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The Lee County Horizon Council is a 62-member, public-private board that advises Lee County Commissioners on economic issues. It works to improve Lee County's business environment, retain and encourage expansion of existing businesses and attract new and diversified employment.

The Importance of Planning

Study, analysis provide blueprint for success

By, Jennifer Berg
edo@leegov.com

The importance of a comprehensive business plan cannot be overemphasized since so much hinges on it: outside funding, credit from suppliers, management of your operation and finances, promotion and marketing of your business, and achievement of your goals and objectives.

Any worthwhile endeavor requires planning. Thinking through and drafting a business plan will help you chart a steady course for your new or existing business. It is an opportunity for you to clearly define the goals of your company and outline the methods by which you plan to achieve them.

Too often in the past, business owners only thought of their business plan when planning for financial assistance. However, savvy, successful business owners embrace their business plan as a planning tool for every aspect of their business.

Today's entrepreneurs understand the benefits to their business when they use their business plans to set goals and objectives for the overall operation of their business. They are reviewing their management team, and skills. The marketing plan and analysis of the competition are adjusted for

fluctuations over the past period. Staffing plans are updated to reflect changes in skill requirements and census numbers to match business needs.

Many business owners struggle and are unsure how to develop a successful business plan or adjust an existing plan. Fortunately, a number of resources are available to help business owners. Whether it's through web-based education, personal experience, or in a classroom setting, educational resources abound for business owners.

The U.S. Small Business Administration has an in-depth, self-paced tutorial on its' national web site which provides a step-by-step road map to developing a business plan. The program can be found on the SBA's web site at www.sba.gov under Strategic Planning.

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Florida Gulf Coast University is dedicated to helping small-to-medium size businesses succeed in southwest Florida. The Center offers one-on-one free business counseling sessions to residents in southwest Florida, and conducts seminars, workshops and trade shows designed to assist small and medium size businesses to succeed in today's dynamic marketplace.

Visit the Center's web site at www.fgcu.edu/cob/sbdc or call the Center at 225-4220 to sign up for a business class to suit your needs and help guide your business to success. You will find a complete list of classes on the SBDC website listed above.

They will be offering a class on “Writing a Business Plan” on August 7, 2007 at First Bank at 14630 Palm Beach Blvd. in Fort Myers from 6 pm until 8:30 pm. The cost is \$199 for the first person and \$99 for the second person.

A solid, real-time business plan will provide you with the roadmap your business needs to navigate successfully in today’s marketplace. The time to plan is now.

Jennifer Berg is a communications specialist with the Lee County Economic Development Office.