

Chamber Marketing Assistance

The most effective marketing strategy for your business comes from having a strong Marketing Plan. Developing this plan will involve careful Industry Analysis and Market Analysis. Refer to the “Writing an Effective Business Plan” section of this guide for more information on developing a Marketing Plan. No single promotional effort can substitute for a strategic Marketing Plan included within the body of your Business Plan. However, the Chamber offers many, many marketing opportunities to use as part of your overall marketing strategy. When you join the Chamber, be sure to take advantage of these opportunities.

The Small Business Action Council of the Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce works to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs. This committee hosts several seminars and workshops throughout the year for the entire Chamber membership. “Our mission is to provide practical information for small businesses, to showcase the wide variety of our local businesses to the rest of the community, and to encourage Romans to Shop Rome and to keep their dollars working at home,” says Chairman 2009 of the Small Business Action Council and small business owner Paula Blevins, C&S Trophies.

Seminars and Workshops offer valuable information to help you establish your new business or take your current business to the next level. Pertinent and timely topics assist growing your small business at any stage.

The ShopRome_{SM} Campaign is a continuous year-round effort to market Rome and Floyd County businesses to local citizens and outlying communities through various media outlets such as radio spots, billboard displays, direct mailings, print media, and electronic media. Advertising for ShopRome_{SM} intensifies during the holiday shopping season to encourage Romans to “Shop Rome_{SM}” and “Keep Your Dollars at Home!”

Business EXPO held annually allows over 85 Floyd County businesses to meet the public and network with other business owners. This two-day event features a private, members-only Business After Hours (the largest networking event of the year) and then an all-day, open-to-the-public exhibition the following day.

The Small Business of the Year Award is presented at the Chamber Annual Meeting each January to an outstanding business. The award is presented to an outstanding small business that has 50 or less employees, that has been an active member of Chamber, and that has been in business for at least five years.

Business After Hours provides a great opportunity for local business professionals who are Chamber members to network, promote their own companies, and make new business contacts. Hosting a BAH event also serves as a great promotional strategy.

Young Professionals of Rome, designed specifically for business professionals in their 20s and 30s, provides many of the same opportunities as Business After Hours in a younger, relaxed environment.

The Chamber Website, www.rome.ga.com, is another excellent resource for starting your own business. On the website, you will find on Chamber membership and benefits, economic development information, and small business resources. You can also use the Chamber Calendar and Community Calendar to keep up with networking events. Registration for most Chamber events is available online through the Chamber Calendar!

The Business Directory on the Chamber website contains an up-to-date list of all Chamber members, organized by company name and by business category. The Chamber also publishes a “Membership Directory and Buyer’s Guide.” Both directories publicize your business and are free for members.



Doing Business Online

You may have already decided you need some sort of web presence for the business you're starting—or you may be planning to conduct the majority of your business online.

Remember that your website should do more than just mimic any advertising or marketing you're doing. It should take full advantage of the Internet's capability for interactive shopping and globally convenient access.

Think of your website as a 24-hour sales force. The thought and care with which you design your site is the 'sales training' you are giving your virtual sales force. Your website should showcase information about your company and products, of course, but it should also include an efficient way of communicating and should, if at all possible, become an international marketplace through which to sell your products and services.

Always keep your ultimate consumer in mind as you begin creating your site. What does your customer want or need to see, hear, or read? How do they want to be treated? What will make them remember you over the competition?

What Equipment & Software Will You Need for your Online Business?

Here are some initial recommendations, if you plan to have an active online presence:

- Computer with at least 4Gb hard drive, 96Mg RAM, Pentium II processor and 56K modem
- Current browser and email program
- Website design program if you plan to maintain your own website
- Web host with secure server for taking credit card information online
- Merchant account so you can accept credit cards
- Scanner to copy and publish pictures or documents
- Fax machine/copier/printer
- Graphics program if you will be designing your own graphics
- Bookkeeping software to record your transactions
- FTP program to facilitate uploading files to your website
- Web statistics program to monitor your Internet visitors

Purchasing Your Domain Name and Web Hosting Services

Selecting a domain name is an important part of developing an Internet business. While you will very likely want to secure a URL (web address) that is relevant or identical to your business name, it may not be in your best interest to use ONLY that name on the net. You may benefit by using two (or more) domain names, one with your actual business name for customers who would look for you online by typing your company name in their browser (like microsoft.com or mcdonalds.com) and one for people who are looking for your actual product or service and would look for that product/service in a search engine (like software.com or hamburgers.com).

If you would like to register a domain name for your company, but don't know where to start, use your search engine. Type "domain registration" into Google, for instance, and you'll find a number of domain registry services. Prices vary, so do some online shopping of your own before you buy that online address.

Many domain registry services also offer hosting services. Again, do a little research before you buy. Some hosting services have better reputations than others – some are more user friendly. If you're not sure, ask another business owner who they use and if they're happy with their hosting company. The main things you need from your hosting company are: reliability, access to customer support when you need it, and an adequate amount of server space. Remember, a 15-page website with 2-5 graphics on each page, would need between 120K and 3MB of space. Even if you have a much larger website with many more graphics, your website should be able to fit comfortably onto about 10MB of hard disk space. When web hosts offer you 400MB of hard disk space, they do so knowing that the vast majority of users will not come close to using all of that space.





Designing Your Site

If you do not have the time, the inclination, or the skills needed to design and maintain your own website, you will either need to hire someone to work in-house or hire an independent design firm. Unless you plan to have a highly active, involved and frequently updated (daily or hourly) website, it is generally much more cost-effective to hire a design firm. But be sure to shop around and ask an internet-savvy friend to critique any proposals you get from a web-design firm. **Visit the the Chamber website, www.romea.com, and click on the Business Directory to find a list of local web designers.**

Marketing Your Website

Your website is of little use if no one uses it. Generally, your goal should be to generate traffic that will result in increased business. Using internet marketing tricks just to get more people to your site may not actually get you more business. And paying for advertising that does not deliver targeted traffic is not an effective use of your advertising budget. Consider utilizing the following tools: pay per click advertising, search engine listings, keywords and meta-tags, trading links with related businesses or organizations, and listing your website on every piece of printed collateral you produce. If you're not sure what each of these terms means, we suggest inputting the term into your search engine and familiarizing yourself with the ever-changing opportunities of the web.

Making Your Site Interactive -- and Keeping it Up to Date

The Internet offers such great potential for creativity and multi-level communication that your potential customers will expect you to take advantage of it. Don't leave them thinking that your website is just another version of the flat, printed brochure you use. Include interactive elements, such as clickable emails, online shopping, surveys or contests, maps, etc.

Building Your Customer Base

Every website you own should include a form where visitors can give you their email address. Of course, only a small percentage of visitors will share that information, but those who do can be developed into future customers and repeat visitors.

Privacy statements

Every website you own should also display your customer/user privacy statement. Start to notice these disclaimers on websites you visit, and craft one of your own. It is important that you keep your word to your subscribers. That is, if you say you will not sell or distribute your email list to others, you **MUST NOT SELL OR SHARE** these email addresses. If you respect the privacy and wishes of your subscribers and provide useful information in your emails, your reward is that you will have repeat visits from them and will have a loyal and ready audience for important announcements you need to make about your business.



Government Contracting

Does your business development strategy include providing goods and services to the federal government? Creating a profile in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) and the Dynamic Small Business Search (DSBS) and keeping it current ensures that your firm has access to federal contracting opportunities, especially those for small businesses. Entering your small business profile data into the CCR allows you to populate the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Supplemental Pages, known as DSBS, where your business information and capabilities statements can be viewed by contracting officers, large prime contractors, and the general public.

For more detailed instructions on how to start a new registration, visit the Central Contractor Registration website at <http://www.ccr.gov/StartRegistration.aspx>. For more general information, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>.

There are four basic steps in order to begin registration on the CCR. Simply visit www.ccr.gov for more detailed instructions on how to obtain each of the following items. Steps 1 and 2 may be completed simultaneously.

1. Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number

This number is provided by Dun and Bradstreet. Requesting a DUNS number via the web form takes approximately 24 hours for US addresses. When you enter your DUNS number, CCR retrieves the name and address information along with DUNS of any parent organization from D&B.

2. Tax Identification Number (TIN) and Taxpayer Name

Your TIN is used in Federal tax matters. A TIN is either an Employer Identification Number (EIN) assigned by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or a Social Security Number (SSN) assigned by the Social Security Administration (SSA) if you are registering as a sole proprietor. *Not required for non-U.S. registrants*

If you already have a TIN, your CCR registration will take 1-2 business days to clear the TIN Match process. However, a newly assigned EIN cannot be validated in CCR. According to the IRS, when applying for an EIN over the phone or internet, you will be immediately as signed an EIN, but it may take up to 2-4 weeks before your EIN becomes active. If you apply for an EIN by fax or mail, confirmation from the IRS can take up to 5 weeks.

You must wait until you receive a CP-575 notice from the IRS confirming that your EIN is active and valid for use. For questions regarding your EIN, simply call 1-800-829-4933. CCR will forward the IRS the name and TIN you provide and they will confirm that those two items match their records. A match is required in order to complete registration. No other data is exchanged with the IRS. If your taxes are filed under another name, you will need to use that name for input.

Start New Registration. Central Contractor Registry. 02 Jan. 2009 <www.ccr.gov>.

Government Contracting (Continued)

3. Statistical Information About Your Business

You will be required to provide your receipts and number of employees on a world-wide basis, which includes all affiliates. Information on your organization's profile location is optional. Organizations that sell or generate electricity, refine petroleum, or that are financial institutions will be required to provide additional data. The following categories encompass the information you may need to include:

a. Location Information (Optional)

This information may include the Average Number of Employees for your location, comprised of the average number of persons employed at your location for each pay period over the firm's latest 12 months. You may also want to include Average Annual Receipts for your business over the last three completed fiscal years.

b. World-Wide Organization (Required)

This information is passed to the SBA in order to calculate your business size using SBA's official size standards for your industry. Your business size is calculated by two components. The first component, the **Average Number of Employees including all affiliates**, consists of the average number of persons employed for each pay period over the firm's latest 12 months, including persons employed by the parent organization, all branches, and all affiliates worldwide. The second component, the **Average Annual Receipts including all affiliates**, includes the average receipts over the last three completed fiscal years, including receipts of the parent organization, all branches, and all affiliates worldwide.

c. Organizations that sell or generate electricity, refine petroleum, or that are financial institutions need to provide certain information as well. Businesses that generate electricity will need to provide the total megawatt hours for the preceding fiscal year. Businesses that refine petroleum will need to submit the number of barrels per calendar day in total Operable Atmospheric Crude Oil Distillation capacity. Financial institutions will be required to submit their average assets as reported on the fourth quarterly financial statements for the preceding year.

4. Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Information

This information is required for payment of invoices pertaining to your contracts with the government. All non-U.S. registrants are excluded from this requirement. The following items are included in your EFT information.

- a. ABA Routing Number for your bank
- b. Account Number and Type, or Lockbox Number
- c. Automated Clearing House (ACH) point of contact
- d. Remittance point of contact
- e. Accounts Receivable point of contact

Start New Registration. Central Contractor Registry. 02 Jan. 2009 <www.ccr.gov>.



Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT ASSISTANCE

a program of Industry Services

The Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center provides procurement assistance to Georgia businesses, large and small, operating in the government procurement markets at the federal, state, and local levels as a prime contractor or subcontractor.

The Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center (GTPAC) has offices conveniently located throughout the state of Georgia. All counselors, locations, phone numbers and email addresses are posted under a team directory for easy identification and access by the public. Contact the closest office to learn how GTPAC can help you do business with government agencies.

GTPAC also conducts training to help contractor personnel better understand the procurement process.

GTPAC provides counseling and assistance in:

- Solicitation analysis
- Post-award contract administration
- Bid/proposal preparation
- Central contractor registration
- Federal specifications/standards
- Internet procurement opportunities
- Cost accounting/quality systems
- Other registration assistance
- Electronic commerce
- Tech data
- Pre-award surveys

In order to work with GTPAC, you must...

- be a Georgia-based company.
- want to sell to the government.
- have the potential to sell to the government.
- have email capability.
- complete a GTPAC client application.
- complete and submit a procurement activity report every 3 month when requested.
- report ALL government contract awards during the period regardless of GTPAC's direct or indirect involvement.
- complete the annual Quality of Services survey when requested.

About Us. Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center. 02 Jan. 2009 <www.gtpac.org>.



Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center

The Burson Center
500 Old Bremen Road
Carrollton, Georgia 30117
Phone: 678-890-2342
Fax: 770-834-2232
Contact: Jerry Shadinger
jerry.shadinger@innovate.gatech.edu
www.gtpac.org



International Trade

International trade can be difficult, but it also can provide tremendous opportunities. Most start-up businesses will not be participating in international trade. However, if you choose to export or import goods, the following contacts may provide you with valuable information.

The Georgia Department of Economic Development has an International Trade office. The United States Export Assistance Center can provide you access to all Federal exporting resources. The Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce can connect you with additional resources. You may contact them at the following addresses:

**International Trade Specialist
Georgia Department of Economic Development**

75 Fifth St. NW
Suite 1200
Atlanta GA 30308
404-962-4114

United States Export Assistance Center

233 Peachtree St. NE
Atlanta GA 30303
404-657-1900

Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce

1 Riverside Parkway
Rome, GA 30161
706-291-7663
grcc@romega.com