

## DMRC to Host “Marketing Mantua” February 23rd

Are you happy with your sales? Do you wish you could get professional marketing advice without the usual high cost? Here’s your chance!

The DMRC (Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation) will be hosting a series of business improvement workshops titled “Marketing Mantua”. The first workshop will be held on Monday, February 23rd at the Mantua Shalersville Fire Depart-

ment (conference room) from 5:30-9:00PM. There is a modest fee of \$10 to cover the cost of refreshments and workshop supplies.

Michelle Barnauskas, a 15-year retail marketing veteran with a degree in economics will lead the workshop with assistance from local business owners.

Bring a pen/pencil, notebook and pictures of the interior and exterior of your business (if possible). Those in attendance

will leave with an assessment of your operation, examples of easy-to-implement, no cost improvements you can make now and a list of tools/resources for the future.

Contact DMRC secretary, Becky Newell at [bbjnewell@neohio.twcbc.com](mailto:bbjnewell@neohio.twcbc.com) or 216-990-5086 or 330-274-3238 to reserve your spot by Wednesday, February 18th.

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# Marketing Mantua Workshop Offers Small Business Survival Tips

ESTELLE R. BROWN

**Mantua** - During this nationwide economic tailspin which has dragged Ohio down into deeper recession, local business owners are feeling especially skittish. Big banks and big businesses are getting their federal bailouts, but the fate of small businesses seems largely in their owners' hands.

How are small business owners supposed to draw customers in when consumers are tightening their belts and staying home rather than grabbing a bite to eat downtown or killing spare time with window shopping?

The Mantua-Shalersville Area Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation offered some answers with a business improvement workshop given by Michelle Barnauskas of Business Image Solutions on February 23 at the Mantua-Shalersville Fire Department. It was the first in a series of Marketing Mantua business workshops.

About two dozen small business representatives from Mantua, Shalersville, Garrettsville, Hiram and Aurora participated in the interactive workshop titled, "Enhancing Customer Experience & Spreading the Word Without Spending the Bucks." As a marketing business consultant and marketing manager for 80 Pizza Huts in northeast Ohio, Barnauskas drew upon her 15 years of experience to advise local business owners.

First, it's comforting to realize you're not alone. Eighty-eight percent of northeast Ohio businesses have fewer than 20 employees. Sixty percent of northeast Ohio businesses are among the smallest of small businesses, with just one to four employees. Small business owners in small towns know one another. They thrive when they support each other and collaborate to bring

people into the business district.

Also, small businesses need to appreciate their inherent strengths, such as flexibility and adaptability. They are in the best position to shift strategies and implement new marketing techniques.

Needless to say, it will take more hard work than ever to succeed in this deflated market. Barnauskas said, "No one is going to do it for you. You can't afford to wait for the economy to magically improve. There is no quick fix."

Special attention needs to be paid to standard best practices:

- Excellent, personalized customer service so that you gain and retain loyal customers
- Merchandising to improve business
- Marketing/Promotions to spread the word in creative, inexpensive ways
- Vision with short- and long-term goals so you can measure progress and adjust if stagnation sets in

You will make a positive impression if you are uncommonly friendly, helpful and pleasant. Then, if you go the extra mile by offering free delivery or gift-wrapping, solving customers' problems, customizing orders or placing an extra free 'gift' in their bag, customers will be more than satisfied. They'll be delighted, and will become passionately loyal... and they'll tell their friends all about you.

Follow-up after the sale or visit is especially vital. According to Barnauskas, 80 percent of potential new business is lost because owners don't have a marketing strategy in place to follow up with prospects. Ask customers for their contact information so you can send them special offers in the mail, coupons in email or to place phone calls to remind them it's time to re-order or to get services scheduled.

First impressions matter. Realtors call it curb appeal. In order

to put yourself in your customer's shoes, park across the street from your storefront and take a critical look at it. Does it need a fresh coat of paint? New awnings? Better signage? Are the windows clean? Do the steps need repair? Then walk inside and continue your review as a mystery shopper, taking notes and implementing improvements that will make your business welcoming, attractive and easy to navigate.

Then do creative things to make the most of each interaction and increase profits:

- The Up-Sell ("Want fries with that?")
- The Cross-Sell ("Customers who bought this product also purchased this other complimentary product...")
- Introduce New Products/Services with discount pricing or limited-time free samples
- Encourage repeat visits with punch cards (offering a free/discounted special after so many visits)
- Referral Incentives (swap a free gift or discount special for so many referrals)
- Host a Customer Appreciation event
- Branding (Plaster your business name, logo & contact info on everything so you become instantly recognizable to consumers)

Contact your local newspaper when you open for business, host a special event or reach a meaningful milestone. You can get the word out with a display ad and perhaps also an announcement or feature story.

Barnauskas offered many more survival tips for small business owners throughout the workshop. But they can all be summed up with one memorable piece of advice: "Adapt or be left in the dust."

# DMRC & Chamber of Commerce Offer Marketing Tips at Small Business Workshop

A group of local business owners attended a small business workshop entitled “Enhancing Customer Experience & Spreading the Word Without Spending the Bucks” Monday, February 23rd in the conference room at the Mantua-Shalersville Fire Department.

This workshop is part of a series sponsored by the Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corporation and the Mantua-Shalersville Area Chamber of Commerce. Michelle Barnauskas, owner of Business Image Solutions and marketing manager for 80 Pizza Hut locations in northeast Ohio led the workshop.

Businesses from Mantua and neighboring communities came eager to be advised of how they can market their business through adopting excellent customer services practices, effective merchandising, creative marketing, community networking as well as low and no-cost advertising.

Barnauskas gave specific examples of local businesses marketing their business throughout the workshop. Denise Pasquerella, owner of The Nanny’s Salon For Dogs implemented a fundraiser where \$10 from each dog grooming during the month of August was donated to the Crestwood Band. This raised \$500 for the band and got the attention of the the Community Journal, which gained free press coverage announcing the success of her event in a front



*Local business owners take a few minutes to fill out a questionnaire regarding their interest in other marketing topics.*

page article. Another example included Zagursky’s Pierogies. Owners Rick Harr and Caren Stutzman donate pierogies which are fresh but do not meet the visual standards for sale to Parrot Hope Sanctuary. These pierogies make a tasty treat for the dozens of parrots and large birds housed by this non-profit group located in Mantua.

There are many ways you can market your business. Join your local chamber of commerce or other organizations where you can network with business owners and individuals who are tuned in to local shopping.

Barnauskas also emphasized the importance of curbside appearance and the view once inside your business. Are the windows clean? Does everything appear to be neat and well maintained? Customers who feel comfortable in your establishment are likely to spend more time and money in your business. Create a level of comfort between you and your customers, offer coupons which encourage them to return and/or incorporate a frequent shopper program which rewards your customers for multiple purchases.

Businesses owners were given a workbook so that could follow along and take notes during this interactive program.

In addition to the workbook and delicious refreshments donated by local restaurants, those in attendance were given a Business Resource Guide to help them grow their business. The contents included contact and general information for various organizations whose goal is to support you in your marketing plan. Business plan preparation, consulting, low cost advertising and business mentoring organizations are all in our immediate reach and can be utilized when we need them.

Business owners left with homework to help them recognize the areas in which they could use improvement. They were asked to shop the competition, shop themselves, survey customer, perform a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis, make one small change, re-assess their business and to attend the next seminar.

A survey was passed out and requested the opinions of those in attendance of the types of workshops they would be likely to attend and what they were interested in learning more about. The results were tallied and the next workshop in the series is being planned for April.

For more information about the “Marketing Mantua” Business Workshop series, contact Becky Newell at 216-990-5086 or [bbjnewell@neohio.twcbc.com](mailto:bbjnewell@neohio.twcbc.com)