

Small Business Matters

Want more information and resources on this week's topics, ideas and events? Go to www.cose.org/smallbizmatters.

PRESENTED BY



Cheers to Small Business!

Celebrating Small Business Week May 4-8

Join COSE as we celebrate the amazing small businesses in Northeast Ohio during National Small Business Week May 4-8, 2015. Our week-long campaign is jam-packed with promotional, networking and educational opportunities you won't want to miss.

Here is a sneak peak of a few of our favorite events planned for SBW. Check out all the exciting things happening next week at www.cose.org/sbw and come out and celebrate with us!

MONDAY 5/4

I ♥ Small Business Campaign

COSE staff members kick off Small Business Week by hitting the streets for a fun social media campaign spotlighting NEO small businesses. Follow us on Twitter and Facebook for owner interviews, pics, special deals and more. Tweet us @COSEsmallbiz and the team might just stop by your business!

TUESDAY 5/5

Art 101 Tour and Cocktail Reception at the Bonfoey Gallery

Support small business and the local art scene at this one-of-a-kind art tour and cocktail reception exclusively for business owners. (5:30 - 8 p.m.)

WEDNESDAY 5/6

Small Business Bootcamp: Marketing and Branding

You're not going to want to miss marketing guru Sage Lewis of SageRock as he shares his online marketing passion and expertise. (5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at Skylight Financial)

THURSDAY 5/7

Tech Growth: Leveraging LinkedIn: Prospecting, Connections and More

Get the inside scoop from Jamie Nikosey, relationship manager at LinkedIn Sales Solutions, on how tech companies are growing revenues by unlocking the value of LinkedIn. (7:30-10 a.m., Cleveland and Akron locations)

THURSDAY 5/7

Heights Hillcrest Business Expo

This unique B2B event will be a hot spot with hundreds of entrepreneurs, business pros, educational and civic leaders, artists and more. (2:30 - 7 p.m., 700 Beta Banquet and Conference Center)

FRIDAY 5/8

COSE Business Pitch Finale

Cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and \$40,000! Participate in our live audience as we decide the winners of this year's Business Pitch Competition. (4:30-7:30 p.m., Music Hall at Public Auditorium.)



BIG IDEAS

The Toasted Oat: Taking the Granola Market by Storm

On May 5, COSE will announce the winners of its 2015 Business Pitch Competition in which five worthy entrepreneurs will split \$40,000 in cash prizes. We recently checked in with previous winners to see what kind of impact winning or placing in the competition can have on the early stages of a new business. For Erika Boll of The Toasted Oat LLC, winning the \$10,000 second-place prize in 2013 was the beginning of impressive growth for the company.

When Boll entered the 2013 Business Pitch Competition, six Columbus grocery stores sold the gluten-free granola made by The Toasted Oat, her three-month-old start-up company. The month following her win, Heinen's agreed to launch The Toasted Oat in all of its stores. Today, the granola's four flavors are on the shelves of more than 200 grocers in Ohio, Kentucky, and the mid-Atlantic region.

Boll said the COSE prize money allowed her to move from a shared kitchen to a leased space. "It became obvious that we needed to move," Boll said. "After the COSE win, I signed

a lease on a kitchen space, purchased an oven and sink and made all the electrical and other upgrades required by the agriculture department. The COSE money was the catalyst."

Today the company has 15 employees, plus five who demo her granola in stores. Boll intended The Toasted Oat for the gluten-free market, but she found that most stores place her granola on their regular cereal shelves. "It's become a cross-over product. Stores have given us great support and our brand sells 200 to 300 percent above others in its category," she said.

What's next: She has a laundry list of new flavors to eventually add to her Toasted Oat line and she's aiming for national distribution. Sounds like the Business Pitch Competition judges knew a good thing when they saw, um, tasted it!

Join us as we announce the 2015 COSE Business Pitch winners on Friday, May 8. See *Small Business Week* calendar above for details.



Erika Boll, The Toasted Oat LLC

52 TIPS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

#17: Go All In On Sustainable Business Practices

While many small business owners think the idea of sustainable business practices as cost-prohibitive — or even just the mission of large corporations — many small business owners are quickly realizing that there are a number of significant benefits to embracing sustainability, no matter the size of your business.

Sustainability involves identifying opportunities and systems that have a lesser impact on the environment than previous methods. Recognizing the social impact of your business actions and engaging in sustainability practices can help to reduce costs, improve profits and offer opportunities for innovation.

Consumers today want greener products

and services and are increasingly searching out eco-friendly companies with which to do business. Adopting sustainable business practices can give you a unique selling proposition, helping to differentiate your company from the competition. Small businesses are also grasping the need to conform to sustainability policies of companies in their supply chains.

The potential impact on your company's long-term success makes sustainability plain old good business sense. "Looking ahead, smaller companies will continue to face increased pressure by large, publicly traded customers that are auditing the sustainability practices of their value chain, both upstream

and downstream, and reporting on these practices on an annual basis," says Margie Flynn, principal and co-founder of Brown Flynn, a corporate responsibility and sustainability consulting firm in Cleveland. "Those companies that understand and anticipate these increased expectations, and continue to adopt sustainable practices as a result, will be better positioned for success as a valued business partner."

The easiest way to "go green" is to adopt operational efficiencies in your business. Check out www.cose.org/smallbizmatters for 10 steps to make your business more sustainable.

April 27

By The Numbers

Small Business Employees are Generally Happier Employees

68% overall full-time U.S. employees

81% small business employees



Satisfied with job.

SOURCE: SCORE 2015 STATE OF SMALL BUSINESS REPORT

Connection Calendar

CEO MEETUP WITH RACHEL TALTON

10,000 Small Business Alumnus Rachel Talton, CEO of Synergy Marketing Strategy & Research, tackles the topic of Passion Equity: Six Steps to Monetize Your Brand.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6

8:30 - 10:30 AM

Tri-C Metro Campus



Cost: Free

Register at www.cose.org/events.

COSE BUSINESS PITCH COMPETITION FINALE

Get in on the action! Participate in our live audience as COSE gives away \$40,000 in cash prizes among the top five competitors.

FRIDAY, MAY 8

4:30 - 7:30 PM

Music Hall at Public Auditorium, Cleveland

Cost: \$25 COSE Members, \$40 Non-Members

Reserve your seat at www.cose.org/events.

GREAT LAKES BEER SCHOOL

Develop a good head for beer! This fun and educational tour includes beer tasting, t-shirt, tasting glass and light snack.

THURSDAY, MAY 14

6 - 8 PM

Great Lakes Brewing Company



Cost: \$35

Reserve your spot at www.cose.org/events.

Check out www.cose.org/events for all the latest happenings.