio is not a resume highlighting all your skills and experience. The purpose of a bio is to demonstrate your professional credibility, and people see credibility in terms of what you've done - not what you are capable of doing. What are some key milestones you've reached with your business? Specific awards or achievements you can point to? Focus on things that you have DONE.

Maintain Integrity

Your bio is a reflection of you. Make sure it represents you accurately. If you have a super outgoing, gregarious personality with lots of flair, don't write a bio that makes you sound flat and boring. If you're a non-nonsense, down-to-earth person, don't write a bunch of pretentious fluff. When people read your bio, they should get a strong sense of who you are. People often ask whether it's OK to include personal information such as hobbies, family status and pets. This really depends on the type of publication you're writing the bio for. If it's for your website, stick to business. If you're the guest speaker at a local charity event and your bio is going in the program, it may be appropriate.

Understand your Audience

Your bio is a marketing piece. Just like any other marketing material, understanding your audience is the key to making it effective. A bio for an industry-specific business conference, for example, might have a different flavour than one in your local newspaper. Tailor your bio to the industry. If you're a tradesperson, your bio may feel different than if you're a lawyer or an accountant.

Bio Key Points

Typically, most bios include:

- Current job, business or professional experience
- Publications or presentations you have completed
- Professional memberships you currently hold
- Awards, honors and certifications you have received
- What you're particularly good at

You can personalize your bio by including elements such as a photograph, your educational background, quotes or testimonials from clients, and links to examples of your work.

Always Write in Third Person

Your bio should sound as though someone else is talking about you. Instead of writing "I am" and "I graduated", you write "Jane Smith is" and "She graduated." Use your full name (first and last) the first time. After that, it's up to you whether to refer to yourself by your full name, just your first name, or just your last name.

Here are two examples of strong bios. Both Mike and Tom are from [Blue Beetle Books](#). The company's style is energetic and casual, and reflects the personalities of the principles.

Mike Wicks is an award-winning writer who has worked for seven major international publishers in a variety of roles. In the U.K. he was a divisional head at Random House and held the title of managing director of a specialist publishing house. He's ghostwritten or collaborated on several books for clients and has written for some pretty skookum magazines. When it comes to publishing, he has second sight; he just knows what will work and his clients love him for it.

Tom Spetter is our head designer and production manager; the art guy with a great deal of vision. He may be calm, but the creativity and passion just smolders away quietly and comes out in his truly amazing work. Tom's an award winning illustrator, a highly accomplished web designer and CMS expert. His greatest asset is his ability to listen to clients and come back to them with artwork that seems to have been extracted sub-consciously from them.

Writing a bio doesn't have to be a daunting task. Follow these simple tips and you'll be establishing your credibility in a powerful way.

Lessons from Canada's Top 100 Employers

Recently, the company I work for asked me to look into applying for the prestigious "Canada's Top 100 Employers" award. I thought it would be an easy exercise - simply fill in the application, show how great our company is, and hope for the best. What I learned surprised me. This is a tough competition with high standards. I also learned what top Employers are doing for their employees, and why they're considered top Employers. I saw immediately that it would take us 2-3 years of implementing key strategies before our company was ready to compete with others in this league. While your small business may not be in a place to apply for this particular award, it may interest you to know how you can work towards becoming the kind of company that does. These are solid strategies that can help you grow your business now. Here are a few of the things Top 100 Employers do.

This article provided in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

Communication and action - Top 100 Employers are in touch with their employees and their customers so that they have a good sense of their own scorecard. They regularly ask their employees how they're doing in areas like work culture, commitment to core values, compensation, and benefits. They not only ask the questions, but respond to the answers in positive, proactive ways. They also survey their customers regularly so they know where they stand and how they can improve their service and offerings. *How often do you touch base with your*

employees on things that matter to them? Are you responsive to what they tell you? Do you know what your customers think of you, and how you can improve service?

Benefits - Top 100 Employers understand how important benefits are to their employees. Benefits are a major consideration for job seekers when they are deciding on which company they want to work for. It is often equal in weight to compensation. Dental work, prescriptions, eye glasses, massage, physiotherapy and other medical procedures are expensive, and having coverage through work is a big bonus. Some Top 100 Employers even pay 100 per cent of the employee portion of the benefits. Moving forward, benefits will continue to be a major factor in hiring and retaining employees. *Don't assume that providing benefits to employees is cost-prohibitive. Chambers of Commerce in every city have plans they offer to their members at extremely reasonable rates, so even one-and two-employee businesses can afford to offer benefits.*

Vacation - according to my research, three weeks is the new standard for employee holidays. Every Top 100 Employer I researched offered three weeks as a starting allocation for holidays. In the past, two weeks was the accepted number of weeks paid holidays an employee could expect to receive in his or her first three to five years with a company. As we learn more about wellness, stress, and productivity, it's becoming clear that two weeks is simply not enough time for people to fully recharge during a long year of work. *This is one strategy that's not too difficult to implement, regardless of the size of your business, but I guarantee it will make a big difference to your employees and your capacity to retain them.*

Wellness programs - Top 100 Employers are recognizing the connection between wellness and productivity. Providing opportunities to their employees to stay well reduces absenteeism, increases energy, and improves productivity. Simple things like offering fitness subsidies, on-site fitness equipment, or involvement on company sports teams; providing healthy snacks for employees; ensuring work spaces are ergonomic, comfortable and bright; allowing for appropriate sick time; and providing stress management workshops are all ways employers can assist employees in staying healthy, happy, and motivated. Are there small ways you can begin acknowledging this important connection with your employees?

Employee Engagement - Top 100 Employers engage their employees regularly through performance reviews, 360 Degree Feedback, satisfaction surveys, and employee development plans. Employees feel connected, committed and engaged with employers they feel care about them and their goals. They want feedback on their performance. They want to be acknowledged when they've done a good job, and be offered positive, constructive feedback when their work isn't up to snuff. They also want to grow and develop in their careers and in your company. Most aren't happy to stay static in one position or role forever. *Are you looking around you to see where people are best suited within your company? Do you provide regular opportunities for performance-based feedback? Do you provide opportunities for people to take on new challenges and grow with you and your business?*



Corporate Social Responsibility - Top 100 Employers are actively involved in supporting their communities - both locally and internationally. Employees want to be part of a company that cares and reaches out, and where they feel they are part of that effort. *Does your business give back in some way to your community - either locally or abroad? Are your employees involved in your outreach efforts and do they feel connected to what you're doing?*



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