

Open For Business: 10 Things Your Community Needs

Key concepts

- Know what visiting businesspeople want
- Visit successful communities to see what works
- Market your business amenities vigorously

1

World Class Office Space - Visit a successful office park to see what works (Hint: it's the amenities). The steel-sided warehouse out by the interstate won't do it. Rehab a downtown building for upscale small office spaces to get people downtown again.

2

Great Coffee - A great coffee shop, with terrific coffee, an upscale ambiance, and a private meeting room are key requirements of work at home businesspeople, who need a place to meet clients, have a light lunch, or just "get out of the office" to do some work.

3

A Hot Breakfast - Communities need a clean, well-lit place to get a quick, hot breakfast. Businesspeople travel, and not everyone wants to eat donuts and biscuits at the free breakfast buffet at the local motel. A lot of business gets done at breakfast, and the buffet room in the motel is not conducive to that.

4

Lunch and Dinner - Business lunches and dinners are also important. Clients do come to the community to visit businesspeople, and that means the community needs an upscale restaurant for more formal business lunches and dinners. Just one good restaurant in a community makes all the difference to businesspeople.

5

The Right Newspapers - Business visitors want more news that one can get out of the local paper. The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and at least one "big city" paper should be available in easy to find locations, like the coffee shop or the breakfast eatery.

6

Copy Services - Copying and printing services are the lifeblood of "just in time" Knowledge Economy businesses. The value of being able to walk into a Kinko's and get things printed right from a CD or a laptop is invaluable. Does your community have a local copying/printing store that offers these services and is easy to find?

7

WiFi Public Hotspot - Public WiFi access is critical. Visiting businesspeople want to be able to check their email, catch up on news from the Web, and take care of business via the Internet. Can a visitor easily find a hotspot in your community? Is there a place to sit down and work?

8

A Good Place to Stay - A good place to stay is also important. A B&B is fine if the town is too small to support a hotel, but the B&B owners need to know about the needs of businesspeople. Rooms should have a phone (for privacy and dial out Internet access), and a desk is essential--too many B&B rooms have no place to sit and work.

9

Affordable Broadband - This is easy and inexpensive to do. The library can be a great partner, as people who do not have access at home can visit the library to check their email. Shouldn't everyone have an address in cyberspace?

10

A Community Web Portal - A great community Web portal with up to date local news and information (e.g. where to eat, where to find a hotspot, where to find copy services, where to buy a newspaper) is a vital economic development tool. It telegraphs to businesspeople that the community is progressive and "connected."

Tips for success

- High quality office space wired for broadband is absolutely essential.
- Help local businesses learn what kinds of services are available and in demand in larger communities.
- Use economic development funds to create small business grants to get the amenities you need to compete globally.

