

**PRINCE WILLIAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**Business Growth Committee**

**Thursday, December 8, 2011**

**Attendees:** Jim Elliott, *First Virginia Community Bank*; Patrick King and Rebecca Vaughan-King, *ImagineDesign*; Carlos Castro, *Todos Super Market*; Bill Whitescarver, *Scarvnet Systems*; George Harben, *PWC Department of Economic Development*; Bill Poole, *Legal Shield*; Jeff Brown, *Pangea Global*; Mike Howard, *Outerloop Marketing*; Kayne Karnbach, *PW Clean Council*; Brian Howdershen, *Synthetics-Now*; Pat Ennis, *American Solutions for Business*; Les Eszenyi, *Heavy Construction Contractors Association*; Rob Schneider, *Carradice & Associates*; Kathleen Wiltraut-Huber, *Health Care Advisors*; Mario Sacco, *Sacco Financial*; Ron Rose, *AFLAC*; Josh Strange, *Ameriprise Financial*; Karen Cruse, *ImagineDesign*; Sara Hellum, *Colonial Life*; Peter Pitorri, *Pitorri & Associates*; Jeffrey Willey, *Merrill Lynch Wealth Management*; and Suzanne Lewis, *Chamber Staff*.

**Welcome and Introductions:** Chair, Jim Elliott, *First Virginia Community Bank*

**Panelists:** Patrick King, President of *ImagineDesign*, and Carlos Castro, President of *Todos Super Market – Woodbridge & Dumfries*.

**TOPIC:** Rejection of Recession

**Highlights:**

- Be aware of past failures to avoid future ones.
- Don't panic: Avoid listening to inactive information. Focus on smart growth; continue to advertise and promote, and continue to set goals that can propel your business forward vs staying in one place. Need to adapt strategy to current economic climate.
- Pick partners carefully: best price range and alignment for your business, solid reputation; service provides short-term benefit to your business. Woo your customers: make them feel special and show genuine interest through strategic communication strategies (acknowledging birthdays, etc.)
- Customers for life no longer applies. Maintain partnerships through exclusivity and support; be alert for potential conflict of interests between clients. Stay connected through social media. Don't do what everyone else does (sending cookie cutter birthday cards) instead be more personalized – make a phone call.
- Stoke the fire for your craft: new economy demand passion for what you do; be tirelessly innovative; revisit and revise your ideas of success. You can't inspire if you're not inspired. Spread the passion to your team.
- Stay connected with the community. Doesn't have to involve monetary investment – volunteer your time to causes you care about. Look at the needs of your community and become a resource of information. Puts you in a prominent position. Connecting with the community will create a loyalty stream.
- Keep informed globally through trade magazines and other forms of media.
- Monitor cash flow and determine where you can tighten your belt;
- Work with and support your employees so they have skin in the game. As the owner, be their leader vs their boss. Employees don't often leave the company – they leave their boss. Create unity within the company.
- Continue to look for good talent. Good time to hire quality staff since many are unemployed.

- Watch your competition even more carefully since they can become fierce during down times; proactively anticipate and address their future needs. Can track easily through social media resources. Develop relationship with competitors to develop trust and respect for each other.

**Adjourned 10:00am - Next Committee Meeting: Thursday, January 12<sup>h</sup> at  
8:30-9:30am**