

Ask SCORE

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SCORE[®]
Counselors to America's Small Business

Meet Them at the Chamber

Where can you find customers... and suppliers... and shared expertise? At your local Chamber of Commerce, of course. From networking breakfasts to Business After Hours, you will get to know bankers and accountants and technology gurus -- all the folks you need to make your business run. Here is a list of links to local Chambers.

[Check It Out](#)

Free Counseling

Click any link below to sign up for free counseling at that location. Seek help as many times as you like.

[Aurora North](#)

[Aurora Downtown](#)

[DeKalb Branch](#)

[Elgin Branch](#)

[Joliet Branch](#)

[Lisle Branch](#)

[McHenry Branch](#)

[Naperville Branch](#)

Technology & Marketing

Let the Experts Handle Your Small Business Technology

Today, almost every small business depends on computer technology. As a small business owner it is hard to keep up with the constant updating of software, hardware, and Web applications.

You can't afford to assume that your PCs, laptops, networks, and peripherals are operating adequately for your needs, but neither should you upgrade just for the sake of upgrading. Thousands of people regret purchasing bargain hardware that doesn't perform as promised, or using unproven software that crashes on a regular basis. Then there are the email accounts that attract only spam, and Web sites that frustrate and discourage customers.

Fortunately, there are now hundreds of network computer and IT consultants who specialize in working with small companies. In fact, the vast majority of them are entrepreneurs just like you!

An outside tech expert can become a vital extension of your business, almost like a trusted attorney or accountant. But, not just anyone with a little PC smarts will do. You'll want someone who does this full-time for you and other clients rather than a person who merely dabbles in computers on the side.

To find the right fit, develop a detailed list of your needs and

how you want the person to work, including part-time, on-call or on a project basis. Look for someone who understands your type of business. They should also be able to explain the work in plain English. so you or someone else in your business can learn how it all works.

Experience with businesses of your size is also important. Someone who works only with big companies may not be familiar with the best solutions for you. You should tap your independent tech guru for advice before making hardware or software purchases. A few minutes on the phone can prevent costly mistakes.

A good place to find IT consultants for your small business is the non-profit Independent Computer Consultants Association. Their Web site at www.icca.org offers a search feature to identify consultants by location or special skills. Note that a consultant need not be in your geographic area to benefit your firm. Depending on your needs, you may be able to work with someone entirely by phone and/or email.

To learn more about technology issues facing your small business, contact America's free and confidential source of small business mentoring and coaching.

The Fox Valley SCORE Chapter offers *confidential* counseling to small businesses, including start-ups. Affiliated with the U.S. Small Business Administration, SCORE has counselors available in eight locations in the counties and suburbs west of Chicago.

To sign up for a free appointment at the location closest to you, go to ScoreFoxValley.org.

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Meet with us to define your computer needs. We may be able to save you some missteps as your business advances to the next level of computer capability.

Sincerely,

The Counselors at SCORE

For evening hours, see Naperville.



Legal Corner

*Sponsored by
Poznak Law Firm, Ltd.*

Selling Overseas

Exporting offers immense opportunities to grow your business. Using foreign sales reps offers excellent access to overseas markets for businesses that are just starting to export. But what kind of sales representatives will work best for you -- agents, distributors or consignees? Here are the pros and cons of each.

[Details here](#)



February Offers a Full Range of Workshops

Take advantage of short, affordable workshops on **business start-up, planning, marketing, accounting, franchising** and many more, being held at College of DuPage in Lisle, McHenry Community College, Waubensee Community College in Aurora, Joliet Junior College, and Elgin Community College.

Choice of topics. Choice of locations.

FREE: Check out the **Open Forums** scheduled for February 4 and 18 in Lisle.

[Find a workshop that fits your needs.](#)