



Connecting Commerce & Community™



“Business in a Bag”

Small Business Assistance Committee

The series is intended to be a series of informal workshops that contribute to the ability of small business members to educate themselves about a variety of topics that can help them to improve their businesses. This is offered as a membership benefit to help attract and retain members for the Chamber.

The focus of the series is to be oriented toward “continuing education” for Chamber members (while open to outsiders), in contrast to the presentations at the Chamber breakfasts, which are typically “lighter” presentations, and oriented toward “professional development”.

Outline of the concept and its principal features follows:

Registration

- Advance registration will be required in order to ensure that presenters will have an acceptable audience for their efforts.
- No fee for Chamber members to attend. A charge for non-members will be considered, but has not been established yet.
- Group size will be limited to 12 (15-20?) and registration is required by 5 business days prior to the event in order to provide incentive for participants to sign up to attend.
 - Group size is limited in recognition of the disruption created by attendees settling in with their lunches and late arrivals.
 - Maximum capacity for the conference room is approximately 30 persons. Limits may be adjusted upwards to recognize this.
- Minimum class size will be set at 6. SBAC members will commit to fill spaces in any undersubscribed sessions.
- Upon registration, prospective attendees will be encouraged to suggest topics or submit questions that the presenter will attempt to answer during the session. This will assist in directing the presenter toward those topics of most interest to the membership.

Schedules

- Targeted objective is to present at least 2 sessions per month.

- In order to explore the best days for the membership, sessions will be rotated from Tuesday through Thursday at the initiation of the program.
 - Each month of sessions will be scheduled for a single day (for example, Tuesday), and the day changed for the next month.
 - After three months of experimentation, scheduling will be reviewed to set a policy for following sessions.
- Sessions will be set for one and one-half hours each, beginning at 11:30 a.m.
 - Presentations will begin no later than 11:45 a.m.
 - Attendees will be encouraged to arrive early in order to avoid disruption.
- Feedback cards will be provided at each session and attendees will be encouraged to complete them in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and the presenters.
- Programs will be identified and scheduled for a “rolling” three months ahead, in order to provide adequate time for promotion.

Program Promotion

- The featured concept for the program will be that attendees will “walk away with 2-3 ideas for making more money.”
 - Presenters will be asked to focus on concisely delivering these concepts in their presentations to ensure the success of the program.
 - Presenters will be asked to provide the Committee with an outline of their presentation in advance of their presentation.
 - A “suggested” outline might include:
 1. Introduction, 11:45 – 12:00
 2. Listing of “points to remember”, 12:00 – 12:10
 3. Elaboration & discussion, 12:10 – 12:40
 4. Recap & review, 12:40 – 12:50
 5. Questions, 12:50 – 1:00
- Chamber promotion will consist of the usual promotion efforts:
 - Posting of the session information in the Weekly Update sent out regularly.
 - Announcement of events coming up in the six weeks at each monthly luncheon and at each Chamber breakfast event.
 - Posting on an “announcement board” shown at each luncheon in the Mini Trade Table section.

- Targeted e-mails sent to the entire membership promoting individual sessions, at least twice prior to the session (one week before and two days before registration close date?).
- Program information will be included in any Chamber mailouts.
- Event schedules will be added to the Chamber website and maintained currently for reference by the membership.
- SBAC will attempt to obtain sponsors for the programs in order to acquire funds to support additional promotion.
- Promotion materials will follow the example established by the Chamber for the “brown bag” promotion, if feasible.

Programs

- Presenters will be asked to commit to two consecutive sessions to allow for follow up on their topics.
- Chamber members will be provided an opportunity to make the presentations, but outside speakers are also acceptable.
 - A promotional program will be established describing presentation opportunities and will be circulated to all members.
 - Chamber members interested in making presentations will be invited to contact the committee with their proposal.
 - The subcommittee for the series will review submissions and attempt to schedule acceptable proposals for an appropriate time slot.
 - Chamber members should expect to have preferential standing over non-members for selection as presenters.
 - Chamber staff will assist the committee in obtaining member presenters by assembling lists of potential speakers for selected topics, when asked to do so by the subcommittee.
- Anticipated topics for the sessions may include:
 - Public Relations for small businesses.
 - Effective advertising alternatives for small businesses.
 - Marketing your business over the Internet.
 - Using graphic art design to promote your business.
 - Networking effectively to increase your marketing.
 - “Guerilla marketing”
 - How to conduct market research for a small business.
 - Legal and accounting issues for small businesses.

- Budgeting and managing your costs.
- “Chamber Tool Box”, how to make effective use of the Chamber resources to enhance your business.
- Contract Issues for small businesses.
- “How to buy a house”