

Accountability in Numbers

Members of a new group support each other in achieving small-business goals

BY KAREN BOUGHTON SIEGELMAN

The words to an old Beatles' tune that state, "I get by with a little help from my friends", could be used to describe the philosophy of a newly formed, problem-solving group known as Business Peer2Peer.

This group includes 10 men and women who run their own businesses and spend about three hours of quality time together once a month.

"This isn't a referral or networking group", explained Pam Bauer, CEO/President of Abacus & Co., who started Peer2Peer three months ago. "Quite simply the mission of this group is to provide the small-business community with a place where they can come together and find some solutions to the challenges that they are facing."

"They get to explore possible solutions with people who understand their situations and want to help," added Bauer, who holds the monthly meetings at her Webster office. "By working together they become their own board of directors."

Bauer said the participants work in varied jobs, from financial planning and restaurant management to consulting and sales. Some are sole proprietors while others have 15 employees working for them.

Bauer explained that this group differs from others she has been involved in because it is a "bottom up design".

"Every decision will be driven by the members' determination of where they are and where they want to be," Bauer said. "If they want help with SBA (Small Business Administration) funding, then I will bring in an SBA expert. If they decide that they would like some help with marketing, then I will bring in someone to speak about that."

At the July meeting, Chris Kenney, a senior sales consultant at Paychex and a motivational speaker, addressed the group on dealing with the fears that keep them from going outside of their comfort zone. A key part of the presentation involved each participant writing down a goal he or she would like to achieve and then listing the obstacles that are keeping them from working toward it. The group members then shared what they had written with one of their colleagues.

Bauer said that she has shared statistics with the Peer2Peer group that indicate only 5 percent of people in any given situation achieve the level of success that they aspire to.

"Most just end up lowering their bar and settling for what they have," Bauer said. "The members of this group have made a conscious choice to challenge themselves and reach for something higher, something that is currently beyond their grasp, but not their reach.

And once the monthly meetings are over, the group's members do not just



staff photo

Chris Kenney, a senior sales consultant at Paychex and a motivational speaker, shared his personal story of overcoming a difficult upbringing to achieve business and personal success.

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PAM BAUER

go back to their independent existence; they continue to keep in touch with each other through a blog. Bauer has set up a private page on her company's website, www.abacusandco.com, that is password protected. On this page Peer2Peer members discuss their individual issues, concerns and progress.

"In addition I am currently setting up individual pages for each member," Bauer said. "These pages will have a goal that they have committed to accomplishing by year end. The members will comment on each other's pages and help them along the way when they get stuck."

Bauer compares the blog to an online group journal. She said the goals are both personal and business oriented, from increasing their company's revenue by 30 percent to learning how to play the violin.

Glen Cone, of AXA Advisors, said he finds the Peer2Peer concept to be powerful "because of the open and non-competitive atmosphere."

"We all know the idea is to help one another," said Cone, "but more importantly to focus on and help yourself by setting goals, committing to them, and holding each other accountable."

"Being a member of this group has already helped me confront some professional and personal challenges I have," Cone added. "It definitely works."

Although the Business Peer2Peer is in its infancy the word has quickly spread about this unique concept. In fact, Bauer will be starting up a second group this month with more members of the small-business community. She said she has no doubt that there are plenty of resources available to keep both groups going.

"Over the years I have compiled quite a list of people who have something to offer the small-business community," said Bauer. "Rochester has a plethora of talent."

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