

YOU SPOKE AND WE HEARD

BVP RETAIL SURVEY SUMMARY

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Will you be ready when that "what if" scenario actually happens? *Your roof caves in from all that snow/rain/wind. Your cost for X input (think gas) goes up by 50%, or your supplier switches to payment up front only. Or, the economy is down and you have a rotten sales season, but still have to pay the IRS.*

There are a million reasons you might *suddenly* need a loan or line of credit to keep your business from closing the doors. And I mean today, tomorrow, ASAP. **Do you have the relationship with your banker that will get you that loan quickly?**

We here at the EDC have talked with our friends, our partners (yes they're bankers!) to find out what to do now to prepare for that unexpected need.

• Get to know your banker. Go in now to have a confidential chat about your business plan. You know that plan floating around in your head? Write it down! The EDC has forms.

• Make sure your bank does business lending/ lines of credit.
• Know your credit score (and fix any problems with it now.)
www.annualcreditreport.com or (888) 322-8228

• Keep your **financial statements** and **taxes** for the past 3 years in a file with your **credit report** and **insurance** in a safe, accessible place in case of an emergency.

• Who is your accountant? Yes, it's important! An accountant can help you track profit & loss by category and give insight into what areas you need to make changes to be more profitable.

• What is your personal and business debt?

• What collateral do you have?

• Can you list three unique benefits of your product or

service?

• Who is your target audience?

• Who is your competition?

• How are you marketing your product?

• How will you increase sales to repay a loan?

• How does your pricing compare to your competitors?

• Who is your management team? If any person cannot continue working, who will take over their responsibilities? Having these questions answered and information available *before* an emergency happens will make cleanup that much easier!

Q & A - MARKETING

What's In a Marketing Plan

1) Define your business:

Product or service; Geographic area; Competition & how you differ; Advertising; Competition's advertising; Location or distribution methods.

2) Define your customers:

Age, sex, income, neighborhood; How do they learn about your product/service?; Where they shop, what they read, watch & listen to; What do they value most about your product/service?; What do they like least about your product/service?; Who are prospective customers you're not reaching?

3) Define your plan & budget:

Previous marketing you've used; Methods that have been most effective; Cost compared to sales; Cost per customer; Possible future marketing methods; % profits you can allocate to marketing; Marketing tools you can implement within your budget; How can you test your marketing?; How can you measure results of your marketing?; What marketing tool can you implement today?

You Asked: How do I improve my marketing?

We Answered: Following are two ideas.

1) Become a source of expert information in your field.

How some local businesses are doing this:

a. Develop a website and newsletter with education related to your product or service.

What is a common problem people are looking to solve when purchasing your product? Develop your site to answer their questions, and lead visitors to your product (the solution to their problem). We have members throughout the county who do web design - call for a referral!

Case Study: Terra Firma Cosmetics. Their website www.terrafirmacosmetics.com gives information about the benefits of their natural ingredients, how-to for the newest application techniques, and showcases their products which solve many common cosmetics problems. The site also has a sign-up for their e-mail newsletter which sends articles and specials to their client list.

b. Develop your client list with mailing or e-mail addresses.

Beginners: Have a guestbook and ask clients if they would like to receive your newsletter, special offers or contests.

Advanced: Let your website collect the addresses. Have a signup for a drawing, specials, or more information.

c. Hold a conference.

Case Study: Pacific Gro, maker of organic fish fertilizer, is holding a conference February 20th called Moving the World to Organics. They have a speaker, the editor of Touch the Soil magazine, are partnering with 3 other local organic amendment manufacturers, and have sponsors (including the EDC) for printing, mailing, food, etc.... This one day conference will be \$25 to attend, which will fund next year's conference.

2) Track your return on investment.

What it takes:

a. Add a code. On every coupon you send out or advertisement you run, have an offer your customers have to return

for the discount or special. This can be as easy for them as bringing in a coupon or entering the code as they checkout on your website. Each promotional offer gets a different code so you can track how many sales you actually get from that promotion. What's the best type of advertising to get people into your business?

Your Marketing Tools

- **Press Releases:** Write your own article about your business and any new services and submit it to local newspapers.
- **Fliers -** Try a newspaper insert to get your double-sided flier of info & offers into the paper for a reasonable fee. Call your local papers for circulation and price details.
- **Direct mail or e-mail** using your contact list.
- **Phone book**
- **Magazines**
- **Radio / TV**
- **Telemarketing**
- **PR:** Community Involvement, Event Sponsorship
- **Your Website!**