

## WHAT TO DO

### Today

**League of Women Voters of Memphis and Shelby County meeting:** 6:30 p.m., Memphis City School Board Auditorium, 2597 Avery. Supt. Kriner Cash of the Memphis City Schools and Mike Tebbe, the director of communications for Shelby County Schools, will discuss the state of public education.

### Tuesday

**National Black MBA Association diversity breakfast:** 7:30-9 a.m., Memphis Marriott East, 2625 Thousand Oaks Blvd. Kriner Cash, superintendent of Memphis City Schools.

**Cordova Leadership Council Community Safety and Neighborhood Enhancement forum:** 6 p.m., Memphis Area Home Builders Association, 776 N. Germantown, Cordova. For information, call 486-9679 or visit CordovaTN.org.

**Greater Memphis Chamber 2009 Humana Health series:** 7:30-9 a.m., Crescent Club, 6075 Poplar. Speaker: Phil Smeltzer, strategic wellness consultant for Humana. For reservations, contact Ericka Milford at 543-3518 or emilford@memphischamber.com.

**MPACT Toastmasters:** 6 p.m., Christian Brothers University, 650 East Parkway, Buckman Hall, room 112.

**Introduction to Quality Management for Nonprofits:** 8:30 a.m.-noon, Alliance Office, 5100 Poplar. Fee: \$55 PNE; \$65 members; \$125 nonmembers.

### Wednesday

**Kiwanis Club of Memphis weekly meeting:** Noon-1 p.m., The Peabody, 149 Union. Speaker: Dr. John Gnuschke, director of the Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research. Fee: \$24.

**Physics lecture:** 7 p.m. (reception at 6:30 p.m.), Rhodes College. Speakers: Dr. Gordon Squires, assistant director for Public Affairs of NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope, and Dr. Joanna Hinz, senior research associate at the University of Arizona. For information, call Dr. Ann Viano at 843-3912.

E-mail items for What to Do to cabiznews@commercialappeal.com.



**Melissa Keough**



**Billie Johnson**



**Gail Pike**



**Michelle Everitt**



**Lauren McGee**



**Dan Garey**

## PEOPLE IN BUSINESS

Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare recently recognized the following Miracle in Motion winners: **Melissa Keough**, registered nurse, ICU, Methodist Le Bonheur Germantown Hospital; **Billie Johnson**, radio communications dispatcher, Methodist University Hospital; **Gail Pike**, lead dispatcher, Methodist University Hospital; **Michelle Everitt**, registered nurse, Methodist North Hospital. **Lauren McGee**, physical therapist, Le Bonheur Germantown Hospital, was named as an Inspiration award winner.

**Dan Garey** was named to the Chairman's Club and the President's Club of Sterling Health Plans at their national sales convention.

E-mail items and photos for People in Business to cabiznews@commercialappeal.com.

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## JACQUELYN NERREN MARKETING & RESEARCH COUNSEL

# Consumer insight



Dave Darnell/The Commercial Appeal

Jackie Nerren operates Jacquelyn Nerren Marketing & Research Counsel from her home in Midtown.

## Entrepreneur helps firms understand the 'why' behind buying

By JONATHAN DEVIN / Special to The Commercial Appeal

WHEN JACKIE NERREN opens a newspaper or magazine, she said she's one of the few people who look for the advertisements first.

"Every once in a while I open a magazine and see an ad that I worked on, and it's just really exciting to have that insight into things," said Nerren, 54, the owner of Jacquelyn Nerren Marketing & Research Counsel.

Nerren, a Memphis native, will celebrate the 10th anniversary of starting her own consumer research company this October, having spent the last 30 years in the field. She started "by accident," taking a job with a research firm while in college, and later moved to Atlanta with the same company.

"I am amazingly snoopy," said Nerren. "I always want to know why people think the way they think and do the things they do. That's the key to market research."

Now working from her home office in a Midtown high rise where the sounds of gibbons in the Memphis Zoo rise with the breeze, Nerren contracts with companies near and far to discover the reasoning behind consumers' choices.

Nerren explained that research tools like telephone surveys help businesses understand "what" people choose, but she focuses more on the "why."

"There is a lot of research going on right now because we all have less money," said Nerren. "We've suddenly stopped buying as much stuff, but we're making more decisions about what we buy. So as a marketer, I would want to know how people make these decisions and as economic recovery happens, will consumers miss the products that they haven't been buying in a while."

### JACQUELYN NERREN MARKETING & RESEARCH COUNSEL

**Owner:** Jackie Nerren

**Web site:** jackie nerrenresearch.com

**Phone:** 725-1728

**E-mail:** nerrenj@bellsouth.net

Nerren's primary tool is a focus group — a pool of up to eight people from specified demographics who are asked to consider the appeal of an advertisement or product.

Nerren said the health care industry represents the majority of her work, but she has conducted focus groups on everything from ice cream to aquariums across the United States as well as in England, Ireland, France, Japan and Germany.

"People have said to me, 'This study is about motor oil, and the people in the group are guys who change the oil in their own cars — do you think you can talk to them?'" said Nerren. "And I'll go into the room, and they will feel like they have to tell me everything, if for no other reason than because they think I don't know anything about it."

The subject matter of her focus groups is always confidential, Nerren explained.

Karen Kitchens, programs officer for the Assisi Foundation, said that she has

hired Nerren several times over the last four years to conduct focus groups and facilitate meetings.

"Jackie is the ultimate professional," said Kitchens. "When Jackie tells you something, you believe it."

Kitchens had hired Nerren previously while working for Time-Warner Communications.

"Trust and integrity are extremely important when it comes to research," said Kitchens. "It's as much an art form as an acquired skills set. Sometimes you're asking people about some delicate subjects, so you've got to be able to ask it in a way that is nonthreatening and makes people feel comfortable in discussing it."

Nerren's fees range from under \$1,000 to her highest so far, \$90,000. The cost depends on the length and depth of a project. She invests about \$2,000 into her business each year, mostly in computer equipment.

Generally, Nerren's customers find her by word of mouth or through referrals from marketing and advertising agencies or communications groups. She's used to working on 10 to 12 different projects at once.

This year Nerren plans to celebrate her 10th anniversary by starting her first Web site.

Like all businesses this year, Nerren's has taken a hit in the last six months as companies look for corners to cut. She said makers of consumer products should be thinking about how their products will emerge from the current economic downturn.

"There have been downturns along the way and they leave marks," said Nerren. "9/11 left marks, too. It's a big risk assuming that things are down, but they'll be back."

## SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

# Value of assets shifts as marketplace evolves

By JIM BLASINGAME  
jbsba.com

One of the most interesting aspects of the marketplace is the evolution of how businesses leverage assets. For most of history, business leverage came from these three categories in this order:

1. Muscle power (human or animal)
2. Tangible stuff (raw material, inventory, tools, etc)
3. Information (intellectual property, or IP)

Historically, the strongest cavemen, the biggest horses, the fastest ships, the largest factories, all had an advantage over lesser competitors. We've all seen this: "Largest inventory in the region."

But here's the interesting part:

As the marketplace has evolved, the order of importance and the value of assets has inverted. Studies show increasing emphasis is being placed on IP and the ability to leverage it with less emphasis on leveraging tangible assets.

And what about muscles? Increasingly in the global marketplace, human brawn is number four on a list of three.

The good news is small businesses are joining this global trend of leveraging IP more and tangible assets less. They're using technology in exciting new ways, doing more virtual business and are as likely to develop a strategy for doing business across an ocean today as across town 20 years ago.

Regarding how essential IP is to a small business' 21st century

competitiveness, more and more small businesses get it. The bad news is there still are far too many who don't. As an example, incredibly, 49 percent of small businesses still don't even have a Web site.

So, to see if you "get it," consider these four questions:

1. If I gave you (a) a truckload of inventory or (b) a special technology that would help you serve customers better, which would you choose?
2. Do you spend more time (a) thinking about products and services or (b) finding technology to more effectively serve customers?
3. Do your employees (a) use the same technology in the direct performance of their jobs today that they used five years ago or (b)

newer technology?

4. If you were purchasing a business, which would be more valuable to you: (a) the inventory and equipment, or (b) the electronic customer records about who their customers are; how to contact them, including e-mail; what they buy; when they want it; why they buy it; and how they use it?

If you chose (a) for any of these questions, to paraphrase Jeff Foxworthy, you might be a caveman. But if you chose the (b) options, congratulations — YOU GET IT!!!

### WRITE THIS ON A ROCK...

In the 21st century, leverage intellectual property more and tangible assets less.