

MINUTES FOR SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE
Monday, March 3, 2003, 11:40 a.m.-12:03 p.m.

Present:

- Peter Cook, Chair
- Katherine Swarts, Secretary
- Trish Wise, Chamber Staff
- Frances Boyette, Chamber Staff
- Nancy Ehrenkranz
- Arnold Goldberg
- Gary Alexander
- Cheryl Wise
- Dick Myers
- Janell Bonner
- Moe Singh

Business:

Business Assistance Program (BAP)

- Peter distributed copies of the proposed Business Assistance Program outline. The program supervises breakfast and luncheon speakers, Brown Bag seminars, and other special programs.
- The next breakfast speaker will be a business coach from Kaman & Associates. This breakfast will be held on April 3. (The March 6 breakfast is Shameless Self-Promotion.)
- Janell proposed a feng shui specialist for the June breakfast speaker; the proposal was accepted, pending formal arrangements. Janell also proposed a professional organizer to speak at the August breakfast or the next available Brown Bag.
- The Committee discussed appropriate topics for breakfast vs. midday programs. Cheryl suggested concentrating on upbeat topics for all breakfast programs.
- The Committee is working on a date for the next disaster preparedness seminar, perhaps in conjunction with the beginning of the 2003 hurricane season.
- The Committee discussed the planning of future Brown Bag series. Dick estimated it would take around four months to finalize a detailed program, after which a new schedule could be distributed every six weeks. The first formal schedule should be ready in early April, shortly after the current Brown Bag series ends.
- The Brown Bag will remain a program largely for Chamber members. One item of future concern is evaluating member response to specific topics. Proper follow-up is essential.
- Trish suggested introducing advance fees for the Brown Bag workshops, to encourage commitment to attendance.

- Committee members suggested various new titles for the Brown Bag series, including “Business in a Bag,” “Chamber Toolbox” (connected to the current orientation Toolbox), and “Small Business Assistance College.”

Market Research

- Nancy brought handouts of the proposed new Member Audit form. The first official Member Audit (a trial run) will be at the March breakfast on Thursday the 6th.
- Trish pointed out that most of the material on the Member Audit draft is already on the forms used by the Ambassador Committee in new member visits. The Committee briefly discussed possibilities for combining the forms.
- Dick pointed out the value of regular face-to-face contact at Chamber events, to interest members in the Committee’s programs. Committee attendance at Chamber events is still a matter of some concern.
- The Committee discussed various possibilities for using the Audit form, including choosing a “brand” color (other than white) for the forms. There was a lengthy discussion on plans and possibilities for a computerized form. Other matters of concern included maximizing response and planning a test run. Nancy will remain in charge of the Member Audit.

Chamber Website

- Cheryl reviewed the list of ongoing website concerns: clarity in links; visual and navigational consistency; and relevance of available information.
- The online member directory, especially the visual layout and the difficulty of locating specific businesses, is still a matter of concern. The Committee also discussed the possibility of adding short business descriptions to the links-and-contact-information pages in the current directory.
- Cheryl will distribute an e-mail to collect website suggestions from Committee members.

Mini Trade Tables (MTT’s)

- The MTT topic for March will be home improvement.
- The MTT subcommittee was not present; discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next SBAC meeting will be at the Chamber office, at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, April 7.