

Business networking guide is set to publish

There are hundreds of networking groups throughout Oakland County and southeastern Michigan that help businesses increase exposure and gain revenue. By late September a brand-new networking guide will be available to the public, one that encapsulates the details and benefits of these groups.

An updated list and details of Southeast Michigan's networking groups will be documented in the inaugural issue of the Get Networked Detroit Guide, and also included on its Web site, getnetworkeddetroit.com starting Sept. 28. The guide is a resource for businesses and entrepreneurs, to locate and connect with the networking groups that best fit their time, budgets and practices.

The guide identifies and features a range of networking groups, professional, industrial and civic associations in the region.

Freelance reporter Mike Scott spoke with the publisher of Get Networked Detroit Guide, Oakland County resident Ellen Brisson.



Ellen Brisson | SUZANNE YURENKA

Q: What gave you the idea of creating such a guide?

A: The idea came from my experiences exploring and visiting many of the area networking groups and professional associations. It was interesting to learn how meetings are run, what the membership requirements are, the profile of a typical member and the expected return on investment dollars and time. I also needed to provide my coaching clients with tools to assess which groups fit their needs – whether it was time of meetings, professional affiliations or a desire for civic interactions. I wanted to create a one-stop venue where individuals and businesses could find the connections they need to flourish.

Q: What has been your personal experience in business networking?

A: I've never left a networking meeting without making a potential business connection or a potential opportunity for someone I know, or meeting a new friend. I don't go into a networking meeting to do business or "make the sale" but to enjoy the opportunity to make connections. I can also meet other professionals who may be useful as a resource, or to whom I can refer business. Networking provides a place to connect with interesting people, in order to create new business relationships and opportunities.

Q: How is Get Networked Detroit funded, and where will your ongoing

Equal 'Opportunity'

Business: Get Networked Detroit Guide
Publisher: Ellen Brisson
Location: Berkley

Every day, new businesses are formed by people who finally decide to step out on their own. We want to know your startup's story. What turned you into an entrepreneur? What successes and pitfalls have you experienced? How did you overcome difficulties?

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ing revenue come from?

A: Since the guide is a free service, it will be driven by advertising dollars. The businesses involved in the various networking groups have the opportunity to have their ads broadcast to thousands of other groups' members across the southeast Michigan area that they would never normally reach in usual advertising campaigns. Institutional sponsors will also play a revenue role.

Q: What plans do you have for expansion of the Get Networked Detroit or additional revenue sources?

A: The spring Get Networked Detroit

OPPORTUNITY ►

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Guide is already in the planning stages, as are Guides for other markets.

Q: Why do you feel networking groups are seeing their numbers increase even in a sluggish economy?

A: Networking groups are increasing because established businesses and new businesses need a place to connect, interact and create new business opportunities. Business owners need to find new customers and referrals and pursue new avenues of business in order to grow, and networking groups in their infinite variety provide a forum for those connections. Networking groups also provide a comfortable place for new business owners to get their networking feet wet, try on public speaking and taking leadership roles. Graduating students often attend meetings to learn about businesses, how to interact and develop plans to best utilize their education.

Q: What is the biggest challenge with putting this guide together?

A: The logistical process for identifying, organizing and connecting with such an incredible number of networking groups and professional, industry and civic organizations is a significant challenge in producing this guide. It will be updated biannually to ensure that new groups are included, and that existing groups have the most up-to-date information available for the business community's reference.

Q: How do you get information on the networking guides you profile?

A: Information comes from the group members and leadership and referrals from many sources. Most of the networking groups provide detailed information so that they can communicate their message in the way that suits their group's style. We also include information available from a variety of other sources.

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Q: What separates networking groups from each other?

A: Most networking groups generally have a common goal: to increase revenue and leads for membership and to grow the group. But their individual missions, the way they organize their meetings and group activities and how members interact with each other varies significantly.

Q: What are some misconceptions about business networking?

A: There are many common misconceptions. Among them are the belief that networking is a chore – uncomfortable, costly, time consuming and a waste of time away from the office. Other misconceptions are that business owners should go to meetings with the intent to sell whatever service or product they have within the group, and that because they handed

someone a business card meant that a sale will come of it, or that because someone handed them a business card that they have to do business with them.

When attending a networking event, people aren't going to try to sell you. The idea is to refer people to the group member from outside the networking group. That way the circle of influence expands instead of contracts. ■