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# Economic Boot Camp urges Treasure Coast businesses to develop growth potential

By Paul Ivice

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STUART — The most crucial mistake new businesses make is hiring too quickly and carelessly, human resources consultant Gerry Hoeffner said at the latest economic gardening workshop.

Hoeffner spoke at the second economic boot camp for Martin County, held Tuesday at Indian River State College's Wolf Technology Center. The boot camp was the first of four, one in each county that Workforce Solutions serves, in the second round of such programs in the Economic Gardening project.

Other boot camps organized by Michael Corbit, the Economic Gardening project's "green thumb" for the Research Coast, which is the Treasure Coast's three counties plus Okeechobee County will be held in April in Okeechobee, Fort Pierce and Vero Beach.

Corbit said the Economic Gardening project's focus is to support entrepreneurs and existing small and medium-size businesses in the Treasure Coast to develop their growth potential, resulting in more jobs.

Corbit said current statistics show that more than half of small and medium-size businesses in the United States, generally those with less than 20 employees, are home-based. And that number is rising, he said.

Those companies are flying under the radar, Corbit said, and it's important to reach them through networking with resources that can help them grow.

Hoeffner, owner and president of Fort Pierce-based Personnel Dynamics Consulting Group, which specializes in change management, corporate culture enhancement and employee development. His company coordinates the "Best Places to Work" program in the Treasure Coast and about 20 other communities throughout the United States.

Hoeffner offered a list of 18 ways in which employers can build loyalty among employees, including involving them more directly in the company's future by sharing with them specific information about the company's progress.

He also said most businesses do not devote enough effort to training and development. Businesses should spend at least two days a year on training for each

employee.

“It’s all about how you want to run your organization and whether your employees are worth your time,” Hoeffner said.

The most important thing, though, is to be careful in hiring to choose employees who fit the organization and the position, he said, because employee turnover is costly. That should include using personality testing, he said.

“When you’re putting your initial team together, it’s important to get good talent,” Hoeffner said. “You can’t afford a mistake when you’re starting out.”

**IF YOU GO**

What: Economic Gardening seminar for owners and managers of small to medium-size businesses with growth potential.

St. Lucie County: 8:15 a.m. April 20 at the Kight Center on the Indian River State College Main Campus, 3209 Virginia Ave., Fort Pierce.

Indian River County: 8:15 a.m. April 22 at the Richardson Center on the Indian River State College Mueller Campus.

Registration: To sign up or obtain more information, contact Economic Gardening Coordinator Michael Corbit at (772) 335-3030 ext. 438, or by email at mcorbit@tcjobs.org.

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