

SCOTTSDALE

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Women's boot camp aids entrepreneurs

By Maggie Galchouse
The Arizona Republic

SCOTTSDALE — Amy LaDow, a Realtor, is starting a children's clothing line with her mom and cousin.

Under the name Tiger Lily, outfits will be funky, with an Asian influence.

"Ideally, I want to get these clothes into boutiques," said LaDow, 32, "but I need to figure out how to do mass media marketing...."

LaDow got some answers Saturday at the Women Entrepreneurs' Small Business Boot Camp. Organized by Susan Ratliff, 50, owner of a local trade show supply company, the event drew more than 200 people to the Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Villas.

Sara Knab, 46, president and co-founder of Web Strata, a Chandler-based Web design and development company, said, "I came here today because I need a boost."

This year, about 4.7 million women nationwide will be self-employed, an increase of 77 percent since 1983.

Women-owned businesses in Arizona are growing faster than any other state except Utah, says the Center for Women's Business Research.

"Micro-business owners bring a lot to the economy," said Ratliff.

Ratliff, president of Phoenix-based Exhibit Experts, decided to create an event that offered practical advice to female entrepreneurs.

"The speakers are micro-business owners in town," she said.

Speaker Sharon Maloley hammered home the importance of efficient billing systems for businesses.

"The primary goal is payment in full on first contact," said Maloley, who runs A.R. Systems, Inc., a consulting and collection agency. Bills should never say "payment is

due in 30 days," but rather "payment is due on Jan. 10."

Millie Gonzalez-Scott, who had a number of questions for Maloley, is vice president of the Scott Business Group, which provides recruiting and staffing services.

"We struggle with getting paid, even when we do business with midsized companies," said Gonzalez-Scott, 51.

Other attendees needed tips on networking and marketing their products.

LaDow attended a session on networking and prospecting led by Connie Kadansky, CEO of Exception Sales Performance, a Phoenix-based consulting and performance improvement company.

When you fall in love with someone, it's because that person makes you feel good about yourself, Kadansky said. Similarly, business owners should leave prospective clients feeling good about themselves.



Cheryl Evans/The Arizona Republic

Millie Gonzalez-Scott, vice president of the Scott Business Group, attends the Women Entrepreneurs' Small Business Boot Camp Saturday at the Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Villas.