

HAMILTON COUNTY BUSINESS

August/September 2010

MAGAZINE

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Social Media Marketing

Ed and Nancy Cohee,
Frederick-Talbott Inn

Letter from the Editor/August • September 2010

We are entering our third year with this edition, so let me take this opportunity right up front to thank our advertisers who have made this endeavor possible. We know you have to spend your marketing dollars carefully in this economy. That you choose to spend them here is truly humbling and encouraging. Thank you.

As this venture continues to evolve we are adding a couple of new features this time around. Michelle Sybesma has contributed occasional columns over the past two years and has this burning desire (and considerable ability) to solve various business problems. A brainstorming lunch resulted in a Q&A format we're calling "Michelle's Got It Covered." Her initial online call for questions resulted in some interesting queries and she tackles them on page 8. She will take on new ones in future editions, so join in with your problem. Her email address is at the end of her column.

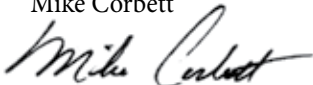
We also debut a feature we're calling "Ear to the Ground." Ever drive by a construction site and wonder what's going up there? I do it all the time so this is an effort to help satisfy my curiosity. This will be a place where you can learn about some of the more interesting economic development projects in the county, large and small, emphasizing ones you probably haven't heard of yet. We can't cover them all but we'll get in as many as we can and you are invited to contribute. Send info and photos to news@hamiltoncountybusiness.com.

Our features include a look at the county's tourism industry, which has done well during the recession. And if you have ever thought about entering that industry by opening a bed and breakfast when you retire, you'll want to read our profile of Ed and Nancy Cohee, who did just that.

Our focus topic is education, and our main story is a review of the effort to establish a Hamilton County-based college. We have a number of fine higher education options in the county, but no college is actually based here. Some people would like to change that. Also, Hamilton Southeastern's superintendent is floating a unique collaboration that would be the first of its kind in the nation. Two promising initiatives, and two reasons it's so great to be living here and contributing to the discussion.

Did I mention we're a darn good marketing vehicle? Hey, I'm the lead sales guy here and my publisher (that's me) would be disappointed in me if I didn't at least bring it up as we approach budgeting season. If your customers and prospects are other business people, this is a great way to reach them. We're local, we're relevant, we're well-read, and we give great customer service. Keep us in mind as you work on that market budget for next year.

Mike Corbett



Editor and Publisher



Mike Corbett/Editor and Publisher



J. Michelle Sybesma

Making the Most of Your Road Time

Strategies for efficient business travel

MGIC:

I manage a sales team with high expectations and vast territories. I know my team works hard but they often run out of time. It seems like they spend too much time in the car or airport. Any suggestions on how to improve efficiency on a minimal budget?
~ Tom Wells, VP & National Sales Manager, Sunburst Chemicals

Tom:

Let's presume the team is already using technology to leverage their time when they can. Despite technological advances, face-time with customers is the only way to close business for many industries.

- Book flights with more in mind than just short-term cost. Consider the on-time statistics of the carrier. www.BTS.gov [Bureau Transportation Statistics] tracks on-time stats that can help you determine if it is worth saving \$20 to fly with a carrier that is late 43% of the time.
- Ensure your team members use their miles rewards toward Airline Mile Clubs. These clubs offer private rooms in larger airports that can serve as an office away from the office. One closed business deal can often justify the membership fee (if miles don't cover it).
- How your sales reps determine driving routes can make or break them. Law enforcement agencies share those challenges in gaining access to persons in need. Take a quick glance at regional layouts on state police websites. This is a great clue to saving resources and ensuring routes are being grouped effectively.
- If the schedule permits and your company will allow it, having a spouse drive can mitigate some of the issues travel causes in personal lives. With a broadband card and a cell phone, you have a virtual office if you have a driver, and

often you can spend an extra day or two on the road which can multiply what you can accomplish with an effective route.

There are many ways to use free/low cost resources to improve travel. Ask your team to brainstorm solutions to reduce their travel stress. You might be surprised by their solutions too.



MGIC:

I run a business that takes people on backpacking adventure vacations. I would like to grow the business, but since I can only hire guides for a week or two here and there, I can't find enough qualified people since they have other employment.

~ Steve Silberberg, Owner, FitPacking

Steve,

Finding a qualified workforce is a surprising challenge for many business owners. Finding someone part-time and flexible is even more difficult. The key is to compare what you can do for them with what they can do for you.

- Match your geographic needs to your calendar and see what matches happen naturally. For example, west coast and winter time may mean you could find a stay-home parent who can pre-arrange a "working vacation" for a couple of weeks. It is a bonus for them to have some extra income, a break in the routine and some extra fitness. A school teacher or grad student, on the other hand, might love a summer opt in. Keep an eye out for fitness-minded majors or coaches.

- Search your client lists for past stars that have already negotiated time away for such trips. An unpaid vacation by their employer might be a consideration.
- Think about partnering with a fellow small business owner who has clients of a similar nature: a Pilates instructor or gym owner who might have the interest and skill, and have the staff to allow them to break away occasionally.

You can teach the skills to those who want to learn. This will diversify your pool and keep your business secure in case of emergencies. I often tell my clients, "Your legacy is not what you leave behind, but rather what lives on when you are not there."

MGIC:

I'm a 23-year-old planning to start my own business, a niche travel guide company to lead cultural, literary, and culinary tours of Europe. I've been doing a lot of research online but I want to reach out to professionals already in the field. How can I find mentors?

~ Kate Wiseman

Having done the research, Kate, you know there are so many things to do in establishing a business. You are right about one thing-relationships matter! At age 23 you will struggle to be taken seriously at first; don't let that stop you. In fact, respect others for their years of wisdom. Start local with face-to-face connections. Look to those who write articles or are considered community leaders in the field. Ask the librarian about their go-to person for topics. Check with culinary institute chefs. Reach out and be candid about your fact-finding. Send a thank you note summarizing what you learned from them. Diversify your connections; ask these mentors who they

know. Don't get too lost in social media; these are good transactions but they don't frequently lead to new and deep relationships. Don't forget about the person responsible for sparking this passion in you. If possible, start there. Good luck, Kate... I am up for Italy.

MGIC

Michelle, any suggestions on managing email? My Outlook inbox often fills up when I am out of the office. How do you stay effective during higher volume times?"

~ Brea Dantin, Senior Client Service Manager, Stifel Nicolaus

Brea:

Inbox management is one of my most frequent questions. Many of us tend to wait until the task is finished and filed to manage the data. I suggest doing the opposite.

- If you tend to keep too much, create a single folder called "Save and Read" and use the search feature of your software to re-find things later. This will eliminate a LOT of backlog. To do this—Right click on the Inbox folder, and select "New Folder". Type "Save and Read." You are done.
- Create a second folder for "Rainy-day reads." Place all fascinating but distracting information there, and schedule a 2 hour review once a month.
- Dropping emails on the task list converts them to to-dos. Drag an email (unless it has an attachment) to the word "Task" on the left and let go. It becomes a task with all the email in the note/history.
- Switching screens to book appointments slowing you down? Highlight the word Calendar and right click...select "Open in new window." See your emails side-by-side your calendar when responding.

Once you have cleaned them all out, send me an email with your latest business challenge: info@skillsconsulting.com.

J. Michelle Sybesma is a business consultant who has spent ten years with Professional Skills Consulting specializing in maximizing business success. More at www.SkillsConsulting.com

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