



Business Walks Post Evaluation Summary

February 25, 2016

AdvantageHOPE, District of Hope, Community Futures, and the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training undertook the inaugural business walk in Hope, British Columbia on February 25, 2016.

The Business Walks program is intended to assist stakeholders in understanding the challenges facing local businesses while also recognizing the success stories inherent in the community. The purpose of the spring 2016 walk was to create a baseline of data and refine our tactics for future walks. It is AdvantageHOPE's intention to join stakeholders each fall to conduct a business walk. This will allow us to speak beyond anecdotal evidence of success when providing information to prospective investors. It will also help our stakeholders to better address the specific needs of the business community and measure the success of targeted programs annually.

Our volunteers reached 79 businesses in spring 2016. For future walks, we will endeavor to add more volunteers and have more time in order to survey more businesses. Volunteers noted that, overall, business owners/managers were appreciative of the visit and had a lot of ideas and questions.

The survey consisted of eight questions with an option to provide additional comments.

Question One

Please rate the current state of your business (over the past year).

The overall response was positive, with over half (53%) citing that their business was doing well or increasing over the previous year. 35% noted that their business was doing fair/steady while only 11% rated their business as slow/declining.



Question Two

What do you like MOST about doing business in the area?

When asked what they liked most about doing business in Hope, 52% of respondents noted 'community/lifestyle.' 38% enjoyed their clientele while 20% cited 'other.' Other reasons included meeting people, affordability of living, high traffic throughout the year, and location within the province.

The remainder of the respondents noted the cost of doing business (14%), having a business-friendly local government (6%), and the availability of labour (3%) as the main reasons for doing business in Hope.

Question Three

What are the biggest challenges facing your business?

This question allowed businesses to choose one or more applicable challenges. The majority of businesses chose two or more options.

Not surprisingly, the seasonality of business (41%) was the most cited challenge facing businesses in Hope. Property taxes and other operating costs (30%), finding and keeping employees (30%), and a lack of customers (29%) were also cited as major challenges. Other challenges facing businesses are financing, marketing, property costs (for purchase and rental), lack of way-finding signage downtown, outside forces (international discounters such as Expedia and the cost of food), and District business policies.

Question Four What can be done to help your business thrive?

This open-ended question elicited a variety of responses, though the most prevalent were: buy local campaigns, increase focus on destination tourism, the need to attract more families to move to Hope, and the need for improved support from the District of Hope for new and local businesses.

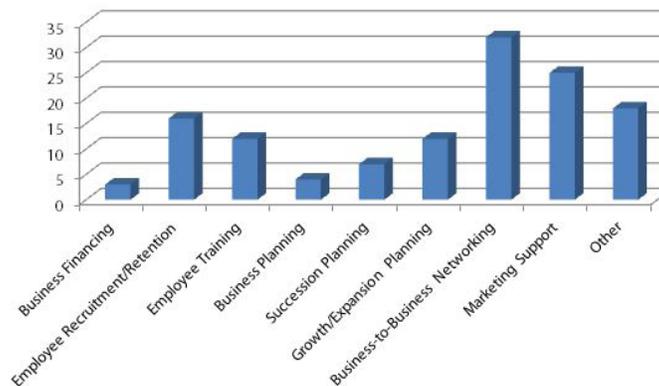
The need to control business licenses to maintain a competitive business climate, targeted marketing at affluent traveler groups (e.g. cyclists), improved commercial space, more industry, overall marketing of Hope to the outside world, more advertising opportunities within the community for small businesses, business-to-business networking, and improved commercial space were all cited by multiple businesses as necessary for helping their business thrive.

Question Five What specific information or resources would you like to have access to locally?

Again, this question allowed respondents to choose one or more responses. Business-to-business networking (41%), marketing support (including more opportunity for advertising), and employee recruitment and retention were the most common needs.

Employee training and growth/expansion planning also scored high among businesses. Perhaps surprisingly, succession planning (9%), business planning (5%), and business financing (3%) were not cited as important information for businesses to have access to locally.

Question #5



Question Six What is the number of employees (full-time) including yourself in summer?

The majority of businesses we visited were owner/operator; however, 14% of businesses reported as having ten or more full-time employees over the summer. 22% reported as having between five and ten while the greater majority (64%) had less than five.

While we did not track the number of part-time employees, some businesses offered that information. For example, at least one business reported as having one full-time employee and up to 8 part-time employees.

Question Seven What is the number of employees (full-time) including yourself in winter?

Predictably, the number of full-time employees in winter was less than in all categories in summer. Only 11% reported as having ten or more, 15% reported as having between five and ten, and 74% had less than five.

Question Eight: On a scale of 1 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely), how likely are you to recommend Hope as a place to do business?

The Net Promoter Score is a common metric used in business today. It is a simple question wherein respondents are asked how likely they are to recommend something, on a scale of 0 - 10. Respondents are then categorized as promoters (score 9 – 10), neutral (score 7 – 8) and detractors (score 0 – 6).

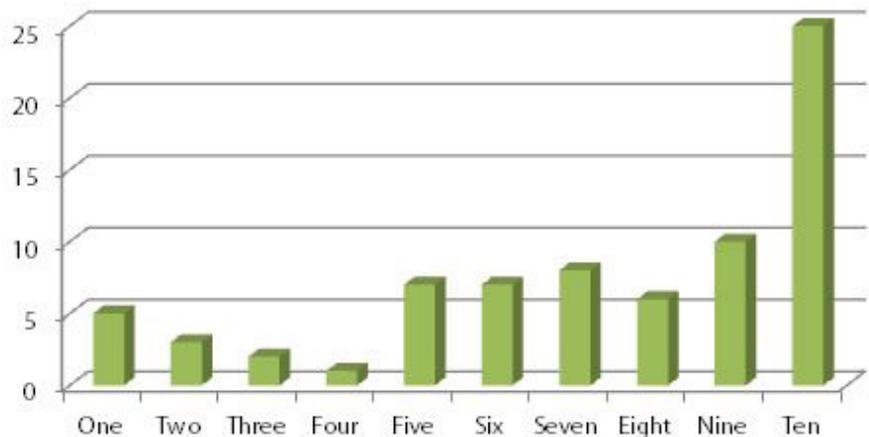
The Net Promoter Score is calculated as the percentage of promoters minus the percentage of detractors, and can range from -100 to +100.

Of businesses we surveyed, 44% of respondents identified as promoters and 31% as detractors. This resulted in an overall Net Promoter Score of 13.

Final Comments

The common theme among the final open-ended comments were the need for a buy-local campaign and more assistance from the District of Hope in supporting a business-friendly climate. The desire for increased advertising opportunities and more avenues for cross-promotion were also cited in the final comments.

Question #8



Thank you to all the volunteers and businesses who participated in the inaugural business walk. We will see you again in the fall.

