



Vermont Cheese Council's 2024 Business Miniversity

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All sessions run from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time.



Monday, January 29

This session includes an overview of financial statements and various financial goals for business owners. Different than bookkeeping systems, this session will focus on analysis of income and expense records to assess costs and profitability. It will also include balance sheets and topics related to equity, making investments, and managing debt.

Mark Cannella, University of Vermont Extension

Mark Cannella has been working in the field of agriculture in Vermont for over ten years. He has managed farm operations in vegetable production, maple sugaring, and agricultural education. His current focus is the management and delivery of farm business planning programs, business management trainings, and farm economic research. Mark contributes to programs that serve a diverse audience of farm producers raising different products at different scales.



Understanding Financial Statements

Wednesday, January 31

Writing grants is hard and can be intimidating! In this session, we will walk through the basic sections of a grant and how to write them, learning to understand the questions funders are asking, the nuance between questions that sound similar, and which questions can seem throwaway but are critical, such as "Describe why you and your staff are qualified to complete this project." If you can, please bring a grant application you are interested in applying for to the session.

Fundamentals of Grant Writing

Rose Wilson, Farm & Food Business Planning Consultant

Over the past 19 years, Rose Wilson has helped more than 450 farms and food producers with business launch, expansion, and exit; enterprise analysis; market development; and grant writing/capital raise. Rose has an 86% success rate helping her clients secure national, regional, and local funding, totaling \$9.7 million in funding to date. Rose's clients range from national NGOs to state agencies; established companies such as CROPP/Organic Valley; emerging brands such as Kingdom Creamery of Vermont; and small, mid-, and large-scale farms of all varieties. Rose brings a broad set of technical and people skills to each client and project, and puts her clients first. In addition to serving individual clients with her broad set of technical and people skills, Rose immerses herself in improving the agricultural economy through regional research on the feasibility of new crops, services, and sales channels. Rose is an experienced presenter, and has led numerous workshops on business life cycle and strategic planning. Rose is a member of the NOFA-VT Revolving Loan Fund Advisory Board, the Vermont Farm Fund Advisory Board, the Vermont First Advisory Board, and the Vermont Organic Farmers' Executive Committee.



Monday, February 5

Active Listening for Better Team Communications

During this interactive virtual workshop, we will consider traits that make a good listener. We will reflect on our own listening skills, considering what we do well and what traits we would like to improve. Components of active listening will be discussed and skills practiced. Then we will focus on how we can talk to colleagues who are feeling stressed. Resources will be shared.

Leanne Porter, Farm First

Leanne Porter also holds a leadership role within FRSAN-NE. She has a Master of Education Degree from Lesley College and was a Doctoral candidate in Education and Administration at The University of Massachusetts, with 37 post-master's credits. Prior to her work at Farm First, Leanne had been working with the Vermont State College system in various roles including Assistant Professor of Education and Psychology, academic coordinator, faculty supervisor, online program manager, and student advisor. Leanne was Interim Director for the Vermont Humanities Literacy programs; she developed and conducted literacy trainings for educators with The Humanities Council for six years. Leanne has also been an Assistant Principal for a K-8 school. Before she resumed her work in education, she served as Post Permanence State Manager for the Vermont Agency of Human Services and as a trauma-informed training specialist.



Angela Shea LICSW, LADC, Invest EAP

Angela Shea is a trauma-informed licensed clinical social worker and drug alcohol counselor who has been working in the mental health field for over 20 years. As a clinical social worker, she has worked in New York City, El Salvador, and Vermont. Locally she has worked in the Burlington School districts, University of Vermont Medical Center system, and more recently at The Health Center in Plainfield, in addition to her work with Farm First. She treats individuals of all ages incorporating mindfulness-based therapeutic interventions, such as art, breathing, and movement. Most of the care she provides incorporates Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, an evidenced-based treatment, which highlights the interconnection of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; a powerful and rewarding intervention!



Wednesday, February 7

Providing Effective Feedback

Providing effective feedback is an essential skill in any working environment. In this highly interactive workshop, you will discover and practice the SBI Feedback Model, a simple tool developed by the Center for Creative Leadership that "reduces the anxiety of delivering feedback" and helps people deliver clear and actionable feedback to build a culture of trust, openness, growth, and positive engagement. After learning the SBI framework, you will practice receiving and delivering feedback using the SBI model.

Amy Beth Kessinger, Community College of Vermont

Amy Beth is a multi-passionate educator, coach, and facilitator who has dedicated her multifaceted career to bringing people together, cultivating deep connections, and building compassionate and creative communities. Whether she is designing an escape room for a nonprofit retreat, teaching conflict resolution skills to adult learners, or training corporate leaders in an outdoor classroom, Amy Beth's high energy and grounded presence help people realize their superpowers, expand perspectives, sharpen skillsets, and step bravely and boldly into their biggest dreams.



Monday, February 12

Social Media Strategy

Social media is always changing. There's a lot to keep up with and it takes a real effort to develop content. So, how do you make the most of it with the time you have and still see tangible results? In this session from Place Creative, entitled *The Simple Six: How to leverage social media to increase your engagement and grow your audience*, you will learn six ways to increase engagement on social media and grow an audience of brand fans—and buyers.

Steve Crafts, Place Creative Company

Steve Crafts has over 20 years of experience creatively launching and propelling brands into the national spotlight. He graduated *cum laude* from Syracuse University where he studied Communication Design. After working in New York City, he headed north to Burlington. He founded Place in 2001 with the single-minded goal of bringing a more human and "brandcentric" approach to marketing. "We wanted to cut through the big agency red tape and create more authentic and soulful brands for our clients." Steve has led integrated campaigns for Rossignol, Pete & Gerry's Organic Eggs, Darn Tough Vermont, Bag Balm, and New-Skin. In 2020, GD USA recognized Steve as a Person To Watch.



Michael Adams, Place Creative Company

Michael Adams works with brands and organizations to craft compelling stories through owned, earned, and paid media. He has a unique background: one that blends traditional agency work with his client-side experience in the consumer packaged goods industry. (He owned Green Mountain Mustard for 7 years.) As someone who has made his own investment into branding, he understands the value of doing it right. Michael has a BSBA in Marketing from Bryant University and an Integrated Marketing 360 Executive Certificate from Cornell University.



Wednesday, February 14

Project Management

Projects that are not on time or just fail to meet business needs are a common source of frustration. You or others may have been to Project Management training and found it didn't help. Learning about systematic ways of thinking needed to support effective Project Management is foundational to effective use of the tools. Key learning objectives:

- Stay organized with communication and collaboration tools
- Create and manage timelines while prioritizing competing demands
- Use awareness of the five biggest failures in project management to create the environment for project success

Louis Prue, Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center

Prior to joining VMEC, Louis Prue held operational roles for a variety of Vermont manufacturers, ranging from a small start-up to a large aerospace manufacturer. He has been on a Lean journey for over 20 years in roles including Logistics Manager, Supply Chain Manager, Quality Manager, and Director of Operations. As a collaborative leader, Louis enjoys identifying challenges and improving processes with functional teams, finding the idea of empowering a workforce to continuously improve exciting and rewarding. Louis is certified in HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) and is a certified PCQI (Preventive Controls Qualified Individual). Originally from northeastern Vermont, Louis embraces all five seasons, enjoying the amazing opportunities Vermont offers in the rain, snow, and even mud; you may bump into him jogging, hiking, or biking back-country trails. In addition, he plays hockey and dabbles in standup comedy. Most importantly, Louis is a dedicated husband and father.



Monday, February 19

Recruiting, Onboarding, and Culture

Join us for a dynamic look at creative and practical solutions to staffing challenges. Effective onboarding and training programs leverage individual and organizational capabilities to engage new team members and get the job done. In this session, participants will:

- Recognize coworkers and new hires as individuals now, and each as part of the community's future
- Break down and assess content and flow of jobs/work (as they are now and as they could be)
- Look for ways to leverage capabilities/aspirations and foster mentor/coaching relationships

Participants will take away reusable, teachable collaboration and training models to engage an organization of individuals, and new/stronger connections and resources.

Carla C. Wuthrich, Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center

Carla Wuthrich joined VMEC after 25 years of experience in technical, managerial, and transformational roles, including a decade leading and aligning strategy deployment processes, leadership development, and continuous improvement efforts for IBM's Microelectronics Division. Using end-to-end, strategic thinking and data, she partners one-on-one with leaders and their teams to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindsets that can sustain a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, while working on the challenges and opportunities that matter today. Carla is equally energized when facilitating and coaching the executive suite through to the front lines, in production and non-production environments. When not helping the manufacturing industry directly, Carla connects with the broader community to explore cultures, music, dance, food, and the outdoors.



Wednesday, February 21

Managing and Calculating Margins through a Specialty Supply Chain

Do you know the difference between *mark-up* and *margin*? Answers to questions like this are crucial to the success of marketing your products. Understanding how to price your products throughout the supply chain is a vital component in achieving and maintaining commercial stability. This presentation will walk you through margin calculations that take into account not just the cost of producing cheese, but also costs incurred in the selling process itself.

Zoe Brickley, Jasper Hill Farm

Zoe Brickley began exploring the world of cheese while attending The French Culinary Institute in New York City. From there, she joined Murray's Cheese; after some time spent behind the counter, Zoe became Cave Manager and American Buyer for Murray's. In 2009, Zoe joined Jasper Hill Farm where she established their foundational development, sales, and marketing efforts; today, she is Jasper Hill's Director of Communications & E-Commerce. Zoe loves to learn more about cheese through teaching, having presented hundreds of hours of content for many organizations. She is an American Cheese Society Certified Cheese Professional and Sensory Evaluator and a member of the *Guilde Internationale des Fromagers*.



Monday, February 26

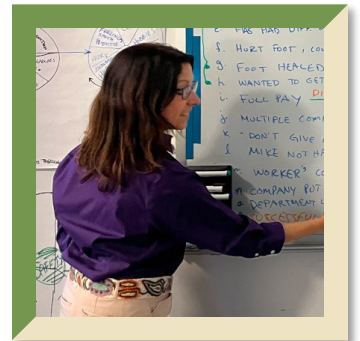
Join us for deep dives into building strong relationships at work **that work**. An overview of Training Within Industry (TWI) Job Relations will be the backbone of this webinar, responding to your concerns:

- How to best manage people, which is as important as managing product quality
- Motivating people to learn, and not feel like cheesemaking is “just a job.”
- Being able to entrust others to take on tasks so as to get those tasks off your plate
- Supporting your staff so that they want to stay with your company longer
- Talking to your employees about performance issues
- Knowing what it looks like to be a good employer

Managing Your Team

Carla C. Wuthrich, Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center

See Carla's bio with the description of our February 19 session.



Wednesday, February 28

Strategies for Successful Negotiation

Whether we realize it or not, we negotiate every day. This session empowers you with practical insights and strategies to tackle negotiations more confidently and effectively.

- Learn the fundamental principles that underpin successful negotiations.
- Explore common, everyday situations where negotiation can be a tool for building and strengthening positive relationships.
- Develop a strategic mindset for negotiation by setting clear objectives and understanding your counterpart's interests.
- Discover strategies for adapting your negotiation style to different situations and personalities.
- Identify simple ways to keep or regain your balance during a negotiation.

Amy Beth Kessinger, Community College of Vermont

See Amy Beth's bio with the description of our February 7 session.



Monday, March 4

Branding: Selling Your Product Through Story

Despite what economists say, people do not behave rationally. Our shopping choices usually don't make the most economic sense; in truth, people's shopping choices are their way of telling the world about their personal values. And your branding choices are your way of telling the customer about your values. Making a connection between your values and your customers' values is the key to keeping them buying, the income flowing, and your business in the black. The tool to do this is as old as humanity itself: storytelling. In this interactive session, outreach and communications consultant Daniel Prial (a former NCAT/ATTRA Community Food Specialist) will walk you through the building blocks for an effective brand story and provide tangible activities for taking control of your brand story to best connect with your customers.

Daniel Prial, Prial Outreach Consulting

Daniel has been building bridges for over 15 years, but not as an engineer – rather as a communicator and educator. For farmers in New England, that meant building bridges between them and their customers through brand management. But it has also meant connecting national parks with visitors, students with nature, and corporate business units with each other. With his diverse experiences, Daniel navigates the intersections of marketing, community work and outreach. Daniel now lives in Germany with his wife and two sons. When he's not working, or busy as a father, he's carving wooden spoons and looking for wilderness. For more on the bridges Daniel is currently building, you are welcome to visit www.danielprial.com.



Wednesday, March 6

Tools for Strategic Business Planning

The Business Model Canvas, found on barn walls and office doors throughout Vermont, is the perfect resource for business owners to visualize key areas of business strategy. In this session, you'll learn to use the Canvas to describe, design, challenge, invent, and pivot your business model. Then we'll examine the Pre-Mortem Analysis, which is a key process for anticipating any project's risks. This form of critical analysis is vital for building sufficient contingencies into your projects, providing the fine-tuning required to increase the chances of success.

Mark Cannella, University of Vermont Extension

See Mark's bio with the description of our January 29 session.



Jeremy Russo, University of Vermont Extension

Jeremy Russo is a Professional Outreach Educator for UVM Extension who works with farm and forest business owners statewide on business planning and improvements. Jeremy has a B.S. in Agriculture from Cornell University. He also brings 20+ years of experience as a dairy farmer in southwestern Vermont. His experience includes dairy farming, organic dairy transition, value-added dairy, and on-farm diversification. Jeremy lives on his family's sixth-generation farm with his wife Jennie and their three children in the beautiful Mettowee River valley town of North Rupert. Jeremy is also a Vermont Farm Fund Advisory Board member and is on the Breakfast on the Farm Committee.



Thank you to our generous sponsors!

