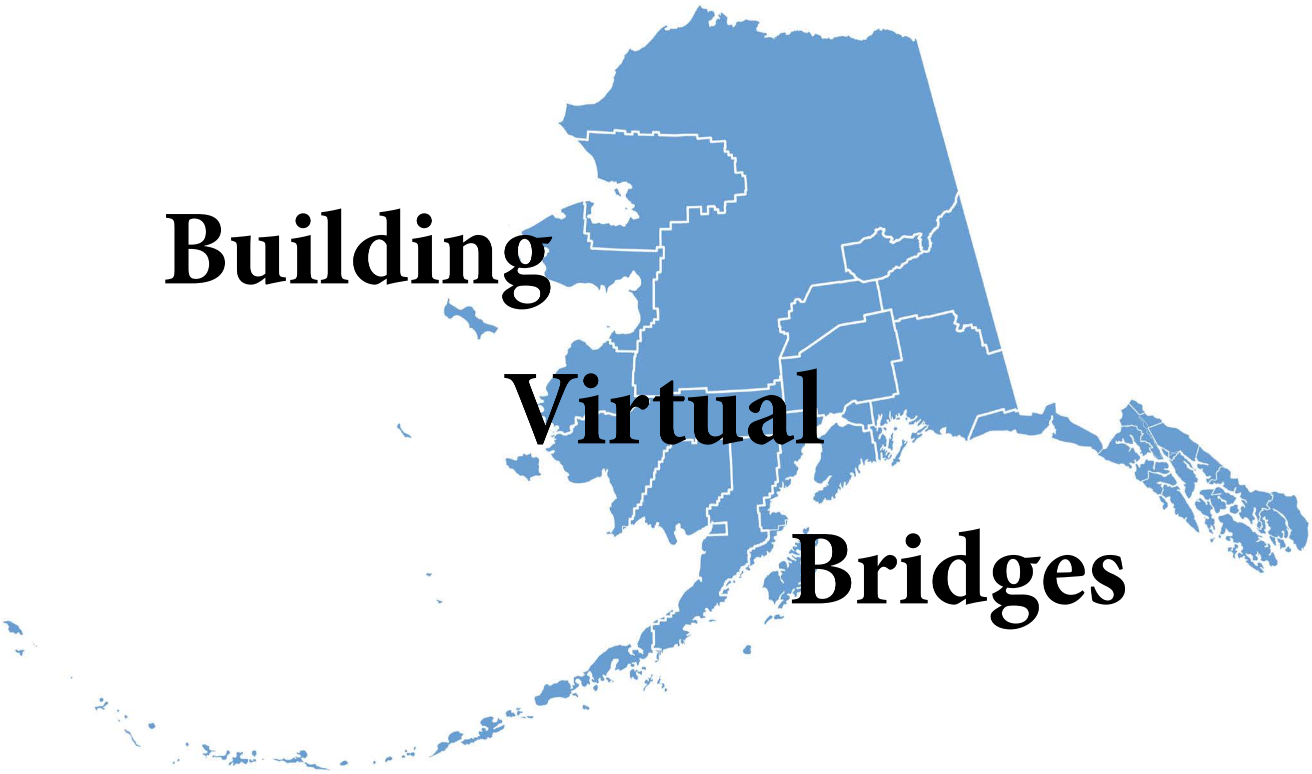
Building Virtual Bridges



A guide to distance delivered microenterprise training with a focus on disadvantaged populations

The University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development (CHD) is one of 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD). CHD is Alaska's only UCEDD. The mission of CHD is to improve the quality of lives for people who experience disabilities and their families, across the life span, through interdisciplinary training, technical assistance, exemplary service development, applied research and dissemination of information.

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Building Virtual Bridges

A guide to distance delivered microenterprise training with a focus on disadvantaged populations

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There were a number of people who assisted with the development of the Industry-Driven Support Model research and demonstration project and this guide. A special thank you to the nine entrepreneur consultants for their contribution throughout the development of the program. Their voices were essential to the development of the program model and guide. A special thank you to our Advisory Board for sharing their insight, skills, and networks. Thank you to Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC for their expertise and guidance. The authors would like to thank the presenters for their commitment to the project and for sharing their knowledge and resources. The authors would also like to acknowledge and thank the entrepreneurs who participated in the series and offered their feedback.

Introduction

Self-Employment as an Option

Self-employment, mostly through microenterprise, has been under consideration for many years as a way to mitigate poverty and empower low-income individuals (Bates, Lofstrom, & Servon, 2011). A microenterprise as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration is “a sole proprietorship, partnership, limited liability corporation or corporation that has fewer than 5 employees, including the owner, and generally lacks access to conventional loans, equity, or other banking services” (SBA, 2010, p. 22). Microenterprise programs have had mixed results, especially when referring to micro-loan programs, as there is little evidence that these programs have a significant effect in poverty reduction (Bates et al., 2011; Sanders, 2004; Sanders, 2002; Schreiner, 2001). However, there is evidence that microenterprise training is effective in creating and sustaining microenterprises by increasing personal well-being through the acquisition of soft skills and by building social capital and community networks (Schmidt & Kolodinsky, 2007).

Despite the argument over the effectiveness of microenterprise programs in reducing poverty, low-income individuals continue to successfully enter into self-employment. A study by Sanders (2004) compares outcomes for low-income women who were wage employed, self-employed with microenterprise assistance, or self-employed without microenterprise assistance. While the study found all three groups of women had significant increases in income over the course of five years there were no significant differences between groups. However, with regard to sustainability of the business, 65% of businesses owned by women who received microenterprise assistance were still in business at the end of five years, which was significantly more than the 28% of non-program participants that remained in business.

Self-employment is a viable alternative to wage work for people with disabilities (Yamamoto, 2011; Griffin & Hammis, 2003; ODEP, 2005; Doyel, 2002a; Doyel, 2002b). Adults with disabilities are choosing self-employment at rates similar to or higher than the general population. According to the 2011 data from the Current Population Survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) the employment-population ratio for the general population was 58.4%, while only 17.8% of people with disabilities were employed (BLS, 2012). Of those workers with a disability, 11.8% were self-employed in unincorporated businesses, compared with 6.6% of the general population being self-employed. Therefore, while people with disabilities are employed at a significantly lower rate than the general population, people with disabilities are more likely to be self-employed.

Individuals with disabilities choose self-employment for a variety of reasons
(Griffin & Hammis, 2003; Doyel, 2002a; Walls et al., 2001)

- Greater Control over schedule and amount of work
- Address accommodation concerns
- Greater ability to be self-sufficient
- Taking part in meaningful work
- Accumulate wealth under Social Security and Medicaid/Medicare systems
- Access to alternative sources of capital not available to individuals without disabilities
- Access self-employment through customization
- Participate in an alternative to day programs
- Engage in career opportunities
- Ability to modify accommodations as business or disability changes over time

Reaching Entrepreneurs in Rural Areas

It is rare that an individual will have all the resources and knowledge to start a business on their own. For many entrepreneurs it is essential to utilize local, as well as web based, resources to gain knowledge and information for starting and running a small business. Self-employment is often more common in rural areas possibly due to the fewer options for wage employment. Greater small business opportunities exist where there is less competition from corporations or other large businesses. However, access to resources in rural and geographically isolated areas is much less than in a more populated area. In addition, options for wage employment for people with disabilities are very limited in rural areas.

Research indicates that states with the highest vocational rehabilitation closure rates in self-employment were typically rural states (Revell, Smith, & Inge, 2009).The top ten states with the highest percent of closures in self-employment were 1) Mississippi, 2) Wyoming, 3) Alaska, 4) Maine, 5) New Mexico and Vermont, 6) Idaho, 7) North Dakota, 8) Iowa, 9) Ohio, and 10) Montana. According to the Geographic Profile of Employment and Unemployment, many rural states like Montana, South Dakota, Maine, North Dakota, Vermont, and Idaho have a higher percent of self-employed workers than more populated states (Solis & Hall, 2011).

Social Capital and Networking

Social capital refers to the connections among individuals which guide them to collaborate in a shared interest (Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 2000). In other words, social capital enables people to work together to achieve common goals and to problem solve through networking (Stone, 2000). Social capital provided to entrepreneurs through networking is beneficial to their venture (Honig, 2001). In addition, involvement in social networks can influence the economic well being of individuals and their communities Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 1998).

Research indicates that isolation from social networks is common for individuals with disabilities and vulnerable populations (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). Furthermore, individuals who are low income have difficulty gaining access to information and business networks (Sherraden, 1998). Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) were positive in regards to clients' motivation, knowledge, and expectations toward self-employment but thought of people with disabilities as having less capital, less collateral, worse credit ratings and unable to generate as much income as non-disabled entrepreneurs (Ipsen, Arnold, & Collin, 2003).

Network theory suggests that marginalized populations benefit from formal and informal networks. Networks can be defined by weak ties (acquaintances with limited contact) or strong ties (family or close friends with frequent contact) (Granovetter, 1973). Network ties can also be described as bonding, bridging, and linking (Stone, W, 2003). Bonding ties are close connections with family, friends, and neighbors who provide support. Bridging ties connect people across networks and lead to possibilities. Linking ties are connections to services or systems that provide resources. It has been found that individuals who have few bonding, bridging, or linking ties typically have poorer health, are less likely to own a home, and are more likely to live in unsafe neighborhoods (Stone & Hughes, 2002).

Networks can also be described as horizontal (within local community) or vertical (expanding outside of local area to regional, state, or national arenas) (Woolcock, 1998; o'Donnell, Gilmore, Cummins, & Carson, 2001). The combination of horizontal and vertical networks leads to a probability of 94% business start-up success (Vennesland, 2004). Entrepreneurs engaged only in one network type, either a horizontal or a vertical network, had a probability of 70% success at start up. The probability of success dropped dramatically to 25% for those who did not participate in either network type.

Therefore, it is implied that a variety of networks are important to microenterprise start-up success. In addition, not only are these networks and networking skills important for microenterprise start-up they are invaluably important to vulnerable or disadvantaged populations.

The Industry-Driven Support Model Project

The Industry-Driven Support Model was developed as a resource for low-income individuals with disabilities; however, it may be applicable to anyone who is isolated geographically or who has limited access to resources. The model was developed as a way to bring entrepreneurs from all parts of Alaska with various disabilities together through one common theme, owning a small business within a similar industry.

The idea of industry-driven is a means to bring entrepreneurs with similar businesses together to learn and to share information and experiences. It would not be expected that service businesses (e.g., handyman or house cleaner) have the same needs and resources as a business in the arts and crafts industry (e.g., potter or jeweler). The belief is that each industry or business sector has specific needs, and the relationships among entrepreneurs in like industries will be of more value. Further, microenterprises have limited access to start-up capital which restricts the start-ups to industries with low-barriers to entry, such as minimal start-up capital and human capital investments (Sanders, 2002; Bates et al., 2011).

The model was developed using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) team, an advisory board, and the feedback from satisfaction surveys and interviews with participants. The PAR team was comprised of three disadvantaged entrepreneurs with disabilities, the principal investigator, the project director, a researcher/project coordinator, and a business advisor. Each year the project employed three new entrepreneur consultants chosen from the pool of participants in the previous year totaling nine entrepreneurs with disabilities that participated in the development and refinement of the model. The PAR team was critical during the first three years of the project when the model was being developed, tested, and refined.

The advisory board was most active in the first year and was comprised of 10 members representing Small Business Development Centers, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, Disability Support Services, community rehabilitation professionals involved in self-employment for people with disabilities, and current entrepreneurs with disabilities or family members. The role of the advisory board was to provide input during model development and refinement, as well as to refer disadvantaged entrepreneurs with disabilities to the program.

Section 1: Getting Started

The purpose of this section is to discuss:

- Model components and design
- How to use this guide
- Developing a team and the roles of team members
- Tasks for carrying out this training model

The Model

The Industry-Driven Support Model has been developed and tested over the course of three years. The main components of the model are industry-driven, web-based delivery, focused training sessions, and networking sessions. Exhibit 1.1 provides a brief description of each model component.

The model was designed around a six week training series with one two-hour session offered per week for the duration of the six weeks. The training series was designed to alternate between training and networking sessions each week. Thus the first, third, and fifth sessions are for training and the second, fourth, and sixth sessions are for networking and networking education. The model components and design provides the basic structure for the training series and the details will be discussed throughout this guide.

How to Use This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to offer insight and ideas for how to conduct distance-delivered business training and networking education. While the model was developed for disadvantaged individuals with disabilities who are geographically isolated, it has the potential to be useful for any group of individuals developing or running small businesses. Each section of this guide will describe an essential component of the training model. Keep in mind that this is a guide. It is not necessary for you or your organization to follow it step by step exactly as described. Instead, use it to assist you in developing a program appropriate for your area and for your participants. The intent is for this guide to provide insight and resources for implementing your own customized program.

Exhibit 1.1 Model Components

Industry-driven: Recruit entrepreneurs who have similar businesses to offer them a chance to connect with and learn from people who share common interests and common challenges. (page 13)

Web-based delivery: Use interactive, real-time web conferencing software to provide training for people in various locations. (page 17)

Focused training: Offer trainings based on a single topic, such as Financial Management, to allow a more in-depth exploration of the topic that is industry specific. (page 33)

Networking sessions: Offer networking sessions focused on the importance of networking to business success, how to build and expand networks and how to use networks effectively. Encourage entrepreneurs to network with each other, to pursue networking opportunities, to share their ideas and successes, and to actively apply what they learned in the trainings. (page 33)

Business development and management are extremely challenging endeavors and yet they provide opportunities for job growth, personal enrichment, and community economic stability. With financial constraints at all levels, it makes sense to use technological advancements to assist entrepreneurs in their efforts to build successful businesses. Our vision is that this guide will inspire others to support entrepreneurs in non-traditional ways that are effective and appropriate.

This guide will discuss each component of the model in detail and will provide examples from our own project. Section 2 discusses why the training is industry-driven, how to choose an industry expert, and ideas for training topics. Section 3 explains how to choose a web conferencing program and what features are important. Section 4 details the process of participant recruitment.

Section 5 discusses how to prepare for the training series and offers guidelines for running the series. Section 6 details the training series offering example training topics and a guide for the networking sessions. Section 7 is a brief guide for training evaluation. Finally the Appendices offer additional information including resources, references, and example forms.

Develop a Team

It is essential to start by developing a team of people who are vested in the training series and can offer their expertise to develop, design, and implement the series. Exhibit 1.2 provides a suggested list of team members and their roles within the team.

As a whole, the team is responsible for the overall program and implementation. They will be responsible for determining appropriate industries and training topics as discussed in "Section 2: Choosing Industries, Industry Experts, and Training Topics". The team will be instrumental in defining the target population and meeting their needs. The team is also responsible for developing a recruitment strategy that the program administrator can implement (described in Section 4). It is important, for the team to be truly collaborative, that each member is of equal importance and has an equal voice throughout the development and implementation of the program.

Exhibit 1.2 Members of the Team and Their Roles

Agency Representative: The agency representative is tasked with developing and leading the team. This team member will likely have access to funding and will oversee the funding/budget for the training series. The agency representative will be responsible for the overall implementation of the model and will define the target population. They will network with other agencies for resources and for recruitment of participants.

Information Technology (IT) Support Person: The IT person is tasked with testing/choosing web conferencing software; training staff, presenters, and participants on the software; and providing technical support for online sessions. The IT person should also have a general understanding of assistive technology and potential technological barriers of the end users.

Network Facilitator/Business Advisor: This team member's main role is to facilitate networking sessions, encourage entrepreneurs to network, and offer business guidance/advice to participants. While choosing an industry expert should be a team activity, the facilitator/business advisor is tasked with searching for and contacting possible experts. This person should have a business background, be well networked, and be comfortable with the target population. They need to be able to keep participants focused on the topic and ensure the session feels safe for participants to contribute ideas. They will also assist in networking for recruitment of participants.

Program Administrator:
The program administrator is responsible for recruiting participants; creating and distributing flyers and other marketing materials; creating, distributing and collecting participant applications; communicating with participants throughout the series (i.e., emailing training reminders and session recordings); creating, distributing and collecting evaluations and/or satisfaction surveys; and creating and distributing participant certificates of completion.

Entrepreneur Consultants (1-3): This group of individuals is recruited to provide consultation on industry groups, training topics, and information specific to the target population. They should be representative of the target population.

Exhibit 1.3 Necessary Tasks to Be Carried Out

- Develop team and conduct meeting(s) to plan implementation
- Choose industry and topic
- Recruit industry expert and establish contract
- Recruit participants (including developing flyer, application, and distribution list)
- Choose web conferencing software (including testing and establishing contract)
- Train team, industry expert, and participants on web conferencing system
- Implement training and networking sessions. Weekly tasks:
    - Review training materials provided by industry expert and check accessibility and relevancy for target population
    - E-mail link to meeting room and distribute training materials to participants
    - Meet online 15 minutes prior to each session to test web conferencing system
    - Conduct and/or facilitate training session
    - Send recording and evaluation after the session
    - Debrief with team
- Distribute certificates and evaluate entire series
- Conduct meeting(s) to review program during and after training series

Section 2: Choosing Industries, Industry Experts, and Workshop Topics

The purpose of this section is to discuss:

- Why and how to group the training series by industry
- Ideas for training topics
- How to choose training topics
- The importance of the industry expert and how to select one for the series.

Why Industry-Driven?

There is a multitude of information in print, on web sites, and offered in local training courses about business development and management. However, it is more challenging to find detailed information that can provide guidance to entrepreneurs about their particular situation and unique challenges. Offering business training and networking sessions focused on a specific industry make it possible to provide information that is narrow enough in scope to be readily applicable to an individual's business. In addition, this type of training links individuals who have common interests, experiences, and challenges for mutual benefit. This is particularly advantageous for those who are isolated geographically and/or isolated by a disability.

Further, another reason for industry specific training is that microenterprises lend themselves to certain industries. It is common for microenterprises, as defined by five or fewer employees and minimal start-up capital, to be based in the service industry or low earnings product industries (e.g., arts, crafts, jewelry) (Sanders, 2002; Bates et al., 2011). Due to minimal necessary start-up capital and few barriers to entry, these two industries make good microenterprise options.

Choosing the Industry

Your team should put significant thought into choosing an industry and deciding what topics are important for that business segment. The industry group chosen should be narrow enough that the group has common interests and can relate to one another but broad enough to include a variety of businesses. You do not want to narrow your choice so much that you restrict the number of participants who qualify for the training. Exhibit 2.1 lists some suggestions for choosing an industry.

Included in the list in Exhibit 2.1 is the standard occupational classification system, which lists 23 major occupation groups, 97 minor occupation groups, and 461 broad occupations (see "Appendix A: Resources" for how to access). The standard occupational classification system can be used to identify an industry and to narrow or broaden the industry group. For example, "Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations" is listed as a major occupational group in the Standard Occupational Classification. For this purpose, the definition may be too broad, in that these occupations may have vastly different business challenges and aspects (i.e., marketing strategies, pricing schemes, etc.). Thus, the industry may be refined to the minor occupational group "Artists and Related Workers." This group may be broad enough to include an adequate pool of participants within a target population, yet narrow enough to focus on the unique business aspects of the occupation. If it is necessary to further narrow the industry you can pick one of the five broad occupations within the minor group: art directors, craft artists, fine artists, multimedia artists and animators, or all other artists and related workers.

Potential Industries:

- Food industry/vendors
- Tourism based businesses
- Child care providers
- Retailers
- Small manufacturing
- Health care providers
- Construction trades
- Computer technicians

Exhibit 2.1 Choosing an Industry

- Use knowledge within your team and your community to determine industries prevalent within the area you will be serving.
- If you are already serving a client base of potential or current business owners, learn what industries they have chosen.
- Check with your local Small Business Development Center, Chamber of Commerce, and/or economic development agencies to learn about kinds of businesses they serve.
- Check with your local vocational rehabilitation providers to find out what small businesses their clients pursued.
- Focus on micro-businesses, those that are one-person business or at the most employ five or fewer.
- The standard occupational classification system from the Bureau of Labor Statistics can be used to guide selection.

Example 2.1 Choosing an Industry

Our team looked at the various industries of twenty-four entrepreneurs who had successfully launched their businesses and were part of our target population. We found a significant number were engaged in service-based businesses. We also found a significant number of individuals engaged in the production of fine art or crafts for resale. No other apparent categories of occupations were in close enough relation that they would produce enough participants for our demonstration project. After identifying the two industries, we referred to the standard occupational classification system to find the balance for the breadth of the industry.

Choosing Training Topics

When choosing topics for training, topics should be universal enough to provide benefit to all participants and address issues that present challenges. On the other hand, topics should be focused enough to develop skills and techniques unique to the industry. It is recommended to focus on one topic for the training series. This allows the Industry expert to go into more depth at each training by focusing on one aspect of the overarching topic. For example, if the topic is marketing one training sessions can focus on marketing basics, one on low cost marketing strategies, and one on selling online (Section 6 provides more details about potential topics).

The entrepreneur consultants can help in the decision making process and are a great resource to make sure the topics chosen are on target. You can use the knowledge of your team, the local Small Business Development Center, Chamber of Commerce, economic developers, and other business resources in your community to learn about the necessary business skills within the industry you have chosen. You can also talk with established business owners in the industry to learn what their greatest challenges were when they were developing their businesses. Typical topics that are important for any new business owner are listed in Exhibit 2.2.

Exhibit 2.2 Training Topic Ideas

- Marketing
- Social media marketing
- Financial management
- Selling online/creating a website
- Customer service skills
- Inventory management
- Hiring and managing employees
- Complying with legal requirements
- Information technology
- Business growth

Example 2.2 Choosing Training Topics

Arts & Crafts Businesses:
Selling skills are not innate skills to most artists, especially those who are not well networked and may be isolated by their disability. In addition, e-commerce opens up tremendous new markets but can be intimidating and overwhelming. Our team decided to offer training to artists & crafters on all aspects of marketing, from setting prices, wholesale and retail sales to selling on the Internet through web sites and portals. A later training series focused on financial management for artists and crafters.

Service Businesses:
As a team it was determined that keeping track of financial activity is typically a challenge for any business, but the challenges associated with financial management are industry dependent. It was mutually decided that the training sessions for service based businesses would focus on financial health. Topics covered included: how to accurately record financial activity, understanding financial statements, and learning to control cash flow and maximize profitability by reading the "vital signs" of a business. The training series that followed focused on marketing skills for service businesses.

Selecting an Industry Expert

Sufficient attention must be given to selecting one or several experts to provide in-depth knowledge specific to the topics and the industry. Otherwise the intent of the project, to heighten the skills of participants within their industry, will be missed. You will need to consider what is budgeted for presenters, but don't let it limit you as sometimes an instructor will be willing to give a discount from regular fees to benefit your target population. Look for someone with a depth of knowledge in the industry or topic and who also has teaching experience. It is preferable that a trainer have experience with online meetings and is comfortable with the target population, but with proper facilitation this is not critical.

Use all your resources including your team, professional networks, and online search engines to identify the most qualified presenters that have the detailed knowledge about the specific industry and/or topic of your training. Since your training will be online, location is no longer a factor and your search can be national; however, you do need to consider if local knowledge will be critical to the training. Exhibit 2.3 lists some ideas for where to find industry experts.

Exhibit 2.3 Where to Find an Industry Expert

- Consider your local business networks to identify potential industry experts.
- Look for industry leaders who have retired and have provided mentorship in the past.
- You may have a local SCORE (Service Corp of Retired Executives) chapter in your area or you might find an expert at SCORE.org.
- Contact a university or community school in your region and ask for recommendations.
- Contact a trade organization that fits within your chosen industry and find out if they can recommend presenters.
- Go online to search for experts that fall within the industry.

Using a virtual classroom allowed us to broaden our search for trainers since location was not a factor in the decision process. Interestingly, it was an internet search that satisfied our search for the first trainer, and our community network of professionals that satisfied our search for the second trainer.

Example 2.3 Selecting Industry Experts

Arts & Crafts Businesses:
We first considered local resources for the arts and crafts marketing series. Organizations supporting the arts were contacted along with art galleries, successful artists, and sales representatives. We were looking for individuals with good teaching skills who possessed the knowledge and skills to cover one or all of the topics. We had little luck searching within the local community and eventually the search went online. Numerous searches finally turned up a fiber artist who had been teaching classes, writing books, and developing web sites about marketing arts and crafts. He had the knowledge base, teaching skills, and willingness to lead the training sessions.

Service Businesses:
Networking amongst the team members produced a list of potential trainers. An accountant who had taught classes online to entrepreneurs and provided accounting services to businesses and non-profit organizations had the time and interest in teaching the first series of financial management classes. In following years we contracted with a local consultant who teaches marketing classes statewide and a specialist in social media to teach marketing skills for service businesses.

Section 3: Choosing Web Conferencing Software

The purpose of this section is to discuss:

- The benefits of conducting workshops and networking sessions online
- What to look for in web conferencing software
- Accessibility concerns for individuals with disabilities
- Our experience with online web conferencing for training delivery

Why Online?

The technology of web conferencing has evolved greatly in the last decade. Today web conferencing systems are more available and reliable for distance meetings, trainings, and information sharing. People are collaborating across city limits and state lines as well as across borders and overseas. This collaboration is especially important in rural areas where people are isolated geographically due to limited means of transportation and long distances between towns and resources. Web conferencing is also beneficial for people who experience a disability that limits their mobility. This may be physical or psychological, either way it allows a person who may be somewhat isolated to interact and network with peers via the web from the comfort of their own home. Web conferencing is a flexible way to offer training; people no longer have to drive to attend a one or two hour training and can save time in their day. Participants also have the flexibility to step away when needed without disrupting the training and, if the software offers a recording option, they can go back to review what they missed. Online training allows participants more flexibility, a safe environment, a broader social network, and often reduced costs to attend training. It also saves the organizer time and money. Exhibit 3.1 further details the benefits of conducting training and networking sessions online.

> "I like the way it brings people of various communities together."

> "I didn't have to travel. I had no problems hearing or participating in the training. This is my first time doing something like this and it was surprisingly easy."

Choosing a System

Deciding on which web conferencing system best fits your project needs is a daunting task. This section is intended to guide you through that process. Section 5, Setting the Stage, will talk more specifically about training presenters and participants on the web conferencing system and how to prepare for conducting training online.

Not all web conferencing systems are created equal. Each has its unique log in process, layout, and set of features. Some systems are better suited for a webinar format with a large number of attendees, some are better suited for professional meetings, and some are better suited for teaching. Ask yourself these questions, what features are important for my training? What features are most important for my audience? Which systems meet my needs and fit my budget? Use the following section, "What to look for in a web conferencing system," as a guide to determine your needs and investigate different systems.

> "It is a highly effective way for a group of people to interact without being in the same room."

Investigate your web conference options and sign up for free trials. Most web conference programs offer a free trial period. Sometimes not all the program features are available in the free trial but you can get enough information to make an informed choice. After an initial investigation, narrow your choice to a couple of options, keeping in mind some of the suggestions in "What to look for in a web conference system." Talk with a sales representative for each program you are considering to gain an understanding of the company, products, and policies regarding technical support. Responsive tech support is a critical piece in running an effective online meeting. The more technical problems in a meeting the more participants will focus on the technology issues and not on the training material. As an administrator it is your job to make sure the course runs smoothly and tech support will be your greatest ally.

As you are searching for systems it is highly important to consider the end-user. If your audience includes individuals with disabilities, accessibility of the program will play a large role in your decision process. Consider having individuals with disabilities involved in the web conference investigation and decision process. Their involvement is especially important when individuals rely on other technology for communicating (e.g., screen readers or closed captioning). Exhibit 3.2 provides advice on accessibility and accommodations for specific types of disabilities.

> "I thought it was easy to use and interact with others. It was simple to follow along the slide show, listen to comments, and see the activity in the chat."

What to Look for in a Web Conference System

It is important to investigate a variety of systems using a trial period prior to purchasing. Most systems allow for a free trial period prior to purchasing, however sometimes these trials do not include all of the features. Contact the sales representative and ask about all of the features, including features mentioned below.

Ease of entry into system

Look for a system that doesn't take a lot of technology know-how to sign in. A number of systems require a download prior to use, such as Java. Look for one that downloads easily and doesn't require a lot of steps to enter. Just remember, you don't have to play the role of tech support, if someone is having trouble logging in they can contact the web conferencing tech support. Also, if you have participants who use a screen reader, check the login process to make sure it is compatible with a screen reader.

> "I would not hesitate to participate in other learning sessions using this technology."

User-friendly interface

The interface refers to the overall layout of the program that the user is going to interact with. You may find some systems allow participants to choose a layout that they find most usable and comfortable. Not all systems offer this option. When considering the user interface think about the look of the interface, the layout, how easy is it to find and select buttons (for example, the mute button), and what options are available (e.g., volume control, hand raising, chatting, participant list, voting/polling).

User-friendly chat box

A chat box allows participants to use written text to "chat" while in the online environment. This is important for several reasons, it allows participants to communicate with each other, participants without a microphone can still ask questions and express ideas, it can be engaging for Deaf participants, and it is an easy format for participants to ask questions to the presenter. Some programs allow different levels of chat, for example a participant can send a message to the whole group or send a message privately to another participant or the moderator. When trying out the chat box ask yourself a few questions: 1) Is the chat box location on the screen easy to find? 2) Is the chat box easy to use? 3) Is there the capability to chat privately? 4) Can the moderator easily monitor the "chat" in case there are questions? and 5) Is the chat box screen large enough to allow for a long stream of dialog?

> "I was pleasantly surprised. I have taken college classes via teleconference and this format was exceptionally more effective for me because of the visual component. Having the ability to actively participate using either the microphone or chat, or both, was so helpful."

Availability of both audio through a computer (VoIP) and a toll-free telephone number

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) where the audio is transmitted via the internet is common, and often included in the price, for most web conferencing systems. While it is cheaper for all participants to use VoIP, a toll-free telephone number allows more access to the trainings for individuals whose internet is too slow for the VoIP or in situations where there is an echo or feedback with the audio. Some programs have integrated call-in where the toll-free number is seamlessly integrated into the online system. This integrated option is the most streamlined and least cumbersome if it is necessary to use a phone line. The toll-free call-in is an additional cost usually per minute per participant and it can add up quickly, so make sure you have sufficient funds. Also, some programs allow users to configure a phone option using an existing toll-free conference call number.

> "It is highly interactive, and I think it runs pretty smooth."

Multiple microphones

Some programs only allow one person to talk at a time requiring the talker to relinquish control of the audio before another talker can activate a microphone, while other programs allow for multiple talkers (often up to a certain number). There are pros and cons to each situation. With multiple talkers, the conversation feels more natural; however, there is higher risk for background noise and feedback. It is important that all participants take responsibility to mute their microphone when they aren't talking. On the other hand, having only one microphone limits the issues with feedback and background noise, but the conversation does not flow as smoothly. If you aren't sure how many microphones you need then consider a program with multiple talkers. This program will be more flexible, as most programs with multiple talkers allow the moderator to control the number of available microphones.

> "I felt connected to others in different towns."

> "It was easy to access, easy to follow along at a comfortable pace, interesting, and enjoyable to be able to interact with others, yet be in the comfort of my own home."

Features for sharing information

In order for participants to get the most out of the trainings, it is best if the trainer can provide visuals, such as slide presentation and synchronous (real-time) web browsing. A number of programs offer various options for sharing information, including a whiteboard, slide presentations, application or desktop sharing, and synchronous web browsing. Most programs allow the moderator to upload a presentation file and the presentation is displayed in the whiteboard field. Application sharing or desktop sharing allows moderators to display portions of their computer desktop or certain applications (e.g., a work document or PDF). Synchronous web browsing allows for shared web browsing in real-time. Often times, participants can navigate the site on their own while moderators maintain the overall navigation control. Consider how you will design your trainings and what features are important for information sharing, then test these features.

> "I've gotten so much out of this workshop as a whole. I learned from every session and found them all very worthwhile. I am going to download the recordings so I can review as I am ready to conquer each step."

Ability to record sessions

Recorded sessions provide individuals with a way to access sessions they might have missed and/or a way to review sessions they want to see and hear again. When looking for a system, ask if there is the ability to record sessions and how participants will access recordings. Ask about the format of the recordings, live streaming only may limit your ability to provide recordings to participants if you no longer have a contract or if participants don't always have an internet connection. However, in some cases you can burn recordings to a CD or DVD. Also ask about additional costs, some systems charge for recording sessions.

Moderator privileges
The moderator is often the person organizing the online training and environment. This person will log into the web conferencing program as a moderator and usually has access to the settings and program preferences. In the online meeting room, the moderator usually has the ability to start and stop the recording, mute participants, load presentation materials, send participants to breakout rooms, monitor participant hand raising, etc. Sometimes it is beneficial to share these privileges with the presenter. If you need multiple moderators, check that the program allows you to share moderator privileges and whether more than one moderator can be assigned.

> "I am blind and could not have easily gone to class even as bad as I wanted it."

Internet connection speed that matches your region's capabilities
Check your target populations' region for internet connection speeds. Some programs work well with faster speeds, but individuals on slower speeds will have trouble using the internet audio, video, and/or application sharing features. Some programs allow the user to define their connection speed when signing in and the program will adjust for the slower speed.

Tech support
Make sure the system has responsive tech support. Being able to call for immediate tech support is critical when you are in the middle of training and there are technical issues. Also use your tech support for helping participants with setting up their systems and logging on. Section 5 of this guidebook provides strategies for preventing and responding to tech issues.

> "Even with the technological limitations the workshop was awesome and the benefits far outweighed the minor problems."

> "Don't have to leave the house or brush my hair! Excellent communication tool."

Extras you may consider:
Video camera capability
The video camera can be a very effective tool, especially for people who like face-to-face interaction. However, consider the following when choosing to use the video capability: 1) Using video requires a lot of bandwidth and it can bog down the system; 2) Some people don't like to be on camera; and 3) Many of the newer computers have integrated cameras, but many older machines do not so it may require an additional purchase for participants. Some programs allow users to adjust the video quality as a way to reduce the drain on bandwidth.

Headsets for participants
Most of the systems suggest participants use headsets which help to decrease echo and feedback. This is an additional cost to participants and/or the agency. In order to do large group participation (i.e., many participants in one location interacting with others online) an external microphone or an integrated microphone (i.e., built into the computer) will be required. If participants are not using a headset but have an integrated or external microphone the audio will feed from the speakers back into the microphone which is very distracting for other participants. It is important that these participants mute their microphone when not talking or that they use a headset. This feedback issue is more prevalent in some systems than others, so consider the audio quality when selecting a system.

Example 3.1 Experiences with Web Conferencing

Our goal throughout this project, in addition to developing and testing a model, was to test a variety of web conferencing programs. Over the course of the project we tested five web conferencing programs and solicited feedback from participants. Many of the recommendations in this guide are a combination of results from participant feedback and staff observations.

The first training series had the misfortune of numerous technical problems combined with our inexperience. Sessions were high stress as we tried to mitigate each technical problem as it arose. At one point we had a handful of participants on a conference call and placed the phone and computer next to each other so participants on the phone could hear and communicate with individuals who were online. This arrangement was not ideal and created a lot of confusion while trying to mute and un-mute the computer or phone in order to avoid feedback.

We learned a lot through trial and error in the first year and in the second year we started instituting practices to help the trainings run smoother with less technical interruptions. For example, it didn't take us long to learn we were not IT professionals. We would spend hours trying to solve sign in problems and never reach a solution, while tech support could often solve the problem in less than ten minutes. Therefore, if we couldn't solve the problem quickly, we would refer participants to tech support.

Despite our efforts to start on time, trainings were often delayed while we tried to help individuals sign in or while we tried to solve audio problems. Even if we required participants to sign in early we were still delayed. Sending participants to tech support was one solution. Another solution was to train participants and presenters on the web conference system a week before the first training session. Any tech issues could be solved before the actual training, which reduced disruptions for individual participants as well as for the whole class.

We learned to not panic, not draw attention to issues, and follow a plan. If audio failed we would go to the phones. If a participant had trouble signing in we would send him/her to tech support. The quicker and more efficiently we could handle a situation the less of an interruption it was for participants. When participants did not focus on tech issues they were learning and using technology effectively to assist in learning. In the end, despite any technical issues, the majority of participants thought web conferencing was an effective way to receive training.

Exhibit 3.1 Benefits of Conducting Training and Networking Sessions Online

Connects people across rural areas who may be geographically isolated
Online training can bring needed training to many individuals who may not have the ability or money to travel to trainings. It can also link individuals across a wide geographic area to share knowledge and understanding about their industry not otherwise represented in their own communities.

Allows flexibility
Participants who are attending from home can tend to family, home, or small business needs if necessary. Participants with children at home can participate without having to find childcare. Participants can take important business phone calls. A caution is, while this allows for flexibility, encourage participants to arrange their lives so they can attend the sessions with full participation

Allows for a variety of accommodations
Web conferencing can offer accessible training for individuals with disabilities as well as a variety of learning styles. Some systems allow for closed captioning (at an additional cost) and other accommodations, which should be considered depending on your target population. Some features of the program, though not intended for accessibility can make training more accessible. For example, recording the session is helpful for participants who may need to hear the material multiple times. See Exhibit 3.3 for more information on accessible web conferencing.

Provides a safe environment
Some individuals are uncomfortable interacting in a group. Web conferencing allows these participants the opportunity to engage at their own comfort level, which may increase as they become more comfortable with the group. The chat box allows people who process information internally, time to consider what they want to say and write it in the chat box.

Cost effective for agency
Reduces facility costs because there is no need to rent or secure a location for the training. It also reduces the cost of training materials because materials are presented online and can be sent via e-mail to participants in an accessible format.

Reduces participant transportation time and costs
Participants don't have to travel in order to obtain needed training, saving them both time and money.

Saves organizer time
Because the training takes place online, there is no need to arrange for and set up a meeting room or purchase and set up meeting amenities.

Participants can easily communicate with other participants
Unlike in a large meeting room, participants are able to communicate with each other using the chat box, in either private or group messages. This allows for interaction among all participants not just those who are in close proximity at a physical location.

Exhibit 3.2 Accommodations and Accessibility Considerations for Web Conferencing Systems

Accessibility should be a primary concern when your target audience includes individuals with disabilities. Many programs have built in features that can provide appropriate accommodations. However, many programs have not fully or specifically considered the needs of individuals with disabilities when interacting in an online environment, and therefore may require some creative workarounds. Some programs are better than others when it comes to accessibility, be sure to ask your sales representative about any accommodation concerns. As an administrator, consider sending your slides via e-mail ahead of time to all participants. This simple gesture can make a world of difference for many participants. Also, all individuals can benefit from practicing with the web conferencing, either one-on-one or in small groups (3-4 people), before signing on with a larger group. This practice helps individuals to feel comfortable with the technology and to feel safe. Section 5 of this guidebook discusses this process in more detail.

Deaf and hard of hearing

For Deaf individuals or those who are hard of hearing the appropriate accommodation depends on the individual's preference. Some individuals may prefer transcription or closed captioning, while others may prefer sign language interpreting. Some programs claim to have closed captioning capabilities in the form of a window that can be used for real-time transcription. This means you still need to hire a transcriber which may be available through the web conferencing company at an additional cost. Further, the stenotype used for transcribing may or may not interface with the program, and in that case you will be looking for a very fast typist. With regard to sign language interpretation, the video capabilities of the program may not be sufficient for sign language interpretation and using the video takes bandwidth. Another option to consider is a video relay service. This option is especially useful for rural areas where there are few to no sign language interpreters. Since location is not an issue with web conferencing, the sign language interpreter, for example, can log on to your training from New York and provide sign language interpretation via video relay to a participant in Juneau, Alaska (note the video relay would be separate from the participant's computer screen). Further, most programs have a chat box; the chat can break down barriers for many Deaf participants and allow them to easily interact with other participants.

Audio sensitivities

Some participants who experience migraines, have a brain injury, and/or or tinnitus may have audio sensitivities. For some of these participants listening through a headset can be uncomfortable. Further, any echo or feedback may amplify the problem. Therefore, try to minimize the audio disruptions and encourage participants to listen through their speakers if that is more comfortable. The audio might be more tolerable through a phone and participants could use the toll-free call-in. Also, these participants may find it easier to communicate through the chat box.

Mental health

Mental health disabilities are diverse and most individuals with mental health disabilities do not require physical accommodations. However, many individuals may seek social accommodations, for example a comfortable and safe environment. While it is good for any audience to practice with the web conference software prior to your first training, it is especially important for this group. Practicing one-on-one or in small groups (3-4 people) before signing on with a larger group will help individuals to feel comfortable with the technology and help make the environment feel safe.

Exhibit 3.2 Accommodations and Accessibility Considerations for Web Conferencing Systems

Blindness and low-vision

Not all programs are screen reader accessible and not all features of web conferencing programs are screen reader accessible. In our experience, individuals using a screen reader may have difficulty even signing into the program. Once in the program they may have limited access to certain features of the program, such as the chat box or slide presentation. This is one reason to send slides ahead of time and to make sure the electronic file is screen reader accessible. Some programs have an activity log which allows individuals using screen readers to follow what is happening in the online meeting room. Consider a practice session with participants using screen readers prior to your first session. As a last resort, participants can call-in using a phone and follow along with the electronic slides sent ahead of time. Unfortunately, a participant can really miss out if he/she cannot access the chat box so make sure to read the chats out loud if the participant cannot read the chat box.

For individuals who have low-vision, check that the web conference program has options for increasing font size and changing the layout. Sometimes the participant can change the font size of the chat box to make it easier to read.

Cognitive disabilities

Individuals with cognitive disabilities, depending on their situation, may need a support person to help them log on and navigate the web conference environment. Handing out the slides ahead of time will help individuals to follow along. Some individuals may want to hear the information multiple times, and recording the session is a great way to accommodate them. Also consider the layout of the program. Are there a lot of words or does the program use icons? Are the icons easy to understand and recognize? Lastly, it is important to make the training feel safe so these participants are comfortable contributing to the conversation.

"I was surprised. I prefer being in person, but this was a very effective alternative. The fact that I could participate from my bed made it more accessible to me than it would have been had it been an on site only workshop."

Section 4: Recruiting Entrepreneurs

The purpose of this section is to discuss:

- Develop a marketing strategy - who, what, where
- Incorporating an application process

Who, What, Where

An organization undertaking this training model should identify their intended target audience based on the organization's mission and the funding source for their training program. Who is eligible for the program? What are the challenges in recruiting this population? Exhibit 4.1 lists some suggestions for recruiting entrepreneurs.

Consider how you will market your training series and what message you want to convey to your target audience. If the training series is free, offering a certificate of completion for attending the whole series might increase attendance. Other strategies that encourage sign-ups and commitment are specifying space is limited and having potential participants complete an application.

Once you've determined what you are marketing and to whom, consider where you will market. What agencies or establishments does your target audience frequent? Will you have a website? Will you distribute a flyer? Will the flyer be distributed via e-mail or a hand-delivered hard copy? Are your materials accessible to your audience? Consider the reading level and accessibility of any written information you distribute. Does it resonate with your audience? Maybe invite a few individuals within your target audience to proof the materials.

Exhibit 4.1 Suggestions for Recruiting

- Contact organizations with the same or similar clientele as your target audience.
- Find the best contact at each organization and coordinate with them to distribute an electronic and hard copy flyer.
- Post flyers in places frequented by your target audience.
- Develop a webpage for your training on your agency website.
- Make sure your marketing materials are accessible for your audience. If you are including individuals with disabilities and work at a university, consider contacting your disability support service office.
- Designate one person as the key contact for potential participants or support people.
- Limit the class-size to approximately 15 individuals to encourage participation and interaction.
- You may want to over-recruit to account for attrition.

Places to recruit from:

- Women's centers
- Chamber of Commerce
- Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)
- Microloan programs
- Public assistance offices
- Vocational rehabilitation
- local small business groups
- local organizations that offer microentreprise assistance
- Peer run organizations (e.g., Independent living centers, support groups, National Alliance on mental Illness)

Application Process

You will want to consider having potential participants complete an application. The reason for the application is two-fold; one, it provides you with individuals' contact information and two, allows you to verify individuals' eligibility for your training. The application can be instituted in any number of ways, for example paper, electronic form (e.g., PDF), or online form (e.g. through Google). Each format has its pros and cons, though we have found using a cloud-based process, such as Google, to be the easiest, least time-consuming, and potentially most cost effective. A Google form is simple to create through any Google account using the Drive function (formerly known as Google Docs).[1] This form can then be embedded on any website. When someone is interested in applying they click the link to the Google form, complete the form, and submit. All of their responses populate a spreadsheet on your Google Drive making it really easy to manage all of your applications electronically. For an example of a paper application and types of questions to include see Appendix C.

1 More information on Google Drive can be found at http://support.google.com/drive/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=49008

Example 4.1 Recruiting Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

The UAA Center for Human Development's mission is to improve the lives of individuals who experience disabilities. The funding source for our training program was the U.S. Small Business Administration PRIME (Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs), whose mission is to offer training and technical assistance to low-income and very low-income entrepreneurs. Considering the training was distance-delivered, our geographic boundary was the entire state of Alaska. We further narrowed the population by identifying specific industry sectors (e.g., arts & crafts or service businesses). Thus, our intended audience became low and very low-income entrepreneurs, who experience disabilities and operate businesses within a specific industry sector. When marketing to this population it was important to specify what the training was, who was eligible, how it would benefit eligible participants, how and where it was delivered, when it was taking place, that it was free, and that space was limited. It was also important for marketing materials to be accessible, which included consideration for reading level and screen reader accessibility.

After creating an attractive flyer with all of the appropriate information the team distributed it electronically to Small Business Development Centers, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, Disability Support Services, community rehabilitation providers, independent living centers, mental health organizations, public assistance offices, and past participants. The electronic flyer had active links to our website and application.

Initially, applications were completed with participants over the phone or participants completed a PDF form and returned it via e-mail. This process was used for the first two years of the project and was found to be cumbersome and time consuming. In the third year of the project we switched to a Google form application embedded on our website. This was a much simpler process that saved time, was easier to track, and gave participants easy access to the application eliminating the "middleman." Previously, when participants requested an application the process was to e-mail the key contact, who then e-mailed the form, complete the form on the computer or print it and complete it by hand, then save it or scan it, attach it to an e-mail and return it. Google forms eliminated the number of steps in the process for participants -- click a link, fill in information, and click "submit". If participants called the key contact, she could direct them to the Google form or take their information over the phone while entering it into the Google form. Therefore, the process became much simpler for both staff and participants.

Section 5: Setting the Stage and Running the Course

The purpose of this section is to discuss:

- Training participants and presenters on web conferencing
- Preparing the presenters
- Creating a positive environment for learning and networking
- Guidelines for training delivery

Pre-Training for Web Conferencing

It is inevitable that at least one training session will encounter technical difficulties. It is best to mitigate these situations and to be prepared for when they occur. Research shows that emotions affect an individual's learning such that negative emotions (e.g., fear and anxiety) inhibit learning (Dirkx, 2001; Dirkx, 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2002). Further, when learners encounter technical difficulties in online environments they learn less and when they learn less they are more likely to drop out (Sitzmann, Ely, Bell, & Bauer, 2010). In our research we found technical difficulties to be distracting and it often took the focus off the training goals. Therefore, it is important to set the stage for success. One way to do that is through pre-training on the web conferencing system.

Training participants

Depending on your target audience, some or most of your participants may be unfamiliar with web conferencing technology. In order to avoid a number of technical issues and delays on the first day of training, consider training participants on the web conferencing program ahead of time. One week before the training set aside a couple of one hour blocks of time for trial sessions. Require participants to attend at least one trial session.

The two activities that are often most challenging for participants is logging into the system and setting up their audio. The trial session allows participants to practice logging on and setting up their audio without distracting from the training. It also provides an opportunity to explain the features of the web conference system and some of the guidelines for participating in the discussion (e.g., turning your microphone off when not talking or raising your hand to ask a question). Exhibit 5.1 provides a checklist of items to show participants during the trial sessions.

Training the network facilitator and industry experts (a.k.a. presenters)

When choosing presenters it is important to ask if they have ever conducted an online training and if they would be willing to conduct an online training. Even if the presenters have conducted online trainings they may not be familiar with the web conference program you are using. Therefore, it is important to train the presenters how to use the web conferencing system and how to navigate the various features they might use for presenting. Schedule at least 30 minutes and train the industry expert and network facilitator separate from participants. It is important that the presenter has a chance to interact with the program as a moderator. Show them how to advance slides, monitor the chat box, monitor for raised hands, and other features they might be interested in using to engage the participants (see Exhibit 5.1 for a checklist)

One week before the training set aside a couple of one hour blocks of time for trial sessions. Require participants to attend at least one trial session.

Preparing the Presenters

The industry expert and network facilitator may not be familiar working with your defined target audience. It is important to prepare the presenters for how to interact with the target audience. For example, if your training is intended for individuals with disabilities it would be important to use person first language or if your population is low-income it is important to understand that they might have limited access to resources. The training should be appropriately matched to the target audience.

It is also helpful to provide the presenter with a list of the types of businesses your participants are operating. This information can be gathered from participant applications. Sharing this information with the presenter allows the presenter to provide relevant examples that participants can relate to and to direct specific comments and questions toward certain types of businesses.

Further, Edgecomb (2002) had researchers observe a number of microenterprise trainers and rate the trainers' performance. The more dynamic trainers who incorporated personal experience, gauged the pace of training on participant behavior, considered themselves a resource, and encouraged discussion, had more success. Participants who had dynamic trainers were 21% more likely to complete their homework and 20% more likely to complete the training than those with less dynamic trainers. These suggestions are important for creating a positive learning environment that appeals to adult learners.

Creating a Positive Learning Environment

There are a number of theories around adult learners, learning styles, and learning spaces. The goal of this guide is not to make you proficient in all of these theories, but to provide the necessary tools to create an effective online training. However, we would be remiss to not include some of these concepts in our discussion as they provide an important foundation for learning.

Adult learners and constructivism

There are numerous books and articles that describe and study adult learners. It is often mentioned that adult learners need to know the how, what, and why of learning; are typically self-directed learners; rely on previous experience; prefer problem solving; and have high motivation when knowledge can be related and transferred to real life (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Further, Huang (2002) proposes a constructivist model for adult learners in online environments, where he defines constructivism based on work of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner where "learners could learn actively and construct new knowledge based on their prior knowledge" (p. 28). Huang (2002) recommends the following practices:

- Interactive learning – learning doesn't happen in isolation
- Collaborative learning – "If instruction uses cooperative learning properly, it can improve students' social skills or interpersonal skills." (p.33)
- Facilitating learning by creating a safe environment
- Authentic learning – "…learning needs to meet real life experiences." (p.33)
- Learner-centered learning – emphasizes ownership of the learning process
- High quality learning – involves critical thinking and transferring information into valuable knowledge

Learning spaces and experiential learning

Learning spaces encompass safe and respectful environments that promote learning. Kolb and Kolb (2005) describe learning spaces as places that require "norms of psychological safety, serious purpose, and respect to promote learning" (p. 200). Experiential learning, while it can take on many definitions in practice, in theory it is the transference of experience into knowledge (Kolb, 1984). Kolb and Kolb (2005) describe a number of principles for learning spaces that support experiential learning. Many of these principles are directly applicable to conducting online trainings with adult learners.

- Create a space that is respectful of learners and their experience.
- Validate participants' experiences and show they have value.
- Create a space where it is safe to express and embrace differences.
- Allow space for genuine conversation.
- Open a space for deep learning and development of expertise.
- Allow a space for both feeling and thinking.
- Connect learning experiences to learners' interests.
- Provide space for participants to take charge of their learning.

> "Appreciated [the presenter] mentioning each of us with example of applications...Made it personal."

Creating a safe environment
A safe learning environment is essential to a positive learning experience. It is important to create a safe environment where participants are comfortable asking questions, sharing experiences and ideas, and engaging with others. Edutopia, an online resource from the George Lucas Education Foundation, posted Twenty Tips for Creating a Safe Learning Environment (Alber, 2011). While these tips are focused on a traditional classroom and younger students, a number of them are applicable to adults in an online environment. Consider the following when preparing for your online training:

Build a community – Allow participants time to build relationships, collaborate, and to share about themselves.

Share and recognize participants' work – The original list on Edutopia talks about displaying students work around the classroom to create student ownership and increase comfort. Hanging work would be difficult in an online classroom. However, have participants introduce themselves and their business, inform the presenter of the types of businesses so he/she can draw on relevant examples, use participants' businesses as positive examples, and have participants share images of their work.

Have guidelines – The original article calls these guidelines or rules "non-negotiables." Think about what is important for you in keeping the environment safe. What will you not tolerate? We encouraged participants to be respectful of each other's time by signing in early and to be positive and constructive in their feedback.

Remain calm – The original list mentions how losing your temper will diminish the bonds of safety and trust. While this is true, we would add that in online training it is important to keep calm when dealing with technology. Technology problems will happen and calmly and quickly handling the problem will create less of a distraction and less interference to learning.

Demonstrate vulnerability – This is best described with an example. At the first networking session a staff member volunteered to share her network map and discussed challenges with meeting people in a new place. It later helped participants to feel comfortable discussing their own networks. Expressing vulnerability should be genuine and only share what is appropriate and comfortable.

Laugh together – Laughter is comforting and helps people relax, so add humor where appropriate.

Guidelines for Training Delivery

The following is a list of some other guidelines to consider when conducting online training and networking sessions.

Distribute presentation slides early
If you present PowerPoint slides it is helpful to email them to participants at least one week in advance so they have time to review the material and prepare questions. If you have participants who use screen readers be sure the slides are in an accessible format.

Provide relevant examples
People relate to stories and are often more likely to remember a story. Consider providing the industry expert and networking facilitator with a list of the participants' businesses so they can customize the training to fit participants' specific business needs and provide relevant examples.

Early login
It is helpful to have the presenter, facilitator, and participants log on 15-30 minutes prior to start of session. Having people log in early allows time to handle technical problems without delaying the training. This also allows time for audio set-up and audio checks.

Introductions
In an effort to build community, it is important for participants and presenters to introduce themselves to the group. There are various ways to incorporate

introductions in the schedule, like having a mandetory pre-training session to practice with the web conference and do introductions. Other options include extending the length of the first session or reducing the time of the first presentation to allow time for introductions.

Tech support 911

If there is a technology problem it is best to keep the disruption time to a minimum. Be prepared and save time by having onsite tech support and the tech support number close by. The IT Support team member, as mentioned in Section 1, can focus on tech issues during the online session, which frees up the facilitator to focus on the participants and training.

Plan for Problems

Have a back-up plan in case the web conference system fails or if there are technical problems. For audio failure (more likely), consider providing a toll-free or other phone number to participants so you can switch to the phone if needed; for presentation failure (less likely), consider sending all materials via e-mail prior to the session so participants can use their copies to follow along.

Keep the presentation simple

Most programs allow you to load a presentation file (e.g., PowerPoint) to the whiteboard so participants can follow along. Keep the presentation simple. A presentation file with large and numerous pictures or graphics will take longer to load and can be problematic for participants with slow internet connections.

Take breaks

It is easy to forget to take breaks in an online environment. Take a break at least every hour to give everyone a chance to stretch and step away from the computer for a minute. Some programs have timers that can be set to monitor the break period.

Class communication

The online learning environment has changed dramatically in the past ten years and current online environments are more suited for interactive and collaborative learning. There are tools, both synchronous and asynchronous, to engage participants in conversation with each other and the presenter. In web conferencing, individuals can interact using audio, video, and chat boxes and collaborate with the use of polls and breakout rooms.

Technology can be used to your advantage when engaging participants in the training. For example, when referring to a particular web site, navigate to the site using synchronous web browsing. Also use visuals and allow for participants to chat in the chat box. Consider all learning types and how they can interact in an online environment.

In addition to tools that facilitate communication and reiterating the tips presented around creating learning spaces and a safe environment, all communication should be positive, respectful, and genuine. Communication guidelines should be clearly explained to all participants and conversation should be relevant to participants' interests.

Make time for questions

It is up to the presenter whether to have questions throughout the training or hold them until the end. Our preference was to allow questions throughout the presentation because it allowed the training to be more interactive. Most programs allow participants to raise their hand, which will notify the presenter that there is a question. Participants can then speak or type their question in the chat box. Oftentimes participants make comments or type questions in the chat box without raising their hand. Either assign a moderator to monitor the chat box or, if the presenter is comfortable with it, have the presenter monitor the chat box for questions or comments. If any participant cannot see or read the chat box be sure to read the comments and questions out loud.

Make time for socializing

At most face-to-face trainings participants have an opportunity to socialize at the beginning and/or end of the training. Informal socializing within the group can help build a community and build relationships that extend beyond the training. It may be more difficult to encourage natural conversations in an online environment. One option is to leave the web conference open at the end of the training for participants to talk with each other and possibly the presenter.

Handling difficult situations

Your role as the administrator is to ensure the environment remains safe. If someone makes an inappropriate comment, talk to them about it after the training. If someone gets off topic with a personal story, politely regain control of the conversation and offer to talk with him/her outside of the training.

Encouraging participation

Some individuals will be more comfortable sharing information and others will take more time to warm up to the group. Encourage everyone to participate and offer individuals multiple opportunities to speak. Requiring or forcing participation can be uncomfortable for people. If you are asking everyone to respond, respect if people wish to pass. If the environment remains safe, in time individuals may speak up. The goal is to keep the learning experience positive and putting someone on the spot can create anxiety which can inhibit learning.

Also, recognize that individuals may be comfortable interacting in a variety ways, especially if they experience a communication disability. For example, some participants may prefer to use the chat box instead of using their microphone.

Exhibit 5.1 Web Conference Trial Check List

The following is a list of some important activities and features to show participants and presenters when training them to use web conferencing:

- Log in process
- Setting up audio
- How to mute and un-mute the microphone
- How to switch to the phone
- Where the slides are presented
- How to chat with the group and privately
- How to raise a hand
- How to show you are away

In addition, to what is mentioned above the presenter may need training on the following activities and features:

- Moderator privileges and controls
- Responding to raised hands
- Changing slides
- Using the whiteboard
- Sharing applications or desktop
- Using synchronous web browsing
- Setting the timer
- Setting up breakout rooms

Exhibit 5.2 Participant Interaction

- Consider providing headsets to participants to make the best use of the technology and facilitate participation. We found that using computer microphones caused feedback and it can be difficult for a person to fully participate if they are limited to typing in the chat box.
- Have the presenter encourage the class to ask questions throughout the training. They can raise their virtual hand or text a question in the chat box to be acknowledged.
- Have the facilitators begin the first training session by having participants introduce themselves briefly and tell about their business. This gets them used to talking within the group and helps them feel comfortable with each other.
- Allow 5 to 10 minutes at the end of the session to answer final questions and focus on action steps.

Section 6: The Training Series

The purpose of this section is to discuss:

- Design of the training series
- Training sessions examples
- Networking sessions guide

Training Series Design

The training series was designed to offer one two-hour session per week for the duration of the six weeks. During the training series participants alternate between training and networking sessions. Thus the first, third, and fifth sessions are for training and the second, fourth, and sixth sessions are for networking. The training sessions are meant to focus on one topic, which builds with each session. The networking sessions focus on understanding networks and why they are important, networking practice, and networking strategies. The following provides some examples for training sessions as well as the basic elements of each networking session.

> "This training series seems set-up to deliver real value for the time one invests over the 6 weeks."

Training Session Examples

Training sessions will vary based on the program, industry expert, and topic chosen. The intent of the training sessions is to teach specific business skills and to provide opportunities for participants to practice these skills, share experiences, and ask questions. Further, training sessions should be guided by the needs of participants and should provide information that can be easily translated into participants' businesses. The following provides some examples that may be useful as a guide for potential trainings.

> "This [planning for profits training] will be invaluable in preparing my strategy for my business to quickly become self-sustaining and profitable."

> "As a new business owner I am so grateful for the help and information you are all providing. I want to be successful and this is such a good start."

Financial training

Session 1: Planning for profits

Objectives:

- Learn the importance of accurate pricing
- Learn to determine costs
- Learn how to gauge competition
- Learn about pricing and perceived value

Action Steps:

- Determine your costs
- Determine your price

Session 3: Recording financial activity

Objectives:

- Learn which records to keep and why
- Learn about filing and tracking
- Learn about check registers and balancing check books
- Learn about accounts payable and receivable

Action Steps:

- Select a filing system
- Choose a bookkeeping system
- Schedule deadlines

Session 5: Understanding and using financial reports

Objectives:

- Understand a balance sheet
- Learn to read income statements
- Learn about cash flow statements
- Learn cash flow management techniques

Action Steps[1]:

- Prepare a balance sheet for your business
- Prepare a cash flow statement

1 More information on preparing financials can be found at http://www.sba.gov/content/preparing-financial-statements#Assets. Microsoft Office templates are available at http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates.

Marketing training for artists and crafters

Session 1: Marketing basics for artists and crafters

Objectives:

- Learn how to price for wholesale and retail
- Learn about increasing perceived value
- Learn to price one-of-a-kind pieces
- Learn to sell successful at retail markets
- Learn about creating an elevator speech

Action steps:

- Determine recovery cost
- Identify fairs and events to exhibit
- Design an attractive booth display
- Get signage, business cards, brochures
- Prepare and elevator speech

Session 3: Marketing basics for artists and crafters

Objectives:

- Learn about selling wholesale
- Learn about additional revenue streams
- Learn about resources for setting up a website

Action steps:

- Determine if you want to sell wholesale
- If selling wholesale, look at potential stores and catalogs
- Think about how to earn additional revenue

Session 5: Sell online

Objectives:

- Learn how to get started online
- Learn about Etsy, Ebay, and Artfire
- Discuss tips for success

Action steps:

- Identify online stores
- Prepare for selling online – create a bio, take photos of work, write descriptions
- Determine shipping and return policies
- Track what sells

"I felt it a worthwhile enterprise to get better acquainted with other entrepreneurs and be an encouragement to one another."

Marketing workshops for service businesses

Session 1: Marketing basics for service businesses

Objectives:

- Learn about customers and customer service
- Learn about developing your message – unique selling proposition
- Learn about types of marketing
- Learn about evaluating marketing efforts
- Learn about creating an elevator speech

Action steps:

- Define your unique selling proposition
- Determine features and benefits
- Identify customers
- Brainstorm how to market creatively
- Prepare an elevator speech

Session 3: Logistics of setting up a website or a web presence

Objectives:

- Learn about identifying the goal and audience of a website
- Learn about choosing a domain name
- Learn how to find a designer or developer
- Learn about other sites like Craigslist, Angie's list, Facebook, and Groupons

Action steps:

- Work on elevator speech
- Investigate low-cost or free options for setting up a website or creating a web presence
- Choose and register a domain name
- Identify goals and audience for your website
- Sign up for Yelp and/or a Google listing

Session 5: No cost/Low cost marketing

Objectives:

- Learn about marketing plan basics
- Learn about low cost/no cost tools
- Learn about website and social media marketing
- Discussion on enthusiasm and optimism

Action steps:

- Develop list of marketing ideas as basis of your marketing plan

Other Potential Training Topics

Self-employment resources

Objectives:

- Share information about local business resources (Include any agencies that offer business technical assistance, financial support, other support, or support services to your population)
- Share information about online business resources

Action Steps:

- Think about resources that would be beneficial
- Research beneficial resources
- Share good resources and recommendations

Time management

Objectives:

- Learn to keep a time log and to determine time wasters
- Learn about setting goals including SMART goals
- Discuss to-do lists and priorities
- Learn about organization as a way to save time

Action Steps:

- Keep a time log for the next week
- Develop at least one SMART goal related to your business
- Develop a strategy for keeping yourself on task and setting priorities

Social media for business

Objectives:

- Discuss why a business would use social media
- Learn what social media is good for
- Learn about types of social media and which are best for certain types of businesses
- Provide tips for using social media effectively

Action Steps:

- Decide if you will use social media
- Develop a social media strategy for your business

> "I have a hard time putting myself out there, that's been an issue for many years for me, but it's helping me to realize how much I'll benefit from it; not only personally but in my business too."

Networking Sessions Guide

Networking sessions are intended to provide participants with a general understanding of why networking is important, how to evaluate their own networks through mapping, and how to use their maps to achieve the social capital that will be advantageous to their business and life. Networking sessions are a place for participants to share ideas, offer suggestions and support to each other, share challenges and ask questions, and get to know each other on a deeper level. Networking sessions are also a time to check in on action steps or goals, encourage participation in professional and trade organizations, and expand entrepreneurs' networks vertically (outside local area) and horizontally (within local area). The following provides objectives and activities for each networking session. Slides for these sessions are provided in Appendix D.

Overall Objectives for the Networking Sessions

- Participants will gain an understanding of networking and why it is important
- Participants will evaluate their own networks and make plans for improving them
- Participants will have an opportunity to practice business skills taught in the training sessions
- Participants will have an opportunity to build a community within the group

> "The sharing of our sales pitch was really great, with the feedback and pointers. I also enjoyed the goals people were setting. It was great to network. It is good to connect with others with reaching out for ideas and improvements."

Guidelines for each networking session

Session 2: Understanding Networks and Why they are Important

Objectives:

- Learn why networking is important for entrepreneurs
- Learn the different types of social capital and why each is important
- Consider your own networks
- Learn about developing an elevator pitch

Activities:

- Review PowerPoint "Understanding Networks and Why they are Important"
- Have participants list people in their networks
- Provide an example elevator pitch

Action steps:

- Consider your networks - Are they more open? Are they more closed?
- Reflect on how well your networks are working for you
- Develop your elevator pitch
- Artists provide pictures of your work to your training facilitator to share at the next session

"I have such a small network that it seemed hopeless but these sessions may turn that around."

"I raised my awareness of social structure of my personal network, because I have never really tried to picture my social network before. It is rather interesting."

"Being able to see other people's work - really inspirational for me - showed me if they can do this, so can I."

"These networking sessions are invaluable to me; I have learned things I really needed to know."

Session 4: Network Practice

The overall goal of this session is to practice networking and one piece of networking is being able to clearly and concisely describe what you do. Therefore in this session participants will share the elevator pitch they prepared with the group and the group will provide constructive feedback. An added benefit for artists is to share pictures of their work so people can see what it is they do in addition to the artists' explanation. Preparation for this session should be explained in Session 2 (Networking) and/or Session 3 (Training).

Objectives:

- Practice networking skills
- Participants share their elevator pitch and practice describing their business in 60 seconds
- Artists can share their work by showing pictures or going to their website
- Learn about unique selling proposition
- Think about places to network
- Learn about SMART goals

Activities:

- Review PowerPoint "Network Practice: Communicating Your Message"
- Assist participants with their elevator pitch
- Assist participants in setting SMART goals
- Write down each participant's SMART goal

Action steps:

- List groups, associations, or organizations you are involved with currently
- List groups, associations, or organizations you are interested in joining
- Work on your SMART networking goal
- Bring your lists of names from the first session to the final networking session

Session 6: Networking Strategies

Objectives:

- Learn how to map your networks
- Learn more about open and closed networks
- Discuss strategies to build networks
- Discuss groups, associations, and organizations
- Discuss volunteerism
- Check in on SMART goals

Activities:

- Review PowerPoint "Networking Strategies"
- Ask participants to have their list of names from the first session in front of them
- Walk participants through mapping their networks and what it means
- Do not ask participants to divulge what is on their map, but do not discourage if they choose to share
- Ask each participant about progress on their SMART goal
- Discuss ways for the group to stay in contact

Action steps:

- Discuss ways for this group to stay in contact
- List 5 ways you can start building your network locally or online
- Continue with your SMART goal and develop new goals

Additional Quotes:

"I really enjoy the workshops and I am beginning to understand better ways of doing things in preparation for my business."

"I think the participants' input was the most encouraging. I felt like everyone was truly interested in linking up with one another to create a whole new network."

"I loved seeing the work from others. I am just starting out and feel a little intimidated as the others' products are of such high quality. But it also motivates me to want to be successful and seeing that it is possible to run a successful business gives me more motivation to keep moving forward."

"The interplay between participants was phenomenal. Everyone seemed to appreciate the feedback and to accept feedback and the interchange. Great session!"

"The opportunity to network with other new business owners throughout Alaska. Also fine tune my elevator pitch and trying it out on others in a low stress environment was very helpful."

"Breaking down the concept of networking into a more concrete plan of action on how to identify and increase opportunities to network."

Section 7: Evaluation and Follow-up

The purpose of this section is to discuss:

- Why it is important to evaluate your training
- How to evaluate your training
- Provides examples of training evaluations

Why Evaluation is Important

Training evaluation is important for gauging the effectiveness of the training and participants' satisfaction with the training. A key to designing a great training is to use feedback from past trainings to make appropriate changes. Imagine if you never received feedback at your job. How would you know you are doing a good job? How would you know if you made a mistake? Feedback, both good and bad, is essential to learning and improving. The same is true when running an online training. It is important to be able to discern if participants are dissatisfied because the technology wasn't working, the presenter was boring, or the topic was irrelevant. It is also important to understand what your target audience found interesting or helpful. Knowing this information is crucial to designing and developing a great training.

Evaluation is a process and soliciting feedback is only part of that process. It is also important to respond to participant feedback and to make appropriate changes that improve the program. If participants feel their voice is heard they may be more likely to respond to surveys in the future.

Training Evaluation Design and Methods

The most common method for training evaluation is a follow-up survey. The survey may contain both quantitative (e.g., rating scale) and qualitative (e.g., open-ended) questions. Consider asking rating questions about general satisfaction, application of training, satisfaction with the presenter, and knowledge gained. Open-ended questions might include what was most/least valuable, what other training would be helpful, and additional comments. During a six week training series we asked participants to complete a satisfaction survey after each training and networking session. Participants were also asked to complete a technology survey half way through the series and at the end of the series. Example training surveys are provided in Appendix C.

Tips for rating questions

- Use a likert-type scale with opposing endpoints (e.g., strongly disagree and strong agree or not at all satisfied and highly satisfied)
- Define only the end-points of the scale
- Consider using an even scale to avoid a neutral response (e.g., 0 to 5)

Tips for open-ended questions

- Ask the question in a way that solicits a relevant explanation
- Avoid yes or no questions

Distributing surveys

Since the training is online the easiest method for distributing the surveys is through a web-based survey tool (e.g., SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics). These tools are easy to use and some providers offer free accounts. However, free accounts often limit the number of questions, number of responses, and ability to customize the survey. More advanced accounts can be purchased for a monthly fee. Also, consider your target audience when choosing an online survey tool. For example, you may need to use a survey tool that is screen reader accessible.

Online survey tools allow for a variety of question types, including rating and open-ended questions. These tools also allow for skip logic, which can direct participants to relevant questions by allowing them to skip questions that are not relevant. Once you've designed the survey, preview the survey or send it to a test group, especially if you use skip logic.

There are usually a couple of options for distributing the survey. One option is to send an email to participants with a general link to the survey that is anonymous. Another option is to distribute the survey using the online survey tool, which tracks participants' responses. This option is not anonymous; however, it is easy to send follow-up messages to participants who haven't respond without bothering participants who have already responded.

Other options for evaluation

Depending on how much and what type of feedback is wanted or needed you may consider other evaluation methods.

Interviews

Interviews are helpful for generating a deeper understanding of participants' satisfaction. If you decide to do interviews write out your questions ahead of time. Make sure questions are unbiased and that they ask for more than a yes or no answer. Always ask participants' permission to record responses. Interviews should be conducted by someone who was not involved in the training series. Sometimes participants will respond with more socially favorable responses if they know the person conducting the interview.

Group Interviews

In group interviews the whole group is brought together for the discussion. This will be less time intensive than conducting individual interviews.

Pre- & Post-Assessment

Pre and post-assessments can be helpful when it is necessary to measure a change in knowledge or behavior. You will want to be able to match pre-assessment responses to post-assessment responses for each participant. Use a code or identifier to match assessments and maintain confidentiality. An example of a participant and business information form that can be used before and after the training series is available in Appendix C.

Retrospective Post-Pre Assessment

Like pre and post-assessments the post-pre can be used to measure a change in knowledge or behavior. In this case the participant fills out one questionnaire at the end of the training. First, participants rate their knowledge/behavior/skills after participating in the training and then reflect on and rate their knowledge/behavior/skills before participating in the training. The advantages of this methods are it is less burdensome for participants and it avoids response shift bias (Klatt & Taylor-Powell, 2005). Response shift bias can happen in pre and post assessments because the participants' frame of reference has changed, which can lead to inaccurate results. The limitations of this method are the recall period and participants' bias in recalling the pre information as well as biases of self-reporting (Klatt & Taylor-Powell, 2005).

Appendix A: Resources

BOOKS/GUIDES

Baker W. Achieving Success Through Social Capital. New York NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000.

Doyle A.W. No More Job Interviews! Self-employment Strategies for People with Disabilities. St. Augustine, Florida: Training Resource Network, Inc., 2000.

Griffin C, Hammis D. Making Self-Employment Work for People with Disabilities. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 2003.

Kaufmann, B. & Stuart, C. Road to Self-Sufficency: A guide to entrepreneurship for youth with disabilities. Washington, DC: National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for youth, Institute for Educational Leadership, 2007.
http://www.ncwd-youth.info/road-to-self-sufficiency

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR BUSINESS

The Abilities Fund
http://www.abilitiesfund.org
The Abilities Fund is the first nationwide nonprofit community developer and financial institution focused exclusively on expanding entrepreneurial opportunities, including access to capital, for people with disabilities.

Alliance for Technology Access
http://www.ataccess.org
Focused on increasing the use of technology by children and adults with disabilities and functional limitations through public education, information, and referral.

The Aspen Institute FIELD Project
http://fieldus.org/index.html
FIELD's mission is to identify, develop and disseminate best practices, and to educate funders, policymakers and others about microenterprise as an anti-poverty strategy.

Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO)
http://www.aeoworks.org
AEO supports the development of strong and effective U.S. microenterprise initiatives to assist underserved entrepreneurs in starting, stabilizing, and expanding businesses.

Association of Small Business Development Centers
http://www.asbdc-us.org
The Association represents America's Small Business Development Center Network -- the most comprehensive small business assistance network in the United States and its territories.

Bureau of Labor Statistics
http://www.bls.gov
The principal Federal agency responsible for measuring labor market activity, working conditions, and price changes in the economy. Its mission is to collect, analyze, and disseminate essential economic information to support public and private decision-making.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Occupational Classification System
http://www.bls.gov/soc/
Classifies workers into occupational categories and lists 23 major occupation groups, 96 minor occupation groups, and 449 broad occupations.

Cynthia Says Portal
http://www.cynthiasays.com
This portal is a free web content accessibility validation tool for checking websites against various accessibility standards.

Entrepreneur
http://www.entrepreneur.com
Entrepreneur.com is the online version of Entrepreneur magazine and provides information, advice, and resources to entrepreneurs.

Global Network for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (GNED)
http://www.entrepreneurswithdisabilities.org
GNED seeks to create global, social, and business network for business owners with disabilities.

Griffin-Hammis Associates, LLC
http://www.griffinhammis.com
A full-service consultancy providing high quality training and technical assistance specializing in community rehabilitation improvement.

Inc.
http://www.inc.com
Inc.com is the online version of Inc. Magazine which has been in print ofr over 30 years. Inc.com provides information, advice, insights, resources, and inspiration to entrepreneurs and business owners.

Job Accommodation Network
http://jan.wvu.edu
Information and assistance on small businesses and disability, assistive technology, training programs and local resources.

Kauffman Foundation
http://www.kauffman.org/
Focused on increasing the use of technology by children and adults with disabilities and functional limitations through public education, information, and referral.

Mind Your Own Business
http://www.mindyourownbiz.org
This site was created by the U.S. Small Business Administration and Junior Achievement and it teaches youth about business ownership.

Office of Disability Employment Policy
http://www.dol.gov/odep
Provides national leadership on disability employment policy by developing and influencing the use of evidence-based disability employment policies and practices, building collaborative partnerships, and delivering authoritative and credible data on employment of people with disabilities.

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
http://rsa.ed.gov
Provides leadership and resources to assist state and other agencies in providing vocational rehabilitation (VR), independent living (IL) and other services to individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence and integration into the community and the competitive labor market.

Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
http://www.score.org
Business articles, training webinars and free mentoring assistance for small business owners with retired or working business owners volunteering as business consultants.

Small Business Development Center National Clearinghouse
http://sbdcnet.org
Provides resources for small business development.

Start-Up USA
http://www.start-up-usa.biz
Provides technical assistance and disseminates resources nationally to individuals with disabilities interested in pursuing self-employment.

The Rural Institute at the University of Montana
http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu
Information on training events, publications, policies and technical assistance on self-employment and disability.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
http://uschamber.com
A business federation representing companies, business associations, state and local chambers in the US, and American Chambers of Commerce abroad.

U.S. Small Business Administration
http://www.sba.gov
Provides resources, training, loans, and programs nationwide to assist small businesses grow and prosper.

U.S. Social Security Administration
http://www.socialsecurity.gov
The administration provides work incentives that support small business and self-employment for disabled workers including Plans for Achieving Self-Support (PASS).

U.S. SourceLink
http://www.ussourcelink.com/
SourceLink connects aspiring, emerging, and established small business owners to a wide network of business-building resource organizations.

Women's Business Centers
http://www.sba.gov/about-offices-content/1/2895/resources/13729
These centers are located throughout the U.S. and provide business training, counseling, and other resources to women who want to start or grow a business.

WEB-CONFERENCING RESOURCES

Online Meeting Tools Review
http://www.webconferencing-test.com/en/webconference_home.html
Vendor independent reviews of web conferencing software.

Think of It
http://thinkofit.com/webconf/index.htm
Provides an independent guide to and list of web conferencing software.

Appendix B: References

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Appendix C: Application & Surveys

The following are examples of forms used in our training series to collect participant information and feedback. The Training Satisfaction Survey is based on a specific topic and some questions will change based on the training topic. If using these forms for your project please state on all forms, "Used with permission from the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development."

Participant Application

Industry-Driven Support Model

Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs (PRIME)

Participant Information

Name: ______________________________ I prefer to be called: ____________________

Address: ____________________ City: ______________ State: ______ Zip: __________

Date of Birth: ____________________ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Do you experience a disability? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How did you hear about this opportunity?

Certification of Household Size and Income

I certify that the number of persons in my household is ________, and that my total household income for the past year (12 months) did not exceed $______________.

Business Information

Have you been selling any goods or services on an on-going basis?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

Do you own a small business?

☐ Yes ☐ In the process of developing a business ☐ I'm thinking of starting a business

What stage are you in your business?

☐ Business concept ☐ Start-up ☐ Established ☐ Re-establishing

If established, how long? ______________________________

More on back ⟶

Technology

Your responses to the following questions will not affect your ability to participate in this training series. We are asking these questions so we have a better understanding of your needs.

Do you have access to a computer with an internet connection?

☐ Yes, I have my own computer. ☐ Yes, I can borrow a computer. ☐ No, I cannot access a computer.

☐ Other ______________________________

It is best to have a headset with speakers and a microphone to participate in the online sessions. We have some headsets available through this project. Do you need a headset?

☐ Yes, I need a headset. ☐ No, I already have a headset.

Have you used web conferencing systems, like Elive or WebEx, before?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐ Other ______________________________

Do you use or require any of the following? Check all that apply.

☐ Screen reader ☐ Sign language interpreter ☐ Transcription services

☐ Other ______________________________

Contact Information

Primary phone: ____________________ Secondary phone: ____________________

E-mail address: ______________________________

The best way to contact me is...

☐ via e-mail ☐ via phone

The best time to contact me by phone is...

☐ Morning ☐ Afternoon ☐ Evening

Signature

By signing this form you confirm that all information is correct to the best of your knowledge.

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made if requested at least two weeks in advance.

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Participant & Business Information Form

Industry-Driven Support Model

Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs (PRIME)

Background Questions

1. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ No formal schooling
- ☐ Elementary education (grades 1-8)
- ☐ Some high school, no high school diploma
- ☐ Special education certificate of attendance
- ☐ High school diploma equivalent (e.g., GED)
- ☐ High school diploma
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Associate degree or vocational technical certificate
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree or higher
- ☐ Other specific work training ______________________________

2. Race/Ethnic Origin: ______________________________

3. Do you experience a disability? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, check all that apply.

- ☐ Mental health
- ☐ Orthopedic/Physical impairment
- ☐ Traumatic brain injury
- ☐ Intellectual disability
- ☐ Visual impairment, including blindness
- ☐ Hearing impairment
- ☐ Deafness
- ☐ Deaf-Blindness
- ☐ Autism
- ☐ Other health impairment

4. Do you have a current business license? ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Have you written a business plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, when was it written? ______________

6. Have you applied for funding for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, from what sources? ______________

7. Have you received funding for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, from what sources? ______________

8. Is your business currently making sales? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, for how long? ______________

9. Have you filed taxes on your business income? ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Do you receive SSI and/or SSDI? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, have you had a benefits analysis? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, when was it done? ______________

If yes, do you have a PASS plan? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, when was it approved? ______________

11. Do you receive services from DVR? (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) ☐ Yes, in the past ☐ Yes, currently ☐ I've applied ☐ Never

12. Do you receive services from TVR? (Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation) ☐ Yes, in the past ☐ Yes, currently ☐ I've applied ☐ Never

Background Questions Continued

13. In the past 6 months, have you attended any training or workshops related to your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain:

14. In the past 6 months, have you received any individual assistance with your business, such as a business counselor or community rehab professional? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain:

Networking Questions

15. Do you think netowrking is important for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

If yes, how important?

A little important	0	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely important
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

16. How good are you at networking?

Very poor	0	1	2	3	4	5	Very good
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	

17. Have you used networking to benefit your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how? Give a specific example. (For example - to find resources, such as a tax accountant or web designer; to get support; or to find a supplier?

18. Do you volunteer regularly? ☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Are you actively involved in any clubs, groups, or organizations? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please list.

Networking Questions Continued

20. Do you use online social media personally? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(Such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, Twitter, Pintrest, or Google+)

If yes, which ones? ______________________________

21. Do you use online social media for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which ones? ______________________________

If yes, how frequently? ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ A couple times per year

If yes, how do you use online social media for your business?

22. Are you following other business online? ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. Do people follow your business online? ☐ Yes ☐ No

24. Do you make online sales? ☐ Yes ☐ No

25. Do you offer coupons or deals online? ☐ Yes ☐ No

26. Do you have a website for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Financial Questions

The following questions are examples of specific questions asked around the chosen training topic.

27. Do you have a strategy for setting the prices of your product or service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

28. Do you have a separate bank account for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

29. Do you balance your business checkbook monthly? ☐ Yes ☐ No

30. Do you keep financial records for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

31. Do you set aside money to pay taxes on your business profits? ☐ Yes ☐ No

32. Do you have a filing system in place for your business records? ☐ Yes ☐ No

33. Do you have a bookkeeping system in place for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

Marketing Questions

The following questions are examples of specific questions asked around the chosen training topic.

34. Do you have a strategy for marketing your product or service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

35. Do you have a logo and/or slogan for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

36. Have you ever surveyed current and/or potential customers? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

37. Have you identified your competition? ☐ Yes ☐ No

38. Have you used any free advertising? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

39. Have you ever paid for advertising? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

40. Do you budget for marketing? ☐ Yes ☐ No

41. Do you keep a list of your customers with their contact information? ☐ Yes ☐ No

42. Does your business ever donate to your community? ☐ Yes ☐ No

43. Do you currently advertise online? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

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UAA Center for Human Development
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Training Satisfaction Survey - Low Cost/No Cost Marketing

Industry-Driven Support Model

Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs (PRIME)

Thank you for attending our training. Your feedback is extremely important. By completing this form you will help us plan and provide improved services for our future trainings. Please tell us about your experience.

Confidentiality: Your response is voluntary. Your identity will be kept confidential. Your responses will be used for purposes of evaluating effectiveness of the programs offered by the Center for Human Development-University of Alaska Anchorage.

1. Which of the following best reflects your level of satisfaction with the overall training?

☐ Not at all satisfied ☐ Somewhat satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Highly satisfied

2. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	Strongly agree 4
I can apply the content of this training to my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have an increased understanding of low cost marketing for my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel my business may benefit from my participation in this session.	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. How satisfied are you with the presenter's ability to...

	Not at all satisfied 1	2	3	Highly satisfied 4
Communicate in an effective and interactive way.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Respond to my questions, or clarify the information being presented.	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please indicate how much you agree with the following.

As a result of this training...	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	Strongly agree 4
I have a better understanding of marketing basics.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have more ideas on how to market my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I understand the importance of keeping customer contact information.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I understand the importance of knowing my product to better promote it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have a better understanding of social media marketing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have more ideas on how to market my business using social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I understand the time commitment of using social media and how to manage that time.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel my business may benefit from my participation in this session.	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. **What was most valuable to you in this training? Why?**

6. **What was least valuable to you in this training? Why?**

7. **Additional Comments:**

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Networking Satisfaction Survey

Industry-Driven Support Model

Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs (PRIME)

Thank you for attending our training. Your feedback is extremely important. By completing this form you will help us plan and provide improved services for our future trainings. Please tell us about your experience.

Confidentiality: Your response is voluntary. Your identity will be kept confidential. Your responses will be used for purposes of evaluating effectiveness of the programs offered by the Center for Human Development-University of Alaska Anchorage.

1. Which of the following best reflects your level of satisfaction with the overall training?

☐ Not at all satisfied ☐ Somewhat satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Highly satisfied

2. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

As a result of this training...	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	Strongly agree 4
I am more aware of my social network.	☐	☐	☐	☐
My social network has increased.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel more connected with entrepreneurs in my industry.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel more comfortable reaching out to other entrepreneurs and professionals in my industry.	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. How satisfied are you with the presenter's ability to...

	Not at all satisfied 1	2	3	Highly satisfied 4
Communicate in an effective and interactive way.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Respond to my questions, or clarify the information being presented.	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements about this session:

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	Strongly agree 4
I feel my business may benefit from my participation in this session.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have an increased understanding of why networking is important for my business.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have an increased understanding of how to network.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had a chance to participate in the conversation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt respected and a part of the group.	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I had questions they were addressed.	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. What was most valuable to you in this training? Why?

6. What was least valuable to you in this training? Why?

7. Additional Comments:

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Technology Satisfaction Survey

Industry-Driven Support Model

Program for Investment in Microentrepreneurs (PRIME)

Thank you for attending our training. Your feedback is extremely important. By completing this form you will help us plan and provide improved services for our future trainings. Please tell us about your experience.

Confidentiality: Your response is voluntary. Your identity will be kept confidential. Your responses will be used for purposes of evaluating effectiveness of the programs offered by the Center for Human Development-University of Alaska Anchorage.

1. I was participating in this training as:
   - ☐ an entrepreneur
   - ☐ a support person for one or more entrepreneurs

Satisfaction Questions

2. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the technology used in this training.

Not at all satisfied									Highly satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. How satisfied are you with the software options (i.e., whiteboard/presentation window, audio, chat, options for user control) of the technology used in this session?

Not at all satisfied									Highly satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. How satisfied are you with the usability (i.e., layout of program, ease of start-up/entering program, computer skills required) of the technology used in this session?

Not at all satisfied									Highly satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Do you require accommodations to use this technology (e.g., screen reader, increased font, closed captioning)?
   - ☐ Yes - Continue to question 6.
   - ☐ No - Skip to question 7 on the next page.

6. How satisfied are you with the accessibility of the technology for individuals with disabilities (i.e., screen reader accessible, keyboard access to menus, transcription, number of steps to enter conference, complexity of entering conference)?

Not at all satisfied									Highly satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Quality & Usability Questions

7. Please select the audio option you typically use.

☐ I used computer audio. ☐ I used the telephone.

8. Please rate the quality of the following features of the technology used in this training:

	Very poor quality 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Highest quality 10
Whiteboard/Presentation window	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Audio	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Chat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Options for user control	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. In reference to the technology used in this training, how satisfied are you with each individual usability item below:

	Not at all satisfied 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Highly satisfied 10
Ease starting up/entering program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Layout of program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Computer skills required	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Recording Questions

10. Have you listened to any of the recordings?

☐ Yes - continue to question 11. ☐ No - skip to question 12.

11. Were the recordings helpful?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

12. Why didn't you access the recordings? (e.g., didn't have time, not interested in listening again, couldn't access the link)

Effectiveness of Technology

13. Was using Blackboard Collaborate an effective way to receive training?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why or why not?

14. Did you have problems with the technology (e.g., accessing the site, hearing, talking if you used a microphone, accessing the chat box)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please explain?

Additional Comments

15. Please provide any additional comments.

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Appendix D: Networking Slides

The following are examples of the slides used in our training series for each of the three networking sessions: Understanding Networks and Why they are Important, Network Practice, and Networking Strategies. These slides are available for use in your training program provided you credit the source. Speaker notes are included with the slides. Speaker notes can be accessed in Adobe Reader or Adobe Acrobat Pro using the "Comment" tab.

Understanding Networks and Why They are Important

Session 2

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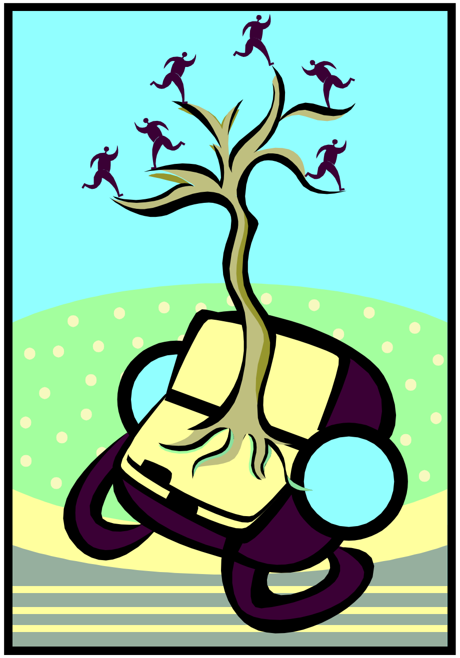
What is Social Capital?



Social Capital

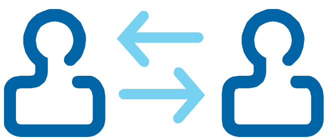
- "Social capital refers to the resources available in and through personal and business networks."
  - Baker, W. (2000). *Achieving Success Through Social Capital.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

- Comprised of relationship structures (i.e., networks) and relationship quality (i.e., norms of trust and reciprocity)
  - Stone, W (2003). Bonding, bridging, and linking with social capital. *Stronger Family Learning Exchange Bulletin*, 4, 13-16.

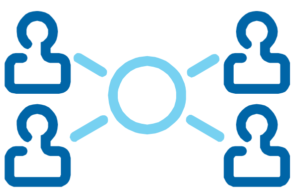
Networks Lead to Resources

- "People who build the right networks get the resources they need when they need them----entrepreneurs secure venture capital, investors find new business opportunities, job seekers locate good jobs, salespeople find new customers…"
  - Baker, W. (2000). *Achieving Success Through Social Capital.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

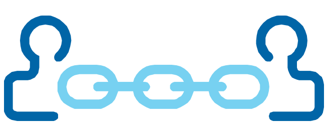
Types of Social Capital



Bonding: Members know one another. Involves trust and reciprocity. Helps you "get-by."



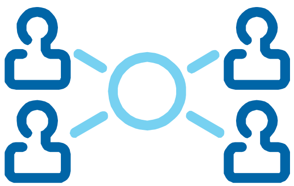
Bridging: Groups overlap so some members know each other while others don't. Involves bridging gaps and having access to resources. Helps you "get-ahead."



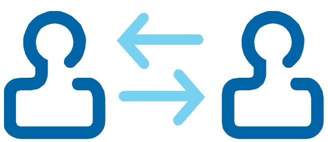
Linking: Social relations with people that can impact change. Involves access to resources and power. Helps you "get-ahead."

Stone, W (2003). Bonding, bridging, and linking with social capital. *Stronger Family Learning Exchange Bulletin*, 4, 13-16.

Types of Networks



Open: less overlap, not as many people know one another, more opportunity to meet others, good for sharing information and resources



Closed: highly overlapped, most or all people know one another, few opportunities to meet others, good for support and trust

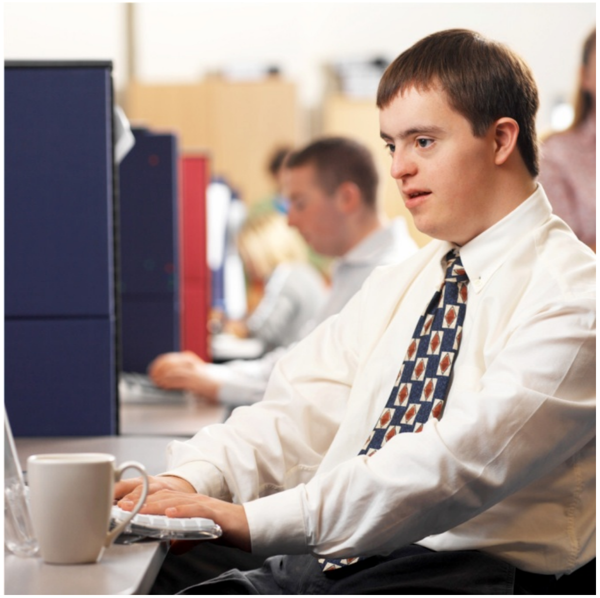
Why is it important?

According to Studies:

- Social capital and a variety of networks aid in finding employment.
  - Baker, W. (2000). *Achieving Success Through Social Capital.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Entrepreneurs engaged in networks both within and outside their community have a 94% probability of start up success.
  - Vennesland, B. (2004). Social capital and networks in forest-based rural economic development. *Scandinavian Journal of Forestry Research*, 19, 82-89.
- Social capital is the foundation for a longer, happier, and healthier life.
  - Baker, W. (2000). *Achieving Success Through Social Capital.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
  - Stone, W. & Hughes, J. (2002). Social Capital: empirical meaning and measurement validity. *Australian Institute of Family Studies research paper no. 27.* Available from http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs

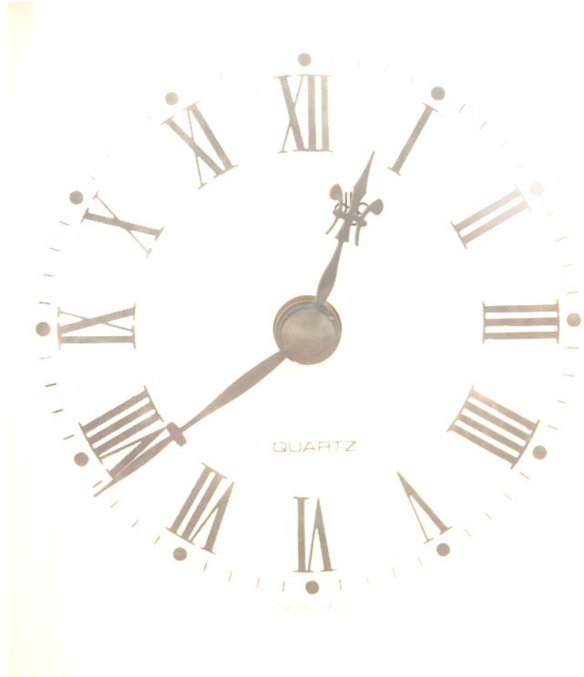
Social Capital and Individuals with Disabilities

- What have you heard or know about the social capital of individuals with disabilities?



Social capital and individuals with disabilities

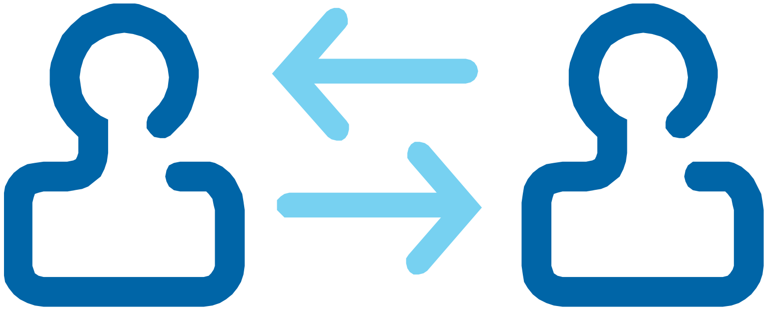
- "…little research and even less programming exist to help individuals with disabilities build and maintain strong social networks."
  - Condeluci, A. et al. (2008). Social Capital: A view from the field. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation,* 29, 133-139.
- "Many people with disabilities and their families have a greatly reduced capacity to form networks."
  - Chenoweth, L. & Stehlik, D .(2004). Implications of social capital for the inclusion of people with disabilities and families in community life. *Int. Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8(1), 59-72.
- "…the concept of social capital as a key to employment has been largely ignored by those assisting persons with disabilities to find employment."
  - Potts, B. (2005). Disability and employment: considering the importance of social capital. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 71(3), 20-25



Break Time

Examine Your Own Network

- When they study their networks, most people find that their networks are smaller and more internally focused than they imagined.
- Most conclude they should enlarge and diversify their networks.



Bonding

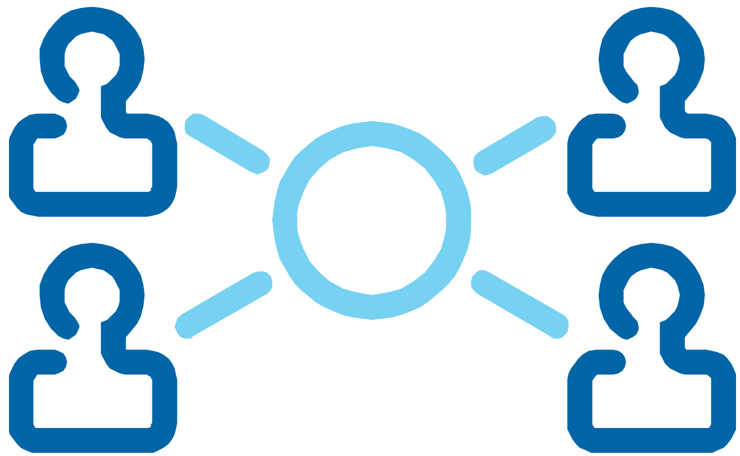
Members know one another. Involves trust and reciprocity. Helps you “get by.”

Jot Down up to 5 names

- During the last year, who have you relied on for assistance with important life matters?

Jot down up to 5 names

- During the last year, who did you hang out with?

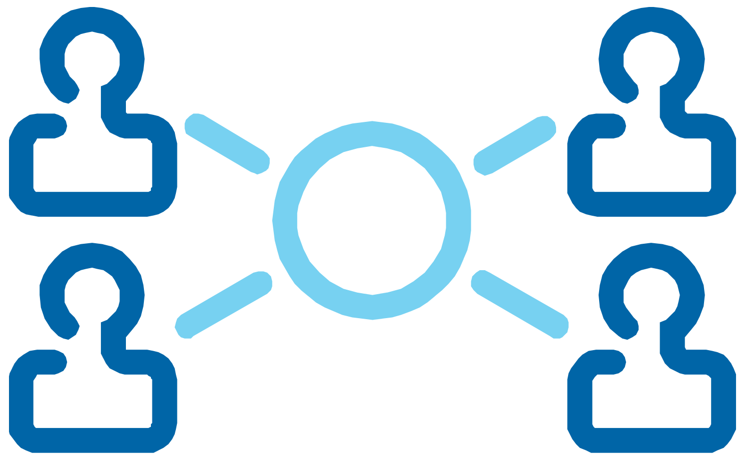


Bridging

Groups overlap so some members know each other while other don't. Involves bridging gaps and having access to resources. Helps you "get ahead."

Jot down up to 5 names

- During the last year, who gave you referrals to business help or resources?



Networking Tip

How can you develop bridging and linking networks?

Create an Elevator Pitch

- An elevator pitch is a brief overview of a business, a product, service, or project. The pitch is so called because it can be delivered in the time span of an elevator ride (say, thirty seconds). It is intended to start a conversation.
- It helps you clearly and briefly describe your core business.

Elements of an Elevator Pitch

- **Concise** - 30 to 60 seconds
- **Clear** - language that everyone understands
- **Powerful** - use words that are powerful and strong
- **Visual** - create a visual image for good retention
- **Tells a story or has a Hook** - something that snares their interest

Example Elevator Pitch

"We are accountants. We make sure you understand your financial statements. We want the process of billing your customers and paying the bills from your vendors every month to wind up making you money, instead of giving you continual unprofitable headaches. We do lots of things, but here is a good example. Just last week we showed a client that he was mistakenly using two different vendors to buy the same thing for different offices, instead of getting the vendors to compete for one big order at a lower price. That change will save our client $100,000 during the next quarter alone."

Crafting an Elevator Pitch

- Write down what you do 10 to 20 different ways.
- Write down benefits your business provides.
- Give an example of someone who benefits from your business.
- Put the best pieces together and practice it with friends.
- Bring us your draft elevator pitch next week. We'll look forward to critiquing it.

Action Steps

- Consider your networks - Are they more open? Are they more closed?
- Reflect on how well your networks are working for you
- Develop your elevator pitch
- Artists provide pictures of your work to your training facilitator to share in the next session

Thank you for attending!

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Network Practice
Communicating Your Message

Session 4

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Elevator Pitch

- **Concise** - 30 to 60 seconds
- **Clear** - language that everyone understands
- **Powerful** - use words that are powerful and strong
- **Visual** - create a visual image for good retention
- **Tells a story or has a Hook** - something that snares their interest

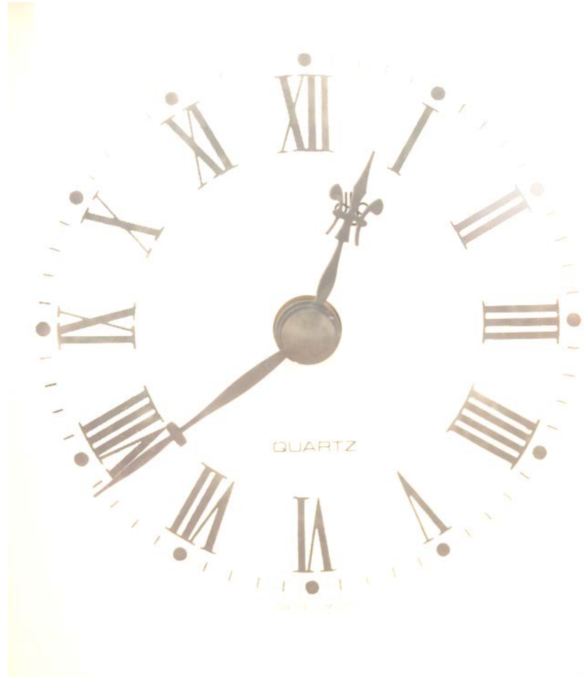
Practice Your Pitch

- Practice your elevator pitch with the group
- Provide feedback among the group
- Artists & Crafters can share a picture of their work when giving their pitch

John's Work (Example)

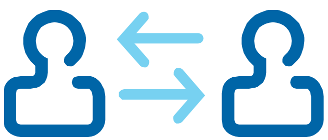
Your Unique Selling Proposition

- What is the industry gap?
- What are your competitors' weaknesses?
- What are your strengths?
- What can you offer that competition doesn't?
- What niche do you fill?

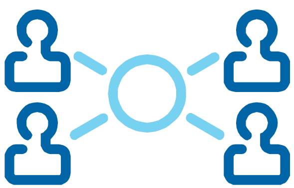


Break time

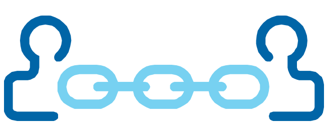
Recap on Social Capital



Bonding: Members know one another. Involves trust and reciprocity. Helps you "get-by."

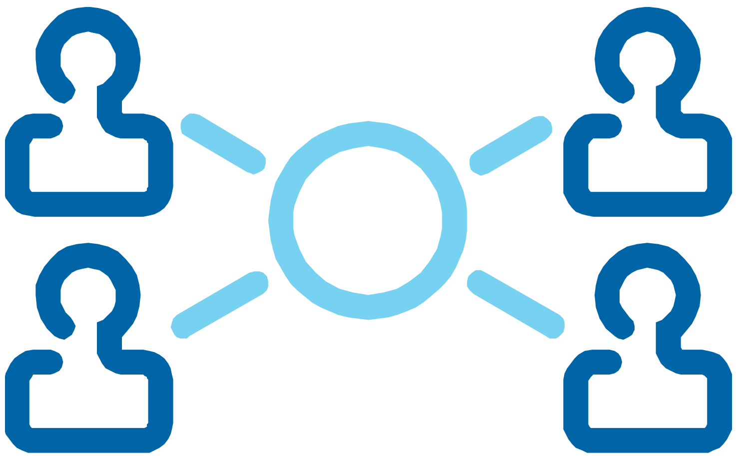


Bridging: Groups overlap so some members know each other while others don't. Involves bridging gaps and having access to resources. Helps you "get-ahead."



Linking: Social relations with people that can impact change. Involves access to resources and power. Helps you "get-ahead."

Stone, W (2003). Bonding, bridging, and linking with social capital. *Stronger Family Learning Exchange Bulletin*, 4, 13-16.



Networking Tip

How can you expand your networks?

Think About Places to Network

- What types of groups, associations, or organizations are you actively involved with?
- Which types of groups, associations, or organizations can you join?
- Brainstorm on ways to interact with people within these groups.
  - How to approach people you don't know
  - How to introduce yourself

Set Goals

- SMART Goals:
  - S-specific
  - M-measurable
  - A-attainable
  - R-realistic
  - T-time measured

Action Steps

- List groups, associations, or organizations you are involved with currently
- List groups, associations, or organizations you are interested in joining
- Work on your SMART goal
- Bring your lists of names from the first session to the final networking session

Thank you for attending!

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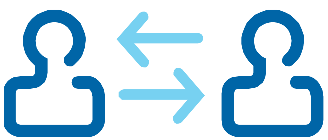
Networking Strategies

Session 6

UAA Center for Human Development
University of Alaska Anchorage

Recap on Social Capital



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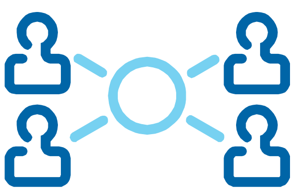

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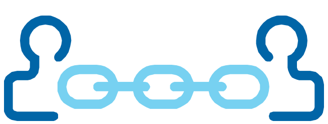

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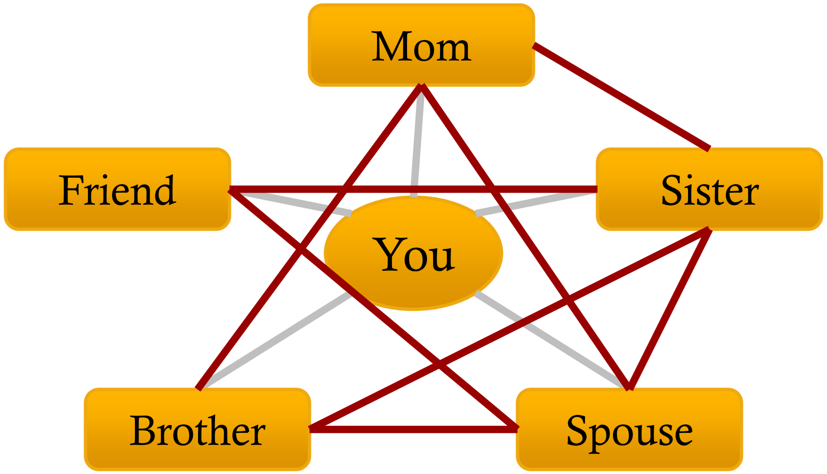
Stone, W (2003). Bonding, bridging, and linking with social capital. *Stronger Family Learning Exchange Bulletin*, 4, 13-16.

Map your Networks

- Refer to the people you listed for each of the following questions. Remember you can only list up to 5 people for each question.
  - During the last year, who have you relied on for assistance with important life matters?
  - During the last year, who did you hang out with?
  - During the last year, who gave you referrals to business help or resources?

Map your Networks

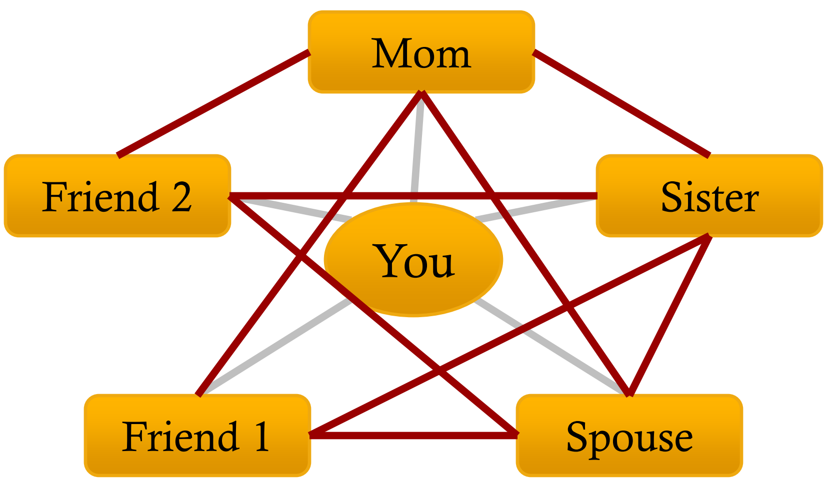
- Drawing network maps
  - Put yourself in the middle and place the people you listed around you
  - Draw lines between people that know each other more than an acquaintance.
  - Do this for each question.



Closed vs. Open Networks

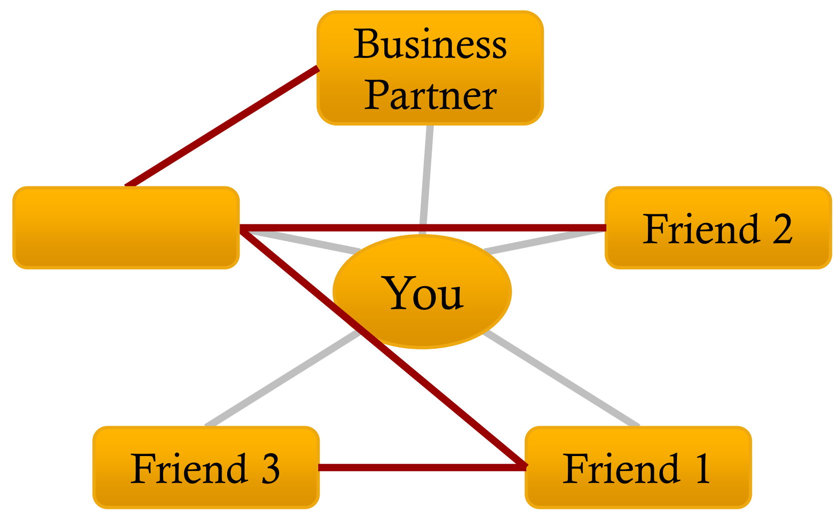
Closed/Bonding Networks

- More connections among the people you listed



Open/Bridging Networks

- Fewer connections among the people you listed



Open vs. Closed Networks

Closed/Bonding Network

- Fewer opportunities to meet other people
- Good for promoting group identity, trust and cooperation
- Good for building consensus and providing support

Open/Bridging Network

- Gives you more opportunities to meet other people
- Good for bridging gaps
- Good for getting new information and accessing resources

What is your goal?

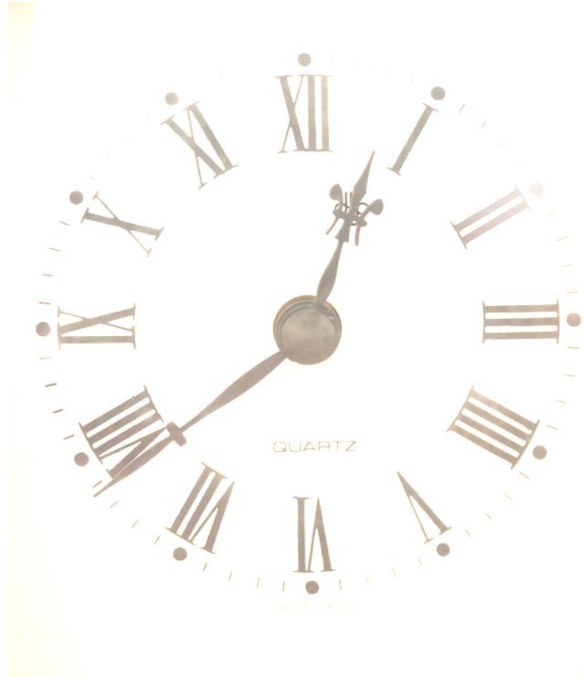
Closed/Bonding Network

- I want to "build a close-knit team with a common mission" (p. 61, Baker)
- I desire trust, cooperation and support

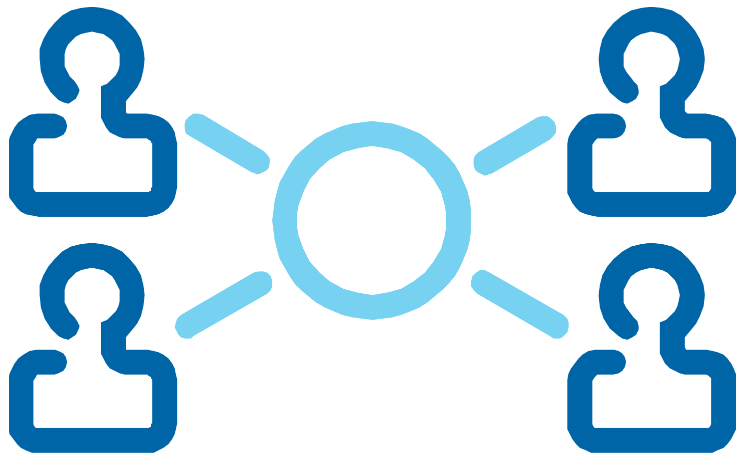
Open/Bridging Network

- I want to "get more information and discover new opportunities." (p. 61 Baker).
- I want to influence other people and have access to more opportunities and resources

Baker, W. (2000). *Achieving Success Through Social Capital.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.



Break time



Networking Tip

How do you build social capital?

Building Your Network

- What are some ways you can build your network?

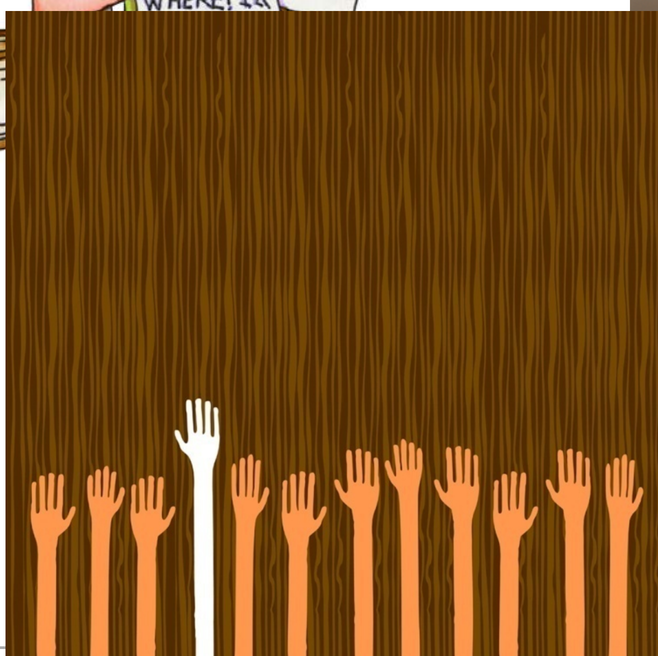
Focus on the "small wins"

- Network "smarter" not "harder"
- Diversify your networks. If everyone is like you, find ways to interact with people who are not like you.
- Externalize your focus to be with new and diverse groups

Ways to Build Social Capital

- Join an organized group
  - Art or cultural organization
  - Sports club
  - Trade or industry group
  - Spiritual group
- Take classes
- Volunteer
- Informal Socializing

Volunteer



Strategies for building your network

- Give, Give, Give
- Give your time, give your talents, offer your services
- Do this without expecting anything in return (not sales, not contacts, not anything)

10 reasons volunteering can grow your business

http://www.getentrepreneurial.com/entrepreneurship/top_10_reasons_volunteering_can_help_you_grow_your_business.html

The following was posted by Michelle Ulrich on GetEntrepreneurial.com

- Volunteering…
  - Helps you find your place in the community
  - Facilitates many new learning opportunities
  - Fosters new relationships and builds on existing ones
  - Try out new skills or hone existing ones
  - Provides a sense of giving, which has been shown to be healthy for our brains and overall health
  - Builds self-confidence and potential for building leadership skills
  - Can lead to business opportunities
  - An important value to pass on and can act as a role model
  - It's a way to share knowledge with others

Develop Your Networking Strategies

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Other businesses that have similar clientele
- Organizations that your customer base might frequent
- Look at list you made of groups, associations, and organizations

Groups, Associations, and Organizations

- How many groups, associations, or organizations did you list?
  - Too many?
  - Too few?
  - Just right?
- Name one group or organization you would like to volunteer for, join, or become more involved in.
- How do you think joining and/or increasing your involvement in this group may help you?
  - Personal goals?
  - Business goals?

Check in on SMART Goals

- SMART Goals:
  - S-specific
  - M-measurable
  - A-attainable
  - R-realistic
  - T-time measured

Action Steps

- Discuss ways for this group to stay in contact
- List 5 ways you can start building your network locally or online
- Continue with your SMART goal and develop new goals

Thank you for attending!

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