

Tech deficiencies cost minority businesses

By Heather Faison
Special to Sentinel-Voice
As entrepreneurs commonly invest in and search for tools to boost profits, a study by the Urban Institute has revealed that many minority and female business owners are missing out on maximized profits because they are behind the technol-

ogy curve. The Urban Institute reported that underutilizing Internet tools is costing these businesses \$200 billion in earning potential each year. In response to the 2004 report, the U.S. Department of Congress' Minority Business Development Agency and Microsoft has created a

task force to launch Biz-Tech Connect, a Web portal developed especially for women and minority entrepreneurs. The task force is administered by the Information Technology Association of America. "Women-and minority-owned businesses are among the fastest growing compa-

nies in the U.S., and are doing incredible work in all sectors of our economy," said Reed Overfelt, general manager of Microsoft's mid-Atlantic small and medium business division. "However, many of these companies are not fully utilizing technology and are unaware of the potential impact it could have on their business success."

The website features business resources, including seminars and training courses hosted by business experts and articles on financial management, marketing

and advertising. The free service, which launched in May also gives users around the clock business news through Small Business TV provided by AT&T. Overfelt says that The Technology Partnership for Small Business Task Force hopes this online resource will make women- and minority-owned businesses more profitable and give business owners a balanced playing field.

"Having a Web presence and being able to take advantage of the strength of the

worldwide Web enables me to be able to compete with larger corporations," said Ginger Johnson, owner of New York-based Ginger Luxe.

When Johnson started marketing her line of beauty products she did not have a website and took orders mainly by phone. Frustrated by limited growth, Johnson created a website for her New York-based business. The website receives 4,000-5,000 visits per month and is her primary source of marketing and profit.

Your Horoscope Says...June 21-27

ARIES

Your suspicions will give you misleading information. Now is a time for trust. Base the trust on the fact that nothing is in danger. No matter what the outcome of current affairs, you are going to come out wiser and better.

Soul Affirmation: I release internal pressure by enjoying the beauties of the world around me.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 26, 34

TAURUS

Ponder your intimate thoughts when you feel that you would rather have stayed in bed. Treasure the remembered image of a friend and play the image over and over to uplift your sleepy spirit.

Soul Affirmation: I make a special effort to bond with old friends.

Lucky Numbers: 34, 36, 39

GEMINI

Give yourself a break this week. Coast! You might not feel it but you are on the top of a hill. You don't have to work to move forward. Just let your momentum carry you. Smile and things will get done. Spend some time on the phone taking care of social obligations and social diversions.

Soul Affirmation: I try to smile more often than usual this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 15, 20

CANCER

This week you're likely to notice that your relationship with your lover has been elevated into a strong friendship as well. Play up the friendship side this week. Don't feel inhibited when the two of you are alone. Act and speak freely. You will be pleasantly surprised at the reception your lover/pal gives you.

Soul Affirmation: I open myself up for a glad surprise.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 23, 45

LEO

It is true that the universe provides, but you are part of the universe, and so you have to be a provider for yourself this week. Willful activity is the key this week. Ego matters. Pursue it because you want it and are good enough to get it. Make the changes necessary to add dynamism and excitement to your body of affairs.

Soul Affirmation: This week I forgive myself for everything that has happened.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 34, 52

VIRGO

You definitely need to ease up on your work schedule and immerse yourself in some good quality quiet time. You have forgotten what it is like to relax, hiding behind all those seeming necessities. Let it go. Smell the roses. Take a stroll in a real or imaginary garden. Chill!

Soul Affirmation: There are other fish in the sea waiting for me.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 52, 54

LIBRA

Your popularity is at a personal peak this week. Be sure to pick and choose among your social engagements so that you gather the best from the most. Financial matters, along with family members, will stir your interests in feathering your nest. Your smart business sense will make the most of an unusual opportunity. In your personal life, let your softer emotions speak.

Soul Affirmation: I focus on long-range financial security this week.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 31, 42

SCORPIO

This week is better than last for financial goals. Put on the thinking cap. Think about money. There is a solution to money problems hidden in the way you conduct your home life. Make the adjustment. Reap the reward.

Soul Affirmation: I change who I am by changing where I am going.

Lucky Numbers: 21, 39, 43

SAGITTARIUS

Think about small stuff. Be petty. Know that details are important. Look not at the bigger picture. Go to the trenches. Get fine points taken care of. Step-by-step movement will help with the grand designs that you are seeking to manifest.

Soul Affirmation: I remain adaptable so I can deal with changing circumstances.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 35, 45

CAPRICORN

Think hard about the nontraditional ideas that you have been percolating. Speak up. There are others that may be thinking the same thing but don't have the same courage to say it. You have more in common with the people you work with than you think. There is strength in numbers.

Soul Affirmation: I let my friendships guide my way.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 40, 41

AQUARIUS

Others need you. Be a great listener this week. Teach, but don't preach. Family members need a vision of the big picture. That's easy for you to give, but use charm to give it. Be a cheer-giver. Expect nothing in return.

Soul Affirmation: When I give thanks for what I have, I lose all sense of what is missing.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 32, 35

PISCES

It is amazing how a big-hearted person like you can button down to the detailed work when you've got the big picture still projecting over and over in your mind. Both the big picture and the details are important to you this week. Concentrate on both at the same time.

Soul Affirmation: Cooperation with others is the key to success for me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 10, 48

Democrats

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any type of situation," Lambert said, noting that many people didn't understand his reasons for supporting Allen.

"Some saw it differently," he said, speaking of the voter backlash.

Political analysts said the election should be a warning to politicians.

"It's a lesson to all incumbents that just because you've been there for decades, you can't do what you want and still be loved by the voters," said political analyst Larry J. Sabato who heads the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia.

"What Sen. Lambert did was beyond the pale," Sabato continued. "A quiet endorsement with your name on a list is one thing.

But to campaign for a man [Sen. Allen] who is enormously unpopular in the African-American community, and then appear with another man, [President] George Bush, who is even more unpopular in the African-American community, is just plain stupid."

Dr. W. Avon Drake, an associate professor on leave from Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Government and Public Affairs.

Drake said Lambert's reason for endorsing Allen "was so infantile that it was enough to anger voters," adding that in despite of Lambert's long tenure, the "fiasco" warranted his loss in the election.

Bonnie V. Winston writes for the Richmond Free Press.

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