HOLIDAY GREETINGS!

As 2011 draws to a close, the staff at the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Kaskaskia College hopes that you have enjoyed success in your small business endeavors. Success can be measured in many different ways, but if you critically assess your business’ attributes, we hope that you can identify both growth and success as you close out 2011.

You are to be commended for surviving the past year of continued consumer caution and recession recovery and this is also a milestone to be proud of. Hopefully, you can apply the same tenacity to sales growth in 2012 and establish a renewed commitment to enjoy business ownership in the coming year.

Entering 2012 and thinking about the “buzz words” for the New Year, it is believed that the following items will be at the forefront for small businesses:

- Social Media (Yes, it’s here forever!)
- Going Green – energy efficiency, recycling & planet sustainability (another forever project)
- Exporting – finding success in global arenas (stay informed; research options)
- Services for returning Veterans (hiring Veterans --a project that we can all feel good about)

The following articles reflect only a small amount of information regarding each topic. We hope you will research the web sites to learn more and keep informed. Entering the New Year dare to dream a little about how each one might affect your small business success.

IMPROVE YOUR SMALL BUSINESS DIGITAL HOME WITH SBA WIDGETS: Your website is your digital home. You may have several social network pages from one end of the Web to the next, but at the day’s end, you need a home to return to, a website of your own. Your digital house, just like your townhouse, house or apartment needs constant improvement as well as the occasional upgrade. The U. S. Small Business Administration feels the same way, as they have been on a campaign to improve their online presence as well. They have redesigned their website to be more engaging and they have also added the (link) SBA Community. The SBA has been “social” for a while with their Facebook page, Twitter account, and YouTube channel. Their latest change includes a series of widgets that makes it easier for small business owners to access a wealth of information directly from SBA.gov. The 5 widgets being offered by SBA.gov:

- **SBA Direct**: This widget supplies small business information and local services via your zip code.
- **Small Business InfoTool**: This widget is a non-branded version of the SBA Direct widget.
- **Tools for Small Business**: This widget supplies tools and resources for running a small business.
- **Small Business Tax Tool**: This widget supplies current tax information.
- **SBA.gov Community**: This widget displays issues concerning small business owners from the community.

Get Social – Have you been holding back on getting involved with Facebook, Twitter and YouTube? It’s time to get social because if your website is your home, then these social networks are how you meet new people and make new friends. Think about it. When you have a party at your “place,” you want people to show up. Well, it’s time to meet people.
Upgrade it – Look at the home page of your website. It may be time for an upgrade. It doesn’t have to be a major overhaul (although it can be). Maybe a fresh home page is enough for now. Constant improvement is a part of our modern landscape – so embrace the process. Simple Access – The SBA Direct widget gives your target audience an easier way to engage with SBA.gov content. Are there some changes you can make to streamline your information and give your visitors easier access to you and your business? Visit the SBA website at www.sba.gov.

**USEPA LAUNCHES GREEN PRODUCTS WEB PORTAL:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched a new tool designed to provide Americans with easy access to information about everyday products like home appliances, electronics and cleaning products that can save money, prevent pollution and protect people’s health. The new green products web portal is available at www.epa.gov/greenerproducts.

Using the new tool, consumers can find electronics and appliances that have earned EPA’s Energy Star label and can browse WaterSense products that help save energy and water. Additionally, consumers can find information about cleaning products that are safer for the environment and people’s health. These products bear the EPA Design for the Environment (DfE) label. The website will also help manufacturers and institutional purchasers with information on standards and criteria for designing greener products. More information on pollution prevention and EPA’s P2 programs can be found at: [http://epa.gov/p2/](http://epa.gov/p2/); DCEO’s Environmental Assistance Program provides free confidential information and services to help small businesses understand their environmental obligations. *Call 800-252-3998 or e-mail at dceo.sbeap@illinois.gov.*

**WEBSITE OF THE MONTH—www.exports.illinois.gov:** Illinois already produces ideas and products which enhance lives around the world, but we should never be satisfied with the status quo if we want to remain competitive and succeed in the global arena. Illinois must continue to invest in educating our workforce and supporting our technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship programs so Illinois products and services will continue to be sought-after commodities worldwide.

*By the end of 2014 Illinois intends to grow its economy by doubling our exports.* One of the ways we will achieve this goal is by offering increased export services, programs and training to our small and medium sized businesses, enabling them to grow into markets outside of the U.S. through DCEO’s Office of Trade and Investment, our Illinois Small Business Development Centers’ and International Trade Centers and other partners. Please explore your business’ global options with the help of DCEO’s Office of Trade and Investment and this web site. Visit the website [www.exports.illinois.gov](http://www.exports.illinois.gov) for more information.

**SERVICES FOR VETERANS:** Governor Pat Quinn’s office and the Illinois Department of Employment Security hosts job fairs across the state to help put veterans back to work. The fairs are part of ongoing efforts to grow jobs and connect qualified job seekers with ready-to-hire employers. For more information about the job fairs, go to: [http://www.ides.illinois.gov/page.aspx?item=2247](http://www.ides.illinois.gov/page.aspx?item=2247). Veterans can also contact the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Kaskaskia College for services and local assistance. Advisors are on staff to assist with the development of a business, marketing and/or financial plan and as well as other considerations for opening a new business. For more information contact the local ISBDC office: 618-545-3260. Most articles taken from DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship Innovation & Technology Newsletters.

**AND JUST A NOTE….A CHILLING FORECAST:** Winter is right around the corner and with it comes ice storms, blizzards and other cold weather threats. *If you don’t have a Disaster Plan, it’s time!* Preparing your organization before a winter storm hits can help you protect your employees, minimize damage and lead to a speedy recovery. Review more information regarding disaster preparedness and recovery at agilityrecovery.com as well as [www.readyillinois.gov](http://www.readyillinois.gov).

**NEED ASSISTANCE? WOULD YOU LIKE TO REVIEW THE ISBDC MANUAL FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS? CALL STEVEN GRONER, 618-545-3260 OR E-MAIL: sgroner@kaskaskia.edu**
MEET KASKASKIA COLLEGE’S INTERNATIONAL TRADE CONSULTANT

Elizabeth Ahern of Greenville, IL is available for businesses interested in being involved in international trade. Elizabeth has international business working experience in Europe, Latin America, Asia Pacific, and the Middle East. She understands the big picture involved in sales operations and distribution of products and her expertise ranges from planning and executing strategies to managing cash flow operations. She started her international career working for an international trade advisor group in Washington, DC on international trade policy issues.

Elizabeth then went to work in banking in the trade services area. After this, she worked in sales operations and distribution and as international sales manager in areas focusing on business development, sales, marketing and finance. Elizabeth also served as Country Manager for Mexico with a service organization and was Director of Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Programs as well as a Business Professor in higher education.

Elizabeth holds a Master’s Degree in International Business from St. Louis University and a Bachelor of Art Degrees in History, Political Science and Spanish from Greenville College. She is fluent in Spanish and has studied French, Portuguese and Chinese. Contact Steven Groner, Director of the IL Small Business Development Center for more information (618-545-3260), or contact Elizabeth directly at 618-267-2578.

WHAT IS INFLUENZA?

Influenza, a commonly known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by droplets when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has the influenza virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

Symptoms of Flu

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:
- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)

*It’s important to note that not everyone with the flu will have a fever.

Get Vaccinated

This year’s seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three influenza viruses that research suggests will be most common. The 2011-2012 flu vaccine protects against an influence A H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the 2009 H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season. There are two types of flu vaccines:

- The “flu shot” – an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The seasonal flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine”). LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

For more information on the flu and to find a flu clinic near you, visit http://www.pandemicflu.gov/ (or contact your local Health Department. This information is provided by Agility Recovery Solutions, a trusted advisor and partner in preparedness (www.agilityrecovery.com).