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Entrepreneur

SE Team Changes

People Are Moving Around

Carolyn is now Marketing Manager and a part-time Business Advisor. Val has become the Assistant Program Manager. Barbara is now a part-time Business Advisor and part-time Program Co-ordinator for BizSmarts (see insert). We are delighted to welcome Ray Peterson as a part-time Business Advisor. Ray has over 30 years experience in business management. This experience includes sales and marketing, logistics, human resources and finance with national and international companies. He is a graduate of the SE Program and the Provincial Instructor Program. He has taught courses on International Trade, Canadian Management Institute subjects and as a facilitator for the Motor Dealer Council licensing program. Ray is an active networker and community volunteer.

H - E - L - P

We DO practice what we teach... using your extensive network, please tell EVERYONE you can about the Exploring Self Employment and BizSmarts programs see inserts for information or call Barbara at 604 588 7772, local 222.

Visions of Excellence 2005

Mark your calendars, the 9th Annual Entrepreneur of the Year Awards Gala will be on Wednesday, October 19th at the Executive Plaza Hotel in Coquitlam. Look for your invitations in the mail in September. Tickets will be \$15 each and seating is limited. This is your opportunity to celebrate the success of your peers, network with others from the business community and be inspired by the winners. To donate a door prize valued at \$100 or more, contact Alex Sim at 604 209 3081 or email him at a_sim@douglas.bc.ca

Communicating For Results

BY DIANNE ARCHER, INTAKE # 93

Language and communication are the cornerstones of society. It is how we convey our ideas, desires and opinions to others. Everything we do is communicated through words and sentences, body language, facial expressions, and voice tones. Do you want to better communicate your intentions? Do you want people to respond positively to your requests? Are you interested in productive meetings? If you answered yes to any one of these questions I encourage you to read on for information that can change your life.

PASSION FROM THE PAST

I learned about the impact and command of communication at a Toastmasters Club when I was in college. We followed the manual of speeches, challenged each other with impromptu speeches and learned how to run effective meetings in a supportive atmosphere. I overcame my fear of speaking up which dramatically increased my self confidence. In my sales career, the composition, impromptu speaking and listening skills were instrumental in meetings and every sales call. Later as a founder of a nonprofit society, I used my skills speaking up at government meetings, public events, conducting meetings and facilitating workshops, and with various media. I attribute much of my success to the tools and skills I gained with Toastmasters and have become passionate about the power of communication and speaking up.

HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE?

Communication is made up of more than groups of words. Body language and facial expressions make up 90% of all verbal messages. The words we use come from our experiences and reality to reveal who we are and what we are thinking and feeling at that moment. It is important therefore, to be conscious and deliberate in all of our communication.

TRY THESE TIPS

Know your audience or the person you're speaking with (benefit: the opportunity to prepare based on their perspective increases the chance of a positive response)

Know your subject and use positive words and gestures that support their interests (benefit: people will say "yes" when they feel a mutual interest in the outcome)

When asked a question, rephrase the question to give the questioner the opportunity to confirm or correct your understanding and demonstrate your listening skills (benefit: this gives you time to consider and develop your answer)

Focus on the moment and the person you are communicating with - listen intently, look them in the eye, nod in agreement, smile with understanding, sit or stand in a relaxed open position that reflects the other person's position (benefit: the person feels listened to, valued and responsive to your communication)

CONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION

How we communicate is our choice. Toastmasters Clubs provide opportunities to develop skills, overcome fears and build self confidence with support from like-minded people. Communication can be positive, inspiring and fulfilling. For more information check out these websites:
www.toastmasters.bc.ca/home.php
www.geocities.com/lincolntoastmasters
 Drop by a local Toastmasters meeting to see how easy and enjoyable public speaking can be.

Dianne Archer
 VP Public Relations
 Lincoln Toastmasters
 604 465 3358

A newsletter by and for graduates of the Self Employment Program co-ordinated through The Training Group at Douglas College.

BY CHRIS RICARD, BUSINESS ADVISOR

Get Your Site Ranked #1 In Google For Only \$49.99!

If you believe that, I've got some great property on the moon for sale.

Everyone has something to say about search engine rankings, I guess that includes me. Following aren't any secrets but what most people either won't tell or don't know about getting ranked over time in search engines. First of all, if it sounds too good to be true... you know the rest.

Google is not one of the most successful Search Engines for no reason, they constantly update their technology to stay ahead of the tricksters out there using techniques to fool the search engines. Any money spent on trying to get instant high ranking in a search engine is money wasted. Some of the best techniques to incrementally increase your search engine ranking are free, yes f-r-e-e.

Following is an introduction to some of the basics of building your site to be optimized for search engines:

KEY WORDS

You must start with the key words describing your product or service as almost everything else is built on these. What are the most targeted words in your industry? All the text content for your website should be composed around the key words. Spend some time doing a number of searches in Google for your product/service using as many different key words as you can think of. Which one of your competitors comes up with a high ranking consistently? See what key words appear in the text on the their website regularly and start with these, don't reinvent the wheel.

Once you have a good list of key words (25 is a good number) you can start composing text for your website. Now here's the ring... you can do this for each page that represents a separate product or service within your site. Having said that, you would use many of the original key words and supplement these with product/service specific key words for the specific pages.

META TAGS

The two most important meta tags (oh yeah, meta tags go in the background HTML programming when building the site) are: meta title and meta description tags.

The first place a search engine looks to see if a page is relevant to a keyword is in the title tag and is displayed at the top of your browser. The title tag is restricted to about 50 characters and should be the words that are most relevant to the information on the page and target a specific audience. The next step is to write the meta description tag. This is the place a search engine often gets the description to show searchers a description of what this page is about. This should also be key word rich.

LINK POPULARITY

Building link partners is one of the most important search engine marketing techniques that brings in more traffic and secures top search engine rankings long-term. Probably the most effective means of gaining link popularity is to have other industry related websites insert links back to your site. Gone are the days of 'link farming' where people would try and get their links on ANY website. This will now work against you. Websites linking back to your site must be directly related to your industry. Without link popularity it will be difficult to get a high ranking on search engines.

FREE AND PAID SEARCH ENGINE SUBMISSIONS

First of all once your site is optimized, go to all the major search engines and use their free submission services. Then if you want to expedite the process of getting ranked in the search engine you can shell out some cash for the paid inclusion portion of many search engines... "If I pay to have my website submitted does that mean I am guaranteed a top ranking?" The answer is "no, it only means that the search engines will index or rank your website a lot sooner!"

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Out Of The Gate

THIS ISSUE OF THE SELF-EMPLOYMENT NEWSLETTER
FEATURES THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES,
EACH OF WHICH PROFILES TWO ENTREPRENEURS.

Who: Sarah Hoivic – Intake #91

What: Sole proprietor of Chick Pea, a children's boutique near Commercial Drive in Vancouver.

Grand opening: July 15, 2004. **Phone:** 604 255 2004.

Email: chickpea@telus.net **Website:** www.chickpeakids.com

Roots: Sarah Hoivic wanted to open a shop of her own from the age of four. In her early twenties, she worked for a three-year stretch at Koo Koo Design Inc., a wholesale manufacturer of towels, lounge-wear, and baby clothes. She learned displaying, merchandising and buying for the company's two retail shops, both in Vancouver. She says that it was having a baby that provided "the big push to open [her own] business." While on maternity leave, she made the decision to go into business for herself. Shortly thereafter, in February 2004, she started Douglas College's Self Employment Program.

In training: Developing her business plan made her "explore the financial side of business" and helped set the groundwork to financing her store. She credits SE graduate Matt Dunn, a lease negotiator, with finding her store location and negotiating eight weeks of free rent. She transformed the store with the help of her husband and father. They gutted the former Goth-themed record shop, painted the walls pastel green, put down new red-and-off-white checkered tiles, and created a children's play area.

Trademarks: Sarah handwrites every receipt, using the time to get to know her customers. Twice a year she holds a tea party in appreciation of her customers, many of whom she now considers friends. With a strong regular client base, her main source of advertising is word-of-mouth.

Year in review: With sales exceeding her fast start goals, the biggest hurdle Sarah encountered was "figuring out logistics [around having] a two-and-a-quarter-year old son." Without childcare, she admits that running the store "would have been frustrating." Sarah has used her business plan as a guide, and adjusted to some of the realities of the market she serves. She now buys larger products such as strollers, and has reduced her stock of toys because of local competition. In fact, she and the owner of a children's store in the neighborhood cooperate to the extent that if one stocks a product, the other will avoid it.

Number of employees: Two: one on-call, the other regular part-time.

Best advertising: Word-of-mouth.

Greatest — Disappointments: "None." **Hurdles:** Her husband, a detective, "is on 24-hour call and works crazy hours." **Successes:** "How rewarding it is." **Surprises:** "How well the business has done. The closeness developed with some clients."

Down the road in three, five or ten years: "No idea." She has been approached to franchise the store, but finds it "hard to imagine fully stepping away from this shop."

Wisdom for entrepreneurs: "Have confidence. Be professional – don't skimp on details. Get the experience before going into business for yourself."

Morgan Chojnacki started her own writing, editing and consulting business, The Write Line, in 2004. She holds a Master of Arts from Carleton University and is a graduate of The Writer's Studio at Simon Fraser University. Having served as writing consultant, project writer, researcher, editor, publisher and technical writer since 1992, she'd be pleased to assist you with your writing project, and can be contacted at morgan@thewriteline.ca or 604 215 9488.

BY MORGAN CHOJNACKI – INTAKE # 95

Who: Rene Flindt – Intake # 95

What: Majority owner of Flindt Technical & Inventory Services Inc. The largest minority owner is Elaine, his wife. The home-based business provides services that assist companies in the aerospace industry to secure financial backing, reduce inventory levels and optimize performance.

Official opening: August 15, 2004. **Phone:** 604 341 8108.

Website: www.flindtservices.net

Roots: Up until recently, Rene Flindt had been working in the aerospace industry for 35 years. As a top executive in companies such as Logistechs (affiliate of General Electric), Canadian Airlines International and Air Canada, he managed assets and people. He became weary, though, of what he terms "the political nonsense and silliness" that characterized the corporate environments in which he worked. Rene decided to set out on his own at an age when many would balk at the idea. In July 2004, at the age of 55, he started Douglas College's Self Employment Program. Around the same time, Elaine, his wife, was diagnosed with cancer.

In training: Rene used his energies to support Elaine through her treatments, and to meet the demands of the SE program. Developing his business plan made him "think and understand the complexities of starting and running a business." The program itself "allowed me to learn that I could work for myself," Rene asserts. Now he knows "where the cash is going at any time." Rene points to advisor Max Attwood as a particularly collegial associate who listened to him and provided guidance throughout the program.

Trademarks: "Family comes first," Rene states. "My wife... is my greatest partner and my best friend; a complete asset to my life and my business." Since January, when she "started doing much better," Elaine has been at work alongside him. As Chief Financial Officer, she handles the finances and pays the bills. As President, Rene negotiates contracts and plans their implementation. "Most [of the contracts] come from the aerospace industry through personal contacts."

Year in review: The same international corporations that once dismissed Rene for his age are now eager to hire his company's services to run large, lucrative projects. Entrepreneurs seek his help to secure funding for startup and establish, aerospace companies. The demand has grown enough for Rene to develop a team of specialists, which includes a web administrator who builds websites, a mechanic who conducts technical reviews and a senior executive of a major airline who assists in the creation of business plans.

Number of employees: None. Subcontractors only: currently nine.

Best advertising: Reputation. Word-of-mouth.

Greatest — Disappointments: None. "I look at experiences as, 'What's positive about this?'" **Hurdles:** "My wife had cancer." **Surprises:** The [number of] friends I've developed over the years in the industry, and how they have come forward to support me." **Successes:** "Seeing my wife get better."

Down the road in three, five or ten years: "No idea." His new business plan, however, spans January 2005 to January 2008.

Wisdom for entrepreneurs: "Make sure to make time for yourself. Family comes first. Enjoy what you're doing."

Logo Logic

BY ALAN FLOWERS, INTAKE # 102

YOUR LOGO DEFINES YOUR BRAND

You know what a brand is. It's the product you are using, whether it is a shirt, or a car, or a laundry detergent. A brand makes a promise about what it will do for you. Then, the reality of owning the brand must deliver on its promise, or the consumer will be unsatisfied. The consumer decides if the brand is true.

What do we think of the brand of British Columbia? We think of rugged mountains and green trees, the blue Pacific Ocean, wide open spaces, and fresh air. This is how the BC brand is marketed around the world.

We know the promise of the BC brand is true. There are mountains, and there is the ocean. There is fresh air and there are open spaces. In this case, the reality matches the brand. It meets our expectations. That's why we live here. We have bought the brand.

You know what a logo is. It's the visual identity of the company or the brand. The best logos take our feeling about that brand to a higher level. Some logos are stylized names, like Coca-Cola, and other logos are more evocative, like the 'swoosh' of Nike.

A logo must be evaluated in three ways: first, is it compelling in a visual sense? Second, does it represent the brand to us, the consumer? Third, will it easily reproduce, such as on fax cover sheets?

Consider the Vancouver 2010 Olympics logo, unveiled last month to much controversy. There are no mountains, ocean or trees in the Olympic logo. It is a native symbol, but not from west coast First Nations. Instead, it is a multi-colored human shape inspired by Inuit traditions thousand of miles away.

Does this logo deliver the BC brand we have already bought? The answer is no. This logo says nothing about the reality of Vancouver or Whistler.

However, let's be fair. This logo was chosen by a committee. You know how it is to work on a committee. We have all done that, in business or in family. Committee members evaluate options and compromise to find agreement. You like yellow, and I like red. You say seven o'clock and I say six-thirty. Okay, let's agree on orange at six forty-five.

We can all learn from the Olympics logo choice. Someone wiser than me once said, if you try to be everything to everyone, you end up being nothing to nobody. (By the way, that's really poor English, but it is effective.)

When you hire a professional firm to design your logo, they should give you at least three options. Show those to business people or artists you respect, but beware of having too many cooks in the kitchen. In the end it must be your decision, while relying on the experts you hired. Keep in mind simplicity, strength, and your brand promise. If doing business overseas, will your logo be effective and understood in other cultures?

The 2010 Inuit logo is certainly universal. People around the world will recognize it as a colourful symbol of humanity, and rush to their internet to find out more about the frozen North. That fits, since many people think of Canada as a frozen wasteland that is far too cold to visit. Now they have the Olympics logo to remind them.

Alan Flowers worked for more than 10 years in Canadian media, in creative, marketing, editorial, and operations. Alan also spent four years in management in the vitamin industry working with Canadian pharmacy and grocery channels and exporters. This direct media and business knowledge is available from ideaworks communications, which specializes in media, marketing, promotions and creative. Contact Alan at 778 389 4332 or ideas@ideaworksc.com

Search Engine Rankings

continued from page 1

So with the high costs of paid search engine submissions it is becoming smart business to hire an expert to get it right the first time otherwise your money may be spent achieving poor rankings.

ADDITIONAL TID-BITS

Page names; when constructing your website, use key words specific to each page when choosing the HTML page file names. Image names; when saving an image file for your website, name it using key words. Alt tags are the little popup you see in the cream colored boxes when you place your mouse over an image. Use keyword based descriptions to describe what the picture is about. Then wait, wait and wait some more, it can take between a couple of weeks and close to a year to get picked up by some search engines.

In summary, there is no silver bullet to get ranked in search engines. Experience shows that the best policy is to pursue the production of a clean site, full of natural and good quality information, relevant to its chosen topic, that it is added to or revised regularly and has a steadily increasing number of sites which consider it significant enough to link to.

HAPPY WEB SURFING,

Chris Ricard (Business Advisor) www.theweb-factory.com