

READY FOR BATTLE

Business owner promotes boot camp to empower women entrepreneurs

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After being in business herself for almost a decade and attending a host of seminars and workshops, Susan Ratliff said she wanted to help other women business owners and decided to start her own event.

"One of the experiences I've had is going to a lot of seminars where people were trying to sell me something," said Ratliff.

Other times, Ratliff said she would listen to entertaining speakers and then realize that she didn't have any valuable information or tips to take with her once the seminar was over.

As the founder and chief executive of Exhibit Experts in Phoenix, Ratliff said small companies such as hers "were kind of lost in the middle. I wanted to support micro-businesses — companies with under 10 employees."

That prompted her decision to create the Women Entrepreneurs Small Business Boot Camp. The goal is to offer hands-on practical information in a format accessible to women, filled with real people talking about real-world experiences.

"The reason why I made it a boot camp is that I wanted to supply practical, tactical tools that would help women tackle their business problems," Ratliff said.

When Eileen Proctor went to the first boot camp held three years ago as an attendee, she didn't know she had a problem.

As the founder and chief executive of It's a Ruff Life Dog Day Care, "I already had a successful business. But I was energized beyond belief with all the possibilities. One of the things the boot camp does is empower women to know what is available and what is possible."

After the camp, Proctor started Top Dog Business Boosters, a marketing and training company that focuses on micro-businesses and entrepreneurs.

"What we need is to not just hear information, but hear it from people who have done it and have had success with it. That's something that I appreciated the first year," Proctor said.

Like Proctor, Ratliff had been a business owner before. First, as a real estate agent and then as the owner of a home-based children's book operation.

A divorce and a young son quickly put her back in the business world where she worked for an exhibit company before starting her own firm in 1994. It wasn't always easy for Ratliff, and that is what prompted her to host the seminar, she said.

"That's why I have nine workshop presenters on marketing, sales, leadership and technology. It's ammunition that's going to help them do battle in business," Ratliff said.

The camp also will feature 40 exhibitors, two keynote speakers and a panel of sales experts.

"This is not a chick day. This is high-powered tactics and inspiration," Proctor said.

More than 250 women business owners are expected to attend the third annual event, to be held Jan. 20, at Chaparral Suites and Resort, 5001 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale.



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Women Entrepreneurs Business Boot Camp:
www.womensbusinessbootcamp.com

Susan Ratliff, center, is the founder of the Women Entrepreneurs Small Business Boot Camp, slated to be held Jan. 20 at the Chaparral Suites and Resort in Scottsdale. The event is aimed at helping women start and grow their emerging businesses. This is the third year for the event, which features panel discussions, exhibits and keynote speakers.

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