

THE BAY STATE Banner

Banner Biz Q&A

June 4, 2010
Bay State Banner

Q: What problems motivated the development of Interise (formerly known as InnerCity Entrepreneurs)?

A: Eighty percent of small businesses don't survive start-up — and yet, almost all the small business technical assistance and support is focused on early stage or start-up businesses. The businesses that survive start-up and want to grow significantly have not historically had affordable business development resources tailored to their needs and phase of development. With access to the right networks, knowledge and new markets they grow quickly, naturally creating jobs as they do so.

Our mission is the economic revitalization of lower income communities. By helping existing small businesses in these communities to grow, they create local jobs. From 2004 to 2008, Interise entrepreneurs created 275 net new jobs.

Q: What is the 'Street Wise MBA'[™]?

A: The 'StreetWise MBA'[™] is the point of entry into the Interise membership of small business owners. Over the course of its nine months, the CEO of a small business learns to work on and not just in his/her business. It provides a way for the CEO to acquire the new knowledge and habits of management needed to take his/her business to the next level. Our approach is very hands-on, using peer-to-peer learning and a slew of worksheets and exercises directly focused on growing your business. The final product is a three-year strategic growth plan that entrepreneurs can start implementing as they develop their plans.

Q: What is included in the curriculum?

A: The 15 bi-weekly class sessions cover the following topics: setting personal and professional goals, financial analysis and planning, marketing and sales, resource needs, strategy and leadership. Learning is by doing — each participating company gets an opportunity to use its own experiences as a case study for the group as a whole.

Q: How is the faculty chosen?

A: We are looking for instructors who have hands-on experience of running a small business as well as teaching adults in a facilitative manner. Many of our instructors are or have been adjunct faculty at a university or college. We have a standard curriculum that all of our instructors use and we seek to contract people who can make that curriculum come alive because of their own business



As CEO of Interise, J. Jean Horstman is on a mission to develop small businesses in inner city communities. In this interview, she talks about the nuts and bolts of growing a company.

experience and teaching style. We have an interview process that we use to contract instructors. And we always welcome inquiries from possible instructors.

Q: What is the Strategic Growth Action Plan™?

A: The Strategic Growth Action Plan™ is the three-year plan that each participant develops over the course of the 'StreetWise MBA'™. Unlike a business plan, the SGAP is designed in a short and concise document to identify a CEO's growth goals and the associated steps needed to achieve them. It is the plan to be used to "sell" growth to your staff as well as your investors. And it is the roadmap that an entrepreneur uses to keep him/herself accountable to the growth they seek.

Q: How is the success of the program determined?

A: We have a number of social and economic impact indicators that we track over five years for each entrepreneur who participates in our programs.

Each entrepreneur completes an intake survey. Yearly, we send them an annual survey to complete. These survey returns are then analyzed and reported in the report card.

We also evaluate each class session of StreetWise Steps to Small Business Growth™ as well as do a final assessment.

Q: What is the Street Wise Steps™ program?

A: StreetWise Steps to Small Business Growth™ is the name of the curriculum that we teach in the 'StreetWise MBA'™ in Boston, Lowell and Worcester. It is also the curriculum that we license to other economic and small business development agencies or deliver through contracts with government agencies. Our first licensee is the New York City Office of Small Business Services.

Q: How do small businesses enroll in the program?

A: There are two ways to get started. One is to connect with one of our program managers. Brandon Mastrangelo covers Boston and can be reached at bmastrangelo@interise.org or 617-350-6300.

The other is to go to www.interise.org and click on Join Us. There is a tab for the 'StreetWise MBA'™ where you can apply online.

The next step will be an interview with our program manager.

Q: What steps does Interise take to include inner city firms?

A: We are blessed with a network of more than 60 referral partners ranging from Main Streets to state government agencies who help us identify a rich mix of women, minority and recent American owned businesses in lower income communities. Eighty-seven percent are either women, minorities or own a business located in a low- or moderate income census tract.

Our entrepreneurs are great at referring other CEOs to us. We get out there and get to know the communities we serve. Our staff volunteer with local community groups, attend local community meetings and network widely.