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Spotlight on Success – Centralia Title Company/Illinois Real Estate Services

In 1993, Darin Brandt founded Centralia Title Company when the former banker realized that an un-met need existed within his community. Centralia Title Company provides residential and commercial title insurance services. They strive to provide peace of mind to their clients by ensuring that their real estate investments are safe from fraudulent claims, liens and the legitimate claims of undisclosed parties.

Since 2006, the **Illinois Small Business Development Center at Kaskaskia College** has provided expansion help to the Salem, Illinois based firm. Mr. Brandt now operates in over ten communities and has a full time staff of 24 employees. **Steve Groner, Director of the Illinois SBDC at Kaskaskia College**, recalls one of the most rewarding projects: "When Mr. Brandt's company expanded into Sparta and Randolph County, we helped him develop a marketing plan that could become a template for future locations. Having a plan gave Darin and his team added confidence."

Previous expansions were primarily organic in nature and marketing was done by word-of-mouth. For Sparta, the **Illinois SBDC** provided business database information that turned into an effective mailing list. Invitations to a luncheon were designed and sent out to key business leaders, generating a good turnout. The new branch manager used the database for prospecting and sales calls. Sparta was the first time that Mr. Brandt's company had "leap-frogged" over a few counties and entered a totally new market and he worried about breaking into the local real estate/lender network. The luncheon and introductory presentation started things off on the right foot.

Mr. Brandt plans to utilize one of the Kaskaskia College business incubator locations to reach another new market in 2016, and has settled on a new name, Illinois Real Estate Services, to better reflect the regional aspects of his company.

SBDC's In The News – Illinois SBDC at Bradley University

Chad Stamper, the TIES advisor at the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Bradley University wrote an article entitled Innovation and Commercialization in the Feasibility Stage which appears in the [January 2016 issue of Peoria Magazine](#). In it he discusses the development of a new product by looking at its technical, market and economic feasibility. To see the full article and learn more go to: [Peoria Magazine](#) or <http://www.peoriamagazines.com/ibi/2016/jan/innovation-and-commercialization-feasibility-stage>

Also, Ross Miller, the Director of the Illinois SBDC at Bradley University appeared on local television to discuss the "Business of Art," a conference to help artists navigate the business world. You can view Ross' interview at:

<http://www.centralillinoisproud.com/good-day-central-illinois/the-business-of-art>

Build Your First Mobile App Webinar

The Illinois Small Business Development Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago is happy to invite your SBDC to invite clients and friends to participate in an upcoming webinar we have partnered with Strategic Systems International (SSI) to offer on the topic of building a mobile app. The registration system will ask each registrant to report "Where did you find out about the webinar?" and so we expect to be able to provide your SBDC with a list of individuals who found out about this event from your SBDC and you can then report these individuals attendees in an event you offered. We appreciate your willingness to share this information with your network and individuals who may be interested.

How To Build Your First Mobile App - Learn from experts about how to approach building a mobile application and explore various do it yourself or outsourcing options. This webinar is especially designed for the non-technical in mind. We will walk you through researching to storyboarding, performing user testing and steps to take post launch.

Presented by Humayun Latif of Strategic Systems International (SSI)

Thursday, Jan 28, 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Register free now at <http://bit.do/ILSBDCUIC-0128>

Please ask your clients and contacts to enter your SBDC name in the question "Where did you find out about the webinar?"

Maximizing Neoserra – January 15, 2016 Deadline

December 31, 2015 marked the end of Federal Fiscal Year 2015, the end of the 4th Quarter for Illinois SBDC Performance Year 2015, as well as the completion of 6 months for the Illinois Fiscal Year and the Illinois PTAC Program Year. It is vital that each center compile ALL of its outstanding client information and make sure it is **ALL entered into Neoserra by close of business (COB), Friday, January 15, 2016**. These are very important reporting periods for our State and Federal stakeholders. It is extremely important that all of the center performance information is entered into Neoserra.

SPECIAL NOTE: Please remember to change the status of your new business start clients from not-in-business to in-business client.

The information that needs to be entered into Neoserra ASAP includes all new client profiles and client advising activity, all outstanding business advisor notes, all client milestones and any outstanding economic impact information, the required narrative reports and success story profiles. Please be sure to follow up with your clients and secure any outstanding economic impact verifications and attributions to ensure you receive credit for your efforts. Also, please don't forget to enter all of your program costs for Jan-December 2015 into the Grantee Reporting system (GRS) as soon as possible. Thank you for giving this important notice your utmost attention.

Valued Resources – BBB Top Scams of 2015

Better Business Bureau's Top 10 Scams of 2015 - The Top 10 Scams of 2015 impacting consumers range from taxes and credit cards to home improvement and computers. Common to all of these scams reported to the BBB was the fact that theft is at the core of every one. Scammers wanted to steal either money or personal identity information. What varied was the way they attempted their thefts.

The Top 10 Scams of 2015 are listed below:

1. Tax Scam: You receive a phone call from someone who says they are with the IRS. They claim you owe money in back taxes and will be arrested or face legal consequences if you do not pay (usually by wire or prepaid debit card). The caller ID is spoofed to appear to be a government agency or the police.

2. Tech Support Scam: You are contacted by "technicians" claiming to have detected a virus or security threat on your computer and, for a fee, can log in and correct the problem remotely. These callers are actually hackers trying to steal money or sensitive computer passwords and/or damage computers with malicious software.

3. Lottery/Sweepstakes/Prizes Scam: You receive a call, letter, or email claiming you've won some type of prize. It may involve a lottery or a sweepstakes. In order to receive the prize, you are instructed to send a fee to cover expenses associated with delivery, processing, or insurance. The prize is not real; you should never have to pay money to claim a prize you have won.

4. Advance Fee Loan Scam: While searching for loan information, you see an enticing ad and click through to the website. You fill out an application and soon receive an email or phone call advising that you are approved for the loan, but you must first send a processing fee, security deposit or insurance. You pay the "fee," but never see the loan.

5. Fake Check/Money Order Scam: This can happen any time someone is paying you for goods or services (even when you are selling something online). You receive a check in the mail that is larger than the amount owed, and you are asked to deposit the check and wire the difference. The check is a fake and when it bounces, you're out the money.

6. Debt Collection Scam: You receive a phone call from someone claiming that you have an unpaid debt. You are threatened with garnishments, lawsuits, even jail time if you don't pay right now. The scammer will often use caller ID spoofing and pretend to be a government agency or law enforcement in order to further invoke fear.

7. Credit Card Scam: The scammer pretends to be from your bank or credit card issuer, and they claim that you are now eligible for a lower interest rate, or that they need to verify a recent transaction. The consumer provides the scammer with their credit card number and security code to "verify" their identity.

8. Home Improvement Scams: These can be as varied as the areas around your home that need fixing. Typically, the scammers are not established businesses in the area but still claim to be working on nearby homes. Often they attempt to have you pay a significant amount of money upfront. And then they never show up again as promised. You have lost the money and there's no way to contact them.

9. Government Grant Scam: You receive a phone call, email, or letter informing you that you've qualified for a government grant. In order to receive the grant, however, you are instructed to send money as a processing or delivery fee, usually by wire transfer or prepaid debit card.

10. Work from Home Scam: While looking for a job online, you answer an ad for making big bucks while working from home. The job may be stuffing envelopes, posting advertisements, or shipping packages. They often request an advance fee for their information and materials but no real opportunity to make money exists. You could also have your identity stolen when you fill out the employment forms, or even end up handling stolen merchandise.

"These scams continue because they are successful enough to make it worthwhile for these thieves to keep trying to con people out of money," says Bernas. "There is a science to scams, and it may surprise you to know that scammers use many of the same techniques as legitimate sales professionals. The difference, of course, is that their "product" is illegal and could cost you a fortune."

For more information on scams, visit www.bbb.org/chicago, like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or add us on [Pinterest](#).

Network News and Moves

Please see the note below from Joel Youngs, former director of the Illinois SBDC at Black Hawk College announcing his resignation from the position of president of the Illinois Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth Association (IESBGA) and his new position as the director of the SBDC at Eastern Iowa Community College:

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is with much regret that I need to inform you that I will no longer be with the Illinois SBDC at Black Hawk College as of Friday, January 8, 2016

Effective that day I am resigning from the position of IESBGA Coordinating Council President. I am currently working with Mark and Rod to smooth that transition.

I have accepted the position of SBDC Director at the Eastern Iowa Community College SBDC in Davenport, Iowa. My peer retired from that position unexpectedly on December 1 and I was lucky enough to be offered the job to replace her. Interestingly enough, that office is 1.5 miles closer to my home than my current office with Black Hawk College.

I have immensely enjoyed working and collaborating with each of you and wish you nothing but the best for your professional and personal lives.

I am and will continue to live in Illinois so if there is anything I can do in the future to make your SBDC continue to be successful please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Through the graciousness of the IA State Director and the Vice Chancellor of my new Community College, I will continue my work on the ASBDC Planning Committee so I will be seeing you in Orlando! Here is to continued Economic growth and vitality,

Sincerely,

Joel

The Illinois SBDC wishes Joel much success with his new position at the Iowa SBDC.

IESBGA News

The Illinois Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth Association (IESBGA) held a special meeting of the Coordinating Council to select a new President due to the resignation of Joel Youngs. Please join us in offering Huge Congratulations to Steve Groner who was elected the new President of IESBGA by the Council. Steve vacated his position as the Treasurer of IESBGA to take on his new leadership role. The IESBGA Coordinating Council then elected Priscilla Cordero, the director of the Illinois SBDC at GSU as the new treasurer. Huge Congratulations also go out to Priscilla for her new role as Treasurer. Special thanks to both for their service to the members of the Illinois SBDC Network.

America's SBDC Network Connect

The latest edition of the [America's SBDC Network Connect Newsletter](#) can be found by [CLICKING HERE](#). Check out the access to a number of resources available to your Illinois SBDC and also information about the upcoming winter meeting of the America's SBDC Network.

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The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** email is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and Illinois Department of Commerce Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology each Monday to members of the Illinois SBDC Network to provide our service delivery partners with current updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. Please send information for the email to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov and share this update with interested partners.



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Bruce Rauner, Governor

