

Metro-east training center reinvents itself

BY WILL BUSS
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BELLEVILLE -- After 20 years of guiding local businesses and industries, a metro-east training center has reassessed and reinvented itself.

The Center for Training Innovations has a new name and approach. Established in 1987 as the Business Assistance Center for Belleville Area College, the service has been renamed Selsius Corporate and Career Training. After years of being a "niche-services broker," the center is shifting to become a "full-service, corporate and career performance-improvement agency."

The change comes as the center continues to serve the needs of the region's business community from within the Southwestern Illinois College campus in Belleville and off-campus, but with a newer and more expanded approach. The center has long provided computer and skills training. Selsius also aims to help companies create business strategies through customized training or consultation that will translate into improved performance and sales.

Selsius director Lynette Rienbolt said the center wants to help companies improve their performance and productivity so that they can stay competitive and contribute to economic growth in the area.

"It's not that new," said Rienbolt. "We've been probably doing it this way for the last five to seven years. We've kind of completed our evolution and kind of rebranded it."

The new name is derived from a best-selling business book: "212 ... The Extra Degree."

"The premise is that at 211 degrees, and I know that's Fahrenheit, not Celsius, water is hot," Rienbolt said. "At 212 (degrees), it boils. Steam gives you momentum. That one degree of extra effort has an impact on your bottom line, and that's what we do. We help companies get that one degree of performance improvement and that makes the difference in their bottom line."

The training center's first director, H.O. Brownback, remembers how the service came to rise while the nation's economy was undergoing recession, and the center was established to help local businesses adapt to changing technologies in order to stay competitive and assist displaced workers.

"That's kind of how we started off, as a community college's way of providing services to the business and industry community," said Brownback, who serves as director of Departments of

Planning, Evaluation and Research at SWIC. "It's interesting, because we still have some of those same clients."

Rienbolt said those clients include U.S. Steel Corp.-Granite City Works, Memorial Hospital in Belleville, St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Belleville and Midcoast Aviation in Cahokia. And contemporary training includes more computer instruction as technologies continue to advance.

Selsius provides instruction in Microsoft Office, Dream Weaver, Photoshop and other computer software applications. The center also provides industrial training, which would include machining, welding, electronics, industrial maintenance and safety.

"We perform services in what I call management development areas, which might be coaching, conflict resolution, time management, customer service, project management, and that's what's unique about us," Rienbolt said. "There are other performance improvement consultants, other agencies in the area, but what's unique about Selsius is that it's the breadth of services that we do all of those different subject-matter areas, if you will."

About Selsius

Selsius Corporate and Career Training helps companies establish business strategies through customized training and consultation to meet professional development needs in order to improve performance and sales

Established in 1987 as the Business assistance Center for Belleville Area College, and later the Center for Training Innovations, the renamed center has shifted its focus to a "full-service, corporate and career performance-improvement agency."

The training center serves an estimated 300 companies and 4,300 employees each year.

For more information, call 222-5202 or go to www.selsiustraining.com.

She added, "But also what's unique about us is our affiliation with the college. That really allows for a one-stop shop. Because an academic program might be the best solution for a company or for an individual."

Brownback said, "One of the advantages of Selsius, with its relationship with the college, is that we're such a trusted partner that we're well-positioned to assist industries and getting whatever grants might be out there. That's something we've been very successful with. If the economy



Special to the BND

H.O. Brownback, left, and Lynette Rienbolt show the new logo for the Selsius Corporate and Career Training center in Belleville. Brownback, the training center's first director, is director of Departments of Planning, Evaluation and Research at Southwestern Illinois College. Rienbolt is director of the training center.

does head in the direction that it may be headed, typically both federal and state governments are going to be providing assistance, and we'll be positioned to assist our local industries in getting access to those funds."

Rienbolt said that with the recent downturn in the nation's economy, training and retooling employees is as crucial as ever.

"I don't see this as a temporary thing," she said. "Even when the economy turns around, there is a longer-term issue, and that is a gap in skilled workers. There are not going to be enough skilled workers to fill the jobs that are out there. As the baby-boomers retire, the labor force is not growing."

She added, "Back in the '70s, it grew at 30 percent. In the '90s, it was down to 12 percent. In the next few years, it's going to grow by 3 percent and then flatten out. So as people retire, being able to replace those workers and the knowledge that they have is extremely difficult."

She estimates that the training center has received about \$2 million in grants over the past 10 years - about \$200,000 a year. One of the grants, the Employment Training Investment Program, pays up to 50 percent of the cost of training employees of companies that qualify. She said it's a competitive grant that the training center has received over each of the last 12 years.

"We, as the recipients and the administrator, we're filling the grant application, we're doing all of the reporting and the tracking," she said. "All they have to do is say they need the training, and we say your company qualifies and this program qualifies."

The center serves 4,300 workers each year and more than 300 companies.