

Art of making connections

It can be easy being green

BUILDING alliances was often part of the game strategy for competitors in reality television show *Survivor*, and it's also a clever way to be a survivor in business.

Seeking out businesses which cater to a similar market but offer a complimentary service, and agreeing to refer clients to each other is a cost-effective and mutually beneficial means of advertising.

This Friday, small business marketing expert Carolyn Stafford will share her insights into alliance building at a breakfast at Hyde Park Barracks.

Director of Connect Marketing Professionals and author of *Small Business Big Brand*, Stafford says many businesses overlook the importance of building strategic alliances.

"You really need to look at who else captures the same target market and how you can work together," she says.

"If I was a real estate agent, the first thing I would do would be to build an alliance with a divorce lawyer, because one of the first things people do when they get divorced is sell the house. This way, the agent will refer their clients to you.

"If you're a carwash company, for example, you should build alliances with taxi companies.

"If you're an accountant, build them with real estate agents and lawyers."

Having a reliable business recommend your product or service to their clients is a quick way to boost business, based on one of the most effective means of advertising — word of mouth.

Those who provide the referrals benefit by being able to provide their clients with an extra level of service.

"You're adding value for your clients by directing them to a quality service," Stafford says.

During the breakfast seminar on Friday, Stafford will provide



Sharing insights: Author Carolyn Stafford offers expert advice on building business alliances

advice on identifying complimentary industries and the process involved in building an alliance.

"I'll be talking about how to actually go about doing that, the best way to approach people, form relationships and set objectives," she says.

"I'll go through referral etiquette, and how we communicate these relationships to customers."

According to Stafford, it's important to set objectives, be clear and upfront about what you expect from the alliance, and the kinds of customers you want.

Some businesses may choose to establish a formal agreement, while others will base it on a casual understanding.

"It's important to acknowledge referrals and thank the other business for them. You might want to give them movie tickets, take them to dinner, or give them a holiday with their family for the weekend to show your appreciation," Stafford advises.

After referring a client to another's business, it's also a good idea to follow up and ensure the client was happy with the referral.

At the breakfast, Stafford will

explain her six step process of identifying and building alliances, and a range of businesses that have built successful alliances will present themselves as case studies.

A structured networking session will then be held to match up participants with potential alliances.

The Build Powerful Business Alliances Breakfast will run from 7.15am until 10am. Admission cost is \$65, and includes a hot breakfast.

To register, visit: www.connectmarketing.com.au

DOUG Smith is on a mission to bust the myth that climate change is bad news for small business.

CEO and founder of environmental auditing and advisory firm, Village Green, Mr Smith will be among the speakers at tomorrow's Busting Business Myths seminar at the Powerhouse Museum.

In his work with clients across industries ranging from mining to dining, Mr Smith has proven that reducing their carbon footprint doesn't just generate positive PR for a company — it can also lead to significant increases in their profit margin.

"We're showing businesses how they can extract cost savings by better managing environmental concerns, and reduce the risk to their profitability going forward," he says.

"Climate change has increased resource costs worldwide, so businesses need to become better managers of their resource costs.

"You can increase the return on your bottom line by 10 to 15 per cent by better understanding and managing your environmental impacts."

In one job, for example, Village Green was commissioned to help a Sydney hospitality company identify ways to become more efficient.

Through simply adjusting their cooking procedure to eliminate the need to continuously cool and reheat the ovens and better managing their rosters and stock control, the company managed to save \$16,000 a year.

"This was a significant amount for this small business, as for them to net the same outcome they would need to earn at least \$60,000 to \$70,000 in gross revenue," Mr Smith says.

In another case, Village Green's intervention led to a Sydney cafe encouraging its customers to recycle and reuse cups instead of relying on takeaway cups.

This had the flow-on effect of competitors along the cafe strip doing the same thing.

"It doesn't need to involve a huge outlay — these are just behavioural changes, marrying up procedures to greater efficiency."

According to Mr Smith, integrating innovative eco-friendly initiatives into their operations enables businesses to position themselves as market leaders.

"I think every business in the world is striving for market leadership in industry, and those going down the environmental path are demonstrating by action their leadership capabilities," he says.

"The businesses I have worked with demonstrate that, not only through stronger marketing, but by becoming more profitable and demonstrating to the community what a sustainable business can achieve."



Events to help you start, manage and grow your business.

Small Business September '08

For more information visit www.smallbusinessmonth.nsw.gov.au/dailytelegraph



Department of State and Regional Development



Build your business in the global marketplace

Exporting is one of the most effective ways for a company with a well developed product or service to grow their business.

Events on exporting are a major focus of Small Business September '08, a State-wide initiative of the NSW Department of State and Regional Development.

The Small Business September '08 export events are tailored to help business operators who are new to exporting or who want to expand their international markets.

Topics include getting started in exports, visiting your target market, intellectual property protection, and financial solutions for export growth. Markets focused on include China, the US, Malaysia, India and Dubai and the Gulf States. For more information go to

www.smallbusinessmonth.nsw.gov.au/dailytelegraph and search events with the theme 'International Business and Trade'.

PLATINUM SPONSORS



GOLD SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSOR

