

REAL MINORITY BUSINESS: NOW OR NEVER!

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

We present here some rather realistic and feasible methods for successfully expediting the formation of some small scale enterprises. Be sure to also read the companion article in this issue, "No Spare parts: Does Minority Business Begin In Asia?" Very relevant!

In Portland, Oregon and in most other cities in America, you will find that, everyday, individuals as well as companies are coming up with new ideas for products and services to put on the market. Watching the news, we see that many people start in their basement or garage, and with as little as \$500, some enterprises are family affairs, often a wife will start marketing a parlor game or mail order items from the kitchen or sewing room while the husband supports the household. Then, too, we have the cases of ambitious teenagers who develop sports items or computer games and programs.

I encountered all of these situations while teaching a class I designed at Portland State University in the 1970's. An innovative technique I used was to aid students in setting up a Real Minority Business Company and operating it for profit. Of special interest is a firm set up by four students from California and Georgia to service the maintenance needs of both contractors and house holders. Less than a thousand dollars started it off, and old pickup truck and odd tools.

This was a three-term class and after basic business structures and formats were learned, what is perhaps the most productive technique of all, "learning to retrieve, compile and assess information was examined. Daily reading of both the business and classified sections of the Oregonian Newspaper enabled the group to not only determine what represented the most viable market, but how to effectively reach it (advertising and marketing).

This worked extremely well, even for amateurs, and soon the newspapers and television were giving them even more exposure. Two of these students are presently engaged in substantial businesses in Atlanta and have sponsored a class similar to mine at a local

college. Over the six year life of the class other African Americans and many more whites participated in this hands-on enterprise instruction and went on to establish successful businesses here and elsewhere. So you see that what I mean by "Real" minority enterprise is a learning structure set up in a "Real" world and designed by someone with "Real" experience in the service, experience in the service, manufacturing and general business community.

Another format used would be equally applicable today when we still find a large number of minorities and females without the vaguest idea how the things around them are manufactured or serviced. Whether the area surveyed is the kitchen, bathroom, garage, office or where ever, there are many scores of items which not only are manufactured by large companies, but by "Basement and Garage Firms" all over the United States. you see their wares in your newspapers, magazines, in your catalogs and junkmail, and on television (\$19.98 and have your credit card ready").

That "format" I mentioned was to allocate a large warehouse-like space next to my office on Martin Luther King Blvd. for Saturday demonstrations of how easy it was to manufacture anything from ashtrays, dish racks, shelf brackets and desk trays to towel racks, sauce pans and skillets, wheel covers, mats and you name it (a thousand times). I had many tools left over from personal enterprises and borrowed the rest from local firms as well as occasional personnel. This support made for my campus class proved to be a real winner, I don't know why this approach is not used today when, obviously, minorities and women generally lack a "realtime" background.

Many of the tools and machines still range from \$50 to \$1500 and if you really get going you're usually talking a lot less than a midrange new car at \$15,000. Students were introduced to a range of tools and equipment, some of which they had seen at home but not in the heavy duty business context. Not only a vast number of hand tools, but larger functional devices such as shears,

punch press and dies, brakes, drills, grinders, welders saws, soldering stations, punches, safety equipment and so forth. I even brought over an old mobile steam cleaner from my garage for that piece of equipment had been the base of one of my most successful enterprises downstate in Oregon (cleaning rigs, logging and contractors equipment, agricultural machines, restaurant hoods, shopping carts and much else--"an excellent cash flow to finance other endeavors if you don't mind the dirt")

We also had demonstrations of making jewellery and also "plastic bag" items like you see hanging from the hooks on the racks every where from Fred Meyer to your convenience stores (washers, picture hooks, clips, thumb-tacks and anything else a curious and innovative mind can think up to sell). all of this of course, along with several field trips, brought into a "Real Time" focus all of the classroom texts and lectures. Additionally there were frequent assignments to the library downtown to inspect the other "tools of the trade" (see my other article this week, Perspective).

Here is an opportunity to bring out another key fact about the American manufacturing process of which most minorities or women would have no knowledge--and therefore would never think of getting involved. I had every student inspect "Thomas Register of Manufacturers at the library (about 12 huge volumes then). Here you find listings, illustration and specs on everything made in America From a hairpin to a massive steam shovel, and from wheels, axles and motors in any size to x-ray machines and nuclear reactor parts. It soon dawns on one that you can buy any component or part of any product you design for a market.

For instance, you don't need capital for a "wheel factory" in order to market baby buggies, strollers or wheelbarrows--some specialist makes wheels cheaper and has them "on the shelf". An awful lot of "parts" are manufactured right here in Portland, metal, plastic, ceramic, paper, cloth. Got an idea for a patent or copyright (games). More on this next week.

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City Council Endorses Peninsula Center for Police, Community Services

The City Council today endorsed the conversion of the North Precinct building in St. Johns into a Multi-Services Center for police and community programs.

The Council unanimously adopted a resolution filed by Commissioner Earl Blumenauer to accept

the recommendations of a citizen group and proceed with the new center. Speaking in favor of the resolution were Police Chief Tom Potter, and Clarice White, chair of the Peninsula Multi-Services Center Planning committee.

"The Peninsula Multi-Service

Center is the next step in community policing," said Blumenauer, who earlier this year encouraged police to work with residents on the idea. "By co-locating police, city, and community agencies in one neighborhood building, we strengthen partnerships between them and increase their effective-

ness in the fight against crime."

According to a recent survey, a community policing office, crime prevention assistance, and a citizens foot patrol are the three programs residents would use most often. The planning committee is recommending the city consider locating these and 10 other

services in the center.

In August 1993, police will move North Precinct headquarters from the former St. Johns City Hall to a vacant Fred Meyer store on N.E. Martin Luther King Boulevard. The current location can accommodate only 90 personnel and North Precinct has a staff of 164.

E&M Sentry Market
located at
North Killingsworth
285-6352

Fair In The Square Means Fun Everywhere

The annual, "Fair in the Square" event is scheduled for Wednesday, August 19. The fun begins at 10:00 a.m. in Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square.

KUPL Radio will be doing call-ins from the square, and will be giving away tickets to this year's fair beginning at 11:00 a.m. A & W rootbeer floats will be given away as well.

"Fair in the Square" provides a sampling of the entertainment and events which will occur August 27 through September 7 at the Oregon State Fair.

There will be a petting zoo where children and adults alike may visit and interact with their favorite animals. In keeping with this year's Oregon State Fair theme and character, Enormous "Norm" the Rooster, there will be a rooster in the petting zoo as well as an assortment of goats, bunnies, and calves.

Jolly Molly the Clown will provide entertainment as she strolls around the square, as well as strolling juggler and magician, Willy's Cirkus. The Mini-Ropers from the Pee Wee Rodeo Club will demonstrate their cow-roping techniques. Beginning at 12:00 noon, cowboy poet Ben McKenzie will present his poetry for cowboys. The Mighty Eagles, an acoustic band playing both bluegrass and country, will provide music during "Fair in the Square", and Rufus the Steer, costumed mascot of the Oregon State Fair, will be on hand to visit with the kids and to share the Fair spirit.

Nobody Does it Better for Less



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