



NetWork News

A Center for Simulated Business Services Newsletter

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What's In This Issue?

1. CSBS Welcomes 13 New Firms
2. Student Articles
3. The Faculty Forum
4. CSBS Corner
5. Dates to Remember



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LUCKY NO. 13!

CSBS Growth

You are part of a growing network! Thirteen new firms joined the Mercer network during the 2002-2003 academic year, and four of these members started with two firms. Our newest members are South Hunterdon Regional High School in Lambertville, NJ; Rockland Community College in Suffern, NY; and Northcentral Technical College in Wausau, WI.

We realize the commitment you make to your (lucky) students, and we applaud you for your efforts. We wish you all an enjoyable, relaxing summer vacation . . . now let's start the grill and find that sun-tan lotion!

Radiant Care, Inc.
Improves its Bottom Line

Alison Reffner & Ekaterine Rigas

On April 10, 2003, we attended the Annual Trade Fair, held in New York City. We had the opportunity to interact with students from different practice firms all over the United States and even countries such as Austria and Jamaica. It was interesting to see what they had to contribute for their companies. We found that a lot of the students there

were very sophisticated and had very interesting sales tactics.



When walking around the trade fair, we got to experience the creativity of these students by visiting their booths and making purchases. Raffles and giveaways were very popular and helped toward making a profit for their business. One of our favorite booths was the Mardi Gras theme. They sold tickets for concerts and different events. We loved their choice of advertisement. Not only did they have a very elaborate booth, but they chose to "decorate" themselves in costumes. This sales tactic draws in a full crowd, which is needed for the products which they intended to sell. They also had plenty of raffles and party favors to give away. Most importantly their service was helpful and very friendly.

The whole idea of the Trade Fair itself was a great experience. It teaches students how to communicate with other students and how to communicate with other companies in the business world. It also prepares them for Marketing and Sales, which can at times, be very com-

plicated. Most importantly, it teaches students how to listen to one



another and find more than one way to solve a problem—since that is what marketing means—solving customer problems and what better place to experience the whole feeling in than New York City. We learned how to sell and buy goods from different firms. Each firm came up with a marketing plan on how to attract other customers. It was interesting how each firm took everything seriously, which is a good thing. Overall, the experience was great. We all learned how to act professional and come up with good business attitudes and practices.



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We are located out of Northcentral Technical College, 1000 W Campus Drive, Wausau, Wisconsin 54401. Our firm consists of 20 students from the Administrative Assistant and Accounting Programs. We are finally up and running after many difficult startup months. So come and check out our products at <http://ibpf.ntc.edu>

We can be reached Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 10:00 a.m.-12 noon (Central Time) to answer all of your questions. 715-

675-3331 Ext. 5587. Our email is stitch.spectacular@ibpf.ntc.edu

Meet the Stitch Spectacular Team



Purchasing



Human Resources



Accounting



Marketing



Office Administration



Silent Partners

Wyo Xpress 2003

by David Bavins

This year's Wyo Xpress is striving to bring our customers throughout the world the "New Wild West". Last year we had the Purple Cow Dude Ranch. Sales of this product were disappointing, and we felt we needed to develop a new program in order to promote Wyoming and boost sales for our group.



We started by developing a comprehensive marketing survey. The response to this survey was overwhelming, and invaluable in helping us develop this year's program. We would strongly recommend that all business practice firms engage in some sort of customer survey. It helped us in refining our program and helped us to better understand not only what our customers wanted, but also what they didn't want. Based on the responses of our survey we have developed a program that is tailored to practice firms everywhere, making all practice firms potential customers.

The number one goal of the new program is to help train other practice firms in leadership, business practices, and team building. The whole learning experience is surrounded by an environment of outdoor adventure, mountain sports, and the rocky mountain west.

So far we have been having a lot of fun in developing our new program. The other day we made our first sale of the new product and everyone was very pleased.

Wyo Xpress
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Say It With Socks

An article that ran on December 14, 2000 in our regional newspaper, The Frederick News-Post, said “Say It with Socks”, a virtual corporation created to sell socks, is giving students at Frederick Community College real life experience.”

We here at Say It with Socks feel that our time spent in class is invaluable to our future, even if all of us don't pursue business careers. Our professional consultant, Donna Lane, has provided priceless support and advice. We are forever indebted to her and the college for making this opportunity possible.



As a class, we have learned to manage business finances, brainstorm to think of innovative ways to advertise, handle purchases, sell products and most importantly, to think for ourselves. Thank you for your time, Karl Smith
Human Resources
Say It with Socks

The Faculty Forum

A Deutschland Adventure

During the Fall '02, I was privileged to have a sabbatical from Mercer to pursue some work related to the IBPF model and to spend a little time traveling to “rejuvenate” the body and spirit. Before sharing with you these experiences, I would like to formally thank Donna Davidson who held down the “CSBS

Fort” and Joan Jones who temporarily became the CEO of Radiant Care, Inc. Without them and the support of our Division Dean, Jacky Sanders, my experience

would not have been possible—so thank you Donna, thank you Joan, and thank you Jacky!



My home base was at the University of Hamburg in the northern part of Germany. My visits to practice firms (the term used in Europe) also took me to Augsburg and Essen. Essen happens to be the home of the German Central Office. As part of my time in Hamburg, I worked with Professor Franz Gramlinger learning about some of the research that has been completed with regard to the pedagogy surrounding the practice firm model. Another interesting part of my visit to Hamburg was my observation of what Germany calls a “Junior Firm.” These firms differ from practice firms in that the Junior Firm is actually supported by a real business, and the participants in the Junior Firm are paid (real money) by the business. The model has been in existence for many years in Germany. Up until recently, this has been a very good means of training new employees; however, with the slow economy, students cannot find placement when they finish the Junior Firm. The German Labor Office is reviewing other alternatives.

After spending sometime in Hamburg, I traveled by train (yes, German train travel is fabulous) to Augsburg. This is in the central part of Germany considered Bavaria. This is where the German Trade Fair was being held. Boy, was I proud to see GiftsUnlimited and Java & Joe from the CSBS network participating!! They did a fabulous job, had a great display, and came home with lots of sales and international contacts. My ex-

perience at the trade fair was excellent. I spent a good deal of time speaking with students and teachers from several different countries. One of the issues I addressed with them was “why is trading so difficult at the international level?” The responses that I received supported what one might expect from “real” business partners. The practice firm “employees” want to develop a “relationship” before conducting business. So this semester, I have been trying to get the students in my class to establish “relationships” before trying to conduct business—it seems to be working!

My next step was to visit the Central Office in Essen. These folks were the pioneers over 30 years ago and had a great deal to share with me. I not only learned about their school-related firms, but I also learned about their workforce model for adults. The workforce model is the next step that Mercer is planning to implement. Of particular interest to our current network



members, Werner Auer, Director of the Central Office

shared with me their system of recognizing firms with a “Quality Certificate.” This served as a motivating factor for students in the firm and did not create adverse competition among the firms. The Quality Certificate in Germany is achieved by completing certain tasks, i.e., a business plan, participating in programs and/or conferences, trade fairs, developing a web page and/or online shopping, to name a few of the criteria. Firms could achieve this Quality Certificate without having to do everything on the list—they could focus on the kinds of activities that worked best for them and still achieve the “standard.” We are hoping to implement a similar program for our network firms to assist both firms and teachers with getting well deserved recognition from their local schools and community. We will keep you posted on the development.

Heading back to Hamburg, I finished up my “research” by visiting several more adult workforce practice firms. Although my German is nonexistent, my hosts were very patient with me, the

students did a great job explaining what they did in the program, and when all else failed, my sign language was quite good!



The last portion of my adventure was spent doing some personal travel with my husband. This was probably the most beneficial! This was my opportunity to renew my mind and spirit and come to back to the IBPF program and my students at Radiant Care with a heightened level of interest, enthusiasm and creativity for this exciting and unique learning environment. I am thoroughly enjoying my class this semester. My sabbatical was truly a lifetime experience!

The CSBS Corner

Howdy, partner! Are you ready for some tradin'?

There are plenty of IBPFs out there ready to do some tradin'. All you need to do is "go and get'em"!

Building a customer base for trading is important. Businesslike, professional messages need to be developed (email messages, letters, flyers, etc.) and sent to potential customers on a routine, consistent basis. Surveys can also be prepared and sent out to help introduce your firm and your product to potential trading partners. Thank you messages can be sent to your customers to let them know that you value your business relationship with them and wish to continue trading. You get the idea . . . now put your creative ideas to work for your firm.

New firms need to be especially diligent and persistent in their efforts to build a customer base. Yes, partner, this does take a lot of effort . . . but the rewards are many.

Happy Trading!

Dates to Remember

Best Practices Program—October 24, 2003 at Mercer County Community College. Registration available September 2003.

IBPF Teacher Training—February 26 & 27, 2004

Happy Summer

