

SCORE: Helping small businesses, one at a time

Stephanie M. Harris

If you're a small business owner, chances are that you've had questions about challenges you have faced or decisions that you need to make. Whether you're starting, growing, or maintaining your small business, having a support network could make a major difference in the success of your business venture. SCORE provides that network, free or at a minimal cost, for small businesses across the country.

What is SCORE?

SCORE is a nonprofit association that has been providing help to small businesses all across America for over 50 years. Largely due to its volunteer network, SCORE delivers a number of services catered to small-business owners. The association has over 340 chapters, one located here in Charlotte.

What services does SCORE provide?

There are several ways that SCORE supports the small-business community. Through workshops, mentorships, and business tools and templates, the association helps entrepreneurs set and reach their goals.

One of the most unique and valuable services that SCORE provides is free mentoring for those running their own businesses. Volunteers and participants, alike, sing high praises of the mentoring that is available. Participants are matched with their mentors according to their industry, questions, or current challenges. SCORE works to make sure that the mentor is a great match, thus making the interaction positive for both individuals.

Jason Fararooei, President and Executive Producer at Yellow Cape Communications, attended one of SCORE's events.

"The event was meant to match entrepreneurs with mentors. It was a type of meet and greet similar to speed dating. It gave me a chance to mingle with business owners who had experience on the path that I am taking," Fararooei said.

As an entrepreneur who owns a company that delivers a wide range of media services, from corporate training to shooting films, Fararooei found the mentorship opportunity exciting.

He said, "Finding someone who I could speak with about my business, who has expertise in my field, would be invaluable."

Fararooei is not the only one who finds the mentorships to be an invaluable component of the SCORE experience. Dave Center, VP of

Marketing/Outreach/Government relations for the Charlotte chapter spoke about the importance of the mentor relationships and SCORE's other services, as well.

"We provide real-world mentoring to help small businesses succeed. Small business success comes from a combination of hard work and risk taking. An individual does not have to take these risks alone ..." said Center.

Many of SCORE's services are available face-to-face or online, making it easy for members to participate even with the busy schedules that are part of the entrepreneurship territory.

How can I get in touch with SCORE to volunteer or become a member?

SCORE has the ability to reach so many participants largely because of its volunteer network. The association welcomes new members and volunteers who wish to mentor or lead workshops. You can learn more about the Charlotte chapter and how to get involved at charlotte.score.org, or call (704) 344-6576 for more information.