

# Cutting Edge Business Training

Innovative programs come to new facility

BY JAKE THOMAS  
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If you're in the throes of unemployment or just want to shake off the shackles of your cubicle, starting your own business might not be a bad idea.

For those who do decide to take the plunge, you don't have to do it alone. Portland Community College offers a program called "Continuous Learning for Individuals, Management & Business," a new facility at 1626 S.E. Water Ave. that can be a great help to businesses ranging from startups to those up and running.

The Portland Observer sat down with Tammy Marquez, the interim director of PCC's Small Business Development Center which manages CLIMB, and Kedma Ough, the executive director of Micro-Enterprise Inventors Program of Oregon, to find out what resources are available to start up businesses.

"Our focus is on challenging and inspiring entrepreneurs to start or grow healthy businesses," said Marquez, which PCC helps by providing advising and training.



Portland Community College offers training programs for small business owners and professionals at the new CLIMB center (Continuous Learning for Individuals, Management and Business), at 1626 S.E. Water Ave., just north of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.

innovators.

Ough said she works with entrepreneurs who range from the idea phase to others who are looking at licensing.

"One of the things I always share with people is that there's this notion that to be an inventor you have to be a scientist or researchers sitting in a lab coming up with an idea," said Ough, which is often not true.

She said that she does have a lot of people who might fit the more common profile of an inventor—coming to her seeking help on consumer products and green technology ideas, but also has plenty of clients who might not be as expected, especially women who have baby products.

Marquez said that two big challenges to startup businesses is the lack of consumer spending and banks tightening up lending.

"[Banks] are saying to the small business owner, if you have a viable idea, if you have a way to pay back the loan, if you have the ability to provide us with three years of financials and you are bankable, we will look at your request," said Marquez. "In my opinion this is how it should have been all along."

However, both Ough and Marquez stress that there are ways to get around this. Both say that getting a loan isn't always a good idea. Often clients will come to them saying that they need cash for something like an ornate office when the debt will likely become cumbersome and the refurbished room won't add much to the company's bottom line.

"If it doesn't lead to sales, what's the point?" said Ough.

They recommend looking for ways to do in-kind trades with other companies before taking out loans to keep costs down.

It's also important to collaborate with others as well.

Ough recalled a client who had developed a headband device meant to keep peoples' heads steady during flights so that they avoid neck cramps. Another client who worked in the medical field suggested that instead she look at marketing it as something that could help out caregivers who deal with elderly and disabled patients who need to be spoon fed. This client just got a manufacturing deal, she said.

Lastly, new businesses should always look at getting certified as a minority, emerging, disadvantaged or woman-owned business because it can lead to special business opportunities.

"Being a 100 percent woman-owned business does have its advantages," said Marquez.

She said the CLIMB Center is designed to help out about 900 business owners a year.

Many economists say that the best time to start a business is when the economy is recovering from a recession. However, Marquez and Ough say it really depends on what the business plan is.

"Business planning is incredibly important," said Marquez.

However, she likens many clients, who are brimming with enthusiasm and energy, to thoroughbred racing horses, championing at the bit.

"All they want to do is have you raise the gate and start running. They don't know where they are running," she said.

The CLIMB Center for Advancement and the small business center offer training on just about every aspect of running a business including marketing, leadership and management, data accuracy, computers and more. Most classes are free or affordable, and there's no cut off point.

Marquez said that some clients stay with them for 10 to 20 years. One business has been coming back for 50 years.

PCC works closely with the micro-inventors program, which provides additional training and consulting, primarily for inventors and

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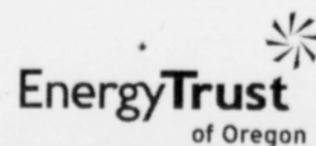
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