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LIBA Local Business Expo focuses on using available services

By [LISA HORNING](#) | January 21, 2019 1:00 pm

The Louisville Independent Business Alliance will host its annual [Louisville Local Business Expo](#) Tuesday afternoon at the Mellwood Arts Center, and this year, it will offer free individual learning consultations.

“I feel like resources are probably better coordinated than they have been in years past, at least locally,” said Jennifer Rubenstein, the LIBA director. “A lot of these agencies are more in touch with each other and trying not to overlap and duplicate and reach more people.”

The atmosphere of small-business ownership is strong and now is a great time to start a business, Rubenstein said.

The National Federation of Independent Businesses’ [December report](#) states that while the trend of owner optimism is moving upward, there are still challenges.



Jennifer Rubenstein | Courtesy of LIBA

“Optimism among small business owners continues to push record highs, but they need workers to generate more sales, provide services, and complete projects,” NFIB’s President and CEO Juanita D. Duggan said in the report. “Two of every three of these new jobs are historically created by the small business half of the economy, so it will be Main Street that will continue to drive economic growth.”

The report said that actual hiring strengthened to the highest reading in six months, job openings are at record highs and plans to create jobs are down only three percentage points from August’s record high.

LIBA hasn’t seen an increase in small businesses or membership lately, Rubenstein said.

“We decided to focus on the members we have as opposed to recruiting new members until we feel great that we’re handling membership engagement at our best with such a large group,” she said. “I don’t know that I’d say there’s increased optimism

— there’s still a lot of uncertainty, but people are chugging along.”

What’s at the Expo

The Louisville Local Business Expo will feature 60 booths representing local business-to-business service professionals, and it is free and open to the public. Usually, about 300 to 500 people attend.



In the past, the expo had breakout learning sessions, but this year LIBA decided to go with one-on-one meetings. The learning consultations, or Quick Learns, are available throughout the day.

“We had in the past done breakout sessions, but we felt like this time we wanted to get more personal,” Rubenstein said. “So people are getting real learning applicable to their business specifically.”

Visitors can take part in as many sessions as they would like at no charge. Walk-ups are OK, but advanced appointments will ensure a time slot.

The Quick Learns include:

- Ask A Lawyer, with Patrick Schmidt, [Tilford Dobbins & Schmidt](#)
- Balancing Your Life in 2019, with Jennifer Blair, [Excavive Coaching & Consulting](#)
- Digital Marketing Consultation, with Drake Hatfield, president and CEO of [Hatfield Media](#)
- Elevate Your Questions & Make Better Decisions, with [Whitney Bishop](#)/Nonprofit Leaders Network
- Hands On Help With Your Yelp! Listing, with Emily Hagedorn/[Yelp Louisville](#)
- My Newsletter Needs A Boost! with Lauren Hendricks, [a+h marketing](#)

- Magical and Meaningful Meetings, with [Whitney Bishop](#)/Nonprofit Leaders Network
- Networking For Introverts, with Michael Raymer of [Louisville Business Networking](#)

For fun, the Expo will also have Giant Connect Four, “because we’re all about making connections,” Rubenstein said, as well as free caricatures by the artist Vickie Richardson. Visitors can also sign up to win from a long list of prizes.

“I think that small business ownership is still a very important part of the American dream,” Rubenstein said. “And it’s a solid way to be your own boss and have entrepreneurial spirit. With our emphasis on local, it’s that mom and pop, neighborhood roots and feel that I think is really supportive of small businesses.”

The Louisville Local Business Expo is 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday at the Mellwood Arts Center, 1860 Mellwood Ave., in the Picasso Room.

LISA HORNUNG

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master’s degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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