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Business, Dancing and an Evening on the Row

Last Saturday, Pearson Air Museum and Pearson Field hosted many of the area's prominent business leaders, philanthropists and enthusiasts on what was one of the finest evenings of the summer for "Dancing with the Local Stars."

Clearly this event has to be one of the most unique and enjoyable fundraisers in the community. Complete disclosures on the table, yours truly was in fact a participant in the evening's events, but more on that later.

What I really want to highlight here is the business principles at play. Let's look first at the marketing of the event. Keeping in mind the four P's of marketing, the Fort Vancouver National Trust, whose Board of Directors is populated with key local business leaders, have a Product like no other in the community – an airfield in use longer than any other in the nation and a Museum that so engagingly chronicles its rich history.

Then we have another "P" – Place – again a one of a kind situation. Located on the campus of the National Historic Site, it begs for history buffs and aviation buffs, young and old, to visit.

Third on the marketing list, Promotion begins with the event itself. Unique among many other nonprofit fundraisers in the greater metropolitan area, the Trust hits all the right points. The fact that an event which began as a "Hangar Dance" is itself the promotion component is absolute genius. Take a group of involved and dedicated business folks in the community, convince them to dance in front of their co-workers, community associates and family (a dance, I might add, they've likely never danced before) then give them a moniker of "local star." I know of no one who could do this as comfortably and convincingly as Kim Hash, Director of Programs and Donor Relations for the Trust.

Last of the four P's of marketing is Price – which for this event takes on multiple forms. For those attending, admission ranged from \$20 for a walk-up ticket for those who wanted to watch and mingle to \$43.75 per seat for a reserved table with catered dinner. Local Stars included Battle Ground Mayor Mike Ciraulo; Susan Courtney of Courtney Consulting; Tamara Fuller, NAI Norris Beggs & Simpson; Lisa Lowe, Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt; George Middleton, Limoges Investment Management; Terry Murphy, Design Showroom Inc; Tommy Owens, Tommy O's – and me.

Who better than well-connected business people to go out and market not only the event

but the fundraising as well? After all, who would decline the opportunity to support a “Local Star”? Whether or not donors attended the event they could still support their favorite star by voting with their dollars.

Many attendees had never been to the museum before and certainly weren’t aware of the rich local history it represents. Finally, to put over 500 people in the museum for an event raising over \$72,000 is a commendable feat in good times. To accomplish such a feat amid the worst recession in 40 years, with over 15 percent more money raised this year than last year, is simply great business.

And without a doubt, local business was the heart of it, with local business associates, vendors and customers coming out to support the event. Hats off to the Trust and Pearson Air Museum – both nonprofits that understand business.

When you see Susan Courtney, be certain to congratulate her for being this year’s “Local Star” winner for raising the most money – so much so that reports had her still making solicitation calls the day after the event to collect on pledges that hadn’t been paid yet.

[Click here for photos of the Local Star dancers](#)

An evening on the Row

This Tuesday evening was another shining moment for small business, as well as another indication that even if the recession may not be over, the local community is certainly done with it.

The seven chamber members with offices on Officers Row hosted this month’s Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce “Business After Hours” event as a progressive affair. Awakening Tuesday morning to gray skies and soggy lawns around VBJ’s offices we were more than a bit anxious that the event would be a washout. Luckily, those doubts proved ill advised as the skies cleared and the event begun on one of the finest evenings of the summer. Over 225 chamber members and guests enjoyed a stroll along the Row as they visited each of the co-hosts and enjoyed appetizers from chamber member caterers. The evening concluded with door prizes drawn at the VBJ.

Thanks go out to our fellow hosts for the evening: Rob Pool of Arcadia Investment Advisors, Mike Westby of Westby & Associates, Suzy Taylor of the Restaurant at the Historic Reserve, Bruce Wilson and Karen Laksamana of Formations Design Group, Ronnie Noize of Soho Marketing Guru and Elson Strahan and his crew at the Fort Vancouver National Trust. Special thanks to Eliza Lane of the Trust who provided guests with rides up and down the row in “Trusty” the mini-bus.

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