

DBE ENTERPRISES



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When Business Is Slow

By *Anne Ramstetter Wenzel*

If you're struggling through your start-up phase or were barely profitable up to now, the slow-down is bad news. But if you've been able to maintain a **STABLE** client base and reasonable cash flow this year, there some really great things you as a small business owner can do during these slow economic times.

REVISE YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

It's always difficult to take time to go back and revise your plan once you realize your **MARKET** and/or your business **FOCUS** has changed. Serving customers is much more pressing than researching and writing about your business. However, an up-to-date business plan is essential for managing a well-run business over the long haul. Think of a sales slow-down as an excellent time to **RE-EXAMINE** your markets, operations and management structure -- and document your future course!

CONDUCT YOUR OWN MARKET RESEARCH

Keeping your current customers happy is essential to keep them from shopping with your competitors. But when things are busy, filling current orders or meeting project deadlines is about all you can do. If your sales have slowed up a bit, you can take time to design a customer satisfaction **SURVEY**. Ask them questions about how satisfied they've been doing business with you, and ask them to offer at least one

suggestion for how you could improve your product, service or customer service. You should offer those who fill out the survey in full a **DISCOUNT** on a future order, a free gift, or even a gift certificate to a business like *Amazon.com* or a local restaurant. You'll learn some very valuable information on how to adjust your business offerings or operations to keep -- and maybe even gain -- customers.

WRITE ARTICLES OR GIVE LECTURES

If you've cut back on advertising expenditures to conserve cash, publishing articles can help keep your company name in the public eye. Submit them to the editor of your professional associations' journals, or online. You can even print articles up as a mini-newsletter and pass them out at your networking meetings. Just make sure your bio and company information appears at the end of your article so people can easily contact you or visit your web site. Also offer to speak at professional meetings on topics in your area of expertise (and pass out brochures when you're there!). By substituting your **TIME** for **CASH** advertising outlays, writing articles and giving presentations can help protect your bottom line and maintain public **EXPOSURE** for your company.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

Change is just the way things are, and lifelong education is essential for surviving in the 21st century marketplace. Slow times for your business just may **FREE UP** enough time for you to take a business management or

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technology class at the local community college or small business development center (SBDC - check <http://www.sba.gov/gopher/Local-Information/Small-Business-Development-Centers> for the one nearest you). You may even want to take a **TELECLASS** that doesn't take you off site -- you can learn a lot right from your desk. Traci Bild offers a \$49 one-hour a week, four week tele-seminar, "Sales Success Challenge" (see <http://www.tracibild.com>). Teleclass International offers quality free and for fee classes - check <http://www.teleclassworld.com> for details.

TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Rest up for when the good times roll again. Re-connect with family and friends, exercise more or spend time on a hobby. Running a business requires constant hard work, sometimes 7 days a week, so take advantage of the **DOWN TIME**. Recessions tend to be a form of economic Darwinism. Companies that sell goods and services people don't necessarily need or want, or that were poorly run to begin with, will go out of business. Take time to **RE-CHARGE** when business is slow, so that you'll be ready and rearing to go when your sales up swing begins again.

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CONTACTS

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For DBE Certification information:

Juan Lopez, MAC 612-726-8196
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For information on association member/partnership:

Dianne Holte,
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651-481-7939

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PFA Notice:

The Metropolitan Council's PFA program only accept W/MBE business listed with the State Department of Administration and the DBE Unified Certification Program.

For more information
call Roderic Southall at 651-602-1184

Contractors/Consultants	Total Contract Amount	Total Paid to date	DBE Paid to Date	(1) DBE % Actual to Date	(2) DBE % Total Contract Value	Target DBE % Goal
Minnesota Transit Constructors (MnTC)	320,277,233	293,898,476	39,347,603	13.39%	12.29%	15%
Other Contractors	6,151,610	5,960,180	773,314	12.97%	12.57%	
O'Brien Kreitzberg (OBK) (3)	19,000,000	17,266,321	3,037,527	17.59%	15.99%	15%
Marsh	545,000	395,000	139,497	35.32%	25.60%	5%
Other Consultants	27,236,140	24,104,349	1,605,261	6.66%	5.89%	
SUB-TOTAL:	372,209,983	341,624,326	44,903,202	13.14%	12.03%	
Other Commitments *	91,848,109	83,341,342	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TOTAL:	465,058,092	424,965,668	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* ROW, Cooperative Agreements, Other Direct Costs, etc. (1) Calculates DBE percentage based upon DBE dollars expended vs. contract dollars paid to-date (actuals). (2) Calculates DBE percentage based upon DBE dollars expended vs. total contract value. (3) Values as of February 2004 - Preliminary Incorporates Amendment #2 to the URS/OBK Agreement