



Central Alabama Women's Business Center

Serving Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, Blount, Walker, Talladega & Tuscaloosa Counties

The Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter for Women Entrepreneurs in Alabama

September •
October 2002

Excerpt from *Fortune Small Business Newsletter*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Every week, we receive letters from people seeking money to open a small business. Often, they want to know if the government will give them a grant to get started. The reality is that there aren't many grants like these around, unless you're developing a new technology.

While that news may sound discouraging, it shouldn't be. Most of America's most successful entrepreneurial companies started very small, without much money in their coffers from the government or anyone else. They didn't serve their first clients from brand new office space. Often, their founders worked from a spare bedroom or garage, holding full-time jobs while they devoted themselves to start-

ing their ventures in the evening or on weekends. It may have been tough, but their ingenuity, patience, and willingness to tolerate risk allowed them to turn their dreams into profitable ventures.

During the economic boom, there were times when it may have seemed that starting a successful business required millions of dollars in funding from venture capitalist. Maybe that was the case for some high-tech businesses, but it's not true if you want to start a retail store or an auto repair shop. If you're tired of putting off your dreams while you wait for a massive cash infusion, check out our advice columns on www.fsb.com for tips on how to start a business for less. Whether you click on Verne Harnish's Growth Guru column or Joanne Cole's publicity tips in The Flak, you'll find that the answer to your prayers isn't necessarily a friendly banker. It may be your

Thank You

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You Go, Girl!

Fashion Consulting by Joan, Inc.—
Doncaster and Elena

Q: Why did you start your own business?

It was my lifelong dream to somehow be involved in the fashion industry. However, as many do, I began a career in something totally unrelated to fashion and it took me 25 years to realize the opportunity to fulfill my dream. I worked as a legal assistant to an attorney for 23 years. I thought I was content. He was a wonderful man to work for and I learned a great many things during those years. However, in 1992, I had an opportunity to work part-time as a wardrobe consultant for Doncaster. I had no experience in sales, just a love of fashion, a desire to help women look their best and a gift from God of the talent to know how to do this. For 5 years I tried to work both jobs. However, I began to realize that my talents were being wasted in the law office and that my real love was in the fashion world. In 1997, I developed breast cancer. It was time for me to make a decision regarding my life.

God very me that will for con-my busi-knew plan for that plan was to heal me so that I would be in a position to develop relationships with other women; to help them create a better image for themselves, both inward and outward. I have devoted my business to trying to understand my client's needs and schedule constraints and to help them define and create unique wardrobes for their versatile lifestyles. God has certainly blessed my business by helping me to be the #1 sales consultant in the nation for the past 3 years and being the #1 consultant in the state of Alabama for 9 of the 10 years I have been selling.

Featured Entrepreneur:
Joan Cardwell
Fashion Consulting by Joan, Inc.



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Q: What do you love about being a woman

business owner?

I love being a woman business owner because it has given me the opportunity to develop personal relationships with women. Many times, after we are grown, married and have children, we neglect our relationships with other women. It has also given me the opportunity to be involved in some charity work that I never seemed to have the time for before.

Q: What words of encouragement can you pass on to future entrepreneurs?

I would encourage other women entrepreneurs to follow their dreams and their passions, to know there will be sacrifices and be willing to make them, to always listen to those who know more than you do and to always be willing to help and mentor those who know less. Don't be afraid of a challenge and don't be afraid to fail. Just get up and try again and again. A positive attitude and a smile can overcome many disappointments.

Q: How has the Central Alabama Women's Business Center been helpful to you?

Trudy Phillips has certainly been an inspiration to me with her dedication and hard work toward educating women entrepreneurs and preparing them for the business world.

Central Alabama Women's Business Center

A project of the Schlarb Foundation for Women Entrepreneurs

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Put Your Business on the FastTrac®! An entrepreneurial training program

FastTrac is a practical, hands-on business development program designed to help entrepreneurs sharpen the skills needed to create, manage and grow a successful business. FastTrac participants don't just learn about business, they live it. They work on their own business ideas or ventures throughout the course - moving their ventures to reality or new levels of growth.

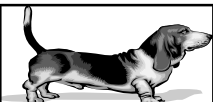
What are the FastTrac programs?

FastTrac NewVenture and FirstStep are two programs designed for aspiring entrepreneurs or start-ups. Before you quit your job or invest your life savings, it might be nice to know if your idea has appeal. The programs assist aspiring business owners by helping them determine whether their business concept is a realistic business opportunity. Both courses cover personal and business criteria, market research, financial documents and financing a new venture. Participants also learn how to conduct a feasibility study on their business idea.

FastTrac Planning is designed for existing small business owners, with the focus on helping them learn and implement key business strategies to transform and improve their business. FastTrac Planning gives you an environment in which to step back and look at your whole business. This program provides participants with information on strategic planning, legal issues, market research and analysis, financial documents and cash flow management. It also covers financing methods and growth strategies for small business owners.

Where do I find information?

If you are interested in finding out more information about these informative and worthwhile programs you can contact us at (205) 250-6380. Visit the FastTrac web site as well at www.fasttrac.org.



Looking for a companion dog? Check out..
WWW.BHRA.ORG

Technology Corner

How do I submit my site to Search Engines?

By Patricia Todd, Technology Coach

There are hundreds of different search engines and they are growing every day. The most popular search engines are:

- Google.com
- Yahoo.com
- AltaVista.com
- MSN.com

If you have a web site and want to make sure that it gets listed on a search engine, you should do your homework.

1. Find out what similar sites are being listed by performing a search on the keywords related to your site.
2. Review those sites, if it is a national company they are probably PAYING for inclusion.
3. Are you willing to devote some time to



- submit your site to search engines on a regular basis? If not, you might want to contract with someone to do that for you.
4. Are you willing to pay for inclusion? For example, YAHOO will add you to their virtual shopping mall for \$50 a month and a percentage of your sales.

There are some local web companies that will work with you to submit your site to the major search engines. They work on an annual fee and there is no guarantee that they can get your site listed, unless you pay for inclusion. If you are interested in contacting one of those companies, give me a call at the office.

In summary, there is no standard today for search engine submission. Each one operates differently and you need to determine how much you want to budget for inclusion.

Recommended Reads



Win Government Contracts For Your Small Business

By: John Digiacomio and James Kleckner

Government contracts under \$100,000 are targeted to small businesses. *Win Government Contracts for Your Small Business* will show you how to get in on the action in just 10 easy-to-understand steps. This book covers step-by-step and in detail, how to successfully compete for federal contracts—and make more money for your small business. In *Win Government Contracts*, you'll learn:

- The simple most important step to take before you start bidding on contracts
- Where to find government buyers
- The best source of bid leads
- How to write a winning proposal
- Essential government web sites

Federal Contracting Made Easy By: Scott A. Stanberry

The fact is it's not as hard to get a contract as you might think. With millions of contracts awarded each year, the government has a need for a wide range of goods and services. The government contracting process includes a significant amount of paperwork to say the least, but the payoff is BIG! *Federal Contracting Made Easy* will lead you easily and smoothly through the stages to a winning contract. *Federal Contracting Made Easy* spells out everything you need to know to succeed in the federal marketplace. If you're currently working for a business (large or small) or thinking of starting your own, this book is for you!