#7: Start Small, Think Big

Even the most confident and optimistic small business owners can have an inferiority complex when it comes to competing with larger, more established businesses. But today’s global economy in many ways has leveled the competitive playing field for small businesses. Understanding the value you bring to the table and offering more personalized attention can help you attract new customers and take your business to the next level.

“The key is to believe you can compete with the big dogs,” says Claude Booker, owner of Simply Southern Sides. “The rules have changed in business. Big customers are looking to save costs, and entrepreneurs need to rethink how they go to market. If you make yourself valuable to your customers by providing a cost-effective solution, there is no limit to what you can accomplish.”

Booker, who successfully grew his heat-and-serve food venture from modest beginnings into a multi-million dollar business, says it’s important to always present yourself as a credible business owner, even if you run a start-up out of your basement. “I felt that pressure early on,” says Booker. “But I believed in my idea and my talent and knew that I deserved an opportunity because of the solution I was bringing.”

Potential clients aren’t necessarily concerned with the size of your office or how many employees you have, as long as you can deliver the goods. Confidence and the ability to provide a solution is sometimes all it takes for a client to give you a shot. “We’ve all heard the term ‘fake it until you make it’ and that is true for small business owners,” says Booker. “Some people want all the bells and whistles – nice office, fancy car – even when starting out. I recommend putting your energy and focus, especially at the beginning, on things that can help you generate revenue. The bells and whistles will come later.”

IN MEMORIAM
William McFarlane Jones
(JAN. 20, 1922 – JAN. 16, 2015)

On January 16, the northeast Ohio small business community lost a remarkable entrepreneur, inventor and friend. Bill Jones, one of the “founding fathers” of the Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE) and its first ever chairman, was specifically responsible for the early growth of the organization.

“Bill Jones had enormous passion and pride for the value and contribution of small business owners to our region and our national economy,” said Steve Millard, President and Executive Director of COSE. “That fervent enthusiasm fueled his efforts back in 1972 to help to establish COSE, and continued to inspire the ongoing support he provided to COSE over the last 43 years.”

At COSE’s 40th anniversary celebration in 2012, Jones shared an inspiring narrative about COSE’s founding and its early days. He spoke about COSE’s beginnings, as well as his perspective on the ongoing work of the organization. “His experience and passion were inspiring,” says Millard. “Bill has left a valuable legacy in the small business community and will certainly be missed.”

Bill Jones, a successful business person in his own right, was willing to take on the challenge of being the first chairman of COSE, the one who would try to build consensus and trust with these outspoken, cantankerous small business owners. Bill knew small business people felt no one was showing them respect, and he knew how to build them into a coalition that could speak with one voice.

You can hear Bill Jones’ remarks on the founding of COSE and the work of the organization at www.cose.org/40years

February 16
By The Numbers
Council of Smaller Enterprises

Owner Resources
Successful entrepreneurs have a wealth of knowledge and practical advice to share and there are many ways to get involved and make a real difference by helping and inspiring other small business owners. Listed below are a few organizations that offer peer-to-peer-based volunteer opportunities.

Council of Smaller Enterprises (COSE)
www.cose.org/volunteer

JumpStart
www.jumpstartinc.org/entrepreneur support

Manufacturer Advocacy & Growth Network (MAGNET)
www.manufacturingiscose.org

Ohio Small Business Development Center
www.clients.ohiosbdc.ohio.gov

SCORE Cleveland
www.cleveland.score.org/mentors

February 16
Small Business Rule Breakers
Northeast Ohio’s Small Business Rule Breakers
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26
4:30 PM
Music Box Supper Club
Register at www.cose.org/annualmeeting

CoSf ANNUAL MEETING
A Celebration of Northeast Ohio’s Small Business Rule Breakers

BEND THE RULES BREAK THE MOLD
FEATURED RULEBREAKERS:
Justin Carson
Platform Beer Co.

James Vaughan III
JDD Inc.

Mike & Colleen Miller
Music Box Supper Club

Winston Breeder
Winston Products

Check out www.cose.org/events for all the latest happenings.

registro today!