

POST-BootCamp Telephone Interview with Lafayette, Indiana Attendees

- Jon: OK, we've got 6 different businesses owners from Lafayette, IN and West Lafayette, IN who all attended my BootCamp down in Orlando in March on the line. How are you doing guys?
- Group: Great. Doing well.
- Jon: Just so you know, everything you say is being recorded and remember when you reference something about the BootCamp, people who might be listening to this tape might not know anything about or very little about the BootCamp, so just try to clarify with them exactly what you're talking about. Let's go back and start at the real beginning and how your group found out about our Destination BootCamp and decided to attend. Can somebody chime in?
- Karyl: I can answer that. I think it all started with me. I had talked to Dennis Carson, our Lafayette Urban Enterprise coordinator, and I said that I was looking for something to just kind of revive me. I hadn't been to any kind of sessions for a couple of years and so he e-mailed me this BootCamp one. So, he said I've heard Jon speak. He's very, very good. So, I said OK, and he said IF you get 6 people to go, Jon will come here. And I said, that's no problem, I can find 6 people. So, I'm out beating the pavement and found 6 people that I wanted to go with and merchants that were fairly new to the business because we were all just kind of wanting to do something different. That's really how it began.
- Jon: OK, so Karyl for our listeners, you introduce yourself and then I want to go around to everyone else and let them introduce themselves so that the listeners understand what different businesses we actually had that came to attend. Karyl, you start.
- Karyl: OK, I'm Karyl Traeger and I own The Green Door, which is a fine gifts and interiors & antique store at 834 Main Street in Lafayette.
- Jon: By the way, this is a great time for you guys to do a little publicity, advertising, marketing because remember this tape is going to be listened to by a lot of people. So feel free if you've got a website or something like that, this is the time to plug it.
- Karyl: The Green Door website is at www.greendoorgiftsandantiques.com
- Jon: Great, there you go. OK, Tracy, let's go to you.
- Tracy: I'm Tracy Deno, I own New Dimension, Incorporated at 926 Main. I have a home and garden theme going on and my website is www.newdimensiononline.com. It's under construction, though.
- Jon: Well, it might be up by the time that people are listening to this tape. Debbie, let's go ahead and go to you.
- Debbie: OK, My name is Debbie Goode. I have a shop known as Perfect Solutions. I have a website. It's www.perfectlygood.com I'm a decorative artist and I specialize in taking flea market signs and turning them into hand painted treasures.
- Jon: OK, Linda.
- Linda: Linda Elmore with LE Originals. I'm a nail salon, expanding into retail. I don't have a web page yet.
- Jon: At your retail, what is going to be focused in?
- Linda: I'm changing that product. It's going to be into beads and jewelry.
- Jon: OK. Great. Carrie.
- Carrie: I'm Carrie Ehresman, my husband and I own Triple X Family Restaurant. It's Indiana's oldest and first drive in restaurant. We're open 24 hours, we're about 3 blocks from Perdue. The name comes from a brand of Root Beer out of Houston, TX and we're the only Triple X restaurant left in the country and the only place to get Triple X Root Beer outside of Texas at all. Our web page is www.triplexxxfamilyrestaurant.com
- Jon: And, you're slogan is "We're on the hill, but on the level".
- Carrie: And we're opening #2 up on the by-pass.
- Jon: That's great.
- Carrie: But, we'll still be "on the level".
- Jon: That's great. Did everybody know that?
- Group: No. That's great! Congratulations! That's awesome!
- Carrie: We just decided that on Monday.
- Jon: That's great. This is like a news first. And, Charlene go ahead.

Charlene: Charlene McAndrews and my husband, Dennis, and I own Main Street Ice Cream & Coffee House. We're at 1005 Main Street. We don't have a web page yet but we specialize in ice cream specialties and we do live music on the weekends.

Jon: That's great. So, Karyl, you kind of got the ball rolling. None of you had really heard me speak at all, had you?

Group: No

Jon: So, you just sort of started going door-to-door talking to different businesses, Karyl?

Karyl: Yeah, I did. Dennis faxed me all of the information and we just kind of put together your package and I took it around to different businesses to ask if they would be interested in it and then I asked Dennis, because it was kind of expensive, Jon, for small business owners. So I said, "Dennis is there any way that we can get any help?" Thinking that maybe if he paid for ½ of it, that would be some sort of an incentive. Then he came back with the idea of, "I will pay your way down there, but you'll have to pay your own flight but I'll pay your fees if you get those people to go." Well, it didn't take long for me to find 6 people that were willing to go.

Jon: Did any of you speak to Dennis at all about the flack he took after making that decision?

Karyl: I wondered.

Group: No.

Jon: Well, he did because some people thought it was using public funds for private businesses, but Dennis stood his ground and said strong businesses in our downtown is what's going to make our downtown and our whole community stronger, so he really took a stand on that. Now, all of you let's just go around. What did you hope to learn by attending the BootCamp? Let's start with Karyl.

Karyl: What did I hope to learn? I wanted to learn new marketing strategies and just new ways to grow my business. I felt like I was in a real stalemate.

Jon: Tracy.

Tracy: Well, I came completely open-minded. I think initially, how to put a more professional image. I really wanted to learn how to give my store a more professional image.

Jon: Debbie.

Debbie: I'm going to be real honest, Jon, I was going on vacation. (Laughter). I have been to some seminars before with Karyl and it was kind of been there, done that, but hey, OK, they're going to pay the fee, I might learn something and gosh, it's in Florida, you can't beat that. But when I went and started listening to you speak, I realized that it was the best decision I could have made, vacation or not, because I learned so much and in a very energized arena. So, it was really good for me. I basically feel like I learned to refocus and came back going a little bit different direction from my original plan, but it's been great.

Jon: OK, Linda, go ahead.

Linda: Pretty much the same. I want to better my business and so that was a new way of finding out how to do that.

Jon: OK, I'm going to jump to Charlene. Charlene, what were you thinking of?

Charlene: Well, I think as a new business owner, I just came in totally open because we were at a point where we needed some new ideas and we needed ideas, period, just to get started, so I kind of came in from a starting point.

Jon: Carrie, I know you were a little skeptical. (Laughter)

Carrie: That's an understatement. Yes, I was.

Jon: Carrie and I actually had a conversation where she called me in San Juan, Puerto Rico to talk and to say, "What am I going to learn from this."

Carrie: Actually, I called you. I think you and I talked two or three times to be perfectly honest. I wanted to make sure that it wasn't going to be a waste of time. That you'd actually, in addition to giving us problems, that you'd give solutions. Because everybody can stand up and say what's wrong, but if you don't give us the tools to fix it, what's the point? You did that. I wanted marketing ideas and we were working on getting our web page up and you mentioned in your information that there would be ideas for that and I asked you specifically how you would be able to help us being a restaurant (with the exception of Charlene we were the only food place), so you did all of those things.

Jon: Great. I like that you said at the beginning of our BootCamp that you hoped that this wasn't just going to be anecdotal stories. That's always stuck with me.

Carrie: Well, a lot of times selling seminars, like I said, it's like counselors: they tell you what the problem is, but then they don't give you any roadmap to solve it. They just kind of dump it on you and say well this is what's wrong, but you're on your own.

Jon: And you've been to your share of sales seminars.

Carrie: Lots of my sales experience is in sales and marketing and I worked for an advertising agency and I've done sales for about 12 years and so I had gone to numerous, you know "How to sell against whatever" and hard sell, cold sell, cold call, blah blah blah. I thought, oh yeah, he's going to stand up and tell us how great he is and then not give us any ways to fix our problems, but you didn't do that.

Jon: That's good. I just love hearing your skepticism. That was really good.

Carrie: I was very skeptical. You know, it was time away from my family and I wasn't sure that you were going to give solutions, but you did.

Jon: So, when you were all there, what did you all enjoy about the BootCamp?

Debbie: The energy and your enthusiasm. You kept it interesting.

Charlene: Yeah, it was fun, yeah, interesting.

Karyl: You're very entertaining. Practical solutions, they weren't off the wall solutions. They were very practical. Things that we could do that were realistic.

Linda: I agree with that. In real time. It was like OK, here's the problem, here's how to fix it. You had a map, you knew how to go about taking care of it instead of all of these vague generalizations, or you might do this or you might do that.

Tracy?: Yeah, the pictures that you showed before and after. This is the worst return policy, this is the best. Those visuals actually helped a lot because it's like, OK, I get it, you're not just telling me something, you're showing me this is what it looked like before, this is what it looked like after. The visuals were very helpful.

Jon: So, it helped seeing those examples of those businesses. Like some of you have referenced Nell Hill's in Atchison, Kansas.

Carrie: Well, you know me, the skeptic. I could prove your sources and your stories because I went to the winery that you just talked about in Southern Indiana. I think it's Madison and I went to the web page to see the place in Kansas and some of the other places that you talked about. And the German restaurant, I think Karyl went there.

Tracy: No, I went there, I stopped at Schuler's.

Carrie: Well, and Karyl has been there too. Tracy and Karyl have both been there, so you weren't just giving sources of your friends. You were accountable and like I said, you gave solutions.

Jon: Tracy, both you and Karyl ended up at that Schuler's restaurant in Marshall, Michigan didn't you?

Tracy: Completely by accident, I did. I was really impressed by the place and it just kind of solidified in my mind that you can start from very humble beginnings and get there with the right tools, which I feel like you gave us. You left it in our hands, but you gave us the tools to succeed.

Jon: When you say tools, let me ask you this. Are you guys using the binder we gave you?

Group: Yes.

Jon: And right now, just so the listeners understand what you're doing because we're taping this on a Thursday morning. Normally, explain what you guys have been doing and what you started doing after you got back.

Karyl: We decided as a group to meet on Thursday mornings. When we were in Florida we decided to do a meeting at the Ice Cream Store, at Charlene's place, and get together and kind of just network and we decided to keep it at 8:00 on Thursday mornings and then it grew and we kind of went to West Lafayette and we alternate between Lafayette and West Lafayette at the Hilton Garden in West Lafayette. It has been that it's open to anyone and we did put, Tracy put a little announcement in the paper letting the merchants know that there was a meeting on Thursday morning and that anyone was welcome. Well, low and behold, everybody just keeps showing up every Thursday morning, don't they?

Charlene: We have probably 10 people here right now.

Karyl: You probably have some new ones too, don't you?

Charlene: Yeah.

Karyl: When it's a week that someone new pops in, do you kind of feel like we're in control?

Debbie: I think we're a force to be reckoned with. I think that we came back shoulder-to-shoulder and we were just full of so much energy and we all had a plan to follow and I think that everybody just took a step back and said, "Who are these people?"

Tracy: I think, Jon, what you've given us, we have credibility now. I think the city leaders are sitting up and taking notice of us and saying, "Wow. These people are serious." So they're investing back into the downtown area with the trolley and I just think it's given us a lot of credibility and there's more and more people coming downtown just to check it out.

Jon: Well, in fact, didn't one of you actually end up recruiting a business to downtown?

Karyl: Two new businesses coming to downtown. One is in June and one will be opening in August. They want to be downtown. That's kind of what you've done for us. You have made us a Destination point for new businesses.

Tracy: It's easier to sell it. You know, to say, OK, this is a benefit of coming to downtown because we have this momentum going which really started with the 6 of us and it's just easier to sell.

Debbie: It's become contagious now. We are contagious, aren't we?

Jon: And the people that are showing up at these meetings, at first it was just the six of you, right?

Group: Right.

Jon: But then who started coming?

Debbie: We all kind of took turns inviting different people. We have people that are either thinking about opening a business and we're just trying to extend our positive energy and we also have people that already have existing businesses downtown that just want to catch on to what's going on with what we learned.

Tracy: Plus the media, they want to work for us. They're probably coming to us a little bit more than before and they want to help promote downtown. They're making a really conscience effort to work with us, don't you think, girls?

Group: Yeah, absolutely.

Tracy: We've had a lot. The Convention & Visitors' Bureau is now really (involved).

Karyl: And that's a big turn around, it really is.

Tracy: We had the state tourism board at one of our meetings the week before last and she was giving us ideas on how to get involved at the state level with advertising and listings and things like that. So, it's really kind of branched out. We just have credibility now. People understand that it's a group of people, not just one or two people that are trying to do it.

Debbie: Yeah, I think that's a good point. Because Karyl and I had been trying for a long time to rally the troops, so to speak, and get some momentum built and we just couldn't seem to get a foothold, but when we got back from Florida, and we had the rest of you guys and we were all on the same page. Then it was like, ah-ha, maybe these people do know what they're talking about. So, they started listening.

Jon: Let's go back to the actual BootCamp. When we finished the first day, we had a pretty long day that first day and then we broke up into that Evening of Experts. The people who read about this Evening of Experts might not exactly understand what went on or what kind of benefit that is. Can you guys go into a little bit of a description for our listeners? Tell them what happened and how that benefited you?

Karyl: It was the best. I mean we met with professionals. They gave us, or me personally, ideas to go with and I have hooked up with a couple of them. It's just a whole, we just kind of stepped outside of our box to come back in it and the selection of experts that you have at your BootCamp, I don't think that you could get any better.

Tracy: From my point of view, as a new person in the retail industry and being new to the area and everything, you don't really have access to those kinds of people and you don't really know where to even start to look because everybody's trying to sell something to you. But, the people that you assembled, they are very, very honest with us and they were just very professional and I was just really impressed with who you had and the services that they provide are real world, and they're things that are within everyone's reach.

Karyl: Everything was doable for us.

Tracy: It wasn't, "Oh my gosh, it's going to cost!" I was just really impressed with the variety.

Charlene: I think they also gave us new concepts and new avenues to take that I might not have chosen earlier.

Debbie: I think that is was good to have somebody from the outside who didn't know anything about our businesses specifically who could just bring all of their experience to us, lay it out on the table and then we could kind of just pick and choose what you needed. That was really nice.

Jon: So, to give the listeners an idea, we put all of these experts in a room and we scheduled times where you could all sit down with them but it wasn't like a selling situation.

Group: No. No pressure at all. I didn't feel like I was being sold.

Jon: But actually, a lot of you ended up buying.

Group: Right.

Jon: Four of you have since worked with one of the graphic designers, right?

Karyl: Yes, and he will be coming back again.

Jon: Rich Cararro, a former New York Ad Exec. www.clownbike.com. That's one of our BootCamp Experts and he designed four of your print campaigns for four of your businesses. And he's coming back you said?

Karyl: Yeah, tentatively June 24th, I haven't talked to Rich yet, but that's what our game plan is. Since your visit to Lafayette and your presentation has brought 6 or 7 more people on board with Rich.

Jon: That's Great! That's wonderful.

Tracy: He is wonderful to work with.

Jon: Yeah, he's an extremely talented man who's focused just on small businesses which is just great. Any other thoughts on what you enjoyed about the BootCamp down in Orlando? Do you think it would have worked if I would have brought it up to Lafayette?

Group: No, not as well.

Carrie: I think that the location was conducive to getting people relaxed and the complex that you had it in was great.

Debbie: You need to get people out of the day-to-day stress of running the business so that they can relax and really focus on what you're saying and I just think that's real important.

Carrie: Your staff, Shauna and Peg, were great. I mean their attention to detail and what our favorite foods are, that was an odd question, but just little attention to detail.

Group: That was incredible. That was great.

Linda: They pampered us.

Carrie: It was just class, a class act, and we just felt very welcome and definitely away from. I don't think I would have retained as much as I did if you would have come here, and I would have gone to your session, and then had to come back to my real life and my real world and then be enthusiastic to return the following day. I don't think, because you gave us so much information and we essentially didn't have much else to do, but go to your sessions and then fly home. I think it helped for my enthusiasm and my retention of the information whereas if you had been here and not kind of kept us hostage (in the best sense of the word), I don't think I would have kept as much of the information.

Jon: Well, that's part of the BootCamp mentality. We want you to undergo 12 hours of that and then have some time with me, and all of that, so that we have that experience.

Jon: Now, when you guys came back, let's go around and talk about some of the changes you implemented upon your return.

Tracy: I'll go first. I've changed lighting, I've changed my window. This has actually gotten my husband more involved in the business which has in turn, he's helping me more with the financial side of it. It's just kind of motivated me to take a second look at the things that you really take for granted, the exterior, the lighting, marketing in general.

Debbie: I think one of the big things we did is we changed our focus. I think we were trying to diversify way too much and I think one of the things I came out of your BootCamp understanding is that we really needed to focus on one product and a couple of products that we could do very well and so we really have tried to do that. We've tried to really let go of some of the things that just weren't working well for us and realize that we can't diversify too much.

Jon: Linda, how about you.

Linda: I'm redoing everything, I'm starting all over again. I'm excited about it.

Jon: And you repainted?

Linda: No, actually that paint was there but I painted it here in the past year. I feel like I have to do everything all over again. But I think it's a really good move for me to change the products and things that I have in the shop.

Jon: So, since implementing these changes in your business, and the new mindset that you came back with, have you seen any increases in traffic or increases in sales or any other positive customer feedback?

Linda: Sure, I'm making jewelry and I'm selling it as quick as I can make it. So, that's a really positive thing and then incorporating product in here, the new product. People are excited about it and they're waiting for it to be here. It was a mind process first, and I had to get myself going first, into that process, and now I can do the shop.

Jon: How about the rest of you?

Tracy: I have noticed an increase in traffic and in sales. I'd say probably, I guess can't give a good % but I've noticed a big increase in traffic and in sales.

Jon: Were there any specifics that you brought back that you immediately said, I'm going to try this and it worked?

Tracy: The lighting. That worked for me. I have really tall ceilings and very small light fixtures and it was always dark. I always felt, unless the sun was shining in, it was always dark. It was something that I never really thought about but when you pointed it out, it was like, OH. The light bulb came on and now it's a lot brighter store and it made a big difference.

Jon: Carrie or Charlene, anything you guys can think of?

Charlene: We used the RIT dye idea to paint our rug.

Karyl: Which is very cool!

Charlene: We painted a huge sun on our rug which was really kind of exciting because it really brightened up the place.

Carrie: We did lighting. You suggested making the original structure stand out a little bit more. We've done a ton of stuff. We are changing our marketing, you know I was enthusiastic about Rich when I was in Florida and I kept in contact with him and we've done a lot. Rich is doing a lot of stuff for us and he gave us 3 days, so that, and just the overall appearance. It just energized us and gave us kind of a kick in the backside and just changed everything that we're doing. In a positive way. We're more enthusiastic and excited about what we're doing. We were kind of in a rut.

Jon: Carrie, you used one of the publicity techniques (now don't give the specifics of it because I want everybody to come to the camp to use it), but just kind of talk a little bit about one of the techniques you used and what's been the result.

Carrie: Oh, the fundraising. As small businesses, we are hit up daily for donations to different things. Can we donate to this auction or that auction and we used a technique that Jon taught us and by doing that, we were in the paper I think 3 different times. It was not an ad and got positive press from that as well as it drove business into the store. It has been a double edged sword because of that publicity we have gotten more requests, but I feel like I'm in control of how I handle the request for donations and fundraising, whereas before we were just sort of in a crisis management, and oh, there's somebody coming in today, oh, here's \$50! Now I feel like I'm in control of who I'm donating to and how I'm doing that and we are doing it with the proper intent but we're doing it to be charitable and community minded, but we're also benefiting by getting public awareness and press as a result. Even Greg got a letter from somebody that we donate to, a Purdue team, fairly extensively. He sent us a letter of thanks and commented in that letter how many times he's noticed us in the paper and the different things that we're doing. That has changed for us: how we handle those kinds of requests. We feel like we're more proactive instead of responding to other people's demands. Was that vague enough?

Jon: That's great. Let's talk a little bit about what changes you've seen in the community leaders and government officials in your area since you've gotten back from the BootCamp.

Karyl: We have just passed, we're going to have 2 trolleys running from Lafayette to West Lafayette and to back up a little bit on that, Lafayette to West Lafayette just came out with a new branding and so we're trying to combine the Lafayette to West Lafayette gap a little bit. It's kind of like the twin cities. The city officials wanted to get a trolley on the street and so they passed, at a meeting Monday night, and I was amazed at the city officials who were in such support of running 2 trolleys and they'll be running every 10 minutes and they'll run from 7:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night. This is at a cost of about \$220,000 and this is just funding until the end of the year, which is a big project that everyone was in big support of that essentially, because it revitalized, energized and brought more businesses to the downtown.

Karyl: I think they are just on with us to move forward and faster. We've done a lot of things in the last two months since we've been home. It's just been amazing how fast forward Lafayette to West Lafayette have become.

Jon: Let's talk about the community and your consumers. Any changes that you're hearing from them as they're coming into your businesses or approaching you on the street?

Tracy: I think it's just the visibility has increased so much because we're in the news or we're either in the newspaper or on TV and so the people are commenting that, "Wow this is great what is happening down here. It's so neat to see all of these businesses coming down and you know, I think that the community is just really positive to see all of these really nice stores and there's just a lot going on downtown. We have the Hog Wild Art gig going on which is increasing traffic, which is bringing them into the store and raising our visibility even more.

Charlene: I think people just commenting that they didn't even know we had these things downtown. That we're just raising the awareness that downtown exists, period. I think there's a lot of people that didn't realize that such shopping experiences could happen down here.

Karyl: That all started with the BootCamp. The word BootCamp has gotten so much press for us that people wanted to know what we were really all about. It sparked interest.

Jon: That's great. Now, just to remind my listeners who listen to the tape, what we did is this: I said if you can send me 6 businesses, one preferably a restaurant, from the same community, from the same area, that I would come and do the follow-up session. So, two weeks ago, I was in your community to do this follow-up session at the Hilton and we had a packed house, a whole variety of people that were there.

Karyl: I guess they had to turn people away.

Jon: Right, for the dinner.

Debbie: And, that right there, if I could interrupt for just a minute. That to me was a huge change for Lafayette. I mean, to see that many people! That just shows you how much momentum the 6 or 7 of us have brought back because I don't think you would have gotten that turn out if that hadn't been going on.

Jon: So, we had you 6 and I showed them some of the artwork that had been done now by our BootCamp experts, and some of the changes you guys have made, and we talked about some of the potential and just gave them a brief overview of what some of what you all experienced. What's happened since then?

Karyl: Well, since then, that sparked so much interest, that we will be having Rich coming back to Lafayette, hopefully by the end of June. We have 7 or 8 other people that kind of want to jump on board and really, after they saw his work, were just so impressed with it, that he is a little more expensive, but he is just so worth it.

Jon: Any other changes you all have seen?

Debbie: I think some of the downtown people are now more interested in being part of a group or being one instead of each individual business. As a group together, we can be more powerful than just one at a time and so I think more of the downtown businesses are starting to join in on that too.

Charlene: I think we've seen new businesses. Just East of 9th street, which is where we're located, which has been kind of an area that's been growing, we have 3 new businesses that will be opening this summer, actually 4.

Tracy: Yeah, Charlene, when you think about it just between our two lots, we have 5 or 6 businesses that have been there since the last year.

Charlene: Right, and that's phenomenal. And the number of people that have just come in my shop and said, "Are you one of those BootCamp people?" and they're just curious what's happening and we think the downtown is really revitalizing and it's really got the attention of a lot of local people that "Hey, we need to go downtown. There's something going on down there."

Carrie: I can say for me, even during when Jon took a break, during your time here in Lafayette, where you had a 15 minute break, Greg leaned over and he said, "Now I know why you came back the way you were when you got back." I mean, I'm high energy anyway, as you all know, and he said, "Now I know why" because I came back and I was talking a mile a minute and had to go through the binder and I was changing everything and Greg is not quick to change and now he has a better appreciation for what I was trying to tell him and why I was so pumped and why I'm going to these Thursday morning meetings and I don't think it's just with him. I think that anybody that we came back and talked to about the seminar, the BootCamp experience, that was skeptical or whatever, there was just no way to describe what we did down there until they got a taste of it.

Tracy: That is so true because when we were leaving (the evening session), I asked my husband, "Do you see what I mean?" He goes, "Yeah, I could listen to him talk all day." If we could just get your voice or something, it's just so incredibly motivational. It's amazing.

Carrie: Greg and I were already saying, because you talked about a follow-up or advanced BootCamp and Greg's like, "Oh yeah, I'm going. We're going. We're all going."

Group: We're all going.

Carrie: So, tick-tock Jon, get that Key West thing going.

Jon: Some of you know, I don't know how many of you know, but after that session that night which I think ended about 10:00 p.m., some of you know I went up to the Triple X and finally ate dinner that night, but I did run out of gas at about quarter till 11:00, I think Carrie, didn't I?

Carrie: Yeah, I think so. Actually, you ate breakfast. And Jon, of course we're just talking a mile a minute, so excited and Jon was so great he just kind of looked over like, I'm done, I'm fried and it was like, hello, turn off, he doesn't want talk about it anymore.

Debbie: Turn about is fair play.

Jon: It wasn't so much that I didn't want to as I couldn't anymore.

Debbie: That was kind of like our first night there (in Orlando).

Jon: That's true. How did you guys end your first night there?

Tracy: I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

Karyl: Overwhelmed.

Group: Yeah, overwhelmed.

Jon: Is it because it's so much material or is it because it's a different way of looking at your business or?

Group: All of the above.

Tracy: For me, it was just a different way of looking at my business and understanding that while one thing may not be my strength, another thing is, and I need to just get the people that have those strengths in those areas that I don't. I need to get them involved and be OK with that. That's what I came back with: just the idea that there are people out there that can help you accomplish what you need to accomplish. You just have to let them do it and have access to those people and you provided us with those people down there.

Jon: That's great. Now, when I actually came into your businesses for those 45-minute consultations when I was up in Lafayette, did you find those beneficial?

Group: Oh, yes.

Jon: What was good about that versus the BootCamp experience itself?

Karyl: I felt like I had been given validation to what I was changing into. I felt more positive. I felt positive but I feel even more positive with your validation.

Debbie: Oh, I think it was good for both of us, Jon, because you came in and it was like, oh, this isn't what I expected. I had not really communicated well to you what was going on in my shop so it was really important to have you actually be there and then again, you basically gave me a to-do list, a checklist, which we are implementing and I'm real excited about that and I'm real excited about those changes. I'm putting more of myself back on the floor, as you suggested, and even going to put in a small little studio area in the back, on the floor, where people can come in and see me do what I love to do.

Jon: And that is an interesting process for me because you are the first BootCamp class that I've actually been able to conduct a BootCamp and then go actually see the changes that have been implemented in your businesses. So it was new for me and it was a lot of fun for me. There were a lot of other business owners I think in the community who wanted me to come to their businesses too, but we just didn't have the time. Did you hear that from other people?

Group: I'm not surprised.

Karyl: I've also noticed some changes since you've been here. There's been some stores downtown that I see changes in their windows.

Jon: Now for those listeners who are listening to this tape, I've got six owners here on the line. Let's go around starting with Karyl. Karyl, if a business owner is listening to this or a downtown director's listening to this or a Chamber director, what would be the last words you'd tell them about attending this Destination BootCamp?

Karyl: Just go, you won't be disappointed. Pack your bags and go!

Jon: OK, Tracy?

Tracy: Yeah, do it. Don't hesitate! I feel like I learned more marketing in two days than I probably could have ever at a college course.

Jon: OK, Great, Debbie?

Debbie: It's worth it. I agree, whatever it takes, be there.

Jon: Linda, how about you?

Linda: It was a life changing experience for me, so I suggest you go.

Jon: That's great! Carrie?

Carrie: Definitely go. I was a skeptic and it's not a scam, it's not all just fluff and he's not making us say it. I mean it's real solutions for real-life problems. You get real solutions, not anecdotes. So, definitely go, do it.

Jon: How about you, Charlene?

Charlene: I don't think I could improve on what anybody said, I think, just Go!

Jon: That's great, and I think, have you all received calls from anybody from any part of the country? Because we've had people that have actually called us and said we want to hear it right from these owners, so we've given them your name.

Group: Tell them to call. We're more than willing to talk to them. Absolutely. We'll be the cheerleaders.

Jon: Well, you guys are doing great.

Debbie: We've also got our ears.

Jon: That's right, your Mickey Mouse ears from being down here. Well, I want to thank you guys for taking this morning just to take the time and I'll let you get back. Are you still going to have a meeting this morning.

Tracy: I was wondering that. Are we still going to be there?

Charlene: Let me peek out here and see. There's still a few people here, yes. (Charlene looks out into her ice cream store, where the meetings are held.)

Jon: I think you guys should go!

Group: All right then.

Jon: I will talk to each of you again and Carrie, Happy Birthday and congratulations to all of you for coming. You guys have really made a great impression on me and hopefully your words will spread through other businesses owners around the country.

Group: Thanks Jon. Thank You.

END OF TAPE #1

Hi, this is Jon Schallert. You just listened to my interview of the six BootCamp graduates from Lafayette, Indiana who all attended my Destination Business BootCamp in Orlando, Florida in March, 2003. What I'd like you to listen to now is my interview with Dennis Carson who is the Executive Director and Vice President of the Lafayette Urban Enterprise Association and the Greater Lafayette Community Development Corporation. Dennis is the person who decided it was worthwhile for his organization to fund the tuition costs for the six BootCamp graduates that you just heard.

Jon: I'm now with Dennis Carson who is the Executive Director and Vice President of the Lafayette Urban Enterprise Association and the Greater Lafayette Community Development Corporation. Dennis, thanks for taking the time to do this interview.

Dennis: You're welcome, Jon.

Jon: The listeners who have listened to this tape have already heard some of the business owner comments, the six business owners who attended the BootCamp. Let's kind of go back and talk first about how you originally heard about this BootCamp idea.

Dennis: Sure, I originally heard about it through Indiana Main Street. I heard about your name and your company and what you did and I had subscribed to your e-mail newsletter. I'd been following that for probably almost a year and in that of course, you advertise your BootCamp. Then the last time I received one of your e-mail newsletters, it talked about the idea of sending six people down to your BootCamp from a local community and then having you come up and do a follow-up with that and that really intrigued me and I also, during that time, had gotten some more feedback from Indiana Main Street people and some other people about what a good experience it was for them and how they highly recommended you and the program.

Jon: What we heard this morning, when I was interviewing these different business owners, is that they said that they were looking to learn, have a new training experience, a new process by which they were invigorated and they kind of heard about the BootCamp through you, but what were the determining factors for your organization to decide to actually fund these owners to attend the BootCamp?

Dennis: The determining factors were really the recommendations that I had gotten from other people. And also, what I had seen in your e-mails and on your website and other materials that you had. It seemed to be a very comprehensive program. It seemed to be a program that would really energize people to take the necessary steps to grow their business and make it that kind of destination that would make it successful and I knew from that, that it would help me and my job to have a successful downtown.

Jon: OK. So, explain the funding process for the people that are listening. How did you set it up so that they could actually receive funding?

Dennis: Sure. We had a budget set aside for downtown marketing and for purposes such as this. I sent this out to one of the particular merchants and said this sounds like a really neat opportunity, "What do you think?" She came back and said, yeah, I'd like to go

down, but is there any way that you could help underwrite these costs and I said, I'd be willing to do that but I want to broaden it out to more people. So I said, if you can get six people to go, our organization will pay 100% of their cost and if you get 5, we'll pay 90% and so on down. So, that really energized her to go out and find these people and put together a group to go down there. In my mind, that would be more beneficial than just one or two people to get a whole group to go down and do it.

Jon: Sure, and you guys really were the first city that actually jumped on this, the first and only city that jumped on this opportunity. I had many cities call and say we'd like to try this, but you were really the only one that followed through. Now, what were some of the objections you heard through your organization, through community members when you decided to help fund individual owners with your organization's funds to attend the BootCamp?

Dennis: The main objection was that typically funding from an organization such as ours or local government or those kinds of entities, they do more broad-based public types of investments. Ones that they can justify that they are helping the entire area or a whole group or whatever. Rarely do we do things that would help out an individual business owner, particularly because they are in a private sector. They are a for-profit business so sometimes people see that as solely benefiting somebody who is in business and just enhancing their bottom line. But, in my mind, I said if we can make them more successful, we can make this downtown more successful because they are going to attract more private investment and they're going to put more people on the street and again, have a more successful downtown.

Jon: OK, now you didn't attend the BootCamp, but you saw the owners after they came back. Can you describe the process of getting with them after they came back?

Dennis: To my astonishment, they were just so absolutely energized and just so excited about what they were doing and where they were going now. A lot of them really felt like they had a new purpose and clearly understood where their business needed to go and how to get there. And that was so contagious as well because they not only did that for themselves, they started knocking on doors and saying, "Hey, we went to this BootCamp and we learned this and this and we ought to get together and talk about this and do these things." That was really beyond my expectations. I was hoping that the six would get something out of it to help their own business but now, they're spreading the word and bringing these ideas and concepts to help other businesses as well.

Jon: So, they're knocking on doors. What were some of the other changes that you saw them institute?

Dennis: Also, at the same time, we had an organization here called the Downtown Business Center that was involved in a lot of downtown activities but wasn't merchant focused. That had been changing over this past six-month period and what that helped too was these six merchants were also a part of that organization. Actually, some of them became new members but there was a core of them that were already members and it helped energize them and help give focus to the Downtown Business Center and helped them, pushed them a little farther along the curve of becoming more retail-focused and more merchant-focused downtown. We have a more fully developed infrastructure now to support downtown business and retail.

Jon: And so these six came back and started meeting on their own on, Thursday mornings. First, it was just the six of them.

Dennis: Yes. They meet weekly now, and again, the core group of six, but now it's expanded out and they're looking at doing things more cooperatively with advertising and other things related to their business. It seems to be growing every day.

Jon: Now, I visited your community a couple of weeks ago and there are a number of different positive aspects that are going on in the community. What are some of the changes that you've seen in your community leaders or government officials in your area since these owners have come back more energized?

Dennis: I've seen changes in the community itself and changes in the government leaders. Government leaders and other organizations such as mine, the ones that do similar work in the area, I think we've set in motion a change in the attitude of how we approach downtown development. It's still very important to do a lot of the public sector investments and create that environment, but it's equally as important now to make sure that we do have strong retailers, successful retailers, so by giving them the tools and the training, we now understand that that goes hand-in-hand with these public sector investments. From the community standpoint, here in Greater Lafayette, we have two communities with a river going down the center, so we had downtowns on both sides, and what we have now is both sides that see themselves as one downtown and they're working together which hasn't happened in..., at all really.

Jon: Some of the owners, though they didn't mention it on the tape this morning, some of them are now actually extending their hours of operation and there's other changes that are going on in your community.

Dennis: Yeah, for the first time in as long as I can remember, I'm sure decades at least, the merchants are going to be having evening hours until 9:00 p.m. on two days per week and they have got almost 100% of the merchants and retailers downtown to agree to that. We're putting together a very big promotional campaign with that and then another outgrowth has been that we will have a trolley service within our downtown. We'll have three trolleys going at all times that will have service every 10 minutes at points downtown to bring people around our downtown for customers and visitors. We also have now three hotels in the area so they will stop at those points and again bring people in our downtown and to our downtown and it will be a tremendous asset for us.

Jon: So you had these six come back. How did they integrate with the other community groups that are trying to make changes in the community? How did they integrate with those groups? What happened? Were there any conflicts with any of the groups when they came back?

Dennis: Well, there was. A lot of people that weren't there, of course, didn't know what they learned and what they did, so there was some conflict of, "Was this BootCamp just some sort of direct marketing ploy to do mailings as a form of advertising?" "Was that the only thing that they did, or was there anything else?" There was a lot of education about how this was a very comprehensive program that dealt with all aspects of business. There was some skepticism at first, and just feelings about did they really get something out of this, particularly for the price that was paid for it. Once people started understanding that ... and what helped out a lot was that when you came up here and did your presentation, again we had a whole other group that got to see your presentation and what your program does and a whole other new group energized out there and spreading the word as well.

Jon: That was two weeks ago, so talk a little bit about that. I think we had 50 some people at a dinner and filled up a room with people, most of whom hadn't attended the BootCamp. I think we only had 5 of the original BootCamp attendees that were there. So, explain what happened as a result of that.

Dennis: Well, as part of us sending six down to your BootCamp, of course you came up here and did a seminar in the evening. We had a little over 60 people actually attend that and these were people that had heard about it on the street and in our newspaper about these six people that attended down there and were pretty intrigued about it. Of course, we spread the word out as well and we were able to have that seminar and just got tremendous feedback from it. Lots of people stayed afterwards, I know, to ask you questions and to ask me questions and talk with some of the other merchants that attended the BootCamp and it was just a very entertaining evening. We got a lot out of it and again, now we have a whole new set of people that are energized and wanting to make their business a success.

Jon: Like I said to your owners that I was speaking to this morning on the tape, all of this was a brand new experience for me. I knew these principles worked, but I didn't know how well they would work with six owners in the same community, so you guys were a test case for me, to see exactly how this turned out.

Jon: Some of the listeners who are going to be listening to these tapes, Dennis, are going to be individual business owners. Some of them might be Downtown Directors, directors like yourself of another organization. It might even be chamber directors or city planners or mayors of cities. What would you tell those people about helping fund these owners coming to the BootCamp and what would be your recommendation to them?

Dennis: It was a very good investment for us. I think it was really key that we had 6 people go down. I think it would have been beneficial even if we had just one; that would have been helpful, but the investment that we made by sending six was really greatly multiplied because we had that core group of people. We had a core group that was able to come back, talk amongst themselves, and keep the momentum going and then go out in their part of the community, their part of downtown and talk about it and help energize and organize themselves and their entire community about what's going on here and how we can collaborate and cooperatively make this a success.

Jon: Great. Well, Dennis, I appreciate your time and I appreciate you sending your 7 Lafayette owners, there were actually 6 individual businesses and one husband from one organization, so we actually had 7 that you sent down. I appreciate you sending them and I look forward to more of your people from Lafayette coming. We've already had a couple of people that have inquired about our next BootCamp and again, thank you very much for all of your support.

Dennis: You're welcome. Happy to do it.

Jon: Good talking to you today.

Dennis: Thanks.

END OF TAPE #2

You've now heard the words of the six Destination Business BootCamp attendees from Lafayette, Indiana who attended my 2-day, 12-hour BootCamp in Orlando. You also heard the words of Dennis Carson, whose organization paid for these attendees' tuition. Dennis knew that if these owners changed their businesses into consumer destinations, that his entire marketplace would likewise benefit and the entire downtown would become more of a destination to consumers and visitors. This has obviously happened and is still happening today, months after these owners attended my BootCamp.

If you're interested in learning more about my Destination Business BootCamp, I would encourage you to go on-line to our website at www.Marketing-Bootcamp.com where you can download our Destination Business BootCamp brochure and read more comments from other business owners from around the country who are now BootCamp graduates. You can also call my office at (352) 383-9579 if you have any questions about our upcoming Destination Business BootCamp.

If you are an independent business owner in today's competitive environment, I hope you're interested in learning the process of becoming a consumer destination and improving the position of your business in your marketplace. My BootCamp can give you the tools to achieve this.

If you are the director of an organization whose responsibility is to revitalize a marketplace, whether that marketplace is an entire community, a downtown, or a retail district, I would encourage you to consider sending 6 business owners to our next upcoming Destination Business BootCamp. As you've heard on this tape, as the owners reinvent their businesses, their marketplaces are also the beneficiaries of this positive change.

As with the City of Lafayette, we are currently conducting a promotion where if you send at least six business owners from the community, I will conduct a branded marketing seminar in your community at no cost. Full details of this promotion are found on-line. With that, I hope that you will take this opportunity to consider coming to Orlando for our next Destination Business BootCamp and I thank you for listening to this tape.

END OF TAPE