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Small Business Briefs

Washington Business Journal - by [Lisa Broadt](#)

Small business hardest hit by harsh economy

Small businesses suffer the effects of a harsh economy more than others, according to the Small Business Administration.

To survive, small businesses must actively address the challenges of bad times and not just try to hold on until things improve, says Cher Murphy, president of Cher Murphy PR LLC, a public relations agency with offices in Virginia and Miami.

"It's not enough to simply hang a sign that you are in business and sit back and wait for the masses to come through the door," she says.

Small businesses can take a number of steps to survive.

They can look for ways to cut some of their costs, including their energy use. They also should focus only on profitable enterprises. And they should not allow clients to fall behind in payments.

In addition, a positive attitude is important as businesses go through a difficult economic period.

Inspiring Gen Y workers is important for growth

Executives who want their companies to successfully evolve must motivate young professionals and show that they value them, according to a survey of recruiters by Internet site JobFox.

The work force's newest generation, known as Generation Y, will eventually become the largest population of workers since the baby boomers. Yet some corporate leaders contend that members of Generation Y, generally workers age 28 and younger, are the weakest performers among the four generations in the workplace today.

In its survey of more than 200 recruiters, Jobfox found that 63 percent think baby boomers are "great performers" but only 20 percent classified Generation Y as "great performers."

However, it is the corporate leaders, not Generation Y professionals, who need attitude adjustments, says Rob McGovern, chief executive officer of Jobfox Inc., which operates a Web site that matches job candidates and employers.

"Businesses must shed negative perceptions and learn new ways to incorporate Generation Y views into the work force," he says. "The companies that succeed over the next two decades will be the ones that can most inspire Generation Y."

McGovern says several factors motivate Generation Y employees:

- They work best when they can set their own hours because young workers covet flexible schedules.
- They require experiences that are cutting edge and seek companies that provide new learning experiences.
- They do not want to be treated as junior members. Raised to believe that everyone is special, they want to know that their work is special.
- They are loyal when they feel a part of company goals.

Don't get haunted by costume liabilities

Halloween is a time to infuse fun into the workplace, but employers should make sure the merriment does not move from playful to distasteful, according to Littler Mendelson PC, a labor and employment law firm.

Liabilities associated with Halloween costumes and celebrations are a true threat, especially in a workplace where young workers have different standards of appropriate behavior than older workers do.

To avoid issues, employers should set clear guidelines around the holiday, according to Littler Mendelson, a San Francisco firm with offices in the Washington area. Those guidelines include:

- Make costumes optional to avoid hostile workplace claims.

- Provide clear direction on appropriate office dress and behavior during Halloween.
- Advise employees to avoid overly revealing and politically charged costumes.

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