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### Entrepreneurs: Consider Forming an Advisory Board

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# Google wants to be TV middleman

Recently my company was selected by Google as one of several Web design firms awarded a Logitech



Jesse Bushkar

Google TV unit. Google awarded these units to firms for the purpose of optimizing websites for TV screens, and I was fortunate to

get my hands on one.

But why does Google care about TV?

Google TV is the next in the long line of Google's vast array of products. It basically aims to be a layer of controlling Internet and content access on your television, similar to how a Nintendo Wii or a Playstation works, except not based around video games.

With Google TV, along with the accompanying wireless keyboard/remote, I can pull up YouTube videos, streaming Netflix movies, Pandora radio and a lot more. I can also access Savannahnow.com and almost any other website

available to normal computers.

Along with the set-top box comes a keyboard remote control. While it's a little bit bulky compared to regular remotes, it's almost 100 percent necessary to be able to use a full keyboard while surfing the Internet on your TV.

Now comes the important question that I try to ask with all new technology: Why does this matter? There are so many "innovations" everyday that we have to keep running things through the filter of relevance.

First, it matters because it's Google. They have the budget to make a difference wherever they go. They have identified that television software can be profitable, and when Google goes after a market, they rarely fizzle out.

Google isn't like Apple. They rarely hit a home run with their first swing. Take their Android cellphone operating system. Two years after they launched it, they're finally competing with Blackberry and the iPhone in the smart phone market

**This product image shows the Sony Internet TV with the QWERTY remote, powered by Google TV.**

Photo courtesy of Sony Electronics Inc.



share battle.

Google will look to do the same thing in the TV market: push and push and push until they change the game.

Second, from a business standpoint, television is all about the ads. And since Google is primarily an advertising company, the pieces of the puzzle begin to

fit together.

If Google can be a layer between the content creators (HBO, NBC, etc.) and the content viewers, then they have a huge opportunity to reach an even greater audience with their massive advertising network.

For small businesses, this means your Web presence and your television presence

will be blurring soon. Even if you maintain a traditional TV commercial campaign, viewers will soon be able to click inside of that commercial for more information on you and/or your company.

Let's not forget that Google owns YouTube, the U.S.'s dominant online video site. Making YouTube videos on televisions across the country means even bigger business. And since YouTube has been rolling out and improving their live broadcast feature, you might even see Google starting to carry sporting events, the Emmys or (God forbid) reality TV.

For our part, it's exciting to be included in Google's testing of its new TV system. Small businesses are Google's advertising bread and butter, so it makes sense to reach out to companies that impact small businesses directly.

My view is that 2011 won't be the year of Google TV, but 2012 just might.

Jesse Bushkar is the CEO of Sysconn New Media Inc. He can be contacted at 912-356-9920 or jesse@sysconn.com.

# Entrepreneurs: Consider forming an advisory board

Advisory boards are not just for Fortune 500 companies. Many small business owners could benefit from one as well.

Different from a formal board of directors, an advisory board has no fiduciary responsibilities in the company. Instead, its sole purpose is to advise and support you, the leader of your small business.

Busy entrepreneurs get caught up in the day-to-day operations and often overlook the value of working on their businesses instead of in their businesses. Done right, the rewards you reap from a small business advisory board are tremendous.

## Why should you consider forming one?

- Gain perspectives and feedback from outside the

company.

- Get advice from other seasoned business owners.
- Help you set goals and hold you accountable for your progress.
- Send you business and referrals.
- Learn from someone else's mistakes and avoid making the same ones yourself.
- Keep you motivated and bring out the best in you as a leader and a manager.
- Provide support and guidance, as self employment is sometimes a lonely place.
- Help you solve your most complex problems.
- Indicates you are serious about improving and growing your business.

## Who should you ask to join your advisory board?

Depending on the size and scope of your company, four or five members should be sufficient, and you shouldn't have to look far to find them.

Different from a formal board of directors, an advisory board has no fiduciary responsibilities in the company. Instead, its sole purpose is to advise and support you, the leader of your small business.

Choose people you admire and trust and are genuinely interested in helping you succeed.

This may include a mix of friends, family, other small business owners and local professionals.

You obviously want to avoid competitors, both direct and indirect, but including another business owner with a similar target market could prove beneficial for you both.

For example, a daycare owner might include a local pediatrician or someone from the local YMCA. You may even want to ask a retired executive with the right knowledge base.

In our overbooked society, many owners may hesitate to ask people for the gift of their time. So, what's in it for them?

Perhaps they could learn something from you and the others on the board, too. If they are small business owners themselves, you could repay the favor by sending them business and referrals.

Plus, successful people want to be associated with other successful people, so the opportunity to network and gain a sense of community involvement may be reason enough for them to say yes.

Before you start the search for the perfect advisory board, be sure to have the details outlined. This would include

things like how often the board will meet and how/if they will be compensated.

Most advisory board members are willing to serve for many reasons other than money, but you should be clear on whether "compensation" is in the form of cash or just a really nice lunch four times a year.

Most importantly, don't waste their time and yours by being unprepared for these meetings. Respect your board members and get the most out of them by preparing an agenda that addresses your most pressing concerns and distributing it beforehand.

Lastly, put aside your pride and listen with an open ear even if what they have to say is not exactly what you were hoping to hear.

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