



The Illinois Small Business Development Center Network

## WEEKLY CONNECTION

Entrepreneurship ~ Innovation ~ Technology

August 4, 2014

In Today's Weekly Connection:

- ✚ **Fake Yellow Page Scams Cost Small Business Owners \$Millions**
- ✚ **Program Successes of the Week – EPI Works & D.R. Sperry and Co.**
- ✚ **Resource of the Week – Small Business Reading List**
- ✚ **Neoserra Update – Success Stories**
- ✚ **Moves and News – 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Woman's Entrepreneurial Conference**
- ✚ **America's SBDC Network Connect**

### **Fake Yellow Page Scams Cost Small Business Owners \$Millions**

By Patrick Clark on businessweek.com, 7/28/14 - It doesn't take a lot to fool a hurried small business owner. Case in point: The Federal Trade Commission just announced a series of legal actions against three Montreal operations accused of talking U.S. small business owners into paying millions of dollars for local yellow page listings the merchants neither bought nor received.

A common version of the scam went like this: The crooks called small businesses (some nonprofits, churches, and local government agencies also fell victim) and asked to confirm the shop's name, address, and telephone number. Then the fraudsters call again to tell the business that they owed amounts as high as \$1,800. When the business owners protested, the crooks played back recordings of the earlier phone calls, doctoring recordings to make it sound like the merchant had agreed to pay.

It sounds crude, but plenty of business owners coughed up the cash. One group of scammers tricked thousands of victims out of at least \$4.9 million, according to a complaint filed by the FTC in U.S. District Court in Florida.

Directory listing scams aren't new. In 2012, an Illinois court ordered a group of companies operating out of Palma de Mallorca, Spain, to repay \$10 million to small businesses shaken down for payments for listings the merchants never agreed to buy. In that version of the scheme, crooks sent faxes bearing the "walking fingers" logo associated with local yellow pages. Merchants who returned the faxes were billed for \$1,000 and threatened with aggressive collection tactics.

By trading fax machines for tape recorders and audio editing, the scammers may have climbed up a rung on the ladder of low-tech schemers who prey on Main Street. They're not as sophisticated as the tin-foil bandits who clamber on the rooftops of convenience stores with rolls of aluminum wrap in an elaborate ploy to buy cigarettes with stolen credit cards. But they're way ahead of the crude criminals who simply call small business owners and ask for cash.

### **Program Successes of the Week – EPI Works and D.R. Sperry and Company**

"EpiWorks continues to grow, experiencing double digit growth over the past few years. We recently placed another new production tool online, are now increasing our workforce to support the added capacity, and expect strong growth to continue in the foreseeable future. In addition, we are just starting to increase our global presence, and become more focused on international trade. We are thankful we have Kathie (Cravens) and the (Illinois SBDC International Trade Center at Champaign County EDC) CUSBDC to assist us in achieving this goal.

EpiWorks traveled to the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain in March 2014 with OTI. Although it was too late to get on the mission and benefit from travel expense reimbursement, OTI made an exception and made space at the show and allowed EpiWorks to share space on the Illinois booth.

Participation provided greater exposure to major players in the industry, and insights into new and future trends in the industry. We have already submitted application to OTI for 2015 Barcelona show to enable EpiWorks to take full advantage of the overseas trade mission benefits.

EpiWorks exported only \$300,000 worth of products last year but expects exports to accelerate year by year. As EpiWorks looks to the future, international sales are expected to become a significant portion of overall sales. The company has retained 48 employees and added 2 full time employees."

### **D.R. Sperry and Company**

D.R. Sperry was founded in 1868 in the Chicago area. Since inception the company has manufactured filter presses, and has been the source of many filtration innovations. Priding itself on turnkey production, Sperry embellishes an In-House Design Engineering Department, a fully tooled machine/fabrication shop, research laboratory and a completely stocked filter media center to quickly appease the requirements of its customers.

Sperry filter presses are used in hundreds of applications including but not limited to industries such as Chemical Processing, Wastewater, Petrochemical, Mining and Environmental Cleanup. Any company that requires the separation of Liquids from Solids can benefit from Sperry products. For over 145 years, Sperry's R&D capabilities have produced new and innovative designs for a wide variety of products and have provided applications that continue to be used in the industry today.

Fifth generation owner, Mac Mignin, came to the IL SBDC at Waubensee last year looking for assistance in converting their AutoCad operations to Solidworks insofar as that they would be able to retain their competitive edge in the industry.

The SBDC sourced a Solidworks expert, and coordinated a program to train their personnel, as well as provide them with hands-on assistance in their facility. After the first round of training was complete, and Sperry had a chance to work with the Solidworks software, a second round of consulting was provided to review specific questions as they applied to design work in process.

"The integration of Solidworks into our Engineering Department has afforded our engineers the opportunity to design in 3-D, in real time, with an ease that I could have never imagined," stated H. John Schramer, Director of Engineering/Projects.

"Working with opportunities provided by the IL SBDC at Waubensee Community College, and their liaisons, has been a complete success story. We've increased our opportunities, competitiveness and overall design capabilities by embracing a technology that will continuously aide in our drive to be leaders in our industry."

D.R. Sperry is located at 623 Rathbone Ave, Aurora, IL. You can find out more about D.R. Sperry products and services at [www.drsperry.com](http://www.drsperry.com).

### **Resource of the Week – Small Business Reading List**

Open the link below to find a "Summer Reading List" of books recommended for entrepreneurs.

<http://www.business2community.com/small-business/2014-small-business-summer-reading-list-0935567#!bk7vYJ>

### **Neoserra Update – Success Stories**

Remember to enter your Success Stories into Neoserra under "Activity" and "Milestone." You must have the client agree to act as a Success Story because this information will be made public.

### **Moves and News**

The [Women's Business Development Center \(WBDC\) 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Entrepreneurial Woman's Conference](#) will be held on September 17<sup>th</sup> at McCormick Place West in Chicago. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to find more information about this outstanding event and details about the [28<sup>th</sup> Annual Award Winners](#) and links to the agenda and registration information.

### **America's SBDC Network Connect**

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see the July 31, 2014 edition of [America's SBDC Network Connect newsletter](#).

=====  
The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the DCEO Illinois SBDC Network to provide the service delivery partners with regular updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. You may send any information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to [Tom.Becker@illinois.gov](mailto:Tom.Becker@illinois.gov). Please feel free to forward this update to other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.  
=====



### **Celebrating 30 Years of Small Business Success**

