

November 2009



INROADS

Paving the Way for Montana's Disadvantaged Business Enterprises



Montana Department of Transportation
DBE Program
Civil Rights Bureau
P.O. Box 201001
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Volume 9, Issue 11

Small Businesses are Finally Getting Into Facebook



By GEOFF WILLIAMS, AOL SMALL BUSINESS

So you've probably been using Facebook for a while now -- as in, you're using the website to link up to your old prom date or the people you worked with at your first job. But using it to help run your business? That's another story.

American Express OPEN, an online small business forum, recently did a survey of 763 small business owners of companies with fewer than 100 employees and found that nearly 60 percent of their members feel challenged when finding innovative ways to market, but only 10 percent are even marketing through online social networks like Facebook, Twitter and MySpace.com. More businesses are finally starting to wake up to the social networking potential. Facebook, in particular, has become invaluable. As *The Los Angeles Times* recently put it, "The free social networking site -- blocked in many workplaces as a potential time-waster -- is increasingly becoming an inexpensive marketing tool for small businesses."

If you haven't yet figured out how to make Facebook work for your business, consider these do's and don'ts.

Don't: Try to make money off Facebook. It may sound crazy, but the goal should be interacting with your customers and adding value to their lives, and then the money will presumably come. But if you actively try to directly profit off Facebook users, if that's your sole goal, you may wind up being sorely disappointed. Jeff Widman, a marketing expert says, "At the end of the day, if success is interacting with your clients, Facebook is a great way to do that. But if your goal is strictly to make more money, Facebook isn't a good way to do that."

Why? For starters, people don't enjoy being sold to. Facebook is about relationships. Start the hard sell on your Facebook friends, and soon you won't have any friends left.

Do: Hold a contest. If you're looking for a way to utilize Facebook, this is a popular strategy among businesses, large and small. Used to be, you had to advertise your contest on the radio and TV, and of course, you can still do that, but these days, there's a good argument that all you need is Facebook and some desperate journalist working on deadline who wants to use your business as an example for a Facebook story he's writing, and suddenly you have viral marketing.

Don't: Make Facebook all about you. It might sound crazy -- you put up a fan page, and you get people following your company. Of course, it's all about *you*. But, no, it's not, pal -- think again. As noted, we're all friends here. You need to make your company's Facebook page about your friends as much as it is. After all, you don't go to your best friend's house and talk only about you, right? You hopefully ask about his or her kids, or their career or if they've avoided getting the swine flu.

Do: Reward your friends. *The Los Angeles Times* recently ran an interesting story about Facebook and profiled Charles Nelson, president of Sprinkles Cupcakes, based out of Beverly Hills, California, and noted how his bakery has 70,000 Facebook fans. Every day, on their Sprinkles' Facebook website, they announce a secret word, like "downtown" or "gingerbread," and the first 25 or 50 people to show up at one of their five stores and whisper the word, get a free cupcake.

Don't: Treat all your friends the same. Meaning, if you have a deal that's great for only a small contingent of your customers, try not to blanket everyone with e-mails announcing the aforementioned great deal. For instance, says Whaling, "If you have an event that's local, don't send an announcement to someone a thousand miles away. That will make them unfriend your page. You have to be smart about how you interact with everyone, that you're not communicating in a spammy way. That's really the rule -- don't be spammy."

Do: Use Facebook to benefit your clients. Maybe you can't think of a single way you can truly use Facebook to draw in more customers and create revenue, but you can almost certainly use Facebook to help your clients make money or simply have a better quality of life, and if you do, that goodwill will probably boomerang back in your favor.

INROADS

Bid and Contracting Opportunities

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MDT holds two bid lettings each month.

Proposed for letting December 2009

UPN/UNIT	PROJECT ID	FINANCIAL DISTRICT	PROJECT DESIGNATION	TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION	LENGTH MILES
6496 000	IM 90-1(177)44	1	SUPERIOR – WEST	RESURFACING SEAL & COVER	6.1
5780 000	IM 90-1(166)45	1	SUPERIOR AREA STRUCTURES	MAJOR BRIDGE REHAB WITHOUT ADDED CAPACITY	
3871 003	IM 90-6(114)307	2	MRL STRUCTURES - BOZEMAN	BRIDGE REPLACEMENT WITH NO ADDED CAPACITY	
4475 000	ARRA 294-1(8)27	2	MARTINSDALE-NORTH	RECONSTRUCTION-WITHOUT ADDED CAPACITY	2.1
4291 000	ARRA 15-2(81)125	2	BUTTE AREA STRUCTURES	BRIDGE REPLACEMENT WITH NO ADDED CAPACITY	
4810 000	ARRA-BR 9003(39)	3	MILK RIVER-7 CM W HARLEM	BRIDGE REPLACEMENT WITH NO ADDED CAPACITY	

For further information on upcoming projects, visit MDT's website at:
www.mdt.mt.gov/business/contracting/upcoming_prj.shtml

The State of Montana offers one stop vendor information at the following link:
<http://svc.mt.gov/gsd/onestop/SolicitationDefault.aspx>

This website contains information from all agencies that are soliciting a contract.
 Check it out!

Don't forget, if you need any training or Supportive Services, contact Shannon at 444-7287.

DBE Supportive Services is busy putting together a great new tool, The DBE Toolbox. Look for your new DBE Toolbox soon, it will contain information on bidding, financing, classes, etc.....



Do you know someone who could be a DBE?

If they are a small business owned by a minority or a woman and have less than \$750,000 in personal net worth and less than \$22.41 million in sales averaged over the last 3 years, they may qualify! Tell them to contact Wendy Stewart, DBE Program Manager at 406-444-6337 or westewart@mt.gov for an application packet.

Welcome, Recently Certified DBEs!

Peggy Eby
Bob Marshall Construction Company, Inc.
 Excavation, Earthwork, Grading, Water/Sewer Lines

James Garrigan
Northern Engineering & Consulting, Inc.
 Surveying

Rhonda Foldvik
T & R Trucking Inc
 Trucking



MDT Awarded Contracts for September and DBE participation:

Prime	Location	Project	DBE Participation
H K CONTRACTORS	W YELLOWSTONE URBAN TARGHEE PASS TO W YELLOWSTONE	NH 12-1(19)9 NH 12-1(16)0	2.77%
KNIFE RIVER – BILLINGS	8 TH AVE – MAIN TO 9 TH -LAUREL	ARRA 6905(2)	.60%
LS JENSEN CONSTRUCTION &	VICTOR URBAN-NORTH BELL CROSSING- N & S	NH 7-1(116)60 NH 7-1(102 61 F	.98%
PRINCE INC	S OF CULBERTSON-SOUTH	NH 62-2(20)12	0.00%
RIVERSIDE CONTRACTING INC – MSLA	ABSAROKEE-N. & S.	STPP 78-2(9)30	1.47%
RIVERSIDE CONTRACTING INC – MSLA	BEAR CANYON-W JACKSON CR INT	IM 90-6(122)314	0.00%
TAMIETTI CONSTRUCTION CO	CLARK FORK – 2 KM E WARM SPRINGS	ARRA 9012(131)	5.09%
Average Participation			1.25%

Diggings: Online survey to help area businesses

If you are a Southwest Montana business owner, two economic assistance organizations want to hear from you. The Butte Local Development Corp. and Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development have joined with public and private sources to fund an online survey and business directory, the first of its kind for the area. The survey, which can be found at www.swmtbiz.org, asks about 100 short-answer and multiple choice questions, everything from contact information and type of industry — to how easy is it to find qualified job candidates and where they purchase materials. The survey takes about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Jim Smitham, BLDC executive director, said specific answers will be kept confidential, but the responses will be compiled into reliable statistics for the area. "We want to know what businesses are out there," said Smitham. "We want to know what they do, what they need and what they offer." Warren Harden, economic development planner with Headwaters RC&D, said a goal of the survey is to help area companies build relationships and know more about who is selling what. He said it can also help show what niches need to be filled, spotlighting business opportunities for area entrepreneurs. If local businesses support each other, Smitham said the dollars that are leaving the region could circulate locally many times over. Businesses can also request to be notified by representatives of the organizations, who can suggest such things as ways to increase their capital or bid for government contracts. The survey was distributed in October to 3,500 businesses in the seven southwest Montana counties. Those who did not receive a survey — and even individuals — are welcome to fill it out, too. "We apologize if we missed you and we want to make sure this gets in as many hands as possible," said Smitham. The responses are beginning to trickle in, and will be collected until the end of the year. The responses will begin to be tallied around Jan. 1, but will continue to be updated See DIGGINGS, Page D3 throughout 2010. Similar surveys have been completed in the Bozeman area and other regions throughout the country. "It's been tried and been successful before," said Smitham. "We think it's another tool businesses can use." The survey is available to businesses without Internet access by calling the BLDC at 723-4349 or Headwaters RC&D at 782-7333.

— Reporter Tim Trainor may be reached via e-mail at tim.trainor@lee.net or call 496-5519.

MDT Civil Rights Bureau Directory

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WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Inroads, the Montana DBE Newsletter, is your tool to gain new ideas, meet new people, network with other businesses, blow your own horn, and move your business down the road to success.

- Have you or an associate won an award or been promoted?
- Do you have an idea for an article, or would you like to have your firm profiled in the newsletter?
- Do you want to show off your contracting handiwork?
- Do you want to hire an employee or buy/sell a business-related item?

Let us know what's new! Send questions, comments, ideas, photos, and want-ads to: Wendy Stewart at westewart@mt.gov or call (406)444-6337.

Meetings, Workshops, and Training Opportunities

December & January

12/2 Indian Business Development Expo
SKC Joe McDonald Fitness & Event Center, Pablo, MT
9 am – 4 pm
Business Startup Resources
Business Contacts and Programs
Relationship Building
For more info: Velda Shelby 675-2700 or Jerry Lamb 675-3577

12/2, 3, 8 & 9 Photoshop Web Design
Montana State University, 20 E Olive, Suite LL10,
Bozeman
Cost \$98
For more info: 994-6683

12/9 Business After Hours
Valley Federal Credit Union, 201 North Broadway,
Billings
5-7 pm
Cost \$5/person
RSVP 245-4111

12/10 "Turning Economic Doldrums Into Opportunities"
Doubletree Edgewater, 100 Madison, Missoula
11:30 am – 1 pm
Business luncheon featuring Donald Ton, Hong Kong
Commissioner of Economic and Trade Affairs to the US
Government
RSVP by Monday, Dec. 8th, 243-69982 or
mwtc@mwtc.org

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Introduction to QuickBooks Training

Montana Tech Butte, ELC Building 3rd Floor, Computer
Lab
8 am – 5 pm
Cost \$35
For reservations, call Ashley Popl 782-7333 ext 300
Space is limited

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Grant Proposal Writing Workshop

Montana Tech Butte, Main Hall Rom 106
8:30 am – 5 pm
Cost \$50
For more info: Enrollment Services 496-4526 or 1-800-
445-TECH

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Economic Recovery

MonTec Conference Room, 1121 E. Broadway,
Missoula
11:30 am – 1 pm
This workshop will provide tips and techniques to help
you with your grant writing efforts. Cost \$10
RSVP Leah Borow @ sits@mountainhomemt.org

