



Learn, Develop, Grow – Free Online and Offline Small Business Training Opportunities

By Caron Beesley

Running a business is a fulfilling endeavour, but it often leaves very little room for self-development and on-the-job training.

In fact, finding the time to develop and hone your business skills is probably not top of your list of priorities, but it should be.

One of the best, and simplest, pieces of advice I've been given as a business owner is to make a habit of attending at least one relevant webinar or online learning course per month. Whether its tips on how to do a better job of marketing my business or staying on top of the changes to tax law – free online classes are a great way to keep your finger on the pulse of your industry and business.

But where do you start, and how do you find free courses that are relevant to your needs?

Check Out the SBA Learning Center

Research proves that small businesses want *fast* access to *relevant* and *trusted* information that can help them make informed decisions about starting, running and growing their businesses. With a goal of providing small business owners with fingertip access to free, helpful and reliable training opportunities, in 2012, SBA launched its [Learning Center](#).

Since going live, the site has grown to feature nearly 150 self-paced online courses, videos and web chats hosted by industry and government experts. Topics include starting and managing a business, financing, marketing, taxes, government contracting and more.

Content is filtered by topic, so no matter the stage of your business, or the kind of insight you need, you can quickly get answers.

For example, if you're wondering how SBA loan programs work or just need a primer in accounting or small business taxes, check out these self-paced [online financing courses](#) and [short videos](#). Or explore tips from the pros in these archived [SBA Web Chats](#).

New courses are added all the time, including [how to establish values for your business](#) and [what is intellectual property and how do you protect your ideas?](#)

More Trusted Online Training Options

The Learning Center isn't the only hub of learning. Here are a few other useful resources to explore:

- [SBA YouTube Channel](#) – Here you'll find SBA's archived [how-to webinars](#) from its regular webinar schedule as well as online courses from National Small Business Week. Sign up for the SBA Weekly Updates (at the top right of this page) to learn about upcoming webinars.
- [SCORE](#) – Sponsored by the SBA, SCORE is a small business mentoring organization and you'll find many interesting [webinars](#) on their calendar featuring real-life business use cases and practical tips. SCORE also offers a free [email advice line](#). Simply type in your question and a SCORE mentor will contact you directly to see how they can assist. This is a great option for getting answers to those one-off questions that perplex you.
- [BusinessUSA](#) – Bookmark BusinessUSA.gov's [events](#) page. This site filters online and in-person small business webinars and trade events that are taking place across the country. It also offers access to online training seminars from the IRS and other agencies.

Get Training and Help Offline

Your personal and business development doesn't have to stop at your desktop. SBA also offers in-person training, counselling and access to business development specialists through its [SBA District Offices](#). In fact, SBA's Local Assistance programs also include targeted help for [women business owners](#), [veterans](#) and businesses interested in [exporting](#).

Local [Small Business Development Centers](#) are located in hundreds of cities and towns across the U.S. and are another valuable source of counselling and in-person seminars.

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About the Author

Caron Beesley is the founding partner of April Marketing, a writer, and marketing communications consultant. Caron works with the US SBA.gov team to promote essential US government resources that help entrepreneurs and small business owners to start-up, to grow and to succeed. She has been in the marketing business for 15 years, starting her career as an assistant with a London graphic studio. Caron progressed to hold senior marketing roles with several global and US-based corporations with a particular emphasis on information technology and Internet services marketing.

Read Caron's blog - April Marketing Musings at: <http://april-marketing.blogspot.com/> for insightful strategic and tactical business marketing tips.

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