

Barter exchange geared to entertain clients

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With a trade exchange geared especially to the hospitality industry, with a membership limited to hospitality industry-related businesses, the playing field is a bit more equal, Mitchell said.

SAM SCLAFANI, director of Marketing for Metro Traffic Control, said if he has any complaint with the Entertainment Exchange, it's that it isn't national.

Metro Traffic Control of Troy provides the helicopter traffic reports heard on many of southeastern Michigan's radio stations. The company then sells sponsorship of the traffic report.

"We like to use the Entertainment Exchange because it is so focused on the hospitality industry," he said. The benefit to business travelers of having a national exchange would be fantastic.

Imagine entering a town and being able to go to any number of good restaurants without having to worry about having cash on hand, he said.

"It would be like having a bank account of money in every city," he said. As it is, the Entertainment Exchange makes local exchanges of services more convenient than carrying cash.

"It eliminated having to do cash expenses," he said. Having another company handle the transactions also saves time for the department that handles company expense accounts.

Rather than having to do individual accounts or cash reimbursements, the Entertainment Exchange does the work for you, he said.

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things — they save cash flow and save money, Entertainment Exchange president Mitchell said.

Cash flow is saved by providing goods and services of an equal value later, Mitchell said. Instead of paying for a hotel room on the evening of travel, the exchange member uses trade exchange credits and holds onto his money.

Artistic Limousines of Farmington Hills president and owner Susan Jarvis said she uses the exchange to obtain trade credits for use in member restaurants.

"I use it a lot," she said. "I highly recommend it."

Jarvis said limiting membership to the hospitality industry in the Entertainment Exchange hasn't reduced its usefulness for her. In fact, it's been useful in getting customers she may not have normally had.

Obtaining new clients is exactly the reason why **C. Norman Oshelski** in Royal Oak uses the service. "It provides a source of clients that you probably wouldn't otherwise have."

Oshelski provides accounting and tax services and uses his trade credits for business lunches and dinners.

A veteran of several other bartering associations, Oshelski said members tend to be very loyal. "Some of the clients I had in a trade exchange that no longer exist are still with me."

Mitchell of the Entertainment Exchange said a trade exchange can also save money. "Most businesses

have a unused potential."

At any time, a business will have extra staff and space available that isn't being used. "Even though a hotel has vacancies, it still must have the rooms and the staff to take care of the room."

Filling a room that would otherwise go unused, therefore, is profit, Mitchell said.

MICHAEL JEFFREYS, president of Yes... A Positive Network of Troy, said joining the Entertainment Exchange has conserved cash flow, but it has also worked in other ways.

Yes... A Positive Network holds monthly seminars with motivational and educational speakers. Members of small and large businesses purchase subscriptions to the seminars.

Most of what he does is provide a service, so since he has already hired the speaker and rented the space, each additional subscriber is profit. "It doesn't cost me much to add another row of chairs."

"I love the trade exchange — it's one of the best things that's ever happened," he said. A company doesn't have to use the trade exchange often to benefit from it, he said, so even if he has relatively few users over a given time, he still benefits.

After authorization, the service provider has the purchaser sign the sales slip. One copy is retained by the provider, one by the receiver and a third is sent to the Entertainment Exchange where trade accounts are credited.

They call us to resolve it. We need to deal sometimes with a hostile situation.

"I don't know of any college curriculum. The college of hard knocks is what it is."

Her staff? "They are plain, ordinary people with a desire to serve and the sense of where they're going. One came from another department. One came from the governor's office at one point."

"We're doing staff development all the time in terms of building communications links with other agencies in state government."

State ombusman tries to open closed doors

Continued from back page

WHAT would she tell a student contemplating a career?

"The most critical kind of training is people skills — drawing people out to get the information you need and the sense of where they're going."

"The other skill is negotiating. Often the people have already called the agency and have a problem."

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Law firm is now offering checkups for businesses

By Mary DiPaolo
special writer

Too often, it seems that the only time a small business seeks legal advice is when something has gone wrong. When that something thrusts the business into a courtroom, the legal profession is often viewed as a necessary evil, or, at best, a friendly adversary.

Richard Bruder, a Southfield business attorney and partner with the firm of Seyburn, Kahn and Ginn, claims that attitude is changing, thanks to business owners who have discovered the value of legal business checkups.

"JUST AS we all have physical examinations to aid hospital visits, legal business checkups help to avoid courtroom visits," Bruder said.

His firm began offering the checkups about six months ago.

"By design, our checkup identi-

fies areas where the business may already be exposed to a lawsuit as well as those areas where exposure may exist."

The checkup helps companies plan transactions and design their business's conduct to minimize its exposure to potential litigation while identifying opportunities for increased revenues.

IT SPECIFICALLY examines five areas: employee relations (making sure employment laws are not being violated and that the business follows proper procedure in hiring and firing); IRS relations (testing whether the business is set up to take advantage of tax planning opportunities); owner relations (how the business plans to continue in the event of partner disability or death); customer and supplier relations (whether the company's business forms adequately measure payment for goods and services rendered); and

miscellaneous relations (evaluating the adequacy of the business's recordkeeping, insurance coverage and operational permits).

BUSINESS OWNERS who are looking for financing or who plan to sell their business will be ahead of the game when dealing with lenders, investors and business buyers.

Bruder believes the checkup also functions as an educational tool.

"Business professionals shouldn't be expected to know all the right questions to ask their lawyer regarding the legal health of their business, so the checkup does it for them," he said. Bruder can be reached at 253-7620.

Mary DiPaolo is the owner of **MarketTrends**, a Northville business consulting firm. She is also producer and host of the cable television series, "Chamber Perspectives."

datebook

• **CAREER WOMEN**
Thursday, April 11 — National Association of Career Women meets at 11:30 a.m. in Farmington Hills. Information: 628-0752.

• **INVESTMENT SEMINAR**
Thursday, April 11 — Free investment seminar begins at 7 p.m. in Troy. Information: 963-6700. Sponsor: Roney & Co.

• **WORDPERFECT 5.0**
Thursdays, April 11 through May 1 — "WordPerfect 5.0 (word processing)" begins at 7 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$45. Information: June Fasang, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

• **WORKING WITH JAPANESE**
Friday, April 12 — One-day cross-cultural seminar for Japanese managers as well as those who work for Japanese managers near Rochester. Fee: \$275. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

• **BUSINESS CONSORTIUM**
Saturday, April 13 — Oakland County Business Consortium of African-American business owners and prospective business owners meets at noon in Southfield. Information: Joseph Lee, 851-4470.

• **PURCHASING MANAGEMENT**
Saturday, April 13 — "Managing Your Career" seminar all day in Troy. Non-member fee: \$100. Information: 773-3737. Sponsor: National Association of Purchasing Management.

• **MOTIVATION**
Monday, April 15 — "Winning Ways: Motivation Techniques" 9 a.m. to noon near Rochester. Fee: \$45. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

• **LEGAL ASSISTANTS**
Monday, April 15 — Legal assistant program begins at Adams High

School in Rochester Hills. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

• **PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT**
Monday, April 15 — Production and manufacturing management program begins 6:30-9:30 p.m. at Adams High School. Adams and Tenken, Rochester. Information: 370-3120.

Information for this column should be sent to the business editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Information must be received by Monday to be published in the Thursday issue. Publication cannot be guaranteed. Information should contain a daytime telephone number where information can be verified.

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