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"Every Home. Every Week"

## Small Business Resources Abound

BY ANTONIA R. NEDDER

Sherborn resident Patt Steiner has had years of business experience. She has served as a senior executive for over twenty years for various companies. Most recently, Steiner was Vice President of Corporate Quality for Delphi Technology. She also had the opportunity to serve as a guest speaker for NASA, working with Mission Control in quality assurance. Now, Steiner's focus is on small business.

She is an accredited executive associate for the Institute for Independent Business. The Institute is a not-for-profit organization based in the UK, which provides resources to its associates. These resources allow associates to provide services to qualifying businesses at reduced rates. There are over 2000 Institute associates worldwide. According to Steiner, the Institute "makes the job of helping individual business owners very quick and easy." "They offer a breadth and depth of expertise in just about any area," she explains.



Sherborn resident Patt Steiner is accredited with the Institute for Independent Business. She has lived in Sherborn for thirteen years.

### SMALL BUSINESS

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The Institute requires that Steiner provide a certain amount of free assessments to small businesses each month. For a business that is in need of help or guidance, the free service can be of great benefit. "I provide the best advice and guidance I possibly can and point them toward solutions that would be suitable to them," says Steiner. For businesses that want to hire Steiner to follow through to the next step, the resources of the Institute allow for reduced pricing.

Tasks that Steiner might help with include the formation of business plans, planning for expansion or general problem solving. She uses the example of a baker, who might make the best cakes but who has only just recently bought a bakery. She would provide advice on how to run a bakery business.

According to Steiner, there are many resources that are available to small businesses which people may not be aware of. For example, a Massachusetts state grant is available for any small business in the manufacturing field, which provides \$5000 to bring in advisors to help with company growth. Organizations such as Business Networking International, or BNI, can provide a much needed referral system for businesses. The Institute for Independent Business, with which Steiner is affiliated, can potentially help with any issue facing a small business.

According to Steiner, the Institute recognizes that the world of small business can be lonely, and Institute associates are there to provide needed expertise or advice.

According to the Institute's definition, a small business is a business of at least 3 employees, or as many as 255 employees. Steiner's company, VentureSphere, serves businesses that fall into that category, but she has also helped sole proprietors and larger companies.

As Steiner explains, people have experts to help them with all aspects of life, including health or real estate. She, and those like her, can serve as the "expert" to help with business. "People are so glad to have this help," she explains. "I want them to know that they don't have to do it alone. There are so many people in the same position that they are in."