

FOCUS

Business Lehigh Valley

Bethlehem entrepreneur shares marketing, motivating tips

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In today's economy most business owners are looking for ways to stay afloat. How to accomplish this is the question that Bethlehem entrepreneur Nathaniel J. Williams said he gets asked the most.

A small business owner, motivational speaker and self-published author, Williams said that most business owners want to know how they can remain vital in this economy. Williams, who has a doctorate degree in education, runs several nonprofit organizations and two for-profit organizations, all focusing on the human services sector, that employ more than 200 people in Bethlehem.

The for-profit operations are called HumanWorks Training & Educational Services Inc. and FunWorks Inc. Each businesses generate approximately \$500,000 in revenue each year.

Williams said that the seminars he offers through his HumanWorks organization generate a large portion of the corporation's revenue. Generally 80 percent of his workshops are delivered to and paid for by companies that want several of their employees to attend Williams' individualized workshops.

"With the training we try to look a little deeper, and we make some changes and ask them to make some changes. We look at the who, how, why and when (of an issue). We break it down and then try to put it back together again," Williams said.

Occasionally, the subject that needs addressing is team building, but this isn't something that can be forced, he said.

"Sometimes you have eight islands trying to come together and form a continent," Williams said. "They don't always need to, and you have to help them see that."

FunWorks is an organization that helps physically challenged individuals participate in community activities of their choosing, including events involving one to eight individuals plus direct support professionals. In this instance, each individual pays his or her own way, often \$700 to \$800 per trip.

Williams said that what has been instrumental in creating successful businesses is focusing on a part of the market that is underserved and then asking what a business entrepreneur can bring to that segment that will uniquely have an impact on the customer.

Using FunWorks as an example, he said, "People use travel agencies all of the



Photo courtesy of Nathaniel J. Williams

Nathaniel J. Williams, Ed. D., is the president and CEO of eight organizations, both for-profit and non-profit, that employ over 200 people in Bethlehem.

time, but people with challenges don't have that type of opportunity."

FunWorks focuses on that underserved portion of the market and provides the unique resources these challenged individuals need to continue to lead a full life.

Williams said that he has also encountered marketing success by sending out a FunWorks quarterly brochure to a selected mailing list. This, in part, generates the 40 percent repeat business enjoyed by FunWorks.

The HumanWorks and FunWorks companies also generate interest through their websites and through advertising in key business and trade journals. The combination of marketing tools has helped HumanWorks generate approximately a 20 percent repeat business.

As would be expected from a motivational speaker, Williams said that he uses a variety of means to motivate and reward his employees.

Williams said that he wants "to make

sure that what we're giving people is what will keep them at the level they're at or motivate them to do better."

Through formal sit-down meetings with individual employees, Williams uses charts and some of the five books and one workbook that he's written and self-published. The employees review the material before the meeting.

At the beginning of the hiring process he said, "We use that (the formal meeting) as a way to see if they're thinking the way we are and it helps us figure out if this is a relationship that's worth beginning."

"A lot of times people use the phrase, 'failure is not an option.' Maybe we should be saying that 'failure should not be an option.' People often choose failure. Helping people come to those insights is what makes it exciting," he added.

A reward tool that Williams uses is retreats, not just for those at the upper

level of the for-profit and nonprofit organizations, but also for a cross-section of the employees. Recently, 75 of his employees attended a retreat called "Attaining Your Personal Best" in Lancaster.

"It's a big time commitment," said Williams, "but it's definitely worth it."

The host of a talk show on WFMZ-TV, Williams said that he is also an adjunct professor for Lincoln University, who has been taking part in the Chester County school's Master of Human Services program in Philadelphia. Last year, he taught bricks-and-mortar and online courses at Strayer University.

More information on Williams and his books can be found at www.nj-williams.com.

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