

## North East Business Association

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## NEBA News

### Editors:

**Maureen Thompson**- Media Options  
**Nancy Burns**- Leon County Sheriff's Office

The North East Business Association publishes NEBA News bi-monthly. Articles of interest are welcome. Publication of submitted materials is subject to review and space available. Article deadline is the 1st day of the month of publication.

Send articles, letters, photos or suggestions to: NEBA News at the following email addresses: burns@mail.co.leon.fl.us or maureen@mediaoptionsinc.com. or FAX-850-893-4097

For additional information phone Maureen Thompson at 850-668-0948 or Nancy Burns at 850-922-3331

# President's Corner

## From Will Messer:

Our association must be gaining political clout. With the conclusion of our candidate forums, some unexplainable phenomenon occurred. Somebody cut and pasted a letter on NEBA's letterhead with my signature (copied) and sent it to the media indicating that our association had, in fact, interviewed and endorsed the following candidates: Andrew Gillum, Dee Crumpler, Fred Varn and Don Pumphrey. While it is true that these candidates won our straw poll, it has been a board policy not to endorse candidates in the past. A correction in the Tallahassee Democrat was posted recently and the issue has been dubbed an X-file, after the popular T.V. show describing unexplained events and government conspiracies.

As one event leads to another, this issue raises a credible question. Why doesn't the North East Business Association endorse candidates? The Board of Realtors, the Police Benevolent Association, Firefighters and even the Sheriff cast their endorsements for local candidates. I believe we should do the same. Our association board recently discussed this issue and has decided to further investigate the

issue. With nearly 200 members this could become a difficult task. If you have an opinion, let us know. We simply want to make sure that if we commit to such endorsements, we do it in a way that most fairly represents your position.

Next to hurricanes, tax increases hit home hardest. We seem to battle issue after issue for our small business members. It has come to our attention that the county is considering a new Ad Valorem property tax by virtue of a municipal service taxing unit (MSTU) for a new woman's health clinic. The rumor is that this would increase the current MSTU from .12 to .22 and was slated as a funding source for the commissioner's retreat. Our board is researching the issue and our initial impression is that the commission should find an alternative funding source. We will keep you posted.

Finally, we would like to encourage everyone to participate by attending our luncheon. There is power in numbers and we believe every member's voice can be heard. So if you have a burning issue, please bring it to the attention of one of your board representatives. We appreciate your participation and are honored to represent you. See you all at the next luncheon!

# Building Excellent Customer Relationships

Whether you're selling products or services, go further than is legally required in anticipating and responding to the problems of your customers. How you do this depends in part on the nature of the products or services you offer. But for starters, consider the policy of Eddie Bauer, a highly successful national company that sells outdoor goods through its catalog and retail outlets:

**OUR GUARANTEE** Every item we sell will give you complete satisfaction or you may return it for a full refund.

**OUR CREED** To give you such outstanding quality, value, service and guarantee that we may be worthy of your high esteem.

Over the years, my family and I have bought many items from Eddie Bauer. We've never had to return anything for a refund. But just knowing that the company stands behind what it sells has given us confidence in Eddie Bauer products. And that, of course, is the point: By reassuring customers in advance that they control the resolution of any problems, Eddie Bauer's good customer service is a marketing advantage.

Businesses that offer services have different problems than restaurants and retail outlets. But they still have many opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction and favorable word-of-mouth. On longer-term jobs, you can set time-performance standards in advance so that both you and the

customer can judge if everyone's expectations are being met. Often this consists of little more than committing yourself to meeting interim deadlines. For example, a toxic materials contractor removing asbestos from heating ducts in a three-story building might agree to get the entire job done in 30 days with the first floor clean and ready to reoccupy in ten days and the second floor in 20 days. A home remodeling or painting company might go farther and commit to meticulously cleaning up its work area each day.

Another good approach is to regularly ask for feedback from customers or clients. For example, if you run a bookkeeping service, a copy shop or a janitorial service that does regular business with larger accounts, ask your customers from time to time if your high standards and the customer's needs are being met. I was favorably impressed when the landlord who owns the building where my law firm practices asked me to evaluate the interior and exterior maintenance services we were receiving. There's currently a glut of office space in my town. When my lease is up I'll have a choice of many new buildings. But I'll remember that my current landlord seemed sincerely concerned about keeping this building spic and span.

Here are some other examples of service businesses that use guarantees as a way of building a customer base:

- If you're unhappy with your hotel room, Hampton Inn will refund your

money.

- If you get transferred from phone to phone while seeking an answer to an insurance question, Delta Dental Plan of Massachusetts will send you a \$50 check.

- If your mini-pizza takes more than five minutes to be served, Pizza Hut gives you a free one.

- If you're not satisfied with a lawn treatment applied by Green Valley Lawn Care, the company will reapply the treatment at no cost or, if you prefer, refund the cost of the treatment.

### Elements of an Effective Customer Satisfaction Policy

The following ideas for developing your customer satisfaction policy come from Marketing Without Advertising, by Michael Phillips and Salli Rasberry (Nolo):

- Customers should be encouraged to tell you about any problems.
- Customers should know their rights and responsibilities from the beginning.
- Customers should know the circumstances under which they are entitled to get their money back and how to take advantage of other rights.
- Customers -not you- should feel in control. It's far better to provide a full refund if the customer is dissatisfied than to demand that the customer come up with a good reason for the refund.
- A refund, or any other recourse you offer, should be prompt.

*Excerpted from the "Legal Guide for Starting and Running a Small Business" by Fred S. Steingold*

# Calendar

NEBA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at Lucy Ho's 1700 Halstead Blvd. from 1:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m. Cost is \$9.00 per person

**September 14- Mary Ann Lindley-** The Tallahassee Democrat - Topic- the last twenty years in Tallahassee.

**October 12- Bill Law-** President of Tallahassee Community College

**November 9- Dave Hart Jr.-** Athletic Director FSU- discussing athletic activities at FSU.

**December- Holiday Party-** TBA

## Business Tips....

### Where Can I Go For Help?

The U.S. Small Business Administration has offices in nearly every major city in the country. SBA's operates the toll-free "Answer Desk" at 1-800-8-ASK-SBA (1- 800-827-5722), to give callers direct referral to appropriate sources of information. Sponsored by SBA are a variety of counselling, training and information services including the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Business Information Centers (BICs), Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and Women's Business Centers (WBCs). In addition, procurement center representatives can be found at each major military installation. More than 2,700 chambers of commerce are located throughout the country to provide additional assistance.

### What Do I Do When I'm Ready?

You have done your homework: you have a complete business plan; you know where you want to operate; you know how much cash you will need; and you have specific information on employee, vendor and market possibilities. You now may want someone to look over your plans objectively. Contact the business department at a local college for another opinion. A SCORE representative at the Small Business Administration can also review your work and help with the fine tuning. Then, when you have made the final decision to go ahead, it is time to call the bank and get going. Good luck! All of SBA's programs and services are extended to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.



# NEBA News

WWW.NEBAONLINE.ORG

September- October 2004

## Lies and Misinformation

by: **Peggy Munroe**  
**NEBA Board Member**

"Lies and misinformation win again!" That is what the lawyer who helped write the proposed Campaign and Election Law Amendment yelled at us as we left the County Commission Chambers after speaking against the amendment. Actually, I think "lies and misinformation" lost!

An aggressive information (not misinformation!) campaign on the part of NEBA was probably the primary reason that the commissioners voted to send the amendment to committee. It will be an entirely different committee than the one that assembled this very

bad proposal. If we ever see this amendment again, it will be in an entirely different form.

You all got the e-mails and faxes, so you know the gist of the amendment. Our e-mails were factual, based on the only draft available. There was a great deal of confusion among the proponents about the \$5.00 per petition card requirement. What we did not know earlier, was that one of the proposals for paying for campaign financing called for a 1% surcharge on contracts of any for-profit businesses doing business with the county. They were quite proud that this would not cost the taxpayers! (I have a bridge in Arizona I would like to sell them but I doubt any of them would talk to me.)

The proponents continually tried

to make corporations and businesses look evil. Seemed rather strange to me that we are so bad but they had no problem with 527's and CCE's contributing to campaigns. Identities of corporations and business owners are a matter of public record, but those entities are completely anonymous.

I learned first hand the power of e-mail. Those e-mails took on a life of their own, being forwarded and re-forwarded! But it was the response from you, the members of NEBA, who wrote and called your commissioners, who had the power! Thank you all. Together we triumphed over something that would have been devastating to this community.



North East Business Association  
c/o 2762 Capital Circle N.E.  
Tallahassee, Fl. 32308

## Straw Poll From Our July/August Meetings

### Leon County Tax Collector

Paul Blackburn- 7  
Doris Maloy-5  
Don Pumphrey- 30

### City Commission- Seat 2

Andrew Gillum- 13  
Allen Turnage- 11  
D. J. Johnson- 2

### Leon County Superintendent of Schools

Bill Montford- 36  
Patricia Sunday-2

### Leon County Supervisor of Elections

Raymond Malloy-3 (Withdrawn)  
Ion Sancho- 30

### School Board- District 2

Lorraine Allen-0  
James "Art" Beveridge-0  
Dee Crumpler- 27

### School Board- District 4

John Gladden-7  
Fred Varn-19  
Rosa Freeman Lovett-0

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