

Springs woman's grant yields trip, marketing tips

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THE GAZETTE

To engage customers, offer contests and prizes.

That was one of the marketing messages Becky Anderson came away with from a free, two-day business seminar in Dallas. The Colorado Springs woman was one of 95 small-business owners from across the nation who attended the seminar after being awarded the Holiday Giving Grant from Sam's Club and SCORE in December.

The award came with a \$1,000 Sam's Club gift card and training seminars from SCORE, which trains and mentors people in business plans, marketing and other aspects of opening and operating a business. Anderson owns Earth Cures, which designs, manufactures and distributes herbal remedies for adults, children and some animals. She opened her business in February 2012.

Several speakers at the Dallas seminar focused on the use of the Internet and social media to drive up sales, Anderson said. One speaker stressed using people's competitive nature and their desire for "free" things to attract customers.

"He said you should offer different games and incentives," Anderson said, "and people will be drawn and attracted to that instead of educational information."

Anderson employed that lesson as soon as she returned; she held a contest on Facebook that challenged fans to guess her new product, herbal chocolate, before it was released. The contest, she said, generated a fair amount of response.

Among other lessons Anderson learned at the seminar in late January:

- Feed the spiders.

Spiders is the term used to describe the way Google and other search engines find websites. Anderson said people should update their websites and blogs at least three times a week to attract the spiders.

"You need to find clever ways to name your company," she said, "or put special words in front of your company name to get those spiders to find you."

- The company's website is usually more important than the number of Facebook "likes." While people can follow a company's progress and products on Facebook, a company's website is where people order products.

"I don't always see those who have 'liked' me on Facebook signing up for my rewards program or ordering items from me," Anderson said.

- Use Facebook to push people to your website with monthly drawings, gift certificates, other giveaways or incentives. But don't link your website to Facebook, which can encourage people to leave without ordering products.

"You don't want them to go somewhere else once they are there (on the website)," one speaker told Anderson.

Another speaker, however, disagreed, saying the Facebook link should be included on a business's website.

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Springs woman's

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