

RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE TEACHING TEAM

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E-Business: An Introductory Course

PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT FOR 2008 AND 2009

COURSE STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPATION*

In the fall of 2008 and the spring of 2009, 46 people attended E-business classes conducted by the Louisiana State and Southern University Agricultural Centers.

Five workshops were taught using a 1-1/2 day format in these parishes: Franklin, Lincoln, Pointe Coupee, St. Landry and West Carroll. The workshops were organized into three modules: **[1] Introduction to E-commerce, [2] Options for Gaining a Web Presence; and [3] Marketing Your Web Presence.** Participants used a computer for hands-on training. Registration was \$50.

Class participant characteristics revealed variation in their knowledge of e-commerce:

- Participants had Web sites but lacked traffic to their sites.
- Participants had Web sites but had limited knowledge of how to manage a site.
- Participants wanted to expand their business to the Web but did not know how.
- Participants wanted to create a first time business online but were not sure of options.
- 64 percent of participants had a B.S. or M.S. degree from college.

EVALUATION RESULTS

At the conclusion of these workshops, participants ranked their level of understanding before and after the training using a scale from 1 to 4 with 1 being poor and 4 being good.

Question:	Before:	After:	Percent
How do businesses use Web sites to accomplish different goals (e.g. create company value, marketing)?	2.2	3.6	64%
What makes a quality Web site?	2.2	3.7	68%
What are some Web site features visitors like?	2.3	3.5	52%
How to search the internet effectively?	2.8	3.9	39%
Options for gaining a web presence	1.7	3.4	100%
How to help search engines find my Web site.	1.5	2.7	80%

Participants significantly increased their knowledge of e-commerce. The greatest percentage gain in knowledge was for **Module 2: Options for Gaining a Web Presence.** Also, participants enhanced their ability to use search engines (80 percent), understood better what makes a quality Web site (68 percent) and learned how businesses use Web options to create company value (64 percent). Additionally, 97 percent of participants indicated they were "satisfied" to "very satisfied" with the overall course.

SUMMARY

Rural entrepreneurs in the Louisiana Delta are benefiting from these courses. Additional comments from participants indicated interest in specific topics. As a result, the following courses will be offered in northeast Louisiana in 2009 and 2010: **E-Business: An Introductory Course, Blogging for Business and How to Sell on eBay.**

*This course was also taught to 44 entrepreneurs in the LSU Mobile Classroom. A total of 90 entrepreneurs were trained in 2008/2009.