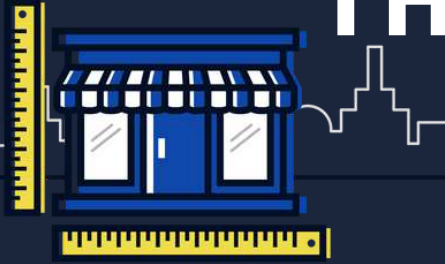


THE BUSINESS LEAD



FALL 2025

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

INCREASE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Having a business also means that you need to organize and promote events to publicize your offerings. Organizing an event or a workshop can be an exciting way to improve your relationship and engage with your current clients, plus find new clients.

However, it is also a time-consuming activity. Not only do you need to prepare the content and logistics for the event, but you also need to promote the event properly. Read more on Page 2 on how to successfully plan a workshop.

BY MICHELLE ELLINGSON
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To subscribe to the Business Lead Newsletter, contact City Hall at cityhall@caledoniamn.gov or call 507-725-3450

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HOW TO PLAN AND HOST A WORKSHOP

Can you think of any products or service you provide that could be turned into a live workshop? There's so many possibilities that you're sure to find the perfect fit for your niche. Follow the steps below for planning and hosting a workshop.

Know Your Audience—Think who your targeted audience will be and what your intended audience wants to learn about. Have customers mentioned anything specific that they wish to learn more about?

Outline Your Presentation—Write down all of your ideas on a sheet of paper of what topics would be a good fit to cover in a workshop and then outline your presentation plan. What supplies will be needed? Will handouts be provided?

Choose a Name— Choose a title that's clear and concise. Think about the keywords you'll be using in the description of your live workshop, and then mix and match them to see what you come up with. If you were teaching an Instagram workshop perhaps your keywords may be "Instagram", "influence", "growth", and "engagement". Use a combination of those words in your title.

Set a date—Make sure there is ample time around the date in your own schedule and keep in mind what seasons are optimal for your specific audience. For example, if you are planning a wedding related workshop for various vendors, you may wish to host it during their off-season.

Book the Venue—While you may find a beautiful venue that comfortably fits 100+ people, you don't need all that space if you're planning an intimate workshop for a dozen people. Find the space that is the right size and within your budget. If you're planning to host more events, you may want to secure additional dates.

Promote the Event—The most economical way to publicize your event is through online promotional posting especially on platforms that allow you to search for niche groups such as LinkedIn. Leveraging Twitter and Instagram as a platform is also a great option as it offers the option of using a special hashtag for your event. Local people can find your event simply by using the right hashtags. Naturally, your Facebook page, website and placing traditional ads in local newspapers are all great promotional tools as well.

source: convertkit.com



Workshop Ideas

Workshops provide a fun way for people to get together, learn, and grow, all while promoting your business.

Floral Business: Plan a houseplant workshop to include steps for propagation and repotting plants or plan a lesson for a specific plant species such as plants used in a terrarium.



Catering Business: Teach how to create a charcuterie board using a variety of meats, cheeses, nuts, and fruits. Partner with a **Winery** and educate your attendees on pairing wines with foods.



Bakery Business: Host a seasonal workshop on creating and assembling gingerbread houses over the holidays by providing kits and demonstrating how-to-steps.



Craft Supply Business: Plan a variety of workshops related to craft supplies for purchase from sewing, to scrapbooking, and cardmaking to knitting.



SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING IDEAS

There are countless ways to promote your small business, so it's important to identify and focus on the most effective tactics.

Marketing Planning: Research and identify your target market, decide how your business will stand out, and develop a plan.

*Revisit or start your market research—Market research is the collection and analysis of information about consumers, and competitors. If market research does not indicate a demand for the product or service, the proposed business will not likely be viable.

*Refine your target audience and niche—The key factors in determining market segments include geographic location/type, demographics such as age, sex, income, occupation and psychographics such as lifestyle, hobbies, and opinions. Every user of your product or service has needs, preferences, and behaviors; and they all factor into how you design your marketing mix and messaging to make the most impact.

*Write a unique selling proposition (USP)—The unique selling proposition, also called the unique selling point, is the marketing strategy of informing customers about how one's own brand or product is superior to its competitors.

Marketing Materials: Using promotional materials to distribute is a way to raise awareness of your business.

*Create or update your business cards so they stand out from the rest.

*Consider producing a leaflet or brochure.

*Build a website.

*Get creative with promotional products—swag like magnets, pens, notebooks, stress balls, etc.

Advertising: Advertising is a part of marketing that involves getting your message about your product or service to the market.

*Use a sidewalk sign to promote your specials.

*Rent a billboard.

*Take out an ad in your local newspaper or buy a spot on the radio.

source: constantcontact.com



BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Jacqueline Van Ravenhorst is an artist, photographer, and designer based in Caledonia and has extensive experience managing communication efforts for small and large businesses and organizations.

Jacque is very involved in community projects and has partnered with Mainspring, a nonprofit arts organization by designing and painting a mural on the side of the building where Mainspring is housed. A current project includes an additional mural that will be applied to the steeple of the building.

Not only is Jaque a talented artist, but she is a whiz with web design, and recently reworked the Caledonia Chamber of Commerce website to be more inviting, and easier to navigate through. Jacque can be reached at artbyjacqueline@gmail.com



HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR COMPETITIVE BUSINESS STRENGTHS

As a business owner, you're not alone, even if you own a one-person, homebased business, you also have your competition to pay attention to. You can develop a list of competitors by talking to customers and suppliers, checking with industry groups and reading trade journals. But it's not enough to simply name your competitors—you need to know their manner of operation, how they compete.

Does a competitor stress a selective, low-volume, high-margin business, or do they emphasize sales growth at any cost? Knowing this kind of information about competitors can help you identify their weaknesses as well as their names.

What makes you better?

Do you offer something obviously different and better than what's already available? Typically, this is called your competitive advantage, but it's not an overstatement to call it your company's reason for being.

Your competitive edge may lie in any of the your company's key distinctions, including cost, features, service, quality, distribution and so forth. Or it could be something totally different. The success of a retail convenience store located on an interstate highway, for instance, might depend almost entirely on how close it is to an exit ramp.

Compare what you have to offer to that of your competitors, including your online competitors. Look for your competitive edge without knocking or denigrating your competition—your goal is not to say they aren't good but that you are a better choice—and explain why.

To figure out your competitive advantage, start by asking yourself these two critical questions:

1. Why do people buy from me instead of my competitors? Think about this question in terms of product characteristics. Ask your customers why they buy from you. Ask noncustomers why they don't. Ask suppliers, colleagues and anybody you can find why they're choosing you over a competitor. Use online surveys, read reviews on places like Yelp or Angie's List, and get a feel for what people like and don't like about the places that do what you do, or are planning to do.
2. What makes me different and, I hope, better? Your competitive advantage isn't quite as important if your company is going to operate in the beginning stages of a new industry. When interest and sales in a new field are growing fast, you can survive and prosper even if you aren't clearly better than the rest. If, however, you plan to take market share away from established competitors in a mature industry, then competitive edge is all-important.

source entrepreneur.com

Old Buildings Renewed

The building located at 118 East Main Street displays the name Brimeyer and 1891, the year when it was built. Pierre Brimeyer was a tinsmith that made the decorative top and also the decorative tops of several other buildings downtown. Pierre and his brother John had purchased the T. H. Abbotts Iron Works in Caledonia.

In 1887 Pierre married Margaretta who came from Paris, France and had learned the milliner trade from her aunt Theresa Schummers of Caledonia. P. Brimeyer built this building as a combination home and millinery store. Margaretta established the business The Brimeyer Millinery Shop. When she died in 1906, Pierre carried on the millinery establishment until his death in 1913.

Their two daughters, Theresa and Mary Louise (Lucy), took over the business and continued until 1973! That year Pat Young opened a gift and book store with the name The Brass Banana. In 1977 Pat moved her business across the street to the Zimmerhagl building (Wired Rooster).

Ole Haugstad bought the Brimeyer building and established Ole's Barber Shop. In 1986 Ole converted the upstairs apartments into a single-family dwelling. Since 2018 David Wray has been the owner and done extensive remodeling of the upstairs living quarters and the downstairs, which is currently a yoga studio.



118 E. Main Street 1960



Upcoming Events

Bluff Country Collaborative Events: *BCC CTE Exploration Day-September 18 from 9:00am-2:30pm at the Caledonia High School. If your business would like to participate register online today! BCC Celebration & Summit: October 9 5:30-7:00pm Rushford-Peterson High School (1000 Pine Meadow Lane) Expect highlights of 8 years of work connecting students with businesses.*

Caledonia Forward Skills-Building Workshops: *Caledonia Forward invites you to save the following dates for the "Grow Your Own Business" workshop series. These three sessions, tentatively scheduled for October 15th, October 29th and November 12th will each focus on a different theme and stage of small business development. Watch for more details!*

Caledonia Forward Consultation Services: *FREE consultation services for businesses looking to expand their skill sets relevant to their business goals. Meet Caledonia Forward's E Navigator Dave Carlson at the Wired Rooster Coffee Shop from 8:30am to 10:30am on the following dates: 9/10, 9/17, 10/1, 10/8, 10/15, 10/22, 10/29, 11/5, 11/12, 12/3, 12/10, 12/17.*

Fall Fun Festival: *October 18. Join the Caledonia Public Library and Community Spirit Caledonia for a fun day of crafts, games, and activities from 10:00am-2:00pm at the City Auditorium 219 E. Main St. FREE EVENT (with a free will hotdog lunch)*

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Caledonia Business Trick or Treat–Friday, October 31 3:30–5:00pm. Watch for the invite to appear in your email in-box for sign up!

Caledonia Street Walk– In partnership with the Caledonia Chamber of Commerce Light Up Caledonia event planned for Thursday, November 20, Caledonia Forward is sponsoring a Caledonia Street Walk event from 5:00pm to 8:00pm where participating businesses will be open to invite the community to learn more about their business, the history of their building, and take part in sales, discounts, and specials. Business are encouraged to sign up to be listed on promotional posters, the city and chamber websites, and Facebook pages. In addition, the Street Walk and Light Up Caledonia will be featured on KQ98 radio What's Happening ads. Details for signing up will be sent out in early October.

Holiday Gift Guide and Punch Card–The Caledonia Chamber will once again be offering the opportunity to advertise in the 2025 Holiday Gift Guide. Punch cards for shoppers will be available with drawings for local business gift cards. Watch for more details.