The key to a successful business is building relationships that go beyond one-time projects and provide ongoing value to retain clients year after year. You want to become a valued partner in a client’s enterprise and someone they grow to value today and for years to come and make sure you see you as more than just a vendor or supplier. You want to show your client they are more than just a revenue stream. The more you identify with them as the person and the company they are, the stronger the bond.

“Your word is part of that bond, so always follow through on your commitments” says Paul Kithcart, President of Group Transportation Services. “This shows your dedication and frees your client of worry.” That freedom from worry builds trust and clients prefer sticking with a business they can trust, rather than rebuilding with another vendor.

It’s also important to offer more than just a good or service. You should offer your clients solutions to their problems. Provide flexible solutions that are specific to their business.

“At GTS, we work backwards from our clients’ current process and their requirements to develop a solution that optimizes their logistics needs. By offering custom solutions to our clients, we deliver a program that is tailored to their supply chain goals in service, finance and efficiency,” says Kithcart.

Be a useful resource. The more value you offer, the more a client will depend on you for an ongoing basis. Providing results will drive relationships and referrals to others looking for a trusted partner.

### KEEPING ENERGY COSTS DOWN

In recognition of National Energy Awareness Month, each week in October, Small Business Matters will publish an energy tip to help you be more efficient in your energy usage. Today’s tip:

When that clogged air filter is working harder, more energy is being used. And when it requires more energy to make your heating and air conditioning to work, it causes your energy bill to skyrocket. The Department of Energy says the average household spends about $2,200 a year on its energy bill. When you consistently change your air filter, you can save from 5 to 15 percent on your utility costs. Having your equipment maintained by professionals and keeping up with a preventative maintenance program will also ensure the efficiency and longevity of the equipment.

### Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program at Tri-C Spurs Both Revenue and Job Creation

Northeast Ohio entrepreneurs who completed the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C®) outperformed the broader economy while exceeding national averages in revenue growth and job creation.

Nearly two of three participants in the 10,000 Small Businesses program at Tri-C reported increased revenue at their companies in the first six months after graduation, and more than 40 percent hired more employees.

By comparison, less than half of small-business owners nationally saw revenue growth while only 22 percent added jobs, according to a survey by the National Small Businesses Association.

“The 10,000 Small Businesses program at Cuyahoga Community College has delivered on its goal to strengthen local companies and grow the regional economy,” said Alex Johnson, president of Tri-C. “With every graduate and success story, we build toward a better tomorrow in Northeast Ohio.”

The results at Tri-C mirror those detailed in a study released today by Babson College. The report “Stimulating Small Business Growth: Progress Report on Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses” details the progress of the thousands of entrepreneurs who have completed the program.

The roll call of graduates includes Randy Golenberg, owner of Spark Your Brand, a product marketing and merchandising company based in Chagrin Falls. He said the time spent in 10,000 Small Businesses created a foundation to build his business.

“It allowed me to work ‘on’ the business instead of ‘in’ the business,” Golenberg said. “You look at things in a different way, and that’s invaluable.”

To be accepted into the program, participants must demonstrate a commitment to growing their businesses and creating jobs within their community. Each spends 12 weeks at Tri-C studying a business and management curriculum designed by Babson College, a top-ranked school for entrepreneurial education and the academic partner of 10,000 Small Businesses.

Tri-C faculty customize the curriculum, which covers topics such as accounting, human resources, negotiation and marketing. The program also includes one-on-one business advising, accounting workshops and advice from Goldman Sachs professionals.

The application deadline for the next session of 10,000 Small Businesses is Oct. 22. Another cohort will begin in early 2016.

Visit www.tri-c.edu/10ksb or call 216-987-3220 for more information.