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Editor's Comments

How is your business doing? We have all heard the warning signs that the business climate is shaky. I came across some interesting information on small business loans made by commercial banks in Connecticut. The number of SBA Guaranteed loans issued by CT banks has increased from 334 in January to 750 in August, and at the same time the average value of loans has gone up 10%. That tells me that banks have confidence things are turning around.

By the way, forget the idea that banks will loan money to you based on a handshake and the look in your eye. Banks are requiring proof that you have successfully managed your business or a similar business for at least two years and that you have a solid business plan that demonstrates how you will pay the loan back. More on business plans later.

Articles in this issue - [Is your Website Effective](#), [Common threads of a Successful Business](#), [introducing another key SCORE counselor](#), and [Grants, Patents, etc.](#) There is also a great training module in the SCORE on-line training section - Creating an on line presence. You will find a hyper-link to this learning module in the section for [Interesting Reading](#).

We have rolled out our new, refreshed, and updated Web Site.

Set aside some time...

... **this Fall.**

Touch base with your SCORE counselor and sign up for a workshop or two.

Review our 2008 workshops for the fall schedule:

- Sept 16-"Managing Your Business" sponsored by Liberty Bank at the Clinton Library.

- Oct. 21 - "Managing your Business Finances" sponsored by Liberty Bank at the Acton Library in Old Saybrook

More workshops are planned for later in September and for October and November sponsored by the Guilford Savings Bank, the Killingworth and Old Saybrook Chambers of Commerce, and the Liberty Bank.

SCORE® National Website

SCORE offers national E-mail Counseling via the Internet! Visit: www.score.org for more information.

You will also find a wealth of resources there for your planning and research needs. Look for the feature "Webinar" - free "on-line" Seminars. The Seminars are ready-made classrooms covering major business topics.

[Check it out!](#) Look for the new Quick Links on the Home page to important resources (outline for business plans, cash flow sheets, etc.). Use the new ["Site Map"](#) to browse through the new sections on how the Counseling Process works and how you can get a quick start on writing your Business Plan.



Our newsletter continues to grow in popularity. We welcome your feedback and will publish any comments you would like us to pass along. Send your email to Editor at score579@hotmail.com or leave a phone message at 860-388-9508.

Dennis Peoples
Editor

Workshop Sponsors

Even though it is a beautiful time of year to be outside, your SCORE chapter is busy planning a new series of workshops for the fall of 2008.

- Sept 16-"Managing Your Business" sponsored by the Liberty Bank at the Clinton Library.
- Oct. 21 - "Managing your Business Finances" sponsored by the Liberty Bank at the Acton Library in Old Saybrook
- More to be scheduled

We appreciate the sponsorship of these events by Liberty Bank, Essex Printing, and Guilford Savings Bank. All of our sponsors recognize that a well-trained client is more likely to be successful. Make sure you sign up for one or more. The information is very helpful for improving the performance of your business and preparing for a potential loan application.



Eric Steinmetz - Key Person

Next in our series of biographical sketches of SCORE volunteers is Eric Steinmetz.

Contact Us!

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Join Our Mailing List!

Score Business Seminars

For more information and reservations please call the following:

Guilford Workshops:
Guilford Chamber of Commerce
203-453-9677

Clinton Workshops:
Heather Downie Desilio, Liberty Bank, 860-669-1086, hdesilio@liberty-bank.com or the Clinton Chamber of Commerce, 860-669-3889, chamber@clintonct.com.

Old Saybrook Workshops:
Old Saybrook Chamber of Commerce
Judy Sullivan
judy@oldsaybrookchamber.com
860-388-3266

Gateway to Success on Your Terms

A second generation SCORE counselor, Eric, a native of Cos Cob, graduated with a degree in Political Science from Southern Connecticut State University and a graduate degree in International Management from Thunderbird School of Global Management in Phoenix, Arizona.

Shortly after beginning as a purchasing agent with a Dutch packaging firm with U.S. offices in Greenwich, Eric was transferred to Amsterdam in 1971. He was promoted to successive assignments in market research, product management, and sales coordination leading to general management where he specialized in warehousing and distribution.

During the next ten years, there were several moves to Belgium and France. After a one-year assignment as Sales Manager for his company for the African Continent, Eric settled with his wife, Sylvie, and their three daughters in Lausanne, Switzerland. Over the next two decades, he was involved in the start-up of several Swiss subsidiaries of multinational corporations. Eric points out that this experience offers parallels to small business issues confronted frequently by clients counseled by SCORE.



For twenty-two years as General Manager in Switzerland in the parcel delivery business, Eric was exposed to the challenges of negotiating with government postal monopolies and customs authorities. The goal was to implement seamless import and export movements, while assuring on-time pick-up and delivery, for every postal code in Switzerland and Lichtenstein, including the most remote Alpine villages.

Retiring in 2004, Eric and Sylvie spent a year traveling extensively prior to settling in Guilford, where Eric is also a member of the Economic Development Commission.

Eric emphasizes that he is not a specialist in the pure sense of running a small business. However, his hands-on experience includes the administrative set-up of legal entities, recruitment, business plan/budgeting, and financial reporting. Eric also points out that the justification analysis skills he acquired to open a branch office or to put an additional truck and driver on the road use precisely the same step-by-step decision making processes SCORE counsels entrepreneurs to use in making the right decisions to build their own businesses.

In addition to counseling in Guilford and Madison, Eric is the Southeastern CT Chapter Chair for 2008-2009. "As Chair", Eric says, "I am charged with the primary mission to 'market' the unbeatable SCORE value proposition from Guilford to

The Southeastern CT Chapter of SCORE® helps approximately two hundred people just like you each year. We believe that business decisions deserve to be discussed in an environment where all of the relevant details about your business and your plans can be aired. Our counseling process consistently yields high quality results.

We make it easy for you to get "face-to-face" counseling. Call 860 388 9508, email score579@hotmail.com, or visit our Chapter website: www.southeasternctscore.org.

You can also get "on-line" counseling support through our national SCORE website - www.score.org. You will find a wealth of information and resources at both web sites, but our own web site is specially tailored to your needs in Connecticut.

Counseling Locations & Times

Counseling appointments are available in the Old Saybrook, Mystic, Madison, Norwich, Guilford, and New London/Groton [Gales Ferry] areas. "Walk-in's" are also welcome at Gales Ferry, Guilford, and Norwich as well.

When:

The 1st and 2nd Tuesdays of each month in **Old Saybrook**. The New Alliance Bank, 20 Main St., Old Saybrook, [2nd Floor Conference Room] @ 9:15 AM 10:15 AM 11:15 AM.

The 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month in **Madison** at the Liberty Bank, 859 Boston Post Road (Route #1), Madison @ 9:15 AM 10:15 AM 11:15 AM.

The 3rd Wednesday of each month

Stonington". His second objective is to recruit retired or active experienced executives who would like to join SCORE as volunteer small business counselors.

Eric adds that those interested in starting, acquiring or rebuilding a small business, or in joining our SCORE counselor team, should contact the Chapter at score579@hotmail.com or visit the website at: www.southeasternctscore.org. For Norwich/New London, they may also call 860-464-7373 and for Mystic to Guilford, call 860-388-9508. There is never any charge for SCORE counseling.

Common Threads of Successful Businesses

Over the years of counseling small businesses, we have found common threads for the ones that survived and prospered. Not every business owner has all the skills necessary to implement what needs to be done.

The common threads of a successful business are:

- A written business plan that outlines the steps to allow you to run and control the events that justify being in business.
- Within the business plan, a marketing plan that focuses on who your customers are and how you are going to reach them with your message - resulting in Sales.
- A cash flow analysis that is updated at least monthly showing your revenue (driven by your marketing plan) and expenses broken down by product or service so you know what is working and what is not.
- Lastly, a capital reserve either in the bank or in a line of credit (not your credit card!) to shepherd you through a slow period (weeks or even months).

All of this may seem common sense and intuitive, but have you done it? The act of documenting and reviewing the document of a plan on a monthly or quarterly basis is the safeguard against being out of touch with what is really happening in and to your business. If your business needs something to help it survive and prosper, you might think about these items and use SCORE counseling to help you implement them. Call SCORE - we can help.



This article was contributed by Joe Beerbower, SCORE Counselor

Is Your Website Effective?

For most businesses, an on-line presence is a must-have nowadays because customers expect to be able find you on the Web. If your business isn't on-line, you are likely to be missing out on opportunities. When people sought to purchase products and services in the past, they opened the Yellow Pages, whereas today they search on-line.

Simply having a website is not enough though. With the ever-growing number of websites and overwhelming volume of information on the Internet, your website must be effective in

in **Mystic** at the Mystic Chamber of Commerce, 14 Holmes St., Mystic @ 1:00 PM 2:00 PM 3:00 PM.

Tuesdays each week from 11:00 AM - 2:00 at the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut in **Gales Ferry** 39 Kings Hwy [Rt. 12]... "Walk-in's" Welcome or by appointment.

The 2nd and 4th Wednesday at the **Guilford** Chamber of Commerce, 51 Whitfield Lane, Guilford @ 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM... "Walk-in's" Welcome or by appointment.

The 2nd and 4th Wednesday at the Dime Bank 290 Salem Turnpike, **Norwich** @ 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM... "Walk-in's" Welcome or by appointment.

Other SCORE Chapters in CT

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www.scorebridgeport.org

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www.westernctscore.com

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score@nwctchamberofcommerce.org
www.nwctscore.org

HARTFORD
hartfordscore@yahoo.com
www.score56.org

NORWALK
score41@aol.com
www.scorenorwalk.org

order to stand out and benefit your business.

The most vital ingredient for an effective website is a high degree of functionality. Visitors to your site want to accomplish specific tasks, such as searching or ordering, as quickly and painlessly as possible. It's critical that your website's design provides content and structure in ways that allow completion of those tasks as efficiently as possible. The average person will spend no more than 10 seconds on a webpage looking for what they want and, if they don't find it, they'll click out of your site to look elsewhere. In order to keep visitors from clicking out, your website needs to be easily navigated and not overloaded with content.

Beginning with your homepage, the navigation within your site should be logical and clearly organized. The "navigation bar" listing the major sections of a website is your site's table of contents. It should be consistent and prominent on every page so your customers can quickly maneuver their way from page to page and easily get back home in the event they become lost.

One of the more common downfalls in websites is too much detail. Writing for the Web is not the same as writing for print. The best websites get to the point fast, in as few words as possible. Website visitors aren't willing to spend time reading your website like they would an article. Instead, their eyes dart across pages, scanning impatiently. That's why there should be very few, if any, full paragraphs of text on your website, especially on the homepage. Also, content should not go off-page - it should be fully viewable without the need for left-to-right scrolling and page viewing should require minimal vertical scrolling.

Websites work best as no-frills, functional places. A great website is useful - it allows customers to find what they're looking for fast. If you don't have an effective on-line presence, and you're wondering where your customers are, look for them on your competitor's website! For more information, see the link further on for SCORE's Virtual Learning Center and information on "Creating an On-Line Presence - Learn how to define and implement a web strategy for your business."



This article was contributed by Don Flynn, SCORE Counselor.

Grants, Copyrights, Trademarks and Patents

Two of the most "popular" questions we get as counselors from our SCORE clients are about the availability of Grants and how to obtain patents, copyrights and trademarks.

Grants: That's easy, Grants [as in **cash** from governments and other than those from private investors] for "For-Profit" businesses are almost nonexistent . . . except for businesses focused toward economically 'distressed' areas, and those focused towards minorities and the disabled. Grants for Non-Profits are an entirely different issue both for start-ups and existing businesses. Remember, though, that the key issue is - What is the "social purpose" the Non-Profit serves?

Patents, Copyrights, Service Marks, and Trademarks: Not so easy! Ever mindful of the fact that this is no place for amateurs, nor for the faint of heart for that matter, here are some Web Sites that you can try for yourself. The lead of each of the Sites is quoted just to give you some idea of what you are in for. Then consult an attorney!

Do Trademarks, Service Marks, Copyrights and Patents protect the same things? No! Trademarks, service marks, copyrights and patents all differ. A copyright, for instance, protects an original artistic or literary work; a patent protects an invention.

For more information go to [US Patent & Trademark Office web site \(USPTO\)](#).

What Are Patents, Trademarks, Servicemarks, and Copyrights?

People often confuse patents with copyrights, trademarks, and service marks. Patents are an entirely different animal. Although there may be some similarities among the kinds of "intellectual property" protection, they are different and serve different purposes.

What Is a Patent?

A patent for an invention is the grant of a property right to the inventor, issued by the United States Patent and Trademark Office. You can research "issued patents" to make an educated guess that a patent does not already exist (NOT a legal opinion) by going to: <http://www.google.com/patents>. Applications for US patents must be filed within one year of certain events taking place, specifically within one year of:

- 1) The sale of a product embodying the invention or,
- 2) The Offer to sell it, or,
- 3) Of a publication of the invention.

Therefore the inventor must act promptly. He must decide whether to obtain patent protection usually before he knows whether his invention will be commercially viable. Filing a provisional patent application might be a solution. Potential applications should be (promptly) brought to the attention of a patent lawyer.

To see if a device might be patentable based on what has been disclosed before in prior patent, enter a few descriptive words of the device in [Google Patents](#).

What Is a Trademark or Service Mark?

A trademark is a word, name, symbol, or device that is used in trade with goods to indicate the source of the goods and to distinguish them from the goods of others. A service mark is the same as a trademark except that it identifies and distinguishes the source of a service rather than a product.

Trademarks: For more information, go to the web for the [US Patent & Trademark Office \(USPTO\)](#).

Copyrights: [US Copyright Office](#). See "About Copyrights".

A Copyright is a form of protection by the laws of the United States to the authors of "original works of authorship," including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other "intellectual works". This protection is available to both published and unpublished works.



Remember! If you think you have a good idea, get an attorney! This is no place to mess up!

This article was contributed by Ed Gottschall (IT Chair for Southeastern CT SCORE) and the legal references by Walter Bernkopf Northwestern CT SCORE.

Evaluate Your Skills to Manage a Business

The SBA has developed a simple survey to allow you to evaluate your skills to run your own business. If you answer the questions on line, you will receive an evaluation of areas where you may want to focus your training and education efforts to assure you have the skills for success. The test is confidential, takes less than 10 minutes, and only you will see an evaluation summary of your strengths and weaknesses.

<http://www.sba.gov/assessmenttool/index.html>

The summary of your skills will also give you links to free on line courses you may want to consider taking.

Interesting Articles you will want to read

SCORE Virtual Learning Center is available on the Internet with over 26 small business-training modules. One Module is very timely for our issue - "**Creating an On-Line Presence** - Learn how to define and implement a web strategy for your business."

Each of the learning modules has several case studies with work sheets that are very helpful. If it is your first time logging onto the Learning Center, you will need to register. After that, you will have unlimited access to the 26 online SCORE courses.

http://www.score.org/online_courses.html

The 2008 Women's Business Conference Oct 16

For women owned businesses, you may want to attend this conference in Trumbull, CT on Oct 16, 2008. Here is the link to their web site:

<http://www.makemineamillion.org/site/>

Thanks for reading our e-newsletter!

Sincerely,

Southeastern CT SCORE®

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