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Durham Business Times



DBT | THE FACE OF BUSINESS IN DURHAM REGION | "Along with success comes a reputation for wisdom." — Euripides

Scugog Chamber to shine spotlight on accessibility

The Scugog Chamber and Ontario Chamber of Commerce will team up on Nov. 25 to host a workshop at Emmanuel Community Church, 1680 Reach St., beginning with registration at 7:30 a.m.

The workshop aims to help local businesses comply with Ontario's new customer service standards, which take effect Jan. 1, 2012.

The workshop will provide the necessary information and make it easier for business owners and staff, volunteers and contractors to meet the training and other requirements under the new standard. The new standard applies to all people, businesses and organizations that provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other businesses or organizations that have one or more employees.

The customer service standard is one of five that will form part of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

"The workshop will help our members and the community become more aware of and comply with the customer service standard, in order to make their services even more accessible to all of their customers," said Tony Janssen, president of the Scugog chamber.

For more information, call (905) 985-4971, e-mail info@scugogchamber.ca or visit www.scugogchamber.ca.



POWERFUL PANEL John Tory teams up with George Hanus, president and COO, Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance and Derek Holt, Vice President Economics, Scotia Capital at the Durham Economic Prosperity Conference held in November.

PHOTO BY CATHY MINZ

'Economic growth is a win-win'

BY CATHY MINZ

Is a return to prosperity in Durham's future? That was the focus of the third installment of the biennial Durham Economic Prosperity Conference on Friday, November 5. Opinion leaders, business leaders, community leaders and 'heavy-hitters' from some of the region's economic partners took the stage to present their views on various segments of Durham's economy.

Keynote speakers and a panel of experts presented their ideas on how to make Durham Region part of Canada's economic recovery.

Durham's skilled labour force, solid links between educational institutions and business, and solid agricultural base were presented as some of the strengths that will help the region recover from the recent economic downturn.

In part, Durham is at the mercy of U.S. economic recovery but embracing change, investing in new technologies and existing businesses together with making Durham Region a worthy option for new industries to settle here will be key in overcoming the various local hurdles that face the local business community.

"No single company can be successful on its own. This isn't a win-lose proposition. We have to look at economic growth, the economic opportunities today as win-win."

Don Lovisa, president of Durham College, boasted a strong link with the local business community. With a staff and faculty of "one thousand strong" who are active in the community, the college's annual budget of \$130 million is spent locally on contractors and purchases. The college's role in building strategic partnerships is essential. "We work with local businesses to ensure that we can provide them with graduates that have the right skills to meet their needs."

Richard Marceau, provost, University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) spoke about change, sustainability, transportation and climate change. "It's no secret that the road is changing. Successful communities are going to embrace change...and those that don't, don't!"

RECOVERY

'Roadmap to Recovery' was the theme of keynote speaker Jayson Myers' address to the crowd. As president and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME), Canada's largest industry and trade association, Setting the stage for today's reality, Myers explained: "Much has changed since the last Prosperity Conference. We've gone through the deepest financial meltdown and one of the most severe industrial recessions since the 1930s."

Working together is the path to future success. "No single company can be successful on its own," assured Myers. "This isn't a win-lose proposition. We have to look at economic growth, the economic opportunities today as win-win."

Myers told the group that "Canadians are all unique in extremely similar ways. The issues are not that different from community to community especially now as we're beginning to recover from the recession."

Regional and provincial strengths include its skilled labour force, strong agricultur-

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Twenty profitable strategies for 2011



TODD SKINNER

THE GROWTH COACH

Do you ever find yourself asking where did the time go? The end of the year is an extremely busy time; we prepare for all the celebrations, holiday parties, time with family and friends, etc. It is also a time to reflect and assess what we have accomplished (Or Not Accomplished). It is a great time to check our results and re-adjust our goals and strategies for the New Year.

Have “you” made the best of 2010? Did you accomplish all of the goals that you set in the areas of; finances, health, family life, business/career, education/training or personal intentions you set for yourself?

OR in 2010 do you feel more like you are on the business owner treadmill, running really fast but not getting where you want to go as quickly as you would like to get there?

As a business coach, I have always helped entrepreneurs to stop dwelling on the past, stop obsessing about problems, and start focusing on solutions. Now is a great time to review our performance and begin planning for the New Year.

Many of us need to turn off the negative news and turn on our creative business minds. We already know all about the negatives ... but what about the positives? That's right, we need to shift our focus to the positive and start asking ourselves bet-

ter and more empowering questions.

Here are 20 suggestions to think about in order to prepare your business in two main areas, general management and sales/marketing:

MANAGEMENT:

- Recognize that you can be both a caring and demanding owner with your employees ... hold them accountable for results.
- What is the Culture of your organization? Is it one of productivity and growth?
- Use the weak recovery to finally get rid of your sub-performing employees and replace them with higher-caliber employees now available in the marketplace because of downsizing.
 - Cut unnecessary expenses that have grown over the years by identify and correcting areas where your company has gotten fat, lazy and complacent.
 - Outsource certain back-office tasks (payroll, employee benefits, etc.) to specialists.
 - Review financial information more frequently, which will help you make decisions and adapt to the changing marketplace.
 - Ask all employees to help identify and eliminate waste, inefficiencies, and unnecessary costs.
 - Remove the poor business practices/habits that have crept into your business.
 - Stop putting off critical decisions ... take bold action.
 - Learn to be “lean and mean” again like when you first started out.
 - Decide to invest in the growth of yourself and your company with business coaching.

SALES/MARKETING:

- Continually educate your customers, prospects and referral sources why it's in their best interest to do business with you – What is Your Value?
- Take full advantage of on-line marketing where you can easily track your return on investment.
- Focus on serving, delighting and retaining your customers ... keep what you already have!
- Eliminate unprofitable product lines, customers, and territories.
- Analyze your marketing expenditures/strategies and keep the winners and lose the losers...track metrics.
- Reward your superstar salespeople (proven performers) with more territories, customers, prospects, etc.
- Invest in sales coaching & accountability for your salespeople ... a great ROI.
- Ask your customers for more feedback, listen and make adjustments in a timely manner.
- Improve the value and differentiation of your offerings.

No doubt about it, in good times, running a business is much easier ... you are paddling with the current. In challenging times, a smart owner really learns to run a business, make tough decisions and adjustments, take bold actions, and innovate.

Todd Skinner is an award winning trainer, coach and global entrepreneur. Locally, Todd is known as The Growth Coach and Team Leader/CEO at Keller Williams Energy Real Estate. For more information or questions please contact Todd at t.skinner@thegrowthcoach.com

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Social Media | Leveraging it for your business

To friend or not to friend? That is the question

Building business relationships today involves more than a handshake and a business card. It often continues, or even begins, with social media. Instead of a one-off encounter, like-minded folks connect – and stay connected – using Facebook and other social media platforms.

What kind of friends are you looking for?

Using Facebook effectively is about relationships, not numbers. It takes time to build and maintain relationships, so focus on adding relevant contacts rather than friending anyone and everyone. Who do you need to succeed? Clients, colleagues and suppliers should be on your list. So should people who refer you. Add in prospects and other people who can help you.

What about your friends? Your family? On Facebook, it's okay to mix business with pleasure. In fact, family and friends often become clients, and both give referrals.

Dealing with friend requests Some people accept every friend request they receive. They're often reluctant to offend or too busy to screen these individuals. Unless they customize their privacy settings or restrict the content they publish, their personal security and privacy may be vulnerable.

When you receive friend requests, think



SUE SUTCLIFFE

A WEB THAT WORKS

twice before clicking “accept.” Is this someone you know? Can you afford the time to build this relationship? If so,

say yes. If not, wait until you have time to screen them and respond appropriately.

Friend-collectors Consider the motivation behind friend requests. Are they building a database, not a relationship? These “friend-collectors” believe in quantity not quality. They aggressively market themselves by spamming their list. And unless you've changed your account and privacy settings, they're free to exploit your list of friends, as soon as you accept their friend request.

Do I know you? Sometimes, friend requests come from people you don't know or don't recognize. Should you accept them? Friending strangers can be risky. Send a polite thank you, apologizing that you can't place them and asking how you met. If they respond, proceed accordingly. If they don't, they're probably not “friend material.”

Dig into their profile:

- Are all the friends on a man's list beautiful women with no real connection to each other? He may be trophy-collecting, especially if he doesn't live nearby.

- Is the person trying to boost his own reputation by collecting high-octane industry “peers” on his list of friends?

- Is there no picture?

Just click “not now” for these would-be friends.

Psst! Guess what I heard! Be circumspect about your private life. Don't post anything on Facebook you wouldn't want customers to see, and tighten up your account and privacy settings. Remember, a wide-open profile displays personal information like your phone number, religion, sexual preference and relationship status. It shows your children's names and photos — even those embarrassing party pics you're tagged in.

Creating limited lists in Facebook allows you to accept new friends while minimizing the risk. You decide what details you're willing to share, and with whom.

But Facebook's account and privacy settings don't confer blanket protection. Use common sense and discretion with the information you share. After all, not every friend is a good friend.

Should you include a quick, personal note when friending someone?

Always. It's only polite. Besides, how many times have you forgotten a new acquaintance's name before saying goodbye? A personal note makes your name and how you met more memorable. Try something like, “It was nice meeting you at the chamber of commerce the other day.”

What about inappropriate posts by friends and family?

You can keep their embarrassing posts, pictures and invitations from showing up on your wall by keeping “wild ones” on a limited list and adjusting your privacy settings so they can't post on your wall.

Can I create a personal profile and a business profile?

Multiple profiles sounds like a good idea, but Facebook doesn't allow it. You can, however, create a business page and a personal profile.

If I unfriend people, will they find out?

They may notice if they want to contact you, if your posts stop arriving, or if Facebook recommends you as a friend.

What's the difference between hiding, unfriending and blocking?

Hiding — Their posts do not appear on your wall
Unfriending — They are removed from your friends;
Blocking — They can no longer find you on Facebook