

Public Libraries Briefcase

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Public Libraries Briefcase is a quarterly column written by members of the BRASS Business Reference in Public Libraries Committee.

Tips on Presenting a Small Business Workshop in a Public Library

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During times of economic hardship, when more people are unemployed, it is obvious to many librarians that libraries begin to receive more requests for job or career materials and sources. Although it is sometimes overlooked or not recognized, there is also an increase in the number of patrons, unemployed or not, who come to the library looking for information on how to start small businesses. These patrons come with all sorts of expectations. Some need general, incorporation or funding information. Others need demographics or statistics to present to a banker or venture capitalist. There are also those patrons that may have no idea what kind of information is available at the library or how to look for it. Frequently we can help patrons and even save them money through the information the library contains. As librarians, we can provide small business information at the reference desk or we can go one step further and provide small business informational workshops to our clientele whether they be the general public, business groups, business development centers, associations, governmental agencies or educational groups from high schools or universities. By providing small business information, collections and workshops, we as librarians can indeed boost economic development in our communities. The following are tips on presenting and developing a small business workshop in a public library. This article is based on the PowerPoint presentation prepared for the Public Libraries Forum at Toronto.

Target Your Audience

Will your group be walk-ins, local business persons, chambers of commerce, entrepreneurial groups, social service agencies or secondary, vocational or college students? Creating a generic workshop based on your library's collections is recommended.

Know Your Contact Person

Discuss what is wanted and what you and your library can do. At this point, you can take the generic workshop you have created and through careful questioning tailor the workshop to the group. Ask how many people will be attending. Schedule a time. Schedule a room or quiet place. Reconfirm at least a week before the workshop. Keep the contact person's name in your files. Contacts may be able to help you or your library in the future. You can help them now.

Create Handouts

Create a workshop bibliography of the print and electronic sources that you will be discussing for the group. Provide library and/or departmental or service brochures as well as small business collection pathfinders and

Trade Journal Title Sources

List the sources your library owns such as ~~SRDS~~ or Bacon's Patrons can use these to find a specific title that they can page through on a regular basis.

Periodicals Indexes

Talk about the ones in your library and how they can be used. For example, do you have ~~Business Periodicals Index~~ or the ~~F&S~~?

Databases

Unless you are fortunate to work in a very large public library or have a massive serials budget, it is unlikely that you will have immediate access to many ~~trade~~ journals. You may, however, have access to databases that may include fulltext articles from these journals. Describe the useful databases in your library. Mention library policy concerning use of the computers. Let the audience know if any of the ~~data~~ can be accessed remotely at home or office.

Statistical Sources

Statistics are needed to back a business or marketing plan to a banker or venture capitalist. List and describe statistical sources available in your library. Statistics can often be

