



## 'I Will Make My Own Economy' – Businesses Get Tips for Recession

By Michael Ayala

"We're going to show you how to finish the race, no matter the economy," Joe Bonura, a national business and marketing consultant, told a crowd of 68 people at the St. Ignace Middle School Wednesday morning, June 24.

Mr. Bonura's seminar, "Thriving on the Challenge of a Slow Economy," offered advice and techniques to business owners on how to keep customers and attract new ones. He stressed creative thinking in marketing, persistence and determination to succeed, and superior customer service as keys to success.

Mr. Bonura stressed advertising is critically important. Sometimes business owners make the mistake of thinking potential customers already know what is offered at a particular business, when in reality, they need reminders. The advertisements must be eye-catching and unique, above all.

"If you're inside the box or outside the box, you're still looking at the box," he said, encouraging creative thinking in marketing a business or service to the community.

Mr. Bonura, who owned a successful advertising agency for 18 years before beginning his career as a national speaker and marketing coach, described an ad campaign that he had worked on in the past. His client was attempting to sell bath towels, soaps, and toiletries. Mr. Bonura went to a wrestling match and found the meanest-looking wrestler he could find and used him as a model for the company. The wrestler held up one of the store's towels with a dreamy smile on his face. The caption on the ad read, "I love pretty towels."

The ad campaign became a success for that business, Mr. Bonura said, because it was eye-catching and unusual.

"If the ad is not unique or notable, why look at it?" he asked.

Businesses should invest a percentage of their revenue in an advertising budget and stick with that percentage, Mr. Bonura advised. The percentage will remain the same, but as profits increase, so will the amount spent on advertising.

Advertising works, he said, whether it's in print or broadcast. It will bring customers through the door, and then it's up to the



It's the message, rather than the medium, that's important in communicating to customers, Joe Bonura said. While a \$1 bill and a \$20 bill look the same, the values differ because of the message printed there, he said, advising businesses that any advertising medium can be used effectively.

staff to make the sale and treat the customer right. Business owners who contend "advertising doesn't work" should take a hard look at their customer service practices. Some fall into the trap of thinking "I already know that," he said about the importance of good customer service -- but urged business people to question how they are putting that knowledge into practice.

Repetition in advertising will make a business more memorable, he said.

Business cards that salespeople hand out to potential customers should include a photograph of the person, he suggested, because customers want to buy from people they know, rather than a "faceless" name on a card. The business will be better remembered by the customer that way, he said.

Some business owners think

**"You always win when you trust the customers."**

— Joe Bonura, business and marketing consultant



At left: Dave Ramsay, operations manager of Star Line Hydro-Jet Ferry of St Ignace, cradles the shredded remains of his dollar bill after Joe Bonura used it as an example, saying poor customer service only wastes money. Following the illustration, Mr. Bonura replaced Mr. Ramsay's dollar.

and provide exceptional customer service to build long-term success. "Every time you mistreat customers, you're wasting money," Mr. Bonura said as he tore a dollar bill to pieces.

Treating local customers well, aggressively advertising, and becoming involved in the local community will enable businesses to compete against major corporations such as chain stores. Everyone will want to try out the new store in town, Mr. Bonura said, but they will eventually return to smaller local businesses if they have established themselves well within the community.

Smiling is one of the most

effective tools customer service tools everyone has at his disposal, Mr. Bonura said. Maintaining eye contact while speaking to a customer and being actively involved in the discussion is a key to success.

"If you make other people feel important, they'll make you important," he said.

Demonstrating trust in the customer is important, as well, Mr. Bonura said, giving the example of stores that use anti-theft devices, compared to customer-service giant Nordstrom department store, which does not. Even after the well publicized theft of an expensive fur coat from Nordstrom, the store chain chooses not to use the devices, demonstrating trust.

"You always win when you trust the customers," he said.

No matter what type of business a person is involved in, everyone is actually in the "problem solving business," he said.

Businesses need to identify the problems of their customers,

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## Youngsters Splash Into Lessons at St. Ignace Community Pool



A group of nine youth gathered at the community pool in St. Ignace Thursday, June 25, for swimming lessons between 10 a.m. and noon. Lifeguards and water safety instructors pictured (not in order) are

Donna Goldthorpe, Abigail Chambers, Kelsey Cryderman, and Alexa Thibault. The swimmers (in no particular order) are Skylar Dumas, Zachary Erskine, Nicholas Erskine, Sarah Doran, Ben Doran, Jordan Osmon, Katlyn Donajkowski, Angela Donajkowski, and Martin Donajkowski. Changes made to the swimming program include adding more certified lifeguards at the pool (at least two on duty at all lessons) and building improvements like roof repairs, deck resurfacing, and locker room repainting and refiling. Recreation Director Scott Marshall said every year, steps are taken to improve the community pool, and this year it's ready for residents to enjoy.

At right: Lifeguard and water safety instructor Donna Goldthorpe (left) shows eight-year-old Katlyn Donajkowski proper diving technique during swimming lessons Thursday, June 25, at the St. Ignace community pool. Lessons are offered from 10 a.m. to noon Monday through Thursday, and evening sessions will also be offered beginning July 27.



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