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Business



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Town to launch new BizPal system within two weeks

BY BRENT COOPER
HUNTSVILLE FORESTER

The Town of Huntsville and business people are about to find a 'pal' within the next few weeks that will assist in securing the necessary paperwork to speed up the permit process.

The economic development advisory committee was given a demonstration of BizPal on March 11. The program is an online service that simplifies the business permit, licence and other compliance regulation processes for entrepreneurs, governments, and third-party business service providers.

The service's primary goals are to slash document research time and help entrepreneurs start up faster.

For government, BizPal provides the assurance that business clients will have the information they need to meet all permit and licence requirements quickly and efficiently. It also provides a way to improve the service experience for business clients, while gaining a competitive edge over other jurisdictions.

The customer is walked through a series of simple, generic questions about the business and is then provided with a list of documents from the various levels of government they need to make their enterprise a reality.

Each point of access through the question section provides the client with comprehensive and customized information collected from all the

participating jurisdictions.

The customer then prints the documents off, fills them out and takes them to the necessary government department for approval.

Margaret Stead, the town's GIS co-ordinator, walked the committee through the demonstration. She said that there is no cost for the program's use, adding that other Muskoka municipalities such as Muskoka Lakes and Lake of Bays township presently use the system.

She said that some federal and provincial level governments may provide licence and permit forms to be filled in and submitted online. "Currently for the Town of Huntsville with specific permits and licences, the user must fill them out and then either submit them by fax, e-mail as

a scanned attachment, or drop them off in person."

Mayor Claude Doughty said he was impressed with the program, based on his past business experiences as a developer. "I had a previous life that involved chasing permits. That's great and I think, notwithstanding our constraints from an IT perspective, that some point in the future, every licence should be submitted and paid for online and you get it mailed back to you," he said.

Economic development and grants officer John Finley said that the program is presently in the testing stages on the municipality's website. BizPal should be available to the public for permanent use within the next two weeks.



BOW AHEAD: The 22nd annual Boat Show drew hundreds to view the ski/wake sport, pleasure, and pontoon boats as hosted by Mobile Marine at the Huntsville Place Mall last week. From March 11 to 15 the show was an opportunity for the public to view boats in a stress-free environment. This week the mall will be host to fishing boats from Baysville Marine.

Photo by Darren Lum

Businessman to be featured speaker at lighting forum

Muskoka businesses and residents are invited to a free training seminar on installing award-winning, dark sky-friendly, outdoor lighting systems for residential and commercial properties since 1999.

The seminar, which will be held at Deerhurst Resort from 10:45 a.m. to 5 p.m., will feature a dozen handpicked speakers who will address a subject that captivates them, outdoor lighting.

One of the speakers, James Solecki of INTEGRA Works Custom Lighting in Muskoka, will talk on residential and shoreline outdoor lighting systems, focusing on how relatively small properties can make a big difference to the environment.



JAMES SOLECKI

Solecki has been designing and installing award-winning, dark sky-friendly, outdoor lighting systems for residential and commercial properties since 1999. He is the recipient of the Muskoka Heritage Foundation's Environmental Stewardship Award and has won company of the year in Huntsville's Business Excellence Awards program. He is an active member of the Illuminating Engineering Society, the Association of Outdoor Lighting Professionals, Landscape Ontario and the Muskoka Builders Association.

Building your business through planning

BY DAVE CONNELL
MUSKOKA ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Business Views

Anyone planning to start a new business must have an idea of what its goals and objectives are and how it will achieve them.

Most small business start-ups have skills and experience in their particular field, and they believe they can sell these skills in the marketplace without having to work for an employer.

However, running a business requires skills that many of us may not have had to use before, such as planning, marketing, financial skills etc. For this reason, a business plan is highly recommended for any new business.

The business plan will outline the goals and objectives of the business as well as the strategies that will be used to achieve them. Two of the most important questions the business plan attempts to answer are: is there a demand for my product or service, and do I have the finances necessary to get started?

Obviously, if the answer to the first question is no, then the second question becomes irrelevant. Therefore, one of the first and most important parts of the planning process is to determine who your customers would be. This is called primary market research, and should involve direct contact with potential customers and/or people who know your potential customers.

Many people will draft a questionnaire to gather information such as how often a person (or business) purchases a product or service, how much they are willing to spend on it, whether or not they are satisfied with what is currently offered in the area, what they would like to see that is not currently offered, and any other questions which will help the entrepreneur decide if there really are enough people to support the business, and to get an idea of who these people are.

From this, one can build a profile of the "typical

Register now for e-business event

On March 26, the Muskoka Enterprise Centre and Muskoka Community Network are hosting the first Muskoka e-business forum called E Biz 4 Your Biz.

Business owners in Muskoka can learn how to benefit from marketing their business online by engaging in e-business. This forum is an opportunity to gather information, ask questions, and learn what is involved in growing your business globally.

Hosted by the Muskoka Enterprise Centre and Muskoka Community Network, E Biz 4 Your Biz is a unique learning and networking event packed with great tips and ideas to help entrepreneurs succeed with e-business. This will help entrepreneurs expand their network of local contacts, swap business cards and meet other business owners. The goal of this forum is to showcase the advantages of a good e-business strategy.

This event will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. at the Bracebridge Sportsplex, 110 Clearbrook Trail. Pre-registration is required and the fee is \$20. You must register before March 18 to guarantee a spot or pay a \$25 fee at the door. The registration fee includes wake-up coffee, munchies and lunch.

To register, visit www.mcnet.ca to register online or call 646-9021 or 646-9044.

customer," which would include information such as age, gender, income bracket, permanent or seasonal resident, urban or rural, etc. This hypothetical group is called the "target market." Identifying this market is key to the success of any business venture.

Once a target market has been identified, it is important to get an idea how big (or small) that market is. Local municipal websites and the Muskoka Enterprise Centre's website are excellent sources of this information, what we call secondary market research.

Here we are looking for statistical information on the population of the area, as well as any reports that have been prepared by local governments on the economic outlook for the area. Some businesses can survive in a small market if there isn't much competition, or if they don't need high volume sales, whereas others, such as a fast food outlet, would have a better chance of success in a larger market.

In either case, the comfort of knowing you have done your research will give you the confidence to go ahead with your business idea.

The Muskoka Enterprise Centre offers free and confidential consultations, whether it's to help you get started on the planning process, or to review your plan before you present it to a bank or other lender. We also offer workshops and seminars on a variety of business topics. Watch for our spring series of seminars, coming soon.

For more information or a free consultation, call us at 646-9021, or visit www.muskokaenterprise.com.

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Muskoka E-Business Forum

"E Biz 4 Your Biz"

How to make E-Biz work for you?
How to turn E-Biz into money for your Biz?

Renowned author Robert J. Sawyer presentation includes "Facing Technology", "Web 2.0" and the "Future of Business". His topics will enlighten participants on steps into e-business and how to turn E-Biz into revenue.

Additional speakers, breakout discussions and trade show will focus on e-business for your business!

Wednesday, March 26th, 2008 from 8:30am.-4:15pm.
The Bracebridge Sportsplex, 110 Clearbrook Trail, Bracebridge

Muskoka Enterprise Centre
705-646-9021

LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER!!!!
Before March 21st, space is limited!
Registration Fee: \$20.00 ~Includes Lunch~
Register online at www.mcnet.ca or call

Muskoka Community Network
705-646-9044

Our Partners: Province of Ontario, Town of Bracebridge, Canada, FedNor, RBC Royal Bank

ADOPT-A-PET:

Josie is a grey and white DSH girl, approximately 5 years old. She loves to be petted but doesn't like to be picked up. Do you have a cozy corner for her?
Adoption fee: \$50.00



George was one of 13 kittens left outside of the shelter in minus 30 degree weather last year. He is very social and would love some individual attention. White and grey, DSH, neutered.
Adoption Fee: \$50.00

The Animal Shelter for Huntsville

Dinner-Auction Fundraiser

April 26, 2008 at the Royal Canadian Legion, featuring Dino's Hot Buffet.

Tickets are \$35.00 ea., available at the Shelter, Pet Valu, Huntsville Animal Hospital, Muskoka Animal Hospital, Treasures and Trophies, The Painted Porch, The Framing Place, Muskoka Hearing Aids and Hillside Country Store.

Donations of new and collectible items are needed! Please contact us to let us know if you can help.

To help you with the costs of bringing home your adopted Shelter pet, Pet Valu offers 10% off of your first purchase of supplies for your four-legged friend, some conditions may apply.

Adoption applications are available at the

Shelter and on our website:

www.animals-huntsville.on.ca



Animal Shelter For Huntsville

19 Bickley Country Drive, Huntsville, ON P1H 1Y4

Phone: 789-9709

E-mail: pets@vianet.on.ca

Open 7 days a week • 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.