

The Facts About . . .

Small Business Education on the Internet

The Small Business Classroom

Knowledge is power, so the old saying goes. And that's especially true in today's world of small business ownership. By knowing where to quickly obtain help with marketing your products and services, with training your employees, or with a variety of other entrepreneurial challenges, you are positioning your business to succeed in the global economy.

The U.S. Small Business Administration is ready to help with its Small Business Classroom, an online training and information resource to help entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses.

The Small Business Classroom is designed to educate and provide interactive business guidance on a variety of topics for small business entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs in both college and high school. If you can't attend formal business classes because of a disability or time and travel limitations, the Small Business Classroom could be just the ticket.

It's Easy to Start

All you need is a computer with access to the Internet. The Classroom's Web address is www.sba.gov/classroom/. Once there, you can read articles, take courses or begin researching areas of small business development that interest you.

Using SBA-developed courses, you can learn how to write a business plan and the basics of running your business. Other topic areas include raising capital for a small business, growing a small business, certification programs to help level the playing field for your business, small business opportunities in federal procurement, and establishing an electronic business on the Internet. The Classroom even offers a Spanish version of the business plan course.

Outside Resources Available

The SBA has also teamed with outside resources to offer courses in initial public offerings, starting and running an online business, and providing health and compensation benefits to employees.

Classroom co-sponsors include Harvard Business School Publishing, Cisco Systems, Bizzed.com, University Access, Inc.com, Network Solutions, Telecommunications Development Fund, Office.com, Equalfooting.com and others.

The Small Business Classroom Web site features book chapters, articles or case studies from professional business publications each month to download and read at your convenience. These materials provide valuable insight on ways to better manage and grow your business.

Attend College Online

College courses covering all aspects of business are also available from the Small Business Classroom Web site for small business owners, managers, and other students of enterprise. The SBA has partnered with a leading distance-learning

company to offer a multi-episode video- and Web-based course entitled Introduction to Entrepreneurship: Building the Dream.

SBA Classroom visitors can get a feel for what it's like to go back to school with access to both the video and online portion of the first lesson, "Do You Have What it Takes?" at no charge.

Links to the college courses, magazine articles and case studies, along with other materials from private-sector developers, are under the Classroom Co-Sponsors area of the Web site.

Learn About eCommerce

Another feature of the Small Business Classroom is the eSmall Business area, devoted to the basics of eCommerce and doing business on the Internet. Sections of eSmall Business address the definition of an Internet economy and offer a basic primer on how to create and expand businesses on the World Wide Web. You can learn everything from providing great customer service on the Web to building your business with Web marketing. We've provided a wealth of resource links within the SBA from financing to business counseling, and have included an archive of frequently asked questions about eCommerce issues and their solutions.

If you're interested in traditional courses in a live classroom setting, you'll find a link to listings of SBA training and conferences in your area under the "About the Classroom" link on the Classroom's home page.

Business Counselors Are Online

Through confidential e-mail, the Service Corps of Retired Executives provides savvy business professionals with the knowledge and expertise to help solve your business problems -- from ownership to operations -- free of charge. The Small Business Classroom also provides a link to SCORE's Web page, www.score.org, for other services, such as online workshops, articles about improving customer relations and success stories of businesses using the SBA's services.

The Classroom Library section features Internet links to online business resources both within and outside of the SBA. Here you'll find links to sites with articles and tips on sales and marketing, financing, customer service and managing people.

Help for Exporters

Need help with selling your products or services overseas? The Classroom Library can connect you with Trade Mission Online, a database of U.S. small businesses that seek to export their products. To be included in this database, a U.S. small business must register its company and export information, and receive a password. TM Online is also a search engine for both U.S. and foreign businesses seeking a U.S. business partner or supplier through direct product sales, licensing or franchising agreements.

Perhaps the best part of the Small Business Classroom is that it's available 24 hours a day. So if you're sitting down for a late-night snack, why not also make room at the table for a business tip or two, courtesy of the U.S. Small Business Administration?

For More Information

- SBA offices are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. For the office nearest you, look under “U.S. Government” in your telephone directory, or contact:
- Phone: 1-800 U ASK SBA
- Fax: 202-481-6190
- E-mail: answerdesk@sba.gov
- TDD: 704-344-6640
- Your rights to regulatory fairness: 1-888-REG-FAIR
- Internet
SBA Home page: <http://www.sba.gov>
Gopher: <http://www.sba.gov/gopher>
U.S. Business Advisor: <http://www.business.gov>

SBA Partners

Inquire at your local SBA office for the location nearest you.

- Business Information Centers -- BICs
- Tribal Business Information Centers -- TBICs
- One Stop Capital Shops -- OSCSs
- Service Corps of Retired Executives -- SCORE
- Small Business Development Centers -- SBDCs
- U.S. Export Assistance Centers -- USEACs
- Women’s Business Centers -- WBCs

Publications

- The Facts About ... SBA Publications -- a listing of free SBA publications

Did you know that in fiscal 2000 the SBA –

- backed a record of nearly \$18 billion in financing to America’s small businesses?
- approved more than 50,400 small business loans totaling almost \$12.4 billion?
- made more than 4,600 investments worth \$5.6 billion through its venture capital program -- a 33 percent gain over fiscal 1999?
- provided more than 28,000 loans totaling approximately \$1 billion to disaster victims for residential, personal-property and business loans?
- extended management and technical assistance to an estimated 1.23 million entrepreneurs through its resource-partner programs?
- responded to almost a quarter million telephone and e-mail inquiries at the SBA Answer Desk?

Did you know that America’s 25 million small businesses --

- employ more than 58 percent of the private work force?
- generate more than 51 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product?
- are the principal source of new jobs?

All of the SBA's programs and services are provided to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.
FS-0086 (10/00)