

5 Business Skills You Can Learn From the Girl Scouts



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What skills do the Girls Scouts learn during their famed cookie sale that you should also master on the road to success?

FEBRUARY 27, 2014 If you're a fan of Thin Mints, you probably already know that this is the time of year the Girl Scouts are selling their famous cookies—some \$790 million worth. The annual cookie sale is more than just a fundraiser. When this young army hits the streets for their direct-sale campaign, the girls are being taught essential skills for success that every small-business owner should master as well.

"These are more than just cookies, they're opportunities," says Lisa Jones, CEO of the [Girl Scouts, North Carolina Coastal Pines](#) council. "By creating a plan, interacting with customers and working as part of a team, girls learn the five skills that are essential aspects to leadership, to success and to life."

What are the [five business skills](#) the Girl Scouts emphasize?

1. Goal Setting

"Girls set cookie goals and with their team create a plan to reach them," says Krista Park, communications and marketing director for the Girl Scouts, North Carolina Coastal Pines council.

Those goals range from hitting a milestone in boxes sold to fulfilling a specific number to fund a trip, outing or project.

Three years into her information design business, Amy Balliett, co-founder and president of the Seattle-based [Killer Infographics](#), agrees that goal setting is important to small-business success.

"Setting goals defines your expectations and gives employees something to shoot for," Balliett says. "That brings value to their days and helps them grow professionally."

2. Decision Making

Individual Girl Scouts and their troops make their own decisions on how to approach a cookie sale.

"Girls decide where and when to sell cookies, how to market their sales and what to do with the earnings," Park says. "This matters because girls must make many decisions, big and small, in their lives."

"Whether in a business plan or on napkins, a well thought-out plan that includes incremental marketing and sales goals prompts the mind to create the necessary steps to achieve them," says Nicole Flores, owner and principal graphic designer at [Studio Savoie](#), "and periodical reevaluation maintains accountability."

3. Money Management

Managing the money coming in and the money going out is both beneficial during a cookie sale and crucial to the day-to-day operation of every small business.

"Money management keeps me awake at night," says Rick Maher, owner of [Effective HR](#), a human resources consulting firm for small businesses. "It is all-encompassing in the business, from sales and expenses to being able to take money out of the business and enjoy life. Also, it brings a sense of peace when you are in a system and then you use it to run the business."

Serial entrepreneur and author [Joe Geiger](#) says for small businesses, it's all about managing the bottom line. "Haphazard money management is the surest way to bankruptcy," Geiger says.

4. People Skills

"A Girl Scout learns how to talk, to listen and work with all kinds of people while selling cookies and learns how to work as a team with other girls," Park says. "These experiences help her develop healthy relationships and conflict resolution skills, which are essential qualities of entrepreneurs and all successful business leaders."

Ryan McEniff, owner of [Minute Women Home Care](#) in Massachusetts, a company that provides home care services for seniors, says people skills are more than important.

"You manage your staff and interact with customers, who all want to be treated with dignity, respect and kindness," McEniff says. "Treat them the way you wish to be treated."

5. Business Ethics

The Girl Scouts teach their young cookie sales force to act honestly and responsibly. "This matters because the world needs ethical leaders in every field," Park says.

"One of the most important factors of running a small business is to create integrity in everything you do," agrees Lori Bizzoco, founder of [Cupid's Pulse](#), a relationship advice website. "If you uphold good business ethics, it will become the standard for those who work with you, and it will also set the stage for your company's image and reputation."

Once a year, an army of Girl Scouts heads out into the world to sell cookies and raise funds for their troops and their councils. But the sale goes deeper than that, teaching important business skills with each and every box.

The girls learn five important skills every time they hand a customer a box of Thin Mints. And those are the same five skills every small-business owner should learn and use on the road to sweet success.

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