

Networking - A necessity for business success!

Being a Mentor is an important part of Paul Smart's life. Recently retired after a diverse and successful business career, Paul now has time to put something back into his local business community in Geelong. Paul is also involved in an honorary capacity with Geelong Chamber of Commerce.

"I often have small business owners tell me that they are in the office waiting for the phone to ring," Paul explains. "They wonder why no one is coming to their door. Part of running a business is about getting out in the world. Business owners need to put time and energy into three key components of their business: networking, marketing and their finances," he continues.

Paul's career began as an Industrial Chemist with Nightingale Chemicals and he was later employed by Kodak to establish a processing plant in Sydney. Over the years, he was transferred to Kodak UK then to Eastman Kodak in USA. After returning to Australia, he was appointed Director of Operations with FH Fauldings and then contracted to Compac Packaging in Melbourne.

It was not until 1991 that Paul purchased Snap Printing in Queen Street, Melbourne and began running a small business with a staff of 8. Over 5 years, the Centre became the third largest in Victoria and gave him the opportunity to come to grips with sales, marketing, cost control, cash flow, customer credit, and asset management on a small scale.

He established Snap Printing Geelong as a green-field site with no customer base, no identity as a brand and no history from which to build. The Centre was sold as a profitable entity with up-to-date technology, a broad range of products and a loyal customer base spread through the wider business community of greater Geelong.

"It was in Geelong that I got to see just how effective networking is to gaining and retaining customers," says Paul. "I didn't know a single person in the area. The community soon embraced me and my business gained attention and an established customer base. I now pass on this understanding to business owners who come to me looking for ways to build their business."

As a semi-retiree, Paul decided to remain in Geelong and offer his experience to the community and loves mentoring local business owners. "I get the same response from anyone who comes to me for mentoring. They are relieved to finally have someone to talk to about their concerns and plans. They all think they are the only one who is struggling on their own. I soon reassure them that 95% of the people I see feel exactly the same way."

"SBMS has launched TSBI to provide courses and activities including networking," Paul continues. "TSBI offers the opportunity for members to learn how to network. There are great offers across the TSBI website. It's the complete kit on how to run your business."