

Small Business – our last untapped economic engine

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This week, rather than answering a question, I would like to share with you a small business success – which results from your loyal readership. At the November, 2008 WCA APEX Awards ceremony, small business was repeatedly acknowledged for its role in the success of Westchester County.

Those of you who could not make it to the awards, you missed a great networking opportunity! The APEX event was attended by about 500 business people from all over Westchester County. I hope to see you there next year!

In the meantime, here are this year's award winners: Reader's Digest Association in the category of international business, Andi Gray (that's me!) in the entrepreneurial category, and Christopher Meyers of Houlihan/Lawrence in the Young Professional Category. Tom Hales, of Union State Bank, came back for a visit, having been an APEX award winner last year.

My deepest thanks go to all of our Ask Andi readership, and to the clients and employees of my company, Strategy Leaders. Your commitment to winning at The Game of Business has played a part in building a strong small business base in Westchester County. I consider my APEX award a tribute to all of you.

I'll use the rest of today's column to share with you my APEX Awards remarks, about the significance of small business.

"Thank you, Westchester County Association. And thank you to all of the small business owners with whom it has been my honor to work. It's your work that got us here.

"Those of you who know me, know I can't resist an opportunity to share a lesson. So, here goes. Listen up! I'm talking about our future!

"Small business owners are entrepreneurial and opportunistic. Your names are Ed, Cory, Bob, Susan, Reggie, Guilio, Ling, Rich, Nancy, Jiao, Murshed, Terell, Isabel, and yes, even sometimes Joe. You own manufacturing companies, service businesses, wholesale, retail, construction, IT, real estate, import, export . . . You name it, you're doing it.

"So what do small businesses have in common? 300. Each of you employs less than 300 workers. **50%.**

Together you **already** put 50% of our private sector workforce into jobs every day. **#1.** You are our #1 source of new jobs – and, ladies and gentlemen, do we ever need those jobs in these challenging times!

"What else do you have in common? You are passionate about what you do, and you are determined to succeed. You put your businesses on the line every day. You figure out how to pay your bills and you personally co-sign for your business loans.

"And at the end of the day, when you get ready to go home, you have made real profits not paper profits. Then you go home and volunteer for Little League, soccer, hockey, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and charity events. You form small business clubs where you help each other stay in The Game.

"All of this makes you **very important to our economy.** And, if we can get you the tools that you need to succeed now, you can be a major part of the toolkit that gets our economy back on track.

"Even more importantly, long term, small business is our last untapped economic engine. If we can teach you how to stay in The Game a little longer, make a little more money while you're in business, and exit more profitably when you're ready to get out, you have the potential to drive our economy forward for the **next 100 years. Big numbers folks! This is important!**

“All of this is why I am privileged and committed to continuing to get to know you and your businesses, individually and in groups, as we team up: marrying what you are already good at, with what we know how to do, as we teach you how to win at The Game of Business.

“In closing, I want to thank Dee Delbello, Westfair and all of the employees at the Business Journal for creating a voice for small business. And for backing Ask Andi.

“I want to thank NCCTV, New Castle Cable TV, for taking Ask Andi onto cable, and Dee Delbello, Bill Mooney of the WCA and Jerry Klein of Mahopac National Bank for helping us to get that project off the ground.

“And last, but never least, I tip my hat to the Westchester County Association. You honor my company, Strategy Leaders, our marketing brand, Ask Andi, our employees, and our clients – the people who make us great. And through this award you send a powerful message about the importance of small business to the present and future success of Westchester County. Thank you.”

Looking for a good book? Try *The Core Value Proposition: Capture the Power of Your Business Building Ideas* by Jack G. Hardy.

Business owners regularly turn to Ask Andi and Strategy Leaders for advice on how to grow profitable, successful companies. They find what they need time after time. Specific advice is available at www.AskAndiBlog.com. Ask Andi is also published weekly in the Westchester and Fairfield County Business Journals and Hudson Valley Business. Written by Strategy Leaders President, Andi Gray, the Ask Andi column is a rich source of advice for owners of established, privately held businesses.

If you are a business owner and you have a question or would like to discuss some aspect of your business, call [1.877.238.3535](tel:1.877.238.3535) or send an email to AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com.