

Release Date: February 1, 2002
Release Number: 02-08

Contact: Bob Borden, (415) 744-1961

San Jose Spa TAPs into Free Technology Consulting

New SBA program unique to Bay Area, gives the 'have nots' a chance

SAN JOSE - Gloria Maciel is a busy woman. She's on the phone taking reservations for customers who want to use her La Concha Inn & Spa in Willow Glen. Others on site wait in line to do the same.

Business is good for her and the firm's 17 employees, admits Maciel, who has plans to expand La Concha into a day spa paired with a small hotel/inn on a nearby parcel of land.

Maciel has profitably operated La Concha for eight years, initially as a hair salon until adding spa body treatments for her customers a few years ago. With revenue approaching \$800,000 in 2001, business has only been marginally affected by the economic downturn. But business could be better and Maciel is taking advantage of a new program to give her an edge on the competition.

Maciel is the first business owner in San Jose to utilize the services of the Technology Advisory Program (TAP), a free service that provides technology consulting for small businesses located in the Bay Area.

TAP's director, Andrea Peiro, says information technology can be invaluable to small business owners who want to reduce the time required to manage operations and improve the effectiveness of business development and sales activities.

There are four key components of TAP:

- Education to build awareness of technologies available to improve the operations of small business.
- Individual audits to assess the appropriateness of the technology deployed and utilized by small business.
- Technology management consulting services to determine how small businesses can utilize technology to improve their operations.
- Support to small businesses throughout the implementation of their information technology plans.

TAP consultants observed La Concha Spa operations and offered Maciel several suggestions, ranging from a comprehensive reorganization of the spa's front-office systems to upgrading two desktop computer systems so one can be dedicated solely to accounting while the other is to be used only for reservations. A suggested laptop computer would be used for office work, marketing tasks, and as a fallback system for the reservation system. The consultants also offered suggestions to improve La Concha's Internet site.

Maciel was impressed with TAP and the written technology adoption plan they provided her. "You work here every day and think you know your business but it's easy to lose site of the big picture," she said. "It's easier for an outsider to come and look at your business with a clear, open mind. TAP's recommendations make sense to me."

Potential TAP clients include businesses that make no use of information technology – a small restaurant or a “mom and pop” corner grocery – to small service businesses such as retail outlets, small construction firms or manufacturing outfits that may have never felt the need to change the way they do business.

“I’ve worked with many small businesses the past four years and I know how they think and operate. I also know the technology advisory program can work for them,” says Peiro, a former Italian naval officer with a background in computer science who’s been involved with a number of computer and software firms in Silicon Valley. “To be competitive and have a realistic possibility to succeed today, small businesses must overcome the divide that separates the technology ‘haves’ from the ‘have nots.’ There are ever-changing rules in the economy and adaptability is a key attribute for survival.”

#

For more information on the Technology Advisory Program (TAP), contact Andrea Peiro at (408) 494-0212 or via e-mail at: andrea@sbdctap.com. The TAP Website is: www.sbdctap.com