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Small Biz Journal

Knowing the SCORE can Help Small Businesses Achieve the Basics for Success

By James A. Kocsi

Aspiring small business owners and entrepreneurs often face common obstacles when starting or expanding their businesses. Confronted with questions like: What are the first steps to take? How do I sell my product/service? And what is the best way to grow my business?

If you are not afraid to ask for advice, then the SBA can help you. And knowing the SCORE is a good place to start. Celebrating its 45th Anniversary, SCORE – Counselors to America's Small Business is the best source to obtain free and confidential small business advice to help you build your business – from idea, to start-up, to success.

The SCORE Association is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, DC and is a key resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration dedicated to providing entrepreneurial education and advice to small business owners nationwide. With an extensive national network of over 10,000 retired and working volunteers, SCORE provides you with experienced entrepreneurs and corporate managers/executives, who provide free business counseling and advice in all stages of development.

How it Works

SCORE has the capability to match volunteer business counselors with clients in need of expert management advice. SCORE volunteers help prospective and established small business owners and managers identify problems, determine the causes and find solutions. They are well-versed in developing effective business plans and creating strategies for business growth.

In New Jersey, there are nine chapters and over 40 branch offices of SCORE with over 250 counselors ready to provide expert advice on a variety of business topics such as advertising, bookkeeping, financing, inventory control, marketing, manufacturing, quality control and retail, to name a few.

Finding SCORE

The key to finding the SCORE office nearest you is to utilize SCORE's Web site at www.score.org. When you open the Web page, all you have to do is enter your zip code and up will come a listing of SCORE offices in your area. It is then up to you to select the location where you would like to receive your counseling.

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Online Counseling

If you are too busy to visit a SCORE counselor, no need to worry. SCORE offers online counseling via their Web site. Again, when you visit www.score.org look for the box that says get started now. You will be prompted to enter a key word in the box. For example, if you enter the word restaurant, up will come a list of counselors who have restaurant backgrounds. Each counselor who is on that list also has their bio posted on the Web site. If you see a counselor who looks like they match up with you, then you can begin the online session by e-mailing that counselor some questions. SCORE counselor will respond within a 48 hour timeframe.

In addition to one-on-one counseling, SCORE also offers low-cost workshops and seminars at the local chapter level. Topics are planned to help address specific interests in a given community. Workshop topics have included: Developing Your Business Plan; Starting and Managing Your Business; Getting Financing for Your Business; Basic Business Accounting; Expanding Your Business and Marketing; E-Commerce and many more.

Remember, now more than ever, the services from SCORE can be the difference in operating a successful small business. Avoid costly mistakes early on; before you do anything, make sure that you get to know the SCORE. Their advice will provide you and your small business with the basics for success.

SCORE Chapter Locations

Chapter 14

Raritan Valley Community College
Route 28 & Lamington Road
North Branch, NJ 08876
(908) 526-1200 Ext. 8235
www.scorechapter14.org

Chapter 24

Morris County Chamber of Commerce
25 Lindsley Drive, Suite 105
Morristown, NJ 07960
(973) 539-3882
www.njscore24.org

Chapter 78

Community Service Bldg of Bergen County
327 E. Ridgewood Avenue
Paramus, NJ 07652
(201) 599-6090
www.scorebergen.org

Chapter 15

Two Gateway Center -15th Floor
Newark, NJ 07102
(973) 645-3982
www.scoremetronj.org

Chapter 36

Brookdale Community College
765 Newman Springs Road
Lincroft, NJ 07738
(732) 219-9119
www.score36.org

Chapter 150

Dover Toms River Municipal Bldg.
33 Washington Street
Toms River, NJ 08753
(732) 505-6033
www.oceancountyscore.org

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SCORE Chapter Locations

Chapter 254

Bank of America Bldg.
4900 Route 70 East (at Browning Rd.)
Pennsauken, NJ 08109
(856) 406-1532
www.score254.org

Chapter 631

Princeton Public Library
65 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, NJ 08542
(609) 393-0505
www.scoreprinceton.org

Chapter 687

1501 South New Road
Pleasantville, NJ 08232
(609) 484-9503
www.tri-countyscore.org

Note: James A. Kocsi is the District Director for the U.S. Small Business Administration's New Jersey District Office.