



profiles

Stand Out: Responding to Social Causes Boosts Sails

By Diana Ransom
Anthony Sandberg, founder of sailing school OCSC Sailing, answers our questions.

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Small-business owners, what are you doing to stand out from the crowd? Each week, we focus on an entrepreneur who has lessons to share that we think will resonate with other small-business owners.

Anthony Sandberg, founder of sailing school OCSC Sailing in Berkeley, Calif., answers our questions:

What are you doing to stand out from the crowd?

We're using social networking and marketing tools to attach our brand to social and environmentally-conscious causes. For example, we hold social and recreational gatherings every week, and we host monthly "salons" where people get together to engage in group discussions. We also donate a percentage of our net annual sales and other resources to social causes and groups that preserve and restore the environment.

What's the best part about running your own business?

I still enjoy teaching, and I'm glad I'm in a position to set the tone of the school's curriculum. I love sharing with others the joy and responsibility of sailing. That includes protecting the water, air and land that make the sport possible.

What's the biggest challenge of running your own business?

Paying attention to the details. Financial statements, insurance, sales and expenses have always been harder for a "concept" person like me. However, I've hired well. I now have a detail-oriented business management team that provides

me the freedom to be creative, to remain the face of the company and to connect with groups, clients and colleagues.

What's the biggest hurdle you've overcome?

When I first started the business, I was an expert on sailing but didn't have any business training. To overcome this knowledge gap, I went out of my way to learn as much about business and financial management as possible. I read books, took night classes in accounting and finance and reached out to knowledgeable friends.

What's the biggest mistake you've made?

Not assembling a professional board of advisors sooner. In the early days, I had the attitude that things only counted if I did them on my own. Today, I know better. Having a sounding board could have helped us avoid mistakes like hanging on to problem employees too long and assuming that if we were busy we were making money.

Name: Anthony Sandberg
Business: OCSC Sailing, a sailing training center.
Industry: Education
Location: Berkeley, Calif.
Year founded: 1979
Number of employees: 75
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What's the best business advice you can offer?

Be open to new types of technology, networking and marketing. Whether it's Facebook, Ning or Plaxo, I make it a point to learn what my clients and employees are playing with.

Also, chase your passion, not a paycheck. I always say that when I retire, I'll start a sailing school in Berkeley.

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