

A Proven Approach to Help Businesses Survive and Grow

The Business Resource Network (BRN) uses a unique approach to help businesses survive and grow. It works closely with them to identify and access a host of business services with as little red tape as possible. The BRN currently operates in Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana Counties in Ohio and Mercer and Lawrence Counties in Pennsylvania.

A collaboration of chambers of commerce, workforce and economic development organizations, universities, career & technical centers, state and local government agencies, the BRN partnership targets businesses with growth potential as well as those facing challenges. It then conducts in-depth interviews with the owners and managers of the businesses.

After learning a business's goals and the obstacles it may be facing, BRN Partners present the business with a package of suggested incentives, technical assistance, training and other programs designed specifically for that business.

This all happens through a single point of contact—the BRN Account Executive—assuring tight coordination of services and minimal bureaucracy. There is no charge for the interview and proposal and many services are available at no cost.

Once the business chooses the programs and services it wants to pursue, the BRN Account Executive continues to work with the business and participating BRN Partners over time to deliver quality services and identify new ways to assist the business.

New Upgraded Website Now Offers More Information, Contact Form

The new BRN website (www.thebrn.net) is proving to be a big success. With the same address as the original BRN website, the new site welcomes visitors with a brief description of the BRN. To learn more, visitors can click on “Who We Are” tab for a full list of BRN partner organizations. The “How It Works” tab discusses the BRN process and also features the “What We Can Do for You” video so in about seven minutes, visitors can hear company executives talk about their experience working with the BRN.

By clicking on the “BRN Successes” tab, visitors can view the “Measurable Success” video that highlights how the BRN helped three local companies grow and expand. The “Contact the BRN” tab provides a form a company can fill out and submit on-line to begin the BRN process.

Two New Videos Explain, Promote BRN

The Business Resource Network recently produced two videos – “Measurable Success” and “What We can Do for You”—that are now available on the website (www.thebrn.net). The videos – each about seven minutes long -- focus on three local companies and their experience with the BRN.

“What We Can Do for You” provides an explanation of the BRN model, how it works and how it can help a company survive and grow. “Measurable Success” relates how the BRN helped three local companies expand. On camera interviews with executives of Brass Accents of Salem, Tri County Towers of North Jackson and Revere Data of Youngstown, give first-hand reports on how the BRN helped each company expand a product range, enter a new business line or expand services and add employees. With eye-catching and informative background footage and narrated by Stacia Erdos, local business news anchor, the videos inform, educate and tell the story of the BRN.

Visit www.theBRN.net and click on the links in the Learn More box on the home page or go to How It Works tab and the BRN Successes tab to see the videos.

Short Interview Now Available

For companies seeking the BRN assistance on a single issue, there is now a short interview process. Contact the BRN at (877) - 3 biznet and an Account Executive can assist you.

Pet Foods Nurture Lisbon Firm's Growth

Ohio Pet Foods (OPF) has been a manufacturer of high quality, special formulation and private label pet foods since 1978. It operates a 75,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Lisbon's Industrial Park with a workforce of 40 full- and part-time associates in management & sales, manufacturing and maintenance.

Matt Golladay, vice president of Ohio Pet Foods, had been wanting to make some strategic changes including purchasing a major customer to secure a significant domestic market for its product but funding had been an issue. To this point, OPF only produced product for customers, many of them overseas. The company exports to 23 counties and is certified to sell in the European Union.

On Dec. 18, 2009, Joe Matasek, BRN account representative, made a "cold call" at OPF. Then things started happening. The BRN interview was conducted on April 6, 2010 and 10 days later, top officials of the Ohio Department of Development, visited OPF to offer support and services to the company. The company was also put in contact with the Mahoning Valley Economic Development Corp.

With the help of the BRN, Ohio Pet Foods secured more than \$1 million in refinancing that allowed it to double the size of its warehouse, purchase its biggest customer and expand office space. The purchase of Blackwood Pet Foods secures 20 percent of the company business, and plans are in place to grow the Blackwood brand to represent half of OPF's business. The expansion has resulted in the hiring of five new employees.

Canfield Sees Growth

The BRN has been "tremendously helpful" to Canfield Manufacturing Co., a processor of lumber and plastics for the steel, electrical and locomotive industries, said Tom Boylan, president. Boylan brought the Canfield company back from the brink three years ago and now it is "doing quite well." So well in fact, that it is looking to expand and add employees.

Boylan credits the BRN for connecting the company to a real estate development group that was key in the company's plans to relocate to a larger facility in Struthers. Also the BRN helped Canfield Manufacturing find "the right" experienced workers as well as arrange for an On-the-Job Training Contract to offset the cost of wages during the training period for new employees.

Stitching Up Expansion

Color 3 Embroidery Inc. is primarily a wholesale embroidery business with a small amount of retail trade. The company, located in Trumbull County, sells nationally using its website and survived the recent economic downturn keeping its 6 full-time and 4 part-time staff working. In a small and high-priced location, the company was unable to expand and was paying the premium for a storefront location.

The BRN connected Traci Miller, Color 3 Embroidery president, to Mahoning Valley Economic Development Corp and with its help, the purchase of a light industrial building was facilitated. Not only is the new facility less expensive but also there is room to expand. The company already has added two additional employees, taking advantage of On-the-Job Training program.

BRN Partners

Compass Family & Community Services
Choffin Career & Technical Center
City of Warren
City of Youngstown
Columbiana County Commissioners
Columbiana County Career & Technical Center
Columbiana County Office of Econ. Development
Congressman Tim Ryan's Office
Eastgate Regional Council of Governments
East Liverpool Chamber of Commerce

Kent State University Columbiana County Campus
Kent State University Trumbull Campus
Main Street Warren
Mahoning & Columbiana Training Association
Mahoning County Career & Technical Center
Mahoning County Commissioners
Mahoning County Dept. Job & Family Services
Mahoning Valley Economic Development Corp.
Manufacturing Advocacy & Growth Network
NEO HealthForce
Ohio Apprenticeship
Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation

Ohio Department of Development
Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission
Ohio Treasurer of State
Regional Chamber
St. Clair Township Area Chamber of Commerce
Salem Area Chamber of Commerce
SCORE
Trumbull Career & Technical Center
Trumbull County Commissioners
Trumbull County Dept. of Job & Family Services
Village of Lowellville
Youngstown State University