Small-business guru records OPT show

Eyes & Ears

Eric Olson

What do you get when you cross a commercial banker and a plumber?

Cash flow.

This riddle came to me as I sat on an Ozarks Public Television set watching small-business consultant Ellen Rohr talk about making more money. On my left was Oakstar Bank President Jim Bracht, and on my right was Benjamin Franklin Plumbing owner/franchisee John Nicholson.

How appropriate, then, to hear Rohr, owner of Bare Bones Biz, stress the importance of cash flow in running a business.

Rohr, who's also a regular Springfield Business Journal columnist, was producing a program called, "Is There a Business in You?" The show, which airs on OPT four times beginning March 1, sets out to help viewers determine if they are cut out for business ownership and to equip them with start-up tools. It also doubles as an OPT fund-raiser: Rohr and OPT are packaging the DVD and other Rohr original materials for sale with different OPT pledge levels.

Naturally, Springfield Business Journal Publisher Dianne Elizabeth Osis jumped on board with the program and became a sponsor, along with Watts Radiant, Nextar Network and Bracht's Oakstar Bank. During a segment break, I asked Bracht why the bank chose to become a sponsor.

"I'm just gambling," he replied. "We're a business bank; our job is to make our clients more successful. That ties into what Ellen is doing."

'Is There a Business in You?'

Ellen Rohr's business program will run in March on Ozarks Public Television.

- 7 p.m. March 1
- 8:30 a.m. March 11
- Noon March 13
- 9:30 p.m. March 16

Guest of honor

Rohr brought in guests from Arizona, Indiana, Minnesota and Texas, including clients who gave testimonials, as well as her mother and other family.

But the guest of honor was an elderly lady from San Diego named Jackie Moran. What made Moran so special? She owned Foxy John's coffee shop, where Rohr spent formidable college years working.

Although it was just a coffee shop, Moran ran a tight ship. And she took her business seriously – from the dress code to customer service to keeping the books. Rohr later discovered that this small-business owner was hugely influencial to her career.

"It's amazing to think that I had a little to do with Ellen's success," Moran said after the show. "All I tried to do was my job. I never felt that I had that much of an influence." And there it was – a big lesson among many taught that day. You never know who is watching or to whom you are teaching a lesson – whether it's right or wrong – in business and in life.

© SBJ photo by ERIC OLSON

Consultant Ellen Rohr, left, says her former employer, Jackie Moran, was an inspiration.

A natural

OPT's nine-member crew and Rohr operated seamlessly. Sure there were the tongue-tied bloopers and rough segment transitions, but Rohr, already a polished public speaker, may have a future in this TV gig.

There I was in the last of three rows, sitting among nearly 30 invited guests, while she was under the lights and scrutiny of multiple cameras trying to follow a script without sounding rehearsed.

Studio audience members were participants, editors, clients and supporters.

Shortly after the cameras stopped rolling, I congratulated Rohr and told her it was my first time on a TV set like that, and she replied, "Me, too." Incredible.

That's what makes Rohr's consulting pitch so convincing. She's in the same boat as the people to which she's preaching; she's doing all she can to win in this game of business, too.

Eric Olson is SBJ editor. He can be reached at eolson@sbj.net.