

# Taking a fresh look at your business

As the blossoms on the cherry trees begin to pop, a feeling of rejuvenation begins to take hold as winter gives way to spring. This sense of renewal is something that is not just for the outdoor enthusiast but also for the business owner. From getting the office organized, to updating your business model or redesigning your Web site, spring is the perfect time to take on new projects.

## Get Organized

Sometimes it's difficult to imagine that taking on those organizing projects may save you money instead of cost you money.

Layman Harang from the **The Karmann Group** helps businesses save money by transitioning them from a manual paper-based system to an information management system that is 90 percent electronic.

Harang has worked with many companies to achieve this goal, and his clients have seen direct results on their bottom line. Additionally, if you implement the steps Harang recommends, your business will become more sustainable by using less paper. Having information stored and organized electronically saves resources and helps increase employee productivity.

Anne Blumer, a Certified Professional Organizer from

**"Being organized is a skill, it's not something you're born with. Just remember to not be too hard on yourself and stay the course."**

**SolutionsForYou, Inc.** couldn't agree more. "Getting organized is an investment," she said. "Over time you will save money, increase productivity and achieve a better balanced work environment."

If people don't know where they put things and how to retrieve them when needed, they lose time, explained Blumer.

Harang agrees, "The real message is that paper consumption seems unbelievably inexpensive until you step back and look at the whole picture. The difference electronic paper management can make in the operation of a company is huge."

If you are interested in





*After six hours with SolutionsForYou, Inc. organizing services, this client felt in control of office surroundings and able to focus on prioritizing tasks.*



moving towards electronic document storage, the first and most important step is to assess where you are right now. Is your business mostly paper based; are you using off-site storage? Does it seem like everyone has a copy of everything, yet it's still hard to find things? Try moving towards working on documents and saving them electronically instead of printing them out. Make sure you have an organized electronic saving system so people can find things quickly.

To get more organized on your own there are a few quick

fixes you can try. If you stack papers, go with your natural tendencies, but stack more efficiently. Categorize your piles of papers so you can find things easier. At the beginning of the week, write down what you want to accomplish and hold yourself accountable each day. Additionally, Blumer said that anything that's an action should be scheduled. If you need to organize your desk, put it on your calendar.

"Being organized is a skill," said Blumer, "it's not something you're born with." Blumer cautions that starting new organization habits can be

awkward, "Just remember not to be too hard on yourself and stay the course."

After you've started your new office organization routine, you might want to assess how your business is being presented to your current and prospective customers online. Exploring ways to improve your site's navigation and organic search results ranking is a perfect way to give your business a boost.

### **Boost your Web presence**

**Harlo Media** helps businesses of all sizes design, redesign, and market their Web sites. According to Cody Galloway, Director of Online Marketing at Harlo Media, spring is a great time to do an assessment of your Web site. Galloway explained that if your Web site displays personality, expertise and professionalism, customers are more likely to take the next step and contact you. If you're thinking about designing or redesigning your business's Web site, Galloway has these suggestions:

- Web sites have a shelf life of two to four years and your business and brand may evolve over time. Ask yourself if your brand is being accurately represented online.
- There may be certain aspects of your business that can be automated

online. For example, customers can sign up for your services or purchase products online; Patients can make appointments and fill out surveys.

- Spend some time online looking at competitor and other industry sites. Pay attention to Web sites with features and design elements that appeal to you.
- Talk to your customers and think about what information your prospective customers might need.
- Think about possible calls to action. What do you want customers to do during and after visiting your Web site?

Just having a good Web site should not be a business's goal, explained Galloway. The marketing of your Web site is tremendously important, because that is what will bring you return on Web development investments. "Most businesses want their Web site to increase business," said Galloway. "So we help with marketing their site online. We tailor those marketing strategies to their industry and customer demographics."

**NetBiz** also designs and markets Web sites, with a

*Monique Lopez, the NetBiz.com Sales manager for their Tualatin location, shares the company's commitment to helping businesses get the most from their Web sites.*



focus on customer service. "There is always someone here to address whatever questions or concerns our clients have," said Larry Waggoner, VPO at NetBiz. Additionally, Waggoner explained that they help businesses understand how Search Engine Optimization (SEO) works. SEO is not just about getting your Web site on the first page of a search engine, it's about getting your name listed multiple times, in multiple ways through different media such as blogs, videos, press releases and more.

John Scevola, who runs the SEO department at NetBiz, clarified, "Even if your Web site is already on the first page of a search, there are still areas where you can improve by getting into multiple listings on that first page," said Scevola. "Most business owners don't have

the time for this so that's where we come in. We try to make that easy and work with them as partners."

NetBiz builds Web sites that are search engine friendly and contain analytic tools that help clients understand their Web site usage trends.

### **Communicate like a pro**

After you've organized your office and spruced up your Web presence, it's time to focus on your professional performance. Do your communication skills need a boost? Are you in need of input from people but you don't always get good responses? Do you have to deliver hard news but also want to maintain positive relationships?

**Nonverbal Solutions** helps business professionals understand their nonverbal communication messages. Their training focuses on different situations, such as

information delivering versus information gathering. Valentina GnuP from Nonverbal Solutions said that we are all hard wired to read each other's nonverbals. Business professionals especially should be aware that nonverbal communication is a significant part of communication, yet not many people are equipped with the skills needed to be effective. That's where Nonverbal Solutions' training comes in. "If you want to be nonverbally

information? An important nonverbal communication tool is eye contact. According to GnuP, eye contact is appropriate in some situations, but not others. For example, if you are delivering bad news, you want to look down when you are delivering the news, but make eye contact after that and focus on a positive message to go along with the eye contact.

Nonverbal Solutions' practical and useful training also helps people understand

the differences between soliciting information from others versus delivering information through situational role playing. "The essence of charisma is being aware and adaptable," said GnuP, "You should recognize what sides of your personality you need for different situations and that you can't have one approach."

However you choose to take a new fresh look at your business, there is one clear message. Don't be afraid to do some self-assessment, be truthful with yourself about where your business is and what areas could be improved, and be clear about your goals and the steps it will take to get there.

**"You should recognize what sides of your personality you need for different situations and that you can't have one approach."**

intelligent, you need to be adaptable and aware," Said GnuP. In other words, you need to be aware of the situation and adapt accordingly to the people you are communicating with.

The first thing you need to do, GnuP explained, is be aware of what message you are sending. Are you coming from a credibility standpoint, or are you more personal and focused on relationships? What kinds of message are you delivering; is it positive or negative, or are you asking for information or giving

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