

SBI has impact on Greater Cincinnati businesses

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About two years ago, we told you about the Small Business Institute (SBI) Program here in the College of Business Administration at the University of Cincinnati. We thought you might be interested in an update on the Program, as well as the results of a recent SBI Impact Survey.

Some of you have graciously participated in the SBI Program; but for those who have not, here is a quick overview. The SBI program allows students to learn from local entrepreneurial and/or family-owned businesses and gives the students the opportunity to have a positive impact on the future of the business.

As part of my courses *Analysis of Small Business* or *Strategic Management*, students participate in a 10-week business consultation process. The students work in teams of two or three and spend about an hour a week for 10 weeks (six to eight meetings) consulting with the business owner to record a history of the firm, identify goals and objectives and discuss strategies to achieve the goals. At the end of the 10 weeks, the student team presents the business owner with a comprehensive business report or business plan, whichever is more appropriate to the firm's needs.

From Winter Quarter, 1993, to Winter Quarter, 1994, I directed 29 field case projects involving 120 undergraduate and graduate students in the SBI Program. Twenty-one of these field cases were at the undergraduate level and eight were at the MBA level.

Recently, the business owners who participated in the SBI Program during the past year were asked to complete a brief SBI Impact Survey. Twenty-one owners responded for a 72% response rate. I would like to share some of those results with you.

The respondents are retailers, service organizations, wholesalers and manufacturers. Their average number of full-time employees in 1993 was 18, with an average hourly wage of \$12.73. The average number of part-time employees in that same year was three, with an hourly wage of \$8.67. The average sales revenue in 1993 was \$2.1 million.

When asked about the SBI student teams' knowledge and expertise, 76% rated the SBI team as "above average" or "excellent." Also, 86% described their overall working relationship with the team as "above average" or "excellent."

In terms of direct impact, 81% indicated they made changes in their operations after receiving counseling from the SBI teams. Forty-three percent indicated they made a change in planning and strategy, while about one-third indicated they made changes in advertising/promotion and in the organization of the business. Businesses also made many changes in their sales and merchandising. Seventy-six percent indicated they made multiple changes in business operations as a result of the SBI experience.

Twenty out of 21 respondents indicated they would recommend the SBI Program to other business persons

(one was uncertain). They found that the students' unique perspective and training added value to their business. Here are some of the comments from the survey:

"Another person's perspective, particularly from young business students, gives valuable counterpoint to one's own vision;" "fresh approach, good resources available, current 'thinking';" "The assistance was invaluable and probably put us several months ahead of where I would have been on my own."

Clearly, the success of the SBI Program at the University of Cincinnati comes from the excellent participation of local businesses. They provide students with an unparalleled learning opportunity and the chance to apply the concepts they have studied. Students consistently rated the SBI field case experience as one of the strongest learning experiences they had while at the University of Cincinnati.

I would like to invite you to participate in the SBI Program. If you would like to have more information or to be considered for consultation during Autumn (September 21-December 4, 1994) or Winter (January 2 - March 10, 1995) Quarters, please call me, Chuck Matthews, at (513) 556-7120, or write me at the College of Business Administration, Department of Management, University of Cincinnati, PO Box 210165, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0165. 