

YOU SPOKE AND WE HEARD

BVP SURVEY SUMMARY

SPOTLIGHT ON PREPAREDNESS: WINTER IS ON ITS WAY, IS YOUR BUSINESS READY?

Have you completed your Emergency Business Preparedness Plan yet? *If not, you're not alone.* With winter on its way, and there are lots of predictions for severe storms this year so, NOW IS THE TIME!

Save lives and allow your company to resume critical operations within 24 to 48 hours of a serious emergency.

Step 1: Print the Plan. Available online at www.pacifiedc.org. Click the "Business Preparedness Planning" link. If you need a hard-copy, call the office number below. *Start three identical binders, one for home, car, and office.*

Step 2: Employee Contacts. Make copies of the Employee Contact List form and make sure every employee fills one out completely. Insert into binders. If phones are down, you'll need cell #'s and addresses. By simply completing step 2, you now have all your

employee information together!

Step 3: Key Suppliers/Vendors & Key Contacts Forms.

If you can't use the internet, your computer, or your paper files, how will you order needed supplies or contact your bank, utilities, insurance, etc.? For each of your key suppliers and contacts, fill out a form. You'll have all the info you need to place orders and can get back up and running.

You've completed the first 3 crucial steps to getting your business back up and operating after any emergency. Now the next steps are easy!

Next Steps: 4. Business Operations. These forms help you identify: Critical Functions for your businesses survival and all the things necessary to perform those functions, such as Vital Records, Recovery Location, Critical Phone #s, Critical Supplies, and Equipment, Machinery and Vehicles.

5. Office Setup. These forms will help you to list computer equipment, hardware, software, voice, and data communications equipment that you use on a daily basis. If you need to replace anything or make a claim, this info is essential.

6. Event Response Steps. From Biohazards to Tsunamis, this gives step-by-step instructions by type of emergency. Add your assembly location and other company-specific procedures.

7. Disaster Response Checklist. Supplies to have on hand in case of emergency.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Questions Every Business Needs to Ask Itself:

Customer service test - Would you talk to Grandma like that?

Take the five phrases you say all the time and add "Grandma" to the end. If it sounds like something you would say to Grandma, then say it. If not, then don't. How would this sound?

- We're Closed, Grandma.
- Next! Grandma.
- What is this in reference to, Grandma?
- It's our policy, Grandma.

If you wouldn't say it to Grandma, why would you say it to a customer? There are lots of common phrases that irritate customers, and you have no clue until you insert "Grandma" at the end.

Q & A— MARKETING

How Asked:

How can I boost Christmas sales?

We Answered:

Sell Gift Cards for your store. (Much of this applies to Gift Certificates too!)

By selling gift cards you get:

- 1) Cash up front; 2) A new customer (the recipient or the giver); 3) Someone coming into your store again; 4) No cost of goods sold when you sell the card, 5) No cash back. Leave unused balances on the card; 6) About 20% of gift cards are never redeemed, that's 100% profit!

Sell Gift Cards at a discount that can only be redeemed after Christmas.

How many more gift cards would you sell if you sold them at 20% off? **Statistics show that ~20% of gift cards are never redeemed.** So, if you sell your gift cards at a discount, you get more sales and cash up front, plus all the other benefits listed above.

Promote your Gift Cards:

- **For more impulse buying,** use eye-catching displays of cards around the store and at your register(s). If you're using certificates, try colorful fliers instead, picturing a "Sample" certificate.
- Draw attention to your cards in your seasonal advertising.
- Consider attractive packaging or gift wrap for your cards.

Tracking Gift Cards:

There are a couple of different ways to track your gift cards.

- 1) No computer? No problem! You can do this manually in a journal, just like gift certificates. Each card is numbered consecutively, and the balance remaining on the card is written in the journal after each purchase.
- 2) Many retail computer systems track gift card activity for you.
- 3) Use externally tracked gift cards. These are tracked by an outside company through the same system you use for credit cards.

Gift Cards vs. Certificates:

Advantages of Cards include:

- Increased Sales. Cards display better around the store and at the register. Impulse sales increase dramatically.

- Security. Cards have no value until they are activated at the register and/or recorded in your tracking system. Cards also have more tracking and reporting options than certificates, depending on your existing computer point-of-sale system.
- The advantage of Certificates is printing cost - you can print your own. However, if you're ready to try personalized gift cards, printing starts at ~\$1.14-\$1.46 each for 100 cards (price breaks for larger orders).

*Source: American Retail Supply, a Washington company, has a special offer—just for our readers! **Mention the Economic Development Council and your card set-up fee will be waived!** 800-426-5708 or www.americanretailsupply.com*