

Business COK To Debut



The Business College of Knowledge will be presented in grower-friendly terms in a comfortable setting. The first offering of the courses will be at the Michigan Greenhouse Growers Expo, Nov. 9-10.

by ERIK RUNKLE

SINCE 1998, researchers and extension educators have developed and presented a series of courses for greenhouse growers called the Floriculture College of Knowledge. The series of 12 courses contains information focused on improving their greenhouse crop production knowledge and skills. These courses have been delivered throughout Michigan and in Ohio to more than 425 participants from 21 states and four countries.

This program continues to be successful and demand for the courses continues to be strong. However, information on business management has increasingly become a limitation for many greenhouse operations. Managers and owners have been seeking information on how to better manage their businesses as profit margins continue to erode for many companies.

To address this need, a team of Michigan State University faculty and Extension educators in horticulture and agricultural economics is developing a series of four business and management modules for greenhouse owners and managers. This new track of four, four-

hour courses will follow a format similar to the highly successful Floriculture College of Knowledge.

Registrants will receive course notes, handouts and books that can be taken back to the workplace for future reference. Each participant that successfully completes an exam or project will receive a certificate of completion for each module. Registration cost is \$225 for each course and includes all course materials and refreshments.

These workshops are specifically developed for greenhouse and nursery owners and managers. The titles and brief descriptions of each course follow. These courses will be offered for the first time at the Michigan Greenhouse Growers Expo in Lansing, Michigan Nov. 9-10. Enrollment in all four modules is strongly encouraged, but not required.

Managing Employees In Horticulture

This course will discuss how to hire, train, motivate, reward and discipline employees to strengthen your horticultural company's workforce. Developed and presented by Vera Bitsch (Department of Agricultural Economics), you'll learn how to train employees to become reliable and independent performers and how to build employee commitment and provide helpful feedback. In addition, wages and benefits, overcoming conflicts and suitable discipline and dismissal processes will be discussed.

Marketing Of Ornamentals

Marketing may be one of the last parts of the business strategy ornamental plant growers develop, but it should be among the first. In this workshop developed by Bridget Behe, (Departments of Horticulture and Agricultural Economics),

you will discuss how marketing encompasses:

1) Identifying the types of products that will be offered for sale.

2) Identifying the kinds of customers who may want or need those products.

3) How the product offerings will be communicated

to the potential consumers.

Discover how to realize profit using a customer-focused, effective marketing strategy that addresses needs with products and services offered.

Financial Management For Horticultural Businesses

This module will give you a better understanding of how to manage your business in ornamentals. You'll learn from Roger Betz, MSU Extension farm management agent, how to develop and use accurate net worth and income statements and the differences between taxable income and true income for your business. You will develop methods to help determine each product's contribution to overhead. The factors needed to determine total economic cost of production of ornamentals will be identified and discussed.

Strategic Planning For Horticultural Companies

In this module, you will learn how to

Building on the success of the Floriculture College of Knowledge, MSU researchers have tailored floriculture-specific business courses to fill an obvious void.

EDUCATION

COLLEGE OF KNOWLEDGE

analyze both your external economic climate (such as market trends, influence of competitors and regulatory changes) and your internal business operation (such as vision and mission, management and financial capacities, facilities, and production methods).

In addition, you will identify opportunities and threats to the business, elucidate a desired long-range position for your company, and set goals needed to reach that position. This course is developed and presented by Van Varner, MSU Extension management agent. GG

About the author: Erik Runkle is assistant professor and floriculture Extension specialist at Michigan State University. Development of the Business Floriculture College of Knowledge is partially funded by Project GREEN, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and MSU Extension's Area of Expertise Teams.

Enroll Now In The Business College Of Knowledge

For registration information, please visit the Floriculture College of Knowledge Web site at www.hrt.msu.edu/cok.htm; or contact Sandy Allen at 517-355-5191 ext. 1339 or e-mail allens@msu.edu.