

business trends

Women Make Big Strides With Small Businesses

(NAPSA)—A growing number of American women mean business. According to the U.S. Census, between 1992 and 1997 the number of businesses owned by women rose by 16 percent.

Research also indicates women comprise the fastest growing population of entrepreneurs, many of whom open small businesses.

However, small business start-ups can find it difficult to get the funding they need. Often, one of the best sources of funding for women in business can often be found right around the corner—through community banks.

Community banks have become a viable alternative for small commercial loans. For these lenders, the emphasis is on building the local economy and giving local businesses a chance to compete.

Many women business owners choose to work with local banks for a number of reasons:

- Local banks offer small loans. Women are generally budget conscious and, as a result, tend to look for less start up capital than their male counterparts. Many community banks offer small loans that are in line with the needs of small enterprises.

- Community banks have comparable services to those available at larger institutions—at competitive rates geared to help businesses succeed.

Today's entrepreneurs are looking for maximum services for their investment. With the available technology, small banks can leverage a wide range of products that may not have been accessible just a few years ago.



Community bankers focus on building the local economy and giving local businesses a chance to compete.

In many instances, they can provide these services at a lower cost, passing the savings on to their clients.

- The community bank business philosophy centers around building relationships. Loan officers in community banks are trained to work clients through the application process. They also have the ability to make individualized loan packages designed to meet the unique needs of each customer.

These qualities can often make a community banker a valuable advisor to a small business owner.

To learn more or to find a community bank in your area, contact the Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) at 888-500-5538 or visit www.icba.org.