

Small-business owners should focus on training

Successful entrepreneurs dedicate time and resources to training. The business world is changing all the time. The only way to keep up is to try new things.

A wise business owner realizes that, though we learn from our mistakes, we always want to succeed.

You can help yourself by helping your employees learn new skills, improving existing skills and finding better ways to get the work done based on lifelong learning.

If you value long-term employees, you will invest in training that keeps them growing within their jobs and, in turn, helps you grow the business.

In medium and large firms, employee training is usually handled internally. Entry-level employees are provided with an orientation and receive specific on-the-job-training for their job duties.

Ongoing employee education is necessary at all levels. In the small firm, the training function is often neglected because it adds to overhead expenses. It's a cost some find difficult to justify, so the owner becomes the trainer.

On some topics, the owner is the best person to relay valuable information. In other cases, the owner should consider providing funds to send employees to college classes, seminars or workshops that provide specific information.

Trade associations can

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often help. Trade magazines, books, seminars and conferences can provide an avenue for modestly priced and focused training for industry members.

People are a key factor in joining the capital and physical resources of the company to produce profits. Well-trained and motivated employees can prove to be the difference between success and failure.

And even though it's difficult for the owner to take time to plan for and conduct training, it is the owner's responsibility to ensure that the company's capabilities remain strong. Training helps the company maintain its readiness to respond to the marketplace.

If you want to know more about properly training employees, contact SCORE.

SCORE the "Counselors of America's Small Business Owners" was formed in 1964 as a nonprofit association dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of small businesses. Contact the Savannah chapter at 912-652-4335 or go to www.scoresav.org.

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tips from SCORE

Small-business owners need new accounts

A business cannot survive and prosper without attracting new customers.

Any business, no matter how well it is run, loses customers every year. Not only must these customers be replaced, but if the firm is to grow, additional new customers are essential.

Poor service, unsatisfactory merchandise, price and relocation are all reasons customers no longer frequent your business. Some of these factors you can control; some you can't. It is always in the best interest of your business to continuously plan on how to attract new customers.

Plan to attract new business before you find that your sale numbers have dropped. Here are steps to take to build your business:

Determine the age, income level and tastes of retail customers. Discover business trends, buying patterns and public contracts among your commercial accounts.

Determine how many accounts you want to add in the upcoming quarter.

Your starting point for customer additions is

based upon the percent of customers you lose annually. After accounting for annual sales lost, add the percent of sales gain you hope to achieve in the year ahead. Budget your sales goals quarterly.

Identify prospects for the upcoming quarter.

Commercial customers can be easily identified by trade groups, through notices of public contracts and even here in BiS.

Retail customers are a bit more difficult to identify.

However, you can access Census Bureau data on the Internet and select parameters for your city and state to narrow the customer focus for your market. Visit www.census.gov.

If you want to know more about how to get new accounts, contact SCORE.

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