

Getting the tools to build a good business

RCC program helps fledgling entrepreneurs sort things out

By Susan Goracke of the Daily Courier

After launching his Grants Pass candy company in early 2001, Cary Couard alternated between the sweetness of success and fear he would have had business decision and run his fledgling enterprise.

As the engineer's background had given him the tools to design efficient candy-making equipment and systems, and he spent years perfecting recipes for toffee that friends and family assured him was the best they'd ever tasted.

But the details of running a manufacturing company, dealing with employees, marketing his product and planning for growth gave him less confidence.

For help, Couard signed up last year for Roger Harding's small business management class, offered through Rogue Community College. Couard considered one of the best business decisions he's made.

"The class has been a wonderful find of support and education," said Couard, who saw sales triple in 2002.

Now that the company has entered its retail phase, he's beyond the Pacific Northwest and California to the Northeast and into Japan. Couard expects 2003 sales to triple last year's numbers.

"I look forward to monthly class meetings with fellow business owners, but said the



Jim PROCTOR/Daily Courier

Cary's of Oregon owner Cary Couard has added employees and tripled sales each of the past two years while taking Roger Harding's Small Business Management Class at Rogue Community College.

one-on-one coaching sessions with Harding have produced the greatest results.

"Roger has always been my sounding board," Couard said. "He helped me identify who my best clients are and to treat them well. He also has been there when things did not go as planned, and he helped me dissolve relationships that

weren't working."

This fall, Couard is completing his second and final year of Harding's class, designed for business owners interested in learning how to work on and not just in — their business.

RCC is now signing up business owners for Harding's first-year program, which

begins Oct. 28 and runs for nine months.

"The class is a hands-on program for business owners who are tired of feeling their business is running them, and not the other way around," said Harding, a business coach and instructor at RCC since 1988.

He also is the former owner

of a successful business and has a background in marketing and financial operations. All business starts with making a solid profit, and this course provides the tools, expertise and guidance to help business owners become profitable," Harding added.

Class topics include financial documents, marketing, cash flow, sales, employer-employee relations, borrowing money, and planning.

Michael and Wendy Larue, owners of Larue Custom Wood Finishing, also are completing their second year of the class. Meanwhile, business is booming.

"I think Roger himself is the big difference," said Michael Larue. "He comes to class, and he sorts it all out."

When the couple began the class, Larue considered himself the craftsman half of the business, while his wife handled the books.

Larue's ability to create beautiful, high-end custom faux finishes to cabinets had already been attracting attention among clients and contractors.

But, due to Harding's encouragement, Larue added two family members to help, while he gets out more among people to market himself and his business.

"The dollar amounts (of sales) have significantly jumped in the last two years — a combination of doing good work and being lucky, being in the right place at the right time," said Larue, referring to the current building boom of upper-end homes.

Also, Harding hooked the couple up with the help of Winters, and helped them make a list of important people to call.

"Now, I follow through with calling people and returning

other people's calls," Larue added.

Hyla Lipson has owned her Grants Pass business, Fiberoptics, since 1987. But last year, still experiencing a business slowdown that began with the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Lipson sought out Harding's class for help.

"My favorite part of the class is getting ideas from the other business owners," said Lipson. She also took to heart one of Harding's suggestions and initiated an employee manual, which the business had never had.

"With an employee manual, your employees think differently about the business," she added.

Another plus has been Harding's personal coaching, which she said has "empowered" her in her business dealings.

Couard calls Harding "an encouraging realist," in that he will encourage you if that's merited.

"Unfortunately, most small businesses surround themselves with well-meaning cheerleaders and, statistically speaking, I believe that's why we have so many entrepreneurial lemmings who charge off with enthusiasm, but without the help of business owners," Roger gives us the tools."

Cost of the class, which is limited to 15 participating owners, is \$500, plus a quarterly term fee. Participants save \$80 by paying in advance.

For a class schedule, information on how to enroll and to set up an intake interview with Harding, call Jim at 954-7694. A free, eight-minute videotape describing the program is available for business owners to view at their convenience.

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New York Exchange

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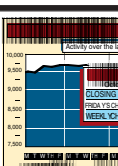


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Money rates

Table showing money rates for various banks and services, including Prime Rate, Fed Funds, and Treasury Bill section yields.

Most active stocks

Table listing the most active stocks, including symbols, high/low prices, and volume.

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