

MA Small Business Development Center

Contributing to the Economic & Entrepreneurial Growth in Massachusetts Since 1980

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bern

There had to be a better way. Before the arrival of Duxbury-based Bern Unlimited, consumers had to buy one helmet for skiing, one helmet for skateboarding, another for mountain biking, and yet another for wakeboarding. Enter company founder Dennis Leedom, already an extreme sports industry icon at the tender age of 32, who has introduced a line of one of those "why didn't I think of that" products, finding indeed "that better way".

It was a little over two years ago that Dennis launched his venture with two friends, Josh Walker and Adam Godwin, working out of an old barn. Starting in 2006, the fledgling company began designing and selling action sport headgear offering complete head protection regardless of season or activity. Whether it was skiing, skateboarding, mountain biking, kayaking, snowboarding or even wakeboarding, a single Bern product was the only head protection customers needed.

MSBDC Business Advisor Mark Allio, who divides his time between our Southeast MA center and the UMass Boston center, was immediately impressed with Dennis and his "positivity". He began working with Dennis in July, providing support and counsel on a wide range of issues- from strategic to operational, from sales to finance.

During that time, Dennis has continued to gain traction in building his company, and his leadership is paying off. In 2006, their first year with a product on the market, Bern signed up hundreds of distributors and sales accounts (including many international), easily surpassed their first million dollar sales benchmark, and actually generated a healthy profit. This year should be even better, as the market embraces Bern's superior products and winning attitude, with sales projected to quadruple by 2008.

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The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (MSBDC) provides free and confidential one-on-one business advisory services to the small business community in Southeastern Massachusetts in the counties of Bristol, Barnstable, Dukes, Nantucket, Plymouth and part of Norfolk.

MSBDC assistance is tailored to the needs of individual clients. Our mission is to support the future success of your business.

Management Counseling Services include, but are not limited to:

- Start-up Businesses
- Business Plan Development
- Financial Plan Development
- Marketing & Sales Strategies
- Cash Flow Analysis
- Organizational & Personnel Issues
- Government Procurement Assistance
- Minority Business Assistance
- International Trade Assistance

MSBDC Staff Members

Melinda L. Ailes

Senior Business Advisor

Daniel Lilly, Jr.

Procurement Specialist

Clifford Robbins

Senior Business Advisor

Michael P. Sullivan

International Trade Counselor

Mark R. Allio

Senior Business Advisor

Tammi A. Jacobsen

Client Service Coordinator

The company has been self-funded to date through equity investments made by Dennis and family and friends, but is now poised for bank financing. Mark continues to help guide Dennis and his team as they work to complete their financing proposal and search for an appropriate banking partner that can support their meteoric growth.

"This is a fresh, exciting company that thinks outside the box", says Allio. "I'm psyched to be working with Dennis, and believe that Bern will become the brand of choice for extreme sports enthusiasts around the world."

For information on Bern Unlimited and their products, see www.bernunlimited.com

Spotlight



Nancy Gibeau

Nancy Gibeau, Senior Loan Officer at the New Bedford Economic Development Council was nominated by the MSBDC to receive the US Small Business Administration's 2007 Massachusetts Women in Business Advocate award. This award is presented annually to an individual who has fulfilled a commitment to the advancement of women's business ownership. Not only did Nancy win the MA award but also the award for all of New England.

"Nancy Gibeau exemplifies the talent, business savvy and vision required to be a recognized leader in the southeastern Massachusetts business arena." said SBA Director Maurice Dubé. "This award is an example of the high regard in which she is held in her community." The sentiment was echoed by Melinda Ailes, Cliff Robbins and Tammi Jacobsen who work closely with Nancy, supporting small businesses in the New Bedford area.

While Ms. Gibeau has worked in banking, lending, and economic development for more than 15 years, the SBA award is recognition for her efforts to increase business and financial opportunities for women. In her current position, Nancy has provided millions of dollars in financing to women-owned businesses throughout southeastern Massachusetts.

NBEDC executive director Matthew Morrissey said, "Nancy is an invaluable member of our team. Her work is very important to the

mission of this organization. Our lending program is up 230% from last year and Nancy's fine work is well reflected in that increase. We are especially proud of Nancy's outreach work to women who are starting up or expanding their business."

Ms. Gibeau volunteers countless hours counseling and educating women. She has created and sponsored training workshops for low income and disadvantaged women, and is a major player in an annual business forum for women, and volunteers to help school age girls and boys. Among her partners are the YMCA, YWCA, SBA, Center for Women in Enterprise, and Commonwealth Corporation.

"I am honored to receive this award," said Ms. Gibeau. "I'm happy to lend my experience and help, especially to women in business." The award will be presented May 11 at an awards luncheon sponsored by the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce.

"Planning and Plans"

By Peter Lowy

Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." His words apply to business in general and marketing and sales in particular. Whatever your plans, chances are external events will emerge to change them. But you're better off for having gone through the process.

In marketing and sales, planning lets you:

Identify and quantify goals. If you don't know where you're headed, you won't know when you get there. Put a stake in the ground, e.g., we want to increase sales by 50% within 12 months.

Assess the landscape. Start by understanding how you've succeeded to date. Whether or not you've ever aimed to increase revenues by 50% in a year, look at your current customers. How many of your top customers would you need to replicate to grow total sales by 50%? Probably fewer than you think. Now identify prospects and stay clear of suspects. Someone who would have good reason to buy from you is a prospect. Someone who is capable of buying your product, but who has no reason to do so is a suspect.

Evaluate the odds. Assign every prospective sale a probability of success of 25%, 50%, or 75%. (Situations of 100% or 0% have been decided.) If you don't meet the person who has veto power over spending, give this prospect a 25% probability, no matter how well the discussion goes. Deciding between 50% and 75% probabilities depends on a lot of specifics. Don't waste time figuring out, say, a 60% probability, because you can't distinguish between 50% and 60%. This approach tells you where to spend your energy and helps focus your team on what needs to be done.

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Consider alternatives. What happens if a new, low-price competitor comes on the scene? What will you do if your biggest customer suddenly goes away? These and other life altering conditions occur. Have a contingency plan.

Now, implement your plan. You'll likely learn that conditions in the field changed before you even get out the door. No matter. You've thought out your goal and you can adjust it because you know the nuances supporting it. You've studied the landscape and know where to go and what to avoid. You have a system for assessing success; it's just a matter of applying it to new conditions. You've also thought how major developments could affect you. In short, you're ready to go forth and succeed.

Peter Lowy is a marketing consultant who works with business-to-business service companies. Call him at 781-326-9980 or email to lowy@bus-com.com.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEED ENTREPRENEURIAL WORKSHOPS are repeated in a different location once a month. For reservations & directions please contact: Tamarah Barao @ SEED 508-822-1020. Costs for trainings are FREE.

Session I: Learn the fundamentals of planning, preparing for & financing your business.

Session II: Learn to understand financial statements how they help to determine the health of your business.

Session I: Thurs. May 3 **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Session II: Thurs. May 3 **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Webster Bank, 330 Swansea Mall Drive, Swansea MA.

Session I: Thurs. May 10 **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Session II: Thurs. May 10 **Time:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Location: Citizens Bank, 865 Washington Street, Braintree MA.

Session I: Tues. June 12 **Time:** 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Session II: Tues. June 19 **Time:** 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: Quest Center, 1213 Purchase Street, New Bedford MA.

FREE SOMWBA Workshop in New Bedford

The **State Office of Minority & Women Business Assistance (SOMWBA)** will conduct a workshop presenting the requirements for state certification of minority (MBE) and woman business enterprises (WBE), as well as for the U.S. Department of Transportation's disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) program.

Date: Thurs. May 24 **Time:** 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Location: New Bedford Public Library, 3rd Floor
613 Pleasant Street, New Bedford, MA.

RSVP to Arthur Levin @ 413-587-6213

LEAVE YOUR COMPETITORS IN THE DUST

Creating a brand for your business and developing name recognition is one of the most important aspects of marketing, according to presenter Cliff Robbins. At this workshop, he will be outlining the basics for all small business owners, both seasoned and new to the field. If you're not only the owner of your small business, but the marketing department as well, then this seminar is of vital importance in understanding how to keep an eye open for trends that provide new opportunities or possible barriers, and how research, planning, implementing and sales can give you the feedback you need for success. Presented by Cliff Robbins, Senior Business Advisor for the MSBDC.

Date: Thurs. May 31

Time: 7:30 AM – 9:30 AM

Location: Holiday Inn, 1127 Route 132, Hyannis, MA.

Cost: \$35.00

RSVP to Christina at 508-362-5709 x 515

To better serve the Massachusetts small business community, the Southeastern Massachusetts Regional MSBDC has outreach sites in conjunction with chambers of commerce and economic development entities.

Attleboro Chamber

North Attleboro Chamber

Falmouth Chamber

Yarmouth Chamber

Plymouth Chamber

Tri Town Chamber

Cape Cod Chamber

Metro South Chamber

New Bedford Quest Center

For general information, training information or to make an appointment, please contact Tammi A. Jacobsen at extension 104 or please go to our website:

www.msbdc.org/semass

"The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network is a partnership program with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Massachusetts Department of Business and Technology under cooperative agreement 7-603001-Z-0022-27 through the University of Massachusetts Amherst. SBDCs are a program supported by the U. S. Small Business Administration and extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. SBA cannot endorse any products, opinions or services of any external parties or activities. Reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities will be made, if requested at least two weeks in advance. For further information, contact the Fall River MSBDC office at (508) 673-9783."



"Funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the SBA"