

# The Benefits of Tapping into Business Expertise

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Score counselor Larry Tessler and Randall Martin meet for mentoring sessions. Photo Sophie Braccini

**R**andall (Randi) Martin, co-founder of Skyline Building Care, has seen the benefits of mentoring in business. A mentor himself for at-risk youth and sales people, when the Moraga businessman wanted to pursue the idea of expanding his business through a franchise, he felt the need for support and turned to Score – a non-profit organization staffed with high-profile, mostly retired, business people who volunteer to put their expertise to good use.

It wasn't the first time Martin had used Score. Three years ago, he and his partner took advantage of Score's online portal when the two started their business, which now has 220 small business clients in Contra Costa and Marin counties. "We launched Skyline Building Care in 2010 after one year of intense planning," says Martin. "We met every Sunday morning from 7 a.m. to noon and worked on all the aspects of our business plan. The day we launched our business we knew exactly where we were going."

"The question for us," says Martin, "is how to grow without being hampered with middle management cost that would price us out of business."

Martin looked at the detailed profiles of the East Bay Score counselors and called for an appointment with

Larry Tessler.

The former owner of a small business startup, Tessler has been a counselor for 14 years since his early retirement from the corporate world of retailing. He consults with local businesses all over the United States via the Internet.

"When I first met Randi (Martin), I was very impressed by his degree of preparedness; that's quite rare," says Tessler. "I quickly introduced him to other counselors who have experience in forming franchises and we started devising a plan."

Martin is in no hurry to start the franchise. "In order to franchise you need to have systems in place," says Martin. "Jim Philpott, a Score franchise expert, came in to offer some perspective on what type of franchise could work for us." A third counselor, ex-Siemens' CFO Karl Haug, also provided input.

Martin continues to execute the plan and meets with Tessler every six months for "validation sessions," and exchanges email on a monthly basis.

"He explains to me what he is doing and asks me if there are holes in it," says Tessler. If he sees a problem, Tessler asks more questions and has Martin draw his own conclusions.

"When I meet with a new client I never tell them that their idea is no

good," says Tessler. "I keep asking questions until they have thought out all the issues."

Tessler says that nine out of 10 people who come with an idea do not end up starting a business. "That's good," he says. "We are saving them a lot of money."

"You can't start without a plan," he adds. "When I meet with someone who wants to start a new business I start by asking all the questions they should have already worked on, that way people realize what they have not thought about and go back to the drawing board."

He goes over key elements with prospective entrepreneurs. "First, you have to start with a solid idea or concept. You see a problem in the market, come up with a solution that has benefits to the potential clients, and forms the basis of the marketing message and of your marketing plan," he says. "Second, you need a financial plan of sorts: the start-up expenses, the operating expense, the revenue projection, and you have to be able to figure out your growth margin."

Tessler says he works about 60 hours a month for Score. He follows up with his clients for months, if not years; last month alone he counseled 30 different people at different stages of business creation.

"Score mentorship works because the mentors care about the mentees," says Martin, who's been working with Score now for two years. "If I'm successful, Larry (Tessler) and his colleagues feel proud. Mentors create jobs for other people; they give opportunities to other people. It is a real domino effect." He expects to have an ongoing relationship with Tessler.

"As you grow, you have different challenges," he says.

For more information about Score of the East Bay go to Eastbayscore.com, Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ScoreEastBay.

*Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.*

# Miramonte Alum and USNA Plebe Put Through Paces

Submitted by Charles Norfleet



Photo Charles Norfleet, www.asjaisimages.com

**O**n May 14, United States Naval Academy Plebe (freshman) Michael Sappio, a 2011 Miramonte High School grad, participated in Sea Trials - a daunting 14-hour obstacle course that marks the end of their first year at the Naval Academy. The training exercise is

modeled after the Crucible by the Marine Corps and the Navy's Battle Stations recruit program and includes a wide array of activities from shore defense to Spartan relay, paintball, land navigation, hill assault and water tactics, according to the Naval Academy.

## business briefs

**Capital Advantage Exceeds \$400M Under Management**  
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Capital Advantage, Inc., a fee-only registered investment advisor, announced last month that its discretionary assets under management exceeded \$400 million, adding over \$100 million since September 2010. When Capital Advantage, Inc. President and Founder John Hayman began in the investment management industry in 1982, he specialized in two areas that remain at the center of Capital Advantage, Inc.'s strategy: personalized financial planning and independent investment management. Hayman believes the company's core strength is retirement planning, and looks forward to helping some of the millions of baby boomers currently preparing for retirement.

**News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette**

Ribbon Cutting for Floret at 5 p.m. Thursday, May 23 at 3581 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite C.

Coffee with the Mayor at 8 a.m. Friday, May 24 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Green Committee Meeting at noon Tuesday, May 28 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Mixer at Mason McDuffie Mortgage from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, June 12 at 999 Oak Hill Road, Lafayette.

**Moraga**

Save the date for the Second Annual Moraga Chamber Golf Tournament and Dinner Party on Monday, July 22, with dinner-only option for non-players. More information coming soon.

**Orinda**

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce invites Lafayette and Moraga to a joint Lamorinda mixer from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday, May 23 at Oak Springs Pool, 39 Spring Road, Orinda. Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette chamber members are invited with a guest.

Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening for Land Home Financial Services, Inc. from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday, May 31 at 2 Theatre Square, Suite 146, Orinda. Celebration includes appetizers, wine, and music. Join Orinda Branch Managers Angela Warren and Parveneh Poirier as they host this event. For information, visit www.lhfinancial.com.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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