

OPINION

EDITORIAL

Seminar pinpoints relation between ethics and success

We don't hear much about ethics in business these days except in the context of lack thereof. Last year in particular the news abounded with tales of corporate greed and dishonesty of unprecedented magnitude. It is refreshing and inspiring, therefore, to encounter an astute businessman who publicly touts such qualities as character, integrity, values, and principles as essential components to achieving success.

To be successful, an entrepreneur needs these leadership traits as much as he or she needs capital or a marketing plan, according to Bill Scheessele, the founder and CEO of Charlotte-based Mastering Business Development Inc. Scheessele gave one of the keynote presentations at the Coastal Entrepreneurial Council's Opportunity 2004 conference, held March 29-30 at the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort in Wrightsville Beach. He also conducted a breakout session at the conference. In both his keynote address and the workshop he stressed that the most successful businesses and individuals have a clearly defined mission to help others.

Of course, simultaneously, they have a goal of making money, but this is necessarily secondary to their mission. Indeed, achievement of financial goals is a natural outcome of fulfilling a longterm mission or short-term purpose of helping one's clients. Always keep your purpose ahead of your goals, Scheessele advised.

Scheessele avoids use of the terms sales and selling, preferring to describe the process which leads a buyer to purchase goods or services as business development. In his view, people who succeed at business development do so because they inspire trust. People buy from them, first and foremost, because they believe they are committed to helping them.

Scheessele has built his own success on helping other business people succeed. His company MBDi offers training programs that teach people how to think like leaders. Apparently part of that process is learning to think in an externally focused way. His basic level course consists of three very full days of intensive workshops preceded by a hefty amount of required reading. Level Two of the training is undoubtedly equally rigorous.

So much to say, that what Scheessele shared with attendees of Opportunity 2004 was certainly a mere taste of the insights to be gained from the training courses. One of those lessons seems to be that virtue isn't merely its own reward. That notion should encourage and validate those of you who already place principles above profit all the while wondering if they aren't mutually exclusive. Serving others will serve your interests in the end.