

A Competitive Edge: Training for Business

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Today, more than ever, running a successful business requires competency in many areas. It isn't enough to have a great idea – even a unique idea filling a universal need – and to work hard. Business owners need specialized knowledge in their specific industry and general knowledge in many areas, including sales, marketing, accounting, finance, human resources and the law – to name just a few.

With the advent of the internet, business has gained affordable market access but is also dealing with a new landscape and new rules that require updated and additional competencies. Few would think, at this point, of starting a business without a web presence. Most would incorporate some aspect of social media in their business planning. And websites and social media are not just new knowledge areas in and of themselves – they've impacted all the classic knowledge areas as well, changing how we sell and market; how we keep our business financial records; and creating what is becoming a whole new area of the law to deal with web-based communications, commercial transactions, and intellectual property rights.

So how does a business owner access this expertise? Complementing our region's impressive array of colleges and universities, this is one of the functions that a chamber of commerce can serve, especially when time and money are at a premium.

I and my colleagues from chambers of commerce throughout the country are often asked, "Why should I join the chamber?" or "What does the chamber offer?" While I can't answer for others, and it's important to note that chambers can vary widely in terms of services, the Greece Chamber has a long history of providing ongoing affordable access to business training and expertise – just one of many benefits that draw businesses and individuals from all sorts of places to us. It's a service, in fact, which we've targeted for expansion.

Recognizing that our members need access to professional training and expertise more than ever, and that our community needs business to be successful more than ever, the Greece Chamber of Commerce is launching a new *Competitive Edge* training series this spring, open to both Chamber members and the general public (with a deep discount for members). We're launching the series with three focused pairings – Sales and Marketing, Accounting and Finance, and Human Resources and Corporate Law – and will be adding more throughout the year. We're working with an exceptional group of carefully selected experts – including seasoned sales trainers, accountants, and lawyers – to individually craft workshops that give business leaders immediate, affordable access to licensed and certified professionals and a quick injection of the latest information pertinent to running any business without a large investment of time and money. The sessions don't promise to turn attendees into experts but they can make business owners more aware and informed as they navigate an increasingly competitive and complicated business landscape: a competitive edge.

Offered at very affordable prices, these workshops are designed to help business owners identify areas in which they or their staffs need more extensive professional training, education and consultation. Sometimes just figuring out what you don't know but need to know in an arena such as law or finance can make the difference between surviving (and thriving) and going out of business.