



# SPD Gazette

Week of November 27, 2006  
Issue 12

## Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is the process of **looking at many kinds of information about a target group or community**. For example, for geographic communities, a needs assessment includes a review of demographic/census data, in addition to other information gained through surveys of the population.

**ASBDC requires that SBDC programs:**

***Identify and segment customers, markets and key stakeholders; determine requirements, expectations and preferences for each; build relationships; and determine satisfaction.***

This week, our focus is key customer requirements – how do we determine what SBDC clients, stakeholders, and partners need and how do we respond to their needs?

This is one of the questions you might hear from the accreditation team. Here are a few more:

- How are the **needs** of SBDC's current and potential customers **likely to change**?
- What are SBDC's customers **likely to want and expect in the future**?
- What are the current and future expectations of your **competitor's customers**?
- How do you use information to **predict SBDC's customers'** future needs?
- How do you know SBDC's customers **are satisfied with services**?

As you probably know, a systematic process for **gathering customer requirements and expectations data and other information is essential to answering the questions posed above**. The process requires listening and learning. SBDC learns from analyzing information collected through **surveys, focus groups, Web-based data, and meetings with**

**clients.** SBDC also uses **listening posts** to collect information. Some examples of listening posts are advisory board meetings, meetings with colleagues, community forums, business and other local association meetings and similar activities. The ideal needs assessment uses a combination of information from many different sources, collected through various information-gathering methods.

**How do we know if SBDC clients are satisfied?** Internally, SBDC routinely sends evaluations to clients to ask them to rate our counseling service. We also ask clients to complete evaluations after participating in SBDC training events. In addition, James Chrisman conducts an external survey of SBDC clients every other year. SBDC uses the information collected in these surveys to determine the level of customer satisfaction.

**Why does SBDC need to conduct regular needs assessment activities?** There are several answers. Our mission statement says we are committed to provide the best business advisement and information. In order to do that, we have to know what our clients need now and what they will need as their businesses grow.

## What's New This Week

### » Marketing

The Director of the **Brockport SBDC** conducts regular presentations during branch manager and commercial loan officer meetings at HSBC, M&T, First Niagara, Bank of Castile and other banks to communicate SBDC program updates and activities.

### » Program Development: Products and Services

The Director of the **Corning SBDC** met with a manufacturing consultant to identify topics for workshops focusing on utilizing technology to address “speed to market” issues, efficiency and profitability.

The **Brockport SBDC** partners with various area libraries to provide workshops and seminars in library facilities. Partners include the Rochester Downtown library as well as the libraries in Brockport, Fairport, Victor, Ogden and Canandaigua.

### » Special Projects

The Director of the **Mid-Hudson SBDC** is actively participating in a Fed/State/Latino Small Business Organization. The organization will develop a bilingual directory/guide on bilingual services/products available to the Latino small business community in the region/state. The organization plans to combine resources, and with input from the Latino small business organizations, develop an essential Fed/State bilingual small business guide. The Hispanic Business & Professional Association has offered to take the lead in developing, printing and disseminating the directory/guide to the Latino Small Business community. The SBDC Director volunteered to be the primary point of contact for Spanish-speaking individuals throughout NYS seeking assistance from the SBDC.

In 2003, the **New York SBDC** was contacted by the [Signage Foundation for Communication Excellence](#) (Portland, OR), which was seeking a partner through

A **Canton SBDC** advisor spoke to Hermon-DeKalb Central School seniors in Government and Economics classes. Students were provided with an entrepreneurial skills quiz prior to the advisor's visit. The advisor reviewed the quiz answers with students, relating them to the skills and knowledge required for successful small business ownership. The advisor also discussed SBDC services, the importance of small business in the economy, business planning, and financing.

## » Sponsors, Host Institutions, Partners and Alliances

The **Stony Brook SBDC** participated in the first annual "How to Build Your Business Conference" event held at the Suffolk County Corporate Training Center. The event featured speakers from Empire State Development, NYS Office of General Services, Community Development Corporation of Long Island, Long Island Development Corporation, US Small Business Administration, and the SBDC. More than 50 attendees participated in the program.

The **Corning SBDC** and the **SBA in Elmira** co-sponsored a workshop for Veterans that featured speakers from the Bath VA Medical Center, the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs, The Chemung County Department of Veterans Affairs, SCORE, the NYS Department of Labor Veterans Office, the Regional Economic Development and Energy Corporation (REDEC), the Southern Tier Planning and Development Board, and the Chemung Canal Trust Company.

The **Brockport SBDC** co-sponsors *Intro to Entrepreneurship* workshops with Rochester Works. The workshop series was initiated in August 2006; 3 sessions have been held between August and October. The program helps to prepare unemployed individuals in their consideration of entrepreneurship as an income producing option.

whom their materials about the benefits afforded by effective on-premise signage for businesses could be communicated to the small business sector. SBDC agreed to research, write, design & distribute a handbook on signage for use by SBDCs and other SBA business advisement programs across the nation, as well as to existing sign companies, city & town planning boards, small businesses, and other parties. The book distilled hundreds of pages of existing research relating to the effectiveness of signage into an easily readable guide to inform small business owners and improve their interactions with sign companies.

In April 2004, the book *What's Your Signage?* was released at the International Sign Association's annual SignExpo in Orlando, FL. Of an initial print run of 10,000 copies, **over 8,600 have been sold or donated to the aforementioned parties**. Feedback from the industry was positive, and the book won two separate awards for excellence from New York- and nationally-based library organizations. As a result, the International Sign Association (ISA) approached the SBDC in early 2005 to create a web-based version of the book. The website would also serve as an electronic means whereby a visiting small business user could create a profile of his/her own business, and then have that profile e-mailed to any of the 20 ISA sign manufacturers nearest them. The [website](#) was unveiled in the fall of 2006, and will be promoted heavily throughout the ASBDC- and ISA-member communities.

## » Professional Development & Staff Retention

The **Canton SBDC** Director attended a web conference on "New Methods for Multicasting Video and Audio Content". The web conference covered a range of topics including marketing, how to shoot video & record audio, RSS feeds, podcasts, and vodcasts.

## » Technology

The **Brockport SBDC** actively participates in a nine-county organization known as WIRED which has received a \$15 million grant from the US DOL to develop and promote technology programs/businesses and related jobs over the next 3 years.

A librarian from the **Research Network** attended the New York State Data Center Affiliates meeting in Saratoga on October 23-25, 2006. The primary topics were the American Community Survey, Labor Force Statistics, and plans for the 2010 Census.

## Do You Have a Comment About the SPD Gazette?

Is there a topic you would like to see in the Gazette? Send your comments to [mary.hoffman@nyssbdc.org](mailto:mary.hoffman@nyssbdc.org).

## About the Gazette

The SPD Gazette is a brief newsletter distributed via email and posted on the Internal Web Site. It will feature a column to be titled, *What's New This Week*, in which the network will share best practices in strategic objectives. A series of articles in the Gazette will explain the program's statewide approach to strategic objectives in six key areas:

- Marketing
- Professional Development and Certification
- Program Development: Products and Services
- Special Projects
- Strategic Partners and Alliances
- Technology, Information and Communication

For more information or answers to your questions, call Tom Morley at 914-375-2107 or email him at [SPD@Mercy.edu](mailto:SPD@Mercy.edu)

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