

RCC's secret weapon

SBM instructor helps small business owners succeed

Roger Harding is a "secret weapon" for area business owners, says Jim Oberlander, owner of Pro Weld, a custom fabrication company in Medford.

"Roger's a good listener. He wants to know what you know, then he analyzes that and makes suggestions on how to help the business," Oberlander said. "He's long to listen and slow to speak. When he does speak, it's very powerful. He's our secret weapon."

Harding, an instructor with the college's Small Business Management program, has a background in journalism, business, and public relations. Since 1986 he's counseled more than 300 area businesses. Clients have included organizations as diverse as property management, resorts, retail stores, chimney sweeps, high tech startups, and river outfitters.

Networking is another of Harding's fortes. He recently helped connect Oberlander with the RCC Welding program to serve as a Weld-a-thon judge for area high school students. It was a homecoming of sorts for Oberlander; as a Medford High School student he won the contest three times.

For the past 28 years, he has been a professional welder. Oberlander and wife Penny started their business eight years ago.

"You name it, we build it," said Oberlander, whose products can be viewed at www.pro-weld.com

"We are looking to become business smart. We're already on the cutting edge of technology, but that doesn't help us run the business," he added. "Roger is helping us strengthen our business skills and utilize things that are working well and get rid of things that are not working."

Harding teaches monthly classes in recordkeeping, marketing, cash flow, and employee relations, along with monthly onsite business coaching. He also helps clients, most of whom sign on for two years, identify characteristics of successful businesses.

"We provide the bricks and mortar of how to build a business," Harding said. "Our emphasis is 'working on' as opposed to 'working in' the business. We help owners take a step back and look at the business. That can be very hard because many of them didn't go into business to



Roger Harding (right), RCC Small Business Management instructor, observes as Jim Oberlander judges welding work by Justin Callahan, Ashland High School. Oberlander, owner of Pro Weld and a client of Harding's, was one of several volunteer judges at the recent Weld-a-thon coordinated by 2+2 Outreach.

work on business plans and set goals."

A major indicator of success, he explained, is the business owner's ability to control and balance use of time.

"Customers, vendors, employees and family make an unceasing bombardment of demands," Harding said.

Todd Grannis, another RCC Small Business Management client, is president and CEO of VISP Technologies. His Grants Pass Internet company won designation as the SBM's 2002 Business of the Year.

"Roger has helped us to be account-

able for the goals we've set," Grannis said. "He's seen a lot of different businesses, so he has a varied perspective on what works. He gathers a lot of material from many sources. For us he's been particularly helpful with budgeting and cash flow ratios."

Harding clearly respects the work ethos that successful business owners bring.

"I really enjoy my job. I get to work with great, great people — the cream of the crop," he added. "It's rare to leave a meeting and not think we both learned something." 📧

Levine's evaluation indicates he's done well

RCC President Rick Levine has received excellent marks from a wide range of people surveyed recently for an annual job review.

"The president's performance evaluation ratings were very high," said Pat Huycke, RCC Board of Education vice chair, who helped oversee the process. Respondents were asked to rate Levine in a number of areas using a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 representing excellent performance. Levine's scores averaged well above 3.5, said Huycke. "Comments we received were also very valuable," he said.

Categories included working relationships, leadership, fiscal and management skills, and problem solving and delegation.

In addition to board and advisory committee members and community leaders, the review randomly sampled full- and part-time instructors and classified staff and administrators. About 50 people responded to the evaluation, which was coordinated by an independent human resources specialist.

Also representing the board in the process was Dean Wendle; Skip Patterson represented the college's Advisory Committee. 📧