

Women's Business Mentoring Programs Demonstrate Unique Characteristics

Mentoring programs most beneficial to women business owners are well matched to the stage of business development and offer specific elements unique to women's mentoring practices. So says a new study just released by the National Women's Business Council (NWBC). The report, "Mentoring in the Business Environment," examines existing, formal mentoring programs for women and men business owners by comparing program structures, identifying best practices, and exploring the unique characteristics among programs geared specifically to women. The study also reviews existing research on mentoring for women business owners and suggests avenues for additional exploration such as e-mentoring.

"Women-owned businesses continue to drive our nation's economy," said Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Chairman and CEO of Carlson Companies and Chair of the National Women's Business Council. "With this growth

comes increasing demand for the resources and tools to facilitate business advancement. Good mentoring can be a key predictor of success."

Seventeen organizations that focus on women, mentoring and entrepreneurship shared information about 19 existing mentoring programs for business owners. The organizations included non-profits, membership organizations, universities, and government offices. The mentoring practices examined offer an understanding of what makes a program successful including planning, design, promotion, recruitment and support.

The study notes that at given points of a business' maturity, a business owner appears to be best served by a particular type of mentoring program. In addition, there are some specific program elements that may prove especially beneficial for women business owners. The study reviewed three categories of mentoring

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Organization of the Month:

ATHENAPowerLink, A Business Enhancement Program offered by the ATHENA Foundation

The ATHENAPowerLink Program "links" a woman business owner with an advisory panel made up of volunteer business professionals who are recruited to meet the specific needs of that business. This mentoring panel usually consists of 12 to 18 women and men interested in helping women-owned businesses in their community grow profitably. Women business owners learn networking skills, how to achieve access to capital, and how to implement best practices from these professionals who work with her at no cost for one year.

To learn more about the ATHENAPowerLink Program, contact the ATHENA Foundation at 312-580-0111 or visit their web site at www.athenafoundation.org.

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Mentoring for Growth By Marsha Firestone, Ph.D.



The National Women's Business Council is to be congratulated on the recently completed research on mentoring programs. The results of their study indicating that there are both formal and informal approaches for business ownership mentoring as well as specific needs for different stages of business development validates the programs of the Women Presidents' Organization. As the study found, second stage or established businesses benefit more from peer-to-peer advisement, where business owners share information and ideas with each other. The Women Presidents' Organization is such a peer advisory group. Our mission is to promote business and financial success and personal development for women who have already achieved at least two million in annual sales if product based and one million for service based. To this end, the Women Presidents' Organization members share their expertise and experience and are guided in small group interactive discussions by trained professional facilitators.

Success stories are abundant as the women identify the benefits that they experience in the process. For example, one of our members writes "Dear Marsha, thought you might like to know that since I joined the New Jersey chapter of the WPO in November 1999 my company's revenues climbed from about \$2.5 million to \$12 million. Now that is woman power!"

Whether the outcomes of our group-centered learning experience are increased revenues, or new ideas for business strategies or simply the support of the other women in the group, the benefits of the WPO peer advisory program are numerous. Another members writes "I just want to say that as I was telling a friend today - joining the

WPO was the best thing I ever did for my business. I am so appreciative of the support. It is making a positive difference."

Frequently WPO meetings utilize a case study approach to business learning. In the case study discussion, members bring in their own real life experiences and request input from other participants as to how they can accelerate their business growth and development. As another member wrote "I have never experienced anything quite like the case study opportunity from the WPO. The most enlightening aspect was hearing what I said in response to the questions from the members. I was at such a crossroads in my business and the WPO input was exactly what I needed. I am grateful for a renewed sense of energy and enthusiasm with which I left the meeting. The interaction with other business women is highly stimulating and I found the exercise an invaluable business tool."

The benefits identified by the members of the WPO peer-to-peer advisory process include the following:

- Increased revenues
- New business strategies
- Employee counseling advice and guidance
- Group support
- New business information
- Decreased isolation
- Decreased company costs
- Business development with other WPO members
- Returning to the work environment reenergized and revitalized

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Quote of the Month

"Those of us fortunate enough to achieve a measure of success in our careers have the greatest responsibility to give back. I believe the best ways to do that are to support and mentor other women and to speak on behalf of those not often heard in the arenas of political and economic decision making."

Sheri Orlowitz, Founder, Principal Owner, Chairman and CEO of Shan Industries, LLC, and Founder of OrloVon, LLC and member of the National Women's Business Council.



Mentoring for Growth, cont.

In the past year, the Edward Lowe Foundation completed some of their own research around medium-sized growing businesses. They found that business owners at this second stage of development learn best from peer advisory groups. Clearly that has been my experience in starting and growing the Women Presidents' Organization. Certainly the sampling of benefits included here address just some of the reasons why women business owners who are at least at the second stage of business development should seek out and participate in peer advisory groups to accelerate their business success.

Dr. Marsha Firestone is the President of the Women Presidents' Organization.

New Facts About Women-Owned Businesses in the U.S.

There has recently been much new information published on the number and growth of women-owned businesses. While the new information clearly shows that women-owned businesses are rapidly growing, there are still different definitions of what constitutes a woman-owned business and what figures should be used when referring to both numbers and growth rates. The NWBC recently worked with the Center for Women's Business Research to clarify new estimates of women-owned businesses and we are recommending that the following statistics be used in speeches and written material to promote credibility and clarity of our issues:

- As of 2002, there are an estimated 10.1 million privately-held businesses in which women own at least 50% of the company. Among them, 6.2 million are majority-owned.
- The 10.1 million privately-held, at least 50% women-owned firms employ 18.2 million people and generate \$2.32 trillion in sales. Majority women-owned firms employ 9.2 million workers and generate \$1.2 trillion in sales.
- Majority-owned, privately-held women-owned firms account for 28% of all businesses in the country. Equally-owned firms represent another 18% of all firms. Thus, nearly half (46%) of all privately-held U.S. firms are at least 50% owned by women.
- An estimated one in five women-owned businesses is owned by a woman or women of color. As of 2002, here are an estimated 1.2 million privately-held firms that are majority-owned by women of color.

Women's Business Connection...a monthly business issues conference call brought to you by the National Women's Business Council

August Topic: The progress of women in Federal government procurement, including the latest figures on Federal agency performance and success strategies from women Federal contractors.

August Date: Tuesday, August 26, 2003, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM EDT

How to Join: Participants may join the call by dialing 1-877-326-2337 (toll free) and entering code #3687613.

"Women's Business Connection" is always on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 3:00 PM EDT; we encourage you to join us regularly!

Listen to Playbacks of Previous "Women's Business Connection" Calls

Previous "Women's Business Connection" conference calls are available to those who were not able to join them live. Each call lasts about one hour and may be accessed by dialing 1-866-803-1430 and entering the conference ID number 3687613#. Listeners will then be prompted to enter one of the following playback ID numbers:

- To listen to the July 22nd call concerning **mentoring in the business environment**, enter playback ID 9670082#.
- To listen to the June 26th call concerning **homeland security preparedness** and procurement opportunities, enter playback ID 7686738#.
- To listen to the May 27th call concerning **government assistance for businesses interested in international trade opportunities**, enter playback ID 6691705#.
- To listen to the April 22nd call concerning **government support available to businesses affected by the activation of National Guard or military reservist employees**, enter playback ID 3465975#.

Mentoring Programs, cont.

programs, each of which may best serve a business in a specific stage or phase. These include:

- Entrepreneurial training programs (which provide subject-specific training to groups of prospective or nascent entrepreneurs) for businesses that are pre-start-up or start-up;
- Mentor-protégé programs (which match a business owner with a seasoned business mentor to facilitate coaching, knowledge transfer, and the creation of contacts, among other things) for businesses that are start-up or second-stage. Women business owners appear to benefit most from a program that matches one protégée with several mentors, or one mentor with several protégées, and gives each protégée the experience of a realistic stretch via a mentor(s) who is at the very next level up; and
- Peer-to-peer networking (which gathers non-competitive peers from a variety of industries to confidentially examine significant business challenges that each faces) for businesses that are second-stage or established. Women business owners would appear to benefit most from a structured form of peer-to-peer networking that plans participant composition, develops meeting agendas and monitors goal achievement.

The study also includes a review of mainstream and academic literature on mentoring for women business owners. The review reveals that discussion and analysis of business mentoring has focused primarily on corporate mentoring and related programs. Very little has been written on the topic of mentoring programming for business owners.

The study concludes with several recommendations for continued research and program support, including:

- Exploring e-mentoring (also known as telementoring) programs and their advantages for women business owners;
- Raising the profile of the mentoring concept through outreach. Methods might include: creating an online portal to serve as a single point of entry to business mentoring resources, with web links and information about existing programs (concludes on pg. 5)

Mentoring in the Business Environment



“Mentoring in the Business Environment” is now available at www.nwbc.gov.

Council Members

Chair

Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Chairman and CEO
Carlson Companies, Inc.

Jean Johnson, President and CEO
LegalWATCH

Laurie McDonald Jonsson, President and CEO
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Sheri Orlowitz, Founder, Chairman and CEO,
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Whitney Johns Martin, Past President
National Association of Women Business Owners

Dr. Lydia Mallet, Past President
National Coalition of 100 Black Women

Elizabeth Lisboa-Farrow, Immediate Past Chair
U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Marsha Firestone, Founder and President
Women Presidents' Organization

Susan Bari, President
Women's Business Enterprise National Council

Mentoring Programs, cont.

- grams; publicizing the business development tools of entrepreneur-support organizations that focus on helping business owners measure their successes and get to the next level; or working with major magazines whose audience is primarily women business owners to determine the availability of no or low cost advertising opportunities for women's business mentoring programs;
- Using the study's findings as a springboard for further research on the successful elements of each type of mentoring program; and
 - Encouraging formal and informal evaluation of programs to help build the case for business mentoring and to help determine the extent to which women's program needs differ from those of men. While many of the organizations reported investing time in follow-up program evaluation through the use of exit surveys or informal verbal check-ins, it was noted that none have begun to evaluate their programs formally and consistently.

"This study is a critical first step in understanding more about existing business mentoring programs and how they serve women business owners," said Carlson Nelson. "But this is just the beginning. This study will direct future research about mentoring programs and most importantly, it can inspire the creation of new ways to facilitate mentoring, such as e-mentoring, which will be vital in expanding the accessibility and immediacy of mentoring resources."

The NWBC is working in collaboration with the SBA's Seattle District Office and the Office of Women's Business Ownership to co-host a mentoring discussion in Seattle, WA on August 8, 2003. This discussion will take place within a regularly-scheduled monthly mentoring roundtable hosted by the district office at their Business Enterprise Center. The symposium will include a presentation of the findings from this mentoring study, followed by a panel discussion about the best practices of start-up training/mentoring programs, mentor-protégé groups and peer-to-peer networks. Seventy-five to 100 mentors and protégés of existing mentoring groups in the Seattle area are expected to attend.

"Mentoring in the Business Environment" is now available on the Council's web site, www.nwbc.gov.

Recently Announced Research

- **"Mentoring in the Business Environment,"** from the National Women's Business Council, July 2003. www.nwbc.gov/pressroom/documents/mentoringfinalreport.pdf
- **"Seizing Opportunities: A Report on the Forces Propelling the Growth of Women-Owned Enterprises,"** from the Center for Women's Business Research, June 2003. www.womensbusinessresearch.org/opportunity
- **"Women in Entrepreneurship"** by Maria Minniti, Ph.D. and Pia Arenius, researchers on the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor team, April 2003. www.emkf.org/pdf/UN-womens_report.pdf
- **"Women Entrepreneurs, Their Ventures, and the Venture Capital Industry,"** a new book from the Diana Project, 2003. www.esbri.se/diana.asp?link=annotated

Upcoming NWBC Research

- **Federal Contracting With Women-Owned Businesses: FY 1997 to FY 2002,** August 2003
- **Women's Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century: A Regional Summit Analysis,** September 2003
- **Women's Entrepreneurship Around the Globe: An Analysis from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 1999 - 2002,** October 2003
- **State Economic Networks for Women Business Owners,** October 2003

Iraqi Reconstruction Conference Provides Information and Insight About New Business Opportunities

A recent conference in Washington, DC drew over 500 participants from 24 states and 18 countries, who attended the event to learn more about the business opportunities springing from Iraqi reconstruction efforts. The conference was organized by Equity International, which is also organizing ongoing briefings.

Plenary discussions and workshops were held on a variety of topics, including: humanitarian and emergency assistance, the energy/oil sector, reconstruction priorities, contracting and subcontracting opportunities, and women and minority business opportunities. Officials from the U.S. government, large contractors, non-governmental organizations, and the Iraqi ex-patriot community spoke to the attentive crowd of business owners eager to learn more about how to get involved in the reconstruction effort.

Several important points were raised by a variety of speakers. Among them:

- Reconstruction efforts are not only providing business opportunities for for-profit businesses, but also for non-profit organizations that can provide support for social, health, and education needs.
- When seeking procurement opportunities, especially subcontracting opportunities, business owners are advised to -
 - be very clear and concise about what goods and/or services can be provided (rather than asking "what do you need?");
 - have proven qualifications in that area, with a track record of performance; and
 - be prepared to provide detailed financial statements.

Reconstruction of Iraq is being compared in its size and scope to the Marshall Plan. This is an effort that will likely take years, so there will be opportunities for businesses to contribute for months and years to come. In fact, as many speakers noted, reconstruction efforts in



A women's business panel spoke at the Iraqi Reconstruction Conference and included (from left to right): Neeran Saraf, President & CEO, Saraf Software Solutions; Janice Davis, Esq., Attorney, Davis & Steele; and Barbara Kasoff, Co-Founder, Women Impacting Public Policy.

Iraq must not only restore infrastructure damaged during the recent military campaign, but build up basic health, social, educational and economic services that have suffered from more than 25 years of neglect. It is definitely not too late to investigate the opportunities that may exist for your business.

For additional information on Iraqi reconstruction business opportunities, business owners are invited to visit the following web sites:

- U.K. Government Contracting Information: www.tradepartners.gov.uk/iraq
- U.S. Department of Commerce Exporter Information: www.export.gov/iraq
- U.S. - Iraq Business Council: www.usiraqbc.com
- Major U.S. Prime Contractors:
 - Bechtel - www.bechtel.com
 - Halliburton: www.halliburton.com
- Other Upcoming Conferences, Briefings: www.globalsecurity.bz

New "Regulatory Alerts" Site Provides Information About Business Regulations

The U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy has recently launched a Regulatory Alerts web page to help cut through the confusing Federal regulatory process and to provide a forum for submitted comments on the proposals. The site, www.sba.gov/advo/laws/law_regalerts, is also a direct line of communication to Advocacy staff and links to other regulatory sites. Small businesses affected by proposed rules are encouraged to provide the Federal agency issuing the notice with comments on the rule and the agency's analysis of potential impacts on small business.

Upcoming Events in the Women's Business Community

Women's Business Procurement Summit,

Hosted by the U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce
Washington, DC
August 13 - 14, 2003
www.uswomenschamber.com

17th Annual Entrepreneurial Woman's Conference, Hosted by the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC)

Chicago, IL
September 9 - 10
www.wbdc.org

Organization of Women in International Trade Conference

Calgary, Canada
September 10 - 12, 2003
www.owit.org

U.S. Small Business Administration's 50th Anniversary Celebration

September 14 - 20, 2003
www.sba.gov/50

"Celebrating Women in Business" Breakfast, part of the 50th Anniversary Celebration for the U.S. Small Business Administration

Washington, DC
September 18, 2003
www.sba.gov/50/regist.html

Women Impacting Public Policy's Annual Meeting

Washington, DC
September 15 - 16, 2003
www.wipp.org

National Businesswomen's Health Care Summit, Hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (in collaboration with the National Women's Business Council)

Washington, DC
September 17, 2003
www.accessamerica.org

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Council Mission

The National Women's Business Council is a bi-partisan Federal advisory council created to serve as an independent source of advice and policy recommendations to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners.

The Council's mission is to promote bold initiatives, policies and programs designed to support women's business enterprises at all stages of development in the public and private sector marketplaces, from start-up to success significance.