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Business

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Learning from the experts



Brigitte Corneilus (left) and Lilianna Gambarte (right) listen to Cherie Soehren-Moe during the Talk with the Experts luncheon, part of the celebration of Small Business Week last week at the Doubletree Hotel at Reid Park. Soehren-Moe, with Sohren Moe Associates Inc., offers marketing advice to the two women. Above, some of more than 300 small business owners soak up knowledge during the luncheon.

Professionals offer advice on 27 subjects to help business owners run their companies more efficiently

By TEYA VITU
Citizen Business Writer

Small businesses need more than a shingle above the door and something to sell. Success in business requires a savvy in marketing, personnel issues, business plans, law and taxes, and perhaps even Internet knowledge.

All these subjects and more were discussed last week at a Talk With the Experts Luncheon that celebrated the nationally recognized Small Business Week.

More than 300 small business owners took up the offer from the Small Business Development Council to glean expertise in 27 subjects in roundtable discussions at the Doubletree Hotel at Reid Park.

"Feel free to suck the life out of them. It's

free today," Larry Cummings told the crowd as he launched the roundtable talks.

Cummings, business development specialist at the Tucson Office of Economic Development, and other event organizers were encouraged by the spirited conversation from table to table. The Talk With the Experts was new this year to the event offerings and organizers wondered how it would be received.

"People are really using this as an opportunity to learn," Cummings said. "There's a lot of conversation going on."

Ken Kasner and Lilianna Gambarte learned about marketing. Brian Ellerman

got pointers about liability and Tim Fowler picked up tax and accounting tips that may help him buy a business.

"I just did a little networking," said Lau-

'Feel free to suck the life out of (the experts). It's free today.'

Larry Cummings, business development specialist at the Tucson Office of Economic Development

ra Godsil, who opened Sonora Tile Design six months ago. "I was meeting people, seeing what they were doing. They had some ideas for me."

Gambarte, a self-employed massage

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Experts offer advice to business owners

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therapist, learned how to make better fliers at a table with marketing expert Cherie Soehren-Moe, who also recommended Gambarte reward customers who refer others to her.

"I'm a small business. I'm doing poorly. My weak point right now is marketing," Gambarte said.

Kasner, a management consultant with a Ph.D., needed help marketing his business. What did he learn from marketing expert MJ Jensen?

"How to focus on customers and not focus on myself in my marketing pieces," Kasner said.

Jensen's table had people taking pages of copious notes. Her message stuck to business fundamentals.

"Everybody has a different business but the philosophy is the same," Jensen said.

"Make sure whoever buys something from you gets the best value for the dollar. How do you do that?"

The simple question doesn't have a simple answer, she concluded.

Ellerman owns Siesta Consulting, an information technology firm, and he had many questions about liability regarding unauthorized access to client Internet sites.

"There were a lot of things about liability that I wasn't aware of," Ellerman said.

"I need to go through quite a few steps to formalize my practice to make sure I'm going to be insurable."

Ellerman is a one-man business and he noted that every minute he's not working is a minute he's not making money.

Yet he set aside several hours to take part in the daylong Small Business Week event.

"To me it's an investment," Ellerman explained. "Investing my time to learn now is more important than making a building doing something improperly."