

CONNECTICUT CONNECTIONS

Comprehensive Small Business Training...

So much more than a business plan!

By Deb Gabinelle

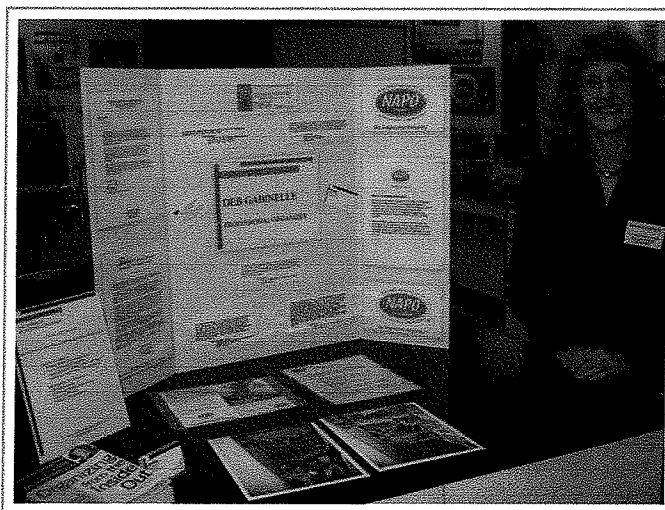
InSightful Solutions

Have you written a business plan for your organizing business? If you have, then you already know the value that a business plan provides. If you haven't, I strongly urge you to enroll in the *Comprehensive Small Business Training (CSBT) Program* at the Entrepreneurial Center (EC) at the University of Hartford. Having just completed a 42-page business plan, I can tell you that the entire experience was very worthwhile and provided me with so much *more* than just a business plan!

After going to my first NAPO CT meeting in January and meeting seasoned organizers, I realized I had a lot of work to do before I could start my own organizing business. At a minimum, I needed to learn more about the industry, identify my target customer, develop an effective marketing plan and define operational and financial goals for my business.

With these goals in mind, I signed up for the CSBT Program at the EC. The EC is a program designed to help Con-

necticut individuals achieve financial independence through self-employment. The program brochure promises "everything you need to know to start and run your own business, practical experience in-



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searching your market and industry, developing a marketing strategy, managing the business operations, evaluating personal and business finances" and "writing a 3-year business plan with financial projections." Wow! Just what I needed!

Like many entrepreneurs before me, including NAPO CT members Faith Manierre, Liz Talbot, JoAnne Grabinski and Anita Taylor, I had the opportunity *and privilege* of taking classes taught by highly successful business professionals. Program instructors guided us through a *process* of critically evaluating our busi-

ness ideas, assessing the challenges and opportunities business owners face and developing comprehensive marketing and financial plans. Along the way, they taught us about insurance, accounting, legal is-

ssues, taxes, networking, public relations, website development, market research and more. EC Director Jean Blake-Jackson described the 16-week process as a "metamorphosis" as we changed from students into entrepreneurs.

Our "metamorphosis" culminated with the Business Showcase. On June 28, we showcased our new businesses and celebrated our entry into the world of small

business ownership. We were congratulated by a very prestigious group of business professionals including Rob Simmons, Business Advocate for Connecticut; John Loban, CT Development Authority; Harland Henry, CT Secretary of State's Office, and Hugh Curley, U.S. Small Business Administration.

CSBT gave me so much *more* than just a business plan! CSBT gave me insight into the world of the small business owner and helped me to clarify my goals for my professional organizing business.