

Small Business Matters

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

PRESENTED BY



X RULE BREAKERS

Making Connections One Cup at a Time

There's an exciting movement happening among small business owners across the country and right here in northeast Ohio.



Startup entrepreneurs of all types — tech firms, manufacturers, professional service providers, and more — are gathering each week to learn about a business or two, share advice, and make connections in an honest and supportive environment...all over a simple cup of coffee.

1 Million Cups was founded by the Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City as a way to engage entrepreneurs in communities, and has since grown to more than 50 cities across the U.S. including Cleveland. Each week, the 1MC program offers two local business owners an opportunity to present their startups to a diverse audience of mentors, advisors, and entrepreneurs to gain feedback and critical connections.

"1 Million Cups is definitely breaking the rules," says Jose Vasquez, founder of both QuezMedia and Build. Brand. Blast. and one of four co-organizers of 1 Million

Cups Cleveland. "It is not a natural instinct to get up and subject yourself and your ideas to feedback from a room full of strangers. You get unscripted feedback and there is just no way to prepare."

The idea is to create connections that will help build positive momentum for projects. "This isn't a pitch meeting. We're not selling a product or service," says Vasquez. "People are sharing their entrepreneurial stories and finding

real opportunities. It is a community in action."

"For me, there is something very unique about this experience. I have the opportunity to meet with incredible companies each week and sometimes I am able to directly help them and their business; sometimes they help me and my business. It's the spirit of sharing and community that is really breaking the rules."

Put yourself out there. Request to present your business startup at <http://cleveland.sites.1millioncups.com/>.



💡 52 TIPS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

#1: Create an Accountability Partner

The start of a New Year is a great time to set some big goals for your business. Not just a passing resolution or two, but a few serious aspirations to take your business to the next level. But if you're like many business owners, the day-to-day demands of running your business can often distract you from tackling those bigger goals.

Instead of finding yourself in the same spot this time next year, find an accountability partner for your business to keep you focused on your goals. An accountability partner is essentially a business coach that helps you keep your commitments. They won't let you rationalize, procrastinate or get away with weak excuses for not charging ahead.

TIP

Let one of COSE's Business Advisors connect you with another business owner that can be your accountability partner. Just e-mail us at smallbizmatters@cose.org.

Your accountability partner can be a trusted advisor, retired business owner, or even a non-competing business owner. "It's important to find someone that you trust and respect," says Jeanne Coughlin, President of the Coughlin Group, who formed an accountability group two years ago with three

other business owners to provide support and keep each other focused on what's important.

The group meets for several hours each month to evaluate progress, identify obstacles and challenges, and set specific goals for the next 30 days. "We challenge each other," says Coughlin. "We set ground rules and we try not to give specific advice. We just experience share."

Things to look for in an accountability partner include a common understanding of your business and positive chemistry. "You also have to be very committed," cautions Coughlin. "Though it's one more meeting on your calendar, it is one that can make a big difference. But you have to make it count!"

ASK THE EXPERT

"With so many stories of violence in the workplace making headlines, what should I be doing to safeguard my business?"

There has been an upswing in recent years in how businesses look at the safety and security of their physical business locations — whether it is an office, warehouse or storefront. Companies are seeing more aggressive behavior in the workplace, not only from visitors and unknown persons, but also from current and discharged employees.

The good news is there are fairly inexpensive and even no-cost ways to better ensure the safety of your employees, customers, visitors and vendors. I recommend an objective physical analysis of the workplace. A professional risk assessment usually includes a walk-through of the business as well as interviews with employees. You can then formalize a 1-3 year plan and budget for small and large improvements to strengthen security

TIP

For more expert advice, check out Linktunity, COSE's online tool that connects you to other business owners who can help you find answers and address your challenges (www.linktunity.com).

and reduce vulnerability and risk. A few easy to implement safety features include:

- Control the flow of all people in and out of buildings. Limit the amount of doors utilized for normal exit and entrance to your business.
- Secure the lobby or entrance area and require visitors to sign in and out.
- Control external access electronically and



limit access to crucial areas of your business.

- Add cameras and improve lighting.

Companies are also realizing the need for awareness and training in workplace violence issues. Training to combat bullying, deal with difficult persons, and diffuse dangerous situations can be crucial in safeguarding your business. ”

TIMOTHY A. DIMOFF, CEO & President, SACS Consulting and Investigative Services, Inc.

January 5

Kick Off the New Year Right

Welcome to Small Business Matters, a new weekly resource for Northeast Ohio small business owners. By partnering with *Crain's* to make this page available for COSE members and *Crain's* subscribers, we will work together to shine a bigger spotlight on small business matters in 2015. On this page each week we will feature ideas, expertise, opportunities, resources, and other items of interest to business owners. As the largest employer in the region with 38 percent of the region's employees, small business continues to be a driving force in our economy. Connecting the work of the small business community and its business owners to each other is one way we know that we can help each small business owner get closer to their idea of success.

Rion Safier
Rion Safier Accounting, LLC
Chairman, COSE

Steve Millard
President and Executive Director, COSE

By The Numbers

86,334

NEW ENTITIES FILING
TO DO BUSINESS IN OHIO

(Jan-Nov. 2014)

SOURCE: Ohio Secretary of State

Connection Calendar

1 MILLION CUPS CLEVELAND

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7

FREE / 9 - 10 AM

Red Space at HotCards.com

2400 Superior Avenue

Register at: <http://cleveland.sites.1millioncups.com/>

INNOVATE YOUR LEASE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28

FREE / 7:30 - 10 AM

COSE Offices, 1240 Huron

Better manage your energy and water issues through innovative lease agreements

Call 592-2390 to register

COSE ANNUAL MEETING

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

4:30 PM

Music Box Supper Club

SAVE THE DATE!

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