

THE NEED FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS TO BE COMMITTED TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

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Small businesses are the backbone of communities. Tennessee has 152,046 small businesses (Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, 2023). According to Lincoln Business Group (2022), Tennessee small businesses employ 1.1 million people. Today's everchanging marketplace and communities are requiring small business owners to remain vigilant in all aspects of business management. Factors requiring small business owners to constantly assess operating conditions are: changing demographics, increasing or decreasing of community population, changing regulations, industrial growth or reduction within a region, and available labor. The constant interplay of these factors is a major reason why small business ownership education is essential.

An economy is affected by how governments (federal, state, and local) determine, write, and enforce rules (Shaffer, Deller, & Marcouiller, 2004). These rules are known as policies and regulations. Political factors affecting small businesses include: partisan control, Small Business Administration and USDA Rural Business policies and loans; and government regulations. Government policies are enacted to provide consumer protection (financial and biological); foster fair competition; protect natural resources; and sustain a business-friendly community. Small business owners vigilant with maintaining working knowledge of relevant government and political issues pertaining to their trade or location are better able to prepare for various aspects of change regarding their operation, store, or service. Examples include: the banning of a material used by the company; required upgrades to the building; change in tax codes of what can be claimed as a business deduction; or the expansion infrastructure which may remove require the business to relocate or close temporarily.

It is essential small business owners develop a capacity to appreciate and implement technological advancements. Regardless of type, the most important aspect of a business as it relates to sustainment is being efficient. Good business owners place an emphasis on being innovative and recognizing innovations considered to be "game changers" within a given industry. A key to any business remaining open is ability and willingness to adapt.

Belonging to trade unions, chambers of commerce, and associations is an excellent way small business owners can receive information essential to the industry. Trade unions and associations usually provide education sessions pertaining to regulation updates, funding sources, equipment advancements, etc. It may also be a manner to receive CEUs required to maintain certifications and licenses.

Other areas concerning the need for small business owner education include succession planning; employee management; and risk management. Obviously, having a team consisting of an accountant, attorney, and insurance agent is a start. However, maintaining a relationship with your chamber of commerce, State Department of Economic and Community Development field reps, Extension specialist, and chamber of commerce staff will assist you greatly.



References

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