



Ask SCORE for Business Advice

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Make Your Business Better by Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt

Learning how to make your business better is important even if you're already recognized as a good business. The Better Business Bureau has added educational opportunities to meetings, and as a result, has forged a relationship with SCORE to provide programs.

JoEllen Wollangk, vice president for the BBB, is regional manager for Northeast Wisconsin. Her job includes increasing the number of BBB accredited businesses, speaking to community groups, answering questions for the media, planning and implementing community events, fielding calls from consumers regarding specific businesses, and offering training to members.

Members were surveyed for topics and asked for programs on cost effective marketing, finding and keeping customers, improving customer satisfaction, and selling more to existing customers. Other topics of interest included improving employee loyalty, increasing productivity, managing cash flow, collections, evaluating alternative distribution channels, understanding the global marketplace, and planning for retirement. The variety of these topics makes SCORE an excellent business partner. With volunteer counselors having vast business experiences, members are qualified to speak, counsel, or offer training in all of these areas.

I spoke at a BBB meeting about a month ago, and invited members to contact me if they had any questions or areas where assistance would be helpful. One of the members notified me with a question regarding employee compensation issues. An e-mail went out to SCORE volunteers, and within the day five members with compensation experience responded and were happy to assist. The speed of the response and information provided speaks volumes about SCORE volunteers and their desire to help businesses.

For Wollangk, the association with SCORE is an effort to make good businesses better. Not every business can join BBB, they must prove that they meet certain standards before being accredited. “The BBB looks at the history of complaints that the company may have received, and determines if they have properly addressed those issues,” Wollangk explained. “The BBB also checks to make sure there is no government action against the

business, that the company is properly licensed in their industry and that the principals of the company do not have a criminal record.”

Once accredited, BBB businesses must work to resolve any complaints that may arise or provide a satisfactory response to the customer. For BBB entrepreneurs, the driving force is to have an ethical business that provides exceptional customer service. That isn't the case with many of the businesses that Wollangk receives complaints about.

The BBB is a non-profit organization that assists consumers by reporting whether companies take care of their customers or not. The organization receives thousands of complaints from customers every year, and does her best to resolve them. That's why she believes so strongly in the mission of the BBB to accredit good businesses. “Our goal is to help consumers find businesses they can trust,” Wollangk noted.

For accredited businesses, the relationship with SCORE is designed to provide information that helps them succeed. “SCORE has an excellent record of assisting small businesses and we feel we can help each other reach our goals and benefit the Wisconsin economic climate,” Wollangk concluded.

If your business group would like assistance with training, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit www.greenbayscore.org or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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