

Commerce means Business

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MARCH 2016

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

International Women's Day 2016	3
World Consumer Rights Day 2016	
Signing Ceremony between Courts St. Lucia and Furniture Manufacturers	5
St. Lucia—Taiwan Trade Exhibition	
Launch of Business Month	7
Finance Symposium	
Launch of SBDC Website	9
St. Lucia -Cuba Signs MOU	10
What's with the One Cent and Two Cent Coins?	11
Entrepreneurial Development	12
SBDC Consultation The Business of Lay Away	
Business Planning Essentials Workshop for Entrepreneurs	14
CSME Consultancy	
Computerized Workshop for MSMEs	
Phonebay Inc	
Let's Meet the Staff	
Have you Smiled Today?	
What's in CIC	



MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, INVESTMENT AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Mission Statement

To actively promote and facilitate, in close collaboration with the Private Sector, the establishment of a dynamic investment and trading environment, which anticipates changes in global circumstances, whilst strengthening and enhancing the productive capacities and competitiveness of Industry and Commerce, encouraging good business practices and promoting consumer interest.

Vision Statement

To be an agency that delivers internationally certified quality services for
Private Sector Development in Saint Lucia.

Editor's Note

Welcome to Volume 2, Issue 2 of Commerce means Business,

a publication of the Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs,
produced by the Commercial Information Centre (CIC).

With the start of the New Year the Ministry continues to work diligently and assiduously in realizing its mission, vision and strategic objectives. For 2016 the Ministry is endeavoring to further improve and augment its service delivery to better serve the needs of the public and private sector. In this issue of Commerce mean Business we start off by acknowledging and celebrating women in business, with an emphasis on women at the helm of the manufacturing sector. This is in keeping with International Women's Day which is observed annually on March 8th.

Another major activity celebrated annually by the Ministry is World Consumer Rights Day, which is observed on March 15th. For the first time the Ministry in collaboration with the National Consumers Association hosted a 5k Fun Walk to mark this occasion, in addition to its usual road show aimed at empowering consumers on their rights and responsibilities.

Having touched on the present events of the Ministry, in the issue of Commerce means Business we found it necessary to reflect on our accomplishments in 2015, all in an effort to make 2016 a better year for the Ministry. It was in September 2015 that the Ministry in partnership with its affiliate agencies, particularly the Trade Export Promotion Agency (TEPA) hosted the first ever Business Month. During Business Month a series of events were hosted including panel discussions, seminars and a public debate. This was the first time Business Month was held in Saint Lucia and was marked an outstanding success. Another major activity held in 2015 was the 8th Annual Saint Lucia – Taiwan Trade Partnership Exhibition which undoubtedly was hailed a phenomenal success.

In this issue of Commerce means Business it was important for us to feature one of the most outstanding women in the Ministry who makes it all happen. In so doing we featured our Permanent Secretary Dr. Alison Gajadhar in our staff profile. While Dr. Gajadhar has been with the Ministry for just a year, she had made a noticeable impact in driving the Ministry forward.

For our usual interviews with one of our clients we featured the small business – Phonebay Inc which has been in existence from 2011 and offers a unique product to our market.

The Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs is pleased to present another issue of this publication to our readers, with the hope that we can continue to satisfy your appetite for information through our quarterly publication of - "Commerce means Business."

*Lydia Dariah - Information Officer/Editor
Commercial Information Centre*

Happy Reading!!

Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs Celebrates International Women's Day 2016

The Minister for Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs, Honourable Emma Hippolyte celebrates the success of business women who contribute to the growth and development of Saint Lucia, by wishing them a Happy International Women's Day. The Ministry takes this opportunity to highlight women in business by giving special recognition to those women and the various sectors in which they operate, particularly those we have had an opportunity to interact with.

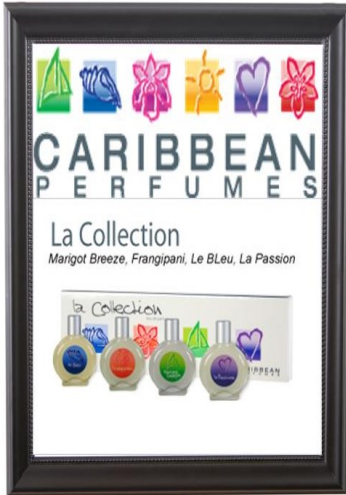
The Ministry has continuously facilitated the establishment and development of women-led businesses in all sectors of the economy. Traditionally, the Agro-processing Sector had been the area of focus for our women who had gravitated from the farm enterprises and into the cottage industry. However, recent trends of registration of businesses owned by women have indicated a sharp increase in the number of businesses contributing to the Services Sector and the non-traditional areas, such as manufacturing.

Additionally, the Ministry along with its affiliate agencies and partners continue to support and guide the private sector through an affordable business registration process, fiscal incentives, investment opportunities and quality assessments.

Eminent global issues such as Globalization, Trade Liberalization and Climate Change makes it even more compelling for both established and women interested in the business community to regard the Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs as the Institution of choice for business support and development of financially viable business options.

The Ministry wishes to encourage its clients to utilize the services offered and invites others to register with the Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs and its allied agencies to gain access to the technical services available to support growth and development of your business.

This year we are pleased to highlight and salute women who own businesses in the Manufacturing and related Sector and recently utilized the many services of the Ministry or affiliate agencies.



Catherine Rioux
CARIBBEAN PERFUMES



Urmie Persaud
CARIBIC DESIGN COMPANY LTD.



Lisa Barton-Volney
DE KLOZE LINE



Devika Alexander
DEBBIES CHIPS



Angela Christine Samuel
CHRISTY CREATIONS



Lina Maria Jackson
CACOA SAINTE LUCIE



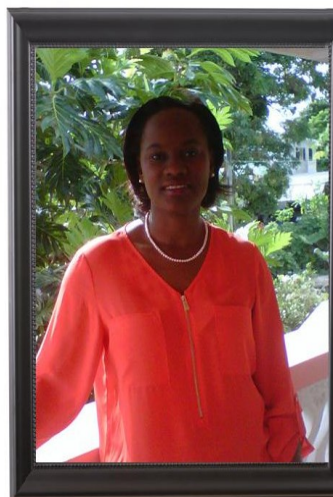
Nadia Jabour
DESIGNS BY NADIA



A.L. Dawn French
DOUBLE F PUBLISHING HOUSE



Dahlia Torrington-St. Marthe
DAHLIA'S BABY SOFTNESS



Rina St. Catherine-Francis
DARK SEAMOSS



Martha Mason
EBENIZA FOAM



Dr. Gilbertha St. Rose
EDEN HERBS



Frances Severin
FRANCES RUB



Cecilia Alexander
FRUTZVILLE



Allison Halliday
KAYZ KREATIONS/ISLAND FAVOURITES



Esther Joseph
KUUMBA DESIGNS



Terril Nicholas
ILLUMINATING DESIGNS



Sophia Jules
INFINITEE DESIGNS INC



Lyn Allison Bristol
LBM DESIGNS



Stephanie Allain
LUBECO



Sharleen Jernel Lagon
JAEYLU DESIGNS



Karen Hippolyte
KAYRIBBEAN HANDCRAFTED SOAPS



Taribba do Nascimento
MEME BETE DESIGNS



Ethelina Lansiquot
MS. ST. ROSE CREOLE DELIGHTS



Dr. Gayle Devaux-Segovia
NATMED



Deborah Bowers
PARADISE WINES & BOOKS



Shirley Ann Edward
SHIRLEY'S CREATIONS



Mae Wayne
STAR PUBLISHING COMPANY LTD.



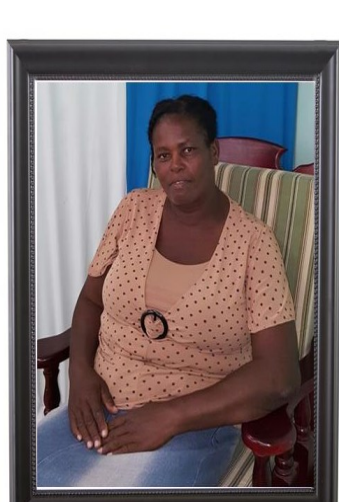
Joan Henry-Louis
PLAS KASSAV



Rose Lascaris
RAFFERTY INTIMATES



Christine Wilson
STUDIO KREATIVITY INC.



Lorna Biscette
SUNSET VIEW BAKERY



Lydia Cazaubon
RAIN FOREST FOODS



Dahlia Ramjaewan-Garia
RAMCO PLASTICS



Claudia Jn Baptiste
THE COUNTRY SHOP COLLECTION



Esther Peter
VIGA MOSS



Shondel Abiola Alexander
ABBY'S EXOTIC BLENDS



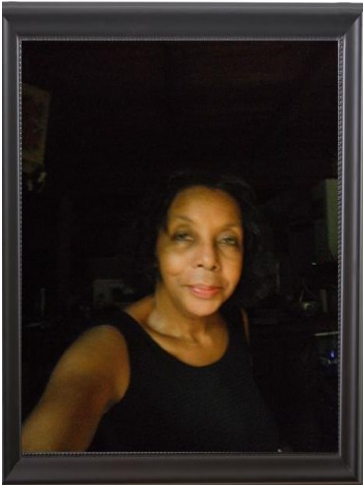
Petra Smith (founder: Mary Smith)
ANJAY'S COCOA STICKS



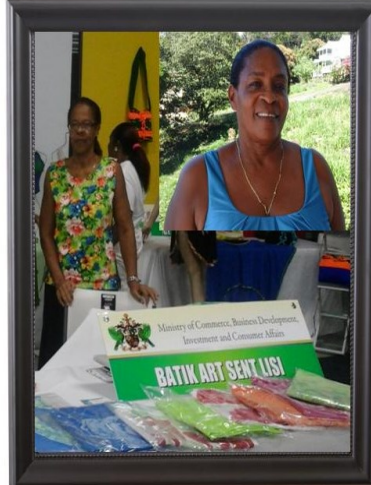
Viola Hunte
VIOLA'S INTERIOR DESIGN & GIFT SHOP



Whilhelmina Auguste
WHILHELMINA'S DESIGNS



Olivette "Oli" Wallace
ART ECLIPSE GALLERY



Euphemia Edmund/Gertrude Cazaubon
BATIK ART SENT LIST



Wilbertha Wilson
WILBERTHA'S LOCAL TREATS



Thelma William
C.W.A.D FASHIONS



Paula Calderon
CARIBBEAN AWNINGS PRODUCTION COMPANY

World Consumer Rights Day 2016

“Antibiotics Off the Menu”

The Ministry joined the rest of the world in observance of World Consumer Rights Day on March 15, 2016 under the theme: “Antibiotics Off The Menu”. The Consumer Affairs Department undertook two public activities to draw greater awareness to the general public about the need to reduce antibiotics in food products.

The main activities planned were a road show and fun walk. The road show was held on Thursday March 10th and took the message of “Antibiotics Off the Menu” to the communities in the North-Eastern part of the island namely: Babonneau, Monchy, Gros Islet and Rodney Bay. Upon a whistle-stop at Babonneau proper, students from the Babonneau Secondary School were brought out to dialogue with officers of the Department about the aforementioned theme.

On Sunday March 13th, the fun walk commenced from Mega J to Pigeon Point at 6:00 am with Hon. Emma Hippolyte Minister for Commerce and Dr. Alison Gajadhar Permanent Secretary of the Ministry participating. Upon completion of the walk, several prizes were given to the participants based on questions in line with World Consumer Rights Day.

The theme “Antibiotics Off The Menu” was proclaimed by Consumer International (CI), a global consumer umbrella organization and was aimed at drawing awareness to its affiliate members of the need to provide their citizens with information about the overuse of antibiotics in food, in particular food producing animals in order to make more informed choices.

The two activities were hailed a success and the Ministry encourages the general to visit the Consumer Affairs Department of the Ministry for further information on their rights as consumers.



A teacher and students of the Babonneau Secondary School being informed about the need to get antibiotics off their menus.

*By: Mr. Damian Monrose
Information Assistant
Consumer Affairs Department*





Signing Ceremony Between Courts St. Lucia Ltd and Local Furniture Manufacturers

The Ministry has successfully facilitated the signing of formal contracts between Courts Saint Lucia Limited trading as Unicomer Saint Lucia Limited and a selected number of small and medium size furniture manufacturers. The contracts will ensure a greater level of certainty and predictability of the supply of locally produced furniture. Under the Agreement, Courts will purchase a guaranteed quantity of furniture from selected local suppliers and will ensure improved branding, advertising and marketing of local furniture products.

This Agreement will assist local suppliers by allowing them to order in bulk, a certain quantity of raw materials without fear of overstocking. This bulk purchasing will allow manufacturers to benefit from greater economies of scale and should in the long term, lead to increased competitiveness. Courts along with the Ministry has over the past two decades assisted local furniture manufacturers with training as well as opportunities to attend furniture tradeshows in the United States and Asia. However, the signing of formal contracts is historic and will help reenergize the local furniture manufacturing industry.

The formal signing of the minimum purchase contracts took place on Friday 26th February, 2016 at the Bay Gardens Hotel. At the ceremony, the Minister of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs Hon. Emma Hippolyte, praised Courts Saint Lucia Ltd. for their contribution to the local furniture manufacturing sub-sector spanning more than 2 decades. Hon. Minister Hippolyte reiterated the need to provide stability and predictability to this important sector which continues to employ skilled workers. She lamented the decline in the number of furniture manufacturers over the years due to cheaper imports and trade agreements which had eroded competitiveness.

The Minister also thanked Mrs. Lorraine Sidonie - OECS Commercial Director-Furniture Unicomer; Permanent Secretary of the Ministry Dr. Alison Gajadhar; Legal Officer within the Ministry - Mrs. Aisha Sealy; furniture manufacturers and other Ministry staff who worked alongside Courts St. Lucia Ltd and the furniture manufacturers to make the Agreement a reality.

*By: Mr. Bonaventura Henry
Commerce and Industry Officer
Commerce and Industry Department*



8th Annual Saint Lucia-Taiwan Trade Partnership Exhibition

The Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs in partnership with the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) hosted the 8th Annual Saint Lucia-Taiwan Partnership Trade Exhibition at the Johnsons Centre, Rodney Bay, from November 27th to 29th, 2015.

The objective of the 8th Annual Trade Partnership Exhibition was to present a wide range of quality goods and services from Saint Lucia and the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the general public and the business community. Additionally, exhibitors should have realized business opportunities and develop strategic networks from the Exhibition.

For the first time a total of sixty exhibitors participated in the Exhibition which included fifty-four Saint Lucian businesses and six businesses from the Republic of China (Taiwan) of the agro-processing, manufacturing, arts and craft and services sectors. A cocktail reception was held on Thursday November 26th, 2015 to officially welcome all the exhibitors particularly the visiting delegation from the Republic of China (Taiwan).

To officially open the trade partnership exhibition, a ceremonial event was held on Friday November 27th, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. at the Johnsons Centre with the opening remarks delivered by Dr. Alison Gajadhar, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry. Dr. Gajadhar in her remarks highlighted the economic and trade benefits of the Exhibition to the Saint Lucian economy and encouraged Saint Lucians to come out to support the micro, small and medium size entrepreneurs. Special remarks were also delivered by His Excellency Ray Mou, Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) on the many opportunities available for trade between the two countries. Remarks were also delivered by Hon. Emma Hippolyte, Minister for Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs who touched on the diplomatic relations which exists between the two countries, as well as, the wealth of opportunities the Annual Trade Exhibition brings to the Saint Lucian economy.

This ceremony also include a cultural presentation by the Corinth Secondary School and a musical rendition by the Monchy Community after School Group. The ceremony then culminated with a symbolic ribbon cutting piece.

The Government hopes that the 2015 exhibition served as an opportunity to create lucrative synergies between the exhibitors; local investors and the business community, in order to foster and promote trade and investment between Saint Lucia and the Republic of China (Taiwan).



Cocktail reception to formally welcome the Exhibitors particularly our visiting friends from the Republic of China (Taiwan)









Launch of Business Month - September 2015

The Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs works integrally with a number of Affiliate Agencies and Business Support Organisations in providing a full spectrum of support services, needed to foster the growth of businesses from incubation to export. It is on this basis that the Ministry designated September as Business Month under the theme, "Economic Growth through Business Support - with a focus on Youth and Women."

The core objectives of Business Month were to:

- ⇒ Create awareness of the functions of the Ministry of Commerce and its Affiliate Agencies;
- ⇒ Celebrate the achievements of Women and Youth in the Business Community;
- ⇒ Generate discussion on Entrepreneurship in Saint Lucia;
- ⇒ Showcase achievements of Affiliate Agencies and their plans to foster Business Development;
- ⇒ Disambiguate the support path of business development from start-up to export.

A calendar of activities was planned by the Ministry in the form of panel discussions; debates; seminars; services and business training expo and other celebratory events in observance of Business Month.

This calendar of month-long activities served as an advertorial piece, highlighting the overall mandate of each entity and how they collaborate to achieve the work of the Ministry and by extension the work of the Government of Saint Lucia.

Business Month was officially launched on Monday, September 7th, 2015, at the National Television Network (NTN) Studio.



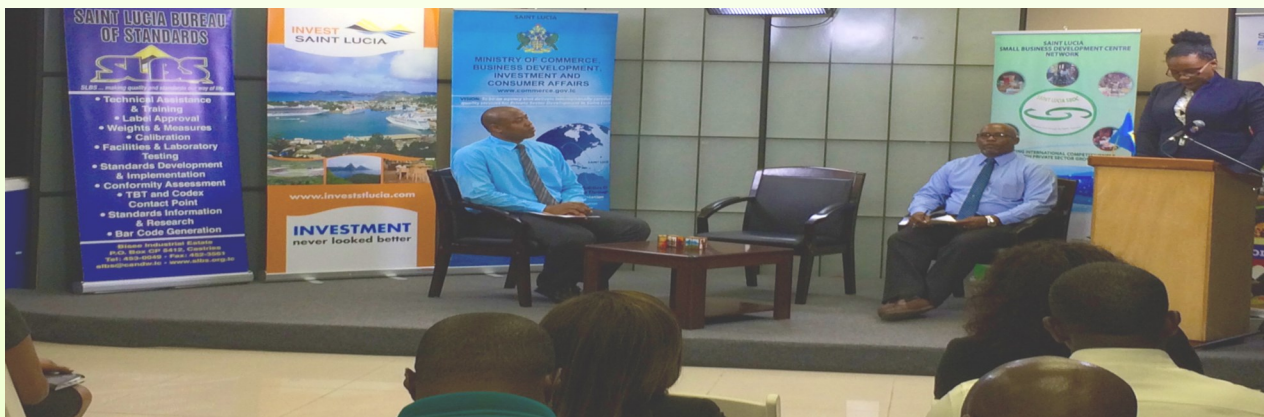
Honourable Emma Hippolyte, Minister for Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs delivered the opening address where she highlighted the importance of the first ever launch of Business Month by the Ministry, which was aimed at creating greater awareness of the Ministry's services and its partner agencies and to stimulate avid discussions among the youth on entrepreneurship.

Remarks were also delivered by Mrs. Natasha Edwin-Walcott – Marketing, Policy Advocacy & Communication Manager of Invest St. Lucia who informed of the agency’s support of Business Month and its role as a partner agency of the Ministry in promoting Investment opportunities for Saint Lucia.

Dr. Mkabi Walcott - Director of the St. Lucia Bureau of Standards, partner agency of the Ministry, highlighted the importance of standards as part of the business development process and further informed of SLBS’ participation in Business Month on September 28th with their launch of World Standards Day and SBA Day –a day dedicated to providing assistance to students seeking information on standards, regulations and conformity assessments for SBA’s.

Chief Executive Officer of the Trade Export Promotion Agency (TEPA) Mrs. Jacqueline Emmanuel-Flood, delivered the closing remarks where she advised of the level of support available to businesses through the Ministry and its support agencies and the expected outcome of Business Month—to inspire and encourage youth and women in their entrepreneurial thrust.

A question and answer session was then held with representatives of the media posing several questions. Dr. Alison Gajadhar, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry addressed some of the questions in relation to Business Month.



By;

*Lydia Dariah
Information Officer
Commercial Information Centre*

Opening Address by Hon. Emma Hippolyte on the Occasion of Business Month

This is indeed a momentous occasion as we mark the launch of the first ever “Business Month” in St. Lucia under the theme “Economic Growth through Business Support”. First, let me applaud the agencies and individuals who saw it fitting to plan this initiative. The main agencies spearheading Business Month are The Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs through its Small Business Development Centre (SBDC), formally SEDU and the Trade Export Promotion Agency (TEPA).

I must also highlight the contributions of our affiliate agencies in making business month a reality including Invest St. Lucia and the St. Lucia Bureau of Standards among others. Some of you may be asking yourselves what is the purpose of “Business Month”, why now and to what aim.

Permit me the opportunity to enlighten you on the significance of this initiative and the rationale for designating the entire month of September as Business Month. We at the Ministry of Commerce have long recognized that despite the number of support organizations available to provide assistance to our business sector in St. Lucia, very few persons are aware of the services and the wealth of resources and information that are accessible to them. Some of these businesses are struggling to survive when the answers to their problems may be just a phone call or mouse click away.

Further, we at the Ministry are constantly reminded of the need to develop and promote a culture of entrepreneurship among our youth in St. Lucia. The onus is on us to reeducate and retool our young people with the mindset of creating employment through business and entrepreneurship as opposed to merely job seeking.

It is with these objectives in mind that we have planned a month of activities which are intended to firstly, highlight the efforts of the various support organizations under our purview, secondly, initiate discussion and debate throughout our populace regarding entrepreneurship and thirdly, reach out to the business community to provide knowledge and resources, that will strengthen their current operations.

Business month allows us to focus on the achievement and challenges faced by the public and private sector. September is thought to be the ideal month for this activity, as it marks the beginning of the school year. It is a month when students enter a higher level of education and is symbolic of growth and new beginnings just as we aim for growth and new businesses within our commercial sector.





BUSINESS MONTH

Speaking of growth and new beginnings, we at the Ministry of Commerce are also pleased to announce the transformation of our small business unit, (SEDU) into the Small Business Development Centre (SBDC). The SBDC represents the adoption of the United States model for small business development, and will help in putting our local MSE sector on a level playing field with their counterparts across the globe. In

November 2014, we achieved a milestone by launching the SBDC Model in St. Lucia, with SEDU as the core SBDC and the Trade Export Promotion Agency (TEPA) as the specialty SBDC with a focus on exports.

Since the launch of the Small Business Development Centre, businesses across St. Lucia have benefited from new training programmes and one on one consultations, all geared to the strategic development of their respective entities. To date over 100 start ups have benefited from the SBDC's Business Essentials training, which helps them to navigate through the do's and don'ts of starting a business. Approximately three hundred and thirty-four (334) businesses have started the formalization process through business name registration and incorporations. I am pleased to announce that of these businesses, a total of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) or 41% are owned by youth under the age of 35 with an almost equal share of men and women owning and operating businesses in St. Lucia. This is an achievement that I am particularly proud of. Hats off to our youth for their forward thinking and compliments to our women who have contributed greatly to the evolution of business in Saint Lucia.

Notwithstanding the SBDC and its remarkable achievements to date, I am reminded that business does not exist in a bubble. There is indeed a wider eco-system at play for which the Ministry of Commerce is responsible. Our affiliate agencies including the Trade Export Promotion Agency (TEPA), the St. Lucia Bureau of Standards (SLBS) and Invest St. Lucia, along with our various departments within the Ministry such as the Consumer Affairs Department, the Investment Coordination Unit, the Import Monitoring Unit and our Commerce & Industry department, all play a critical role in developing and sustaining this eco-system. In so doing, they all contribute greatly in developing our nation.

Invest St. Lucia have done well in promoting our island as a haven for safe investment. TEPA have worked tirelessly in getting our local products through international borders. The Bureau of Standards have overseen improvements in quality across numerous industries. The St. Lucia Coalition of Service Industries have done their part in gradually transitioning our economy from manufacturing to one that is serviced based. In house, our Consumer Affairs Department is championing the rights of local consumers.

Our Commerce & Industry Department is working hand in hand with our industry leaders, while our Import Monitoring Unit and Investment Coordination Units both play their part in guiding policy and improving the ease of doing business.

It is with this rationale of synergy, and the sum of these agencies being greater than their parts, that we celebrate Business Month. It is a month where all agencies are coming together for the greater good. A number of activities have been planned throughout the month of September in observance of Business Month with a bit of something for everybody.

From celebratory events to panel discussions, symposiums, expos and seminars, if you are in business or plan to start a business, this month is for you.

All of these agencies and affiliates fall under the purview of the Ministry of Commerce and are together responsible for developing our commercial sector. This eco-system of which I speak does not end there, as the growth of the commercial sector is also highly dependent on our private sector. To this end, the Ministry is proud to partner with agencies such as the Saint Lucia Chamber of Commerce, the Small Business Association (SLISBA), the Saint Lucia Manufacturer's Association and of course our financial institutions. It is the collaborative efforts of all of these entities, public and private sector that shapes the commercial sector, and it is imperative that we create and sustain synergy across all stakeholders in order to realize our dream of an even better Saint Lucia.

Business owners and potential entrepreneurs take note. This month is your month. It was planned with you in mind. I quote the words of Mr. Peter Drucker, noted Management Theorist in saying, "Today knowledge has power, it controls access to opportunity and advancement". Indeed, knowledge is the key to unlock the door of opportunities. I am therefore urging you to participate in the activities and avail yourselves to the numerous opportunities available during business month. The knowledge you may gain, may just be the door to the opportunity you have been waiting for.

In closing, I want to reaffirm my Ministry's commitment to the development of the commercial sector in Saint Lucia and I say this with my thoughts specifically on the Micro, Small and Medium enterprise sector. We are committed to create an enabling business environment for our business community and this initiative is testament of that fact. Let me again, on behalf of the Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs, and on behalf of the Government and people of Saint Lucia, commend the organizers of this event. I am also hoping that this will not be a one off event, but rather, that "Business Month" will be an ongoing annual initiative spearheaded by my Ministry and with direct involvement of our private sector partners. Ladies and gentlemen I thank you and I now declare business month officially opened.

I Thank you.

Finance Symposium for MSMEs

As part of activities in observance of Business Month 2015 under the theme, “Economic Growth through Business Support – with a focus on Youth and Women,” the Ministry hosted a Finance Symposium tailored to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) on Monday September 21st at 9:00 a.m. at the Bougainvillea Conference Room, Bay Gardens Hotel.

Given the constraints faced by MSMEs in accessing Finance, the symposium served as an opportunity to enlighten business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs on the various financial instruments available to them, in facilitating the growth of their business. This initiative was also in keeping with the Ministry’s mandate to provide training and consultation to entrepreneurs, as a means to promoting the sustainable growth of MSMEs, which comprise 76% of our business sector.

Honourable Emma Hippylyte, Minister for Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs in her welcome remarks to the entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of the MSMEs sector to the sustainable development of Saint Lucia and more importantly the significance of such training opportunities in enabling their continued development.

The symposium brought together a cadre of lenders and investors who presented on various areas of Finance with approximately forty-five entrepreneurs benefiting from the presentations. Mr. Peter Lorde, Consultant of Virghen Consulting presented on the topic of **Planning and Preparing your Business for Establishment or Expansion** and emphasized on risk analysis and ratios in his presentation. Mr. Shawn Isaac of Sagicor Life Inc. presented on **Risk Management and Risk Reduction**.

Mr. Shaka St. Ange, Senior Business Development Officer of First Citizens Investment Services, presented on **Equity Financing** touching on areas, such as crowd funding, angel investors and venture capital. Mr. Bryan Vidal, Customer Relationship Executive and Mrs. Monette Johny-La Barnard, Assistant Customer Relations of Bank of Saint Lucia made a detailed presentation highlighting many pertinent areas on the topic – **How to be an Attractive Prospect for Lenders and Investors**.



Participants of the symposium who demonstrated a keen interest in the presentations asked many questions all in an effort at gaining information in order to foster the growth of their businesses. The symposium also served as an avenue for networking among MSMEs, lenders and investors, on financial instruments and the strategic management of finance which was done in the second part of the symposium.

The Finance Symposium was quite successful as it served as an opportunity to better inform and advice MSMEs on the financial products available to them with the objective of increasing their opportunity to access these financial products and services.

The Ministry wishes to acknowledge and thank the sponsors of the Finance Symposium who made it all possible – Bank of Saint Lucia, First Citizens Investment Services and Sagicor Life Inc., Axcel Finance, 1st National Bank St. Lucia Ltd, St. Lucia Development Bank and St. Lucia Civil Service Co-operative Credit Union Ltd.



*By: Lydia Dariah
Information Officer*

Launch of SBDC Website as a Highlight of Business Month

The Ministry officially launched its Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) Website – Make Saint Lucia Enterprising on Tuesday, September 29th at 10:00 a.m. at the University of the West Indies Open Campus. This was in keeping with activities in observance of Business Month under the theme, “Economic Growth through Business Support – with a focus on Youth and Women.”

This initiative also formed part of the Ministry’s mandate to promote sustainable entrepreneurial growth and development in Saint Lucia. The SBDC Website will serve as a one-stop virtual platform providing entrepreneurs with the tools needed for starting a business and expanding an existing enterprise.

It will be equipped with up-to-date information on business theories and practices; business legislation, regulations and administrative procedures; market intelligence; funding and training opportunities; network links and other pertinent business-related resources.

It is envisioned that through the SBDC Website the Ministry will be an information gateway for entrepreneurs and investors, thereby facilitating the ease of doing business in Saint Lucia.

This easily accessible, user-friendly platform can be accessed through the link www.sbdcsaintlucia.org.





SBDC Staff with Hon Minister Emma Hippolyte

*By: Lydia Dariah
Information Officer*

Cuba and Saint Lucia Sign MOU to Promote Trade

On July 16, 2015, Honourable Emma Hippolyte, Minister of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs and Roberto Verrier, Director of the Centro de Promoción del Comercio Exterior y la Inversión Extranjera (CEPEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) during a recently held Cuba-Caribbean Business Forum.

This MOU cements the on-going relationship between the TEPA and CEPEC to expand trade between the two countries. "The Government of Saint Lucia hopes that this relationship will also deepen existing bi-lateral relations and examine future trade opportunities to be pursued between St. Lucia and Cuba," according to Honourable Minister Emma Hippolyte.

The signing of this MOU was witnessed by a delegation of 6 exporters who participated in the Cuba-Caribbean Business Forum, which was held from 15-17 July, 2015 namely; Caribbean Awnings Production Co. Ltd; Harris Paints St. Lucia Ltd; Viking Traders Ltd; Natmed Ltd (Caribbean Blue Trademark Products); Chemical Manufacturing and Investments Co. Ltd. and Baron Foods (St. Lucia) Ltd.

The Forum was hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba and the authorities of the Government of Santiago de Cuba to mark the 500th Anniversary of the City of Santiago de Cuba.



TEPA continues to work arduously to introduce Saint Lucian products in a systematic and structured manner into Cuba and this involves working closely with Dr. Charles Isaac, Saint Lucia’s Ambassador to Cuba and Jorge Francisco Soberon Luis, Cuba’s Ambassador to Saint Lucia.

Participation in this forum allowed TEPA the opportunity to present a selection of high quality Saint Lucian products to the Cuban market for potential export opportunities.



Source: Saint Lucia Trade Export Promotion Agency (TEPA)

What's with the One Cent and Two Cent Coins?

As of 1 July, 2015, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) discontinued the issuance of the one cent and two cent coins to the commercial banks operating within the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU).



The ECCB Monetary Council took the decision to withdraw these coins from circulation based on their low purchasing power and the significant cost of producing and handling them.

As a result of this decision, effective the 1st day of July 2015, commercial banks and retailers ceased to issue these coins to consumers during transactions. However, since the withdrawal process will extend for a period of five years, consumers are still able to use these coins to transact purchases after the implementation date of July 1st, 2015.

It is important to note that up until June 30th, 2020, business places should continue accepting the coins as they remain legal tender but should not give them back as change. These coins are redeemable at the commercial banks.

In order to facilitate cash transactions between retailers and consumers, a rounding off system has been introduced. If consumers do not have the exact amount, the amount that has to be given back as change and the prices of goods and services will be rounded up or down to the nearest 5 cent increment.

So for example, items that end with 1, 2, 6 or 7 cents, if the consumer does not have the exact amount, prices will be rounded down, therefore, items costing \$1.01 and \$1.02 will become \$1.00 and \$1.06 and items costing \$1.07 will be rounded down to \$1.05.

On the other hand, items that end with 3, 4, 8 or 9 cents, if the consumer does not have the exact amount, the rounding up will take place. Therefore, items costing \$1.03 and \$1.04 will be rounded up to \$1.05 and items costing \$1.08 and \$1.09 will be rounded up to \$1.10.

It is important to note that in rounding of the items, the cost of individual items should not be rounded.



According to the Director of the ECCB's Currency Management Department, Pamela Osborne if someone goes to a supermarket to purchase several items each item should not be rounded off individually; what will happen is that the cashier will total the items at the end. Once tallied, if the consumer does not have the exact amount, that is when the rounding will take place and that will be inclusive of the value added tax (VAT) or any taxes or fees that may be charged.

The rounding system is not be applicable to purchases made by cheques, credit or debits cards.

The withdrawal of the 1 and 2 cent coins is not unique to the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU).

In 2004, the Netherlands discontinued the issuance of 1 and 2 cent coins; Canada withdrew their penny in 2013 and as recently as May 2014, Barbados withdrew its 1 cent coin. The measure is also being debated in the United States.

This decision will impact every consumer, therefore, the Consumer Affairs Department urges all consumers to be informed and take charge.



*By: Mrs. Merlicia Williams-Davy
Information Officer
Consumer Affairs Department*

Entrepreneurial Development

The Small Enterprise Development Unit (SEDU) undertook an exercise aimed at streamlining the assistance available to existing and potential enterprises, as it relates to training needs. The process required the collation of relevant information to facilitate micro and small businesses' access to training in a timely manner.

This exercise was carried out, as there was a recognized need to develop a database of structured, recognized trainers that can assist SEDU's clients in closing skills gaps and additionally positioning them for greater marketability through affordable formal skills and academic certification programmes and using recognized training centers.

The objective of the exercise was therefore to clearly identify the training programmes and institutions available locally which can support skills development and increase the marketability of our local micro and small scale business operators and owners.

Therefore, the Ministry of Commerce sought the assistance of the Ministry of Education as the primary regulator of training and education, in identifying registered trainers and training institutions that provide certified or recognized courses or programmes and could assist in Entrepreneurial Development.

The range of institutions which were considered included:

- ⇒ academic or skills-based,
- ⇒ public, private or quasi government,
- ⇒ facilitators of face to face interaction or other systems,
- ⇒ higher learning or academic training institutions to vocational, skills-based services, and
- ⇒ sector specific programmes e.g. offering training in plumbing or more general opportunities, such as those focused on core managerial and entrepreneurial studies.



The target audience for the training services included entrepreneurs from senior secondary school students (potential entrepreneurs) to established entrepreneurs. The information will serve to better position our entrepreneurs for regional and international markets and enhance their skills for improved competitiveness.

For example, the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) obtained through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme opens opportunities to clients to be able to establish the businesses in other CARICOM territories. SEDU would then serve as a notification point to our clients where the information would allow entrepreneurs to close major skills gaps.



Additionally, the programmes on some level would have been verified by a partner Ministry and SEDU will certainly dialogue with the Ministry of Education, and monitor clients feedback and improvement in skills through our client interactions.

The possibility also exists for the clients to benefit from discounted rates as we negotiate the terms with Private Sector agencies based on factors such as (i) the number of clients who use the services and (ii) the regularity of our clients using the services. SEDU is very pleased therefore to coordinate this sought of Public-Private Sector collaboration.



Currently the results of the survey show that the Ministry of Education has identified sixteen (16) registered training institutions and at least seven (7) additional private sector agencies have been considered based on experience, quality of service delivery, and areas of expertise.

To this end Ministry will continue to seek out ways to assist the owners of micro and small businesses to propel themselves forward, as the engine of economic development.

By: Mrs. Roycelyn St. Hill Howell
Business Development Officer
SEDU

SBDC Consultation

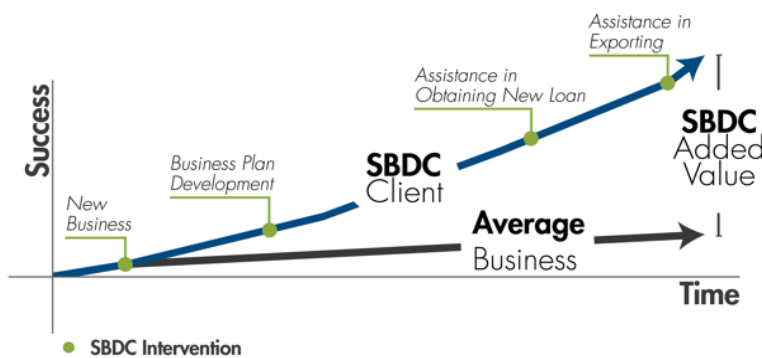
The Ministry is continuing its efforts to facilitate growth of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Sector in Saint Lucia through the recent launch of the Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) and the SBDC Network of Partners.

As the Ministry moves forward with the implementation of the SBDC program, a team of visiting consultants from the SBDCs in Belize and the United States were on island from Monday June 29th to Thursday July 2nd, 2015 to provide some guidance and insight into best practices of SBDCs operating globally.

This four day consultation focused on two particular areas of need in the context of Saint Lucia’s SBDC Program as follows:

- ◆ To review the current operations of the Small Enterprise Development Unit (SEDU), a Department within the Ministry of Commerce. SEDU will serve as the SBDC in Saint Lucia and seeks to amend its own operating procedures in order to adopt the SBDC model. The Department has been working with a cadre of Private and Public Sector entities involved in Business Support Services. These entities form part of the wider SBDC network in Saint Lucia.
- ◆ To meet with Academia involved within the SBDC Network including Monroe College, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, University of the West Indies (UWI) Open Campus, The National Skills Development Centre (NSDC) and the National Research and Development Foundation (NRDF). Academia plays a critical role within the SBDC Network as a resource for training and research for current and future business owners and entrepreneurs.

SBDC in the life of a small business



The results of the consultation included the provision of a strategic plan for SBDC implementation in Saint Lucia and a framework for continued sustainable collaboration between SEDU and Academia. The Consultation was funded by the Organization of American States (OAS) .

By: Mr. Esli Lafeuillee
Business Development Officer

SEDU

The Business of Lay Away

Throughout the months of June and July 2015, the Consumer Affairs Department embarked on an extensive educational exercise with businesses that conduct Lay Away transactions.

The objective of these island-wide interactions was to reinforce to these businesses their obligations when conducting these transactions in accordance with the Consumer Credit Act, No. 29 of 2006.

Thus far, the Department has met with seventy-eight (78) businesses in Castries, Rodney Bay, Soufriere, Choiseul and Vieux Fort. These businesses have all welcomed this informative drive; many of which were aware of the aforementioned Act.

It was against this background that the Department saw the urgent need to heighten its outreach programme regarding the provisions contained in the Consumer Credit Act.

Among the provisions stipulated therein are:

“A seller shall **not** apply interest charges to the purchase price of any good on the Lay Away Plan.”

“A seller shall serve or cause to be served on the consumer within fourteen days after the making of a Lay Away Plan a copy of the Lay Away Plan.”

“A consumer may, at any time before the final payment under a Lay Away Plan falls due, be entitled to cancel the Lay Away Plan by giving notice of cancellation in writing to the seller.”

“Where a consumer defaults in paying installments on the Lay Away Plan, the seller shall be entitled to cancel the Lay Away Plan by giving the consumer notice of cancellation in writing.”

Where a Lay Away Plan is cancelled pursuant to subsection (2) a seller may retain a cancellation fee which shall not exceed **five percent** of the purchase price.”

It is hoped that this exercise will minimize and prevent, as much as possible, any misunderstanding between businesses and consumers engaging in Lay Away transactions but would rather enhance and ensure greater clarity for future conduct of such business transactions.

Both businesses and consumers are urged to avail themselves with a copy of the Consumer Credit Act, No. 29 of 2006; which does not only address the Lay Away Plan but also speaks to Hire Purchase and Credit Sales. This Act is available for sale at the National Printing Corporation.



*Mr. Damian Monrose
Information Assistant
Consumer Affairs Department*

Business Planning Essentials Workshop for Entrepreneurs

The Small Business Development Unit (SEDU) of the Ministry has sort to operationalise one of the many objectives of the Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) in an effort to facilitate growth of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Sector in Saint Lucia.

SEDU, under the SBDC framework has organised a “**Business Planning Essentials**” Workshop targeting new clients who wish to start a business and acquire knowledge to better manage their small business from the onset. The workshop started in February of this year (2015) and to date over 75 entrepreneurs have been trained. This training is being held monthly - on the third Thursday or Friday - in the Conference Room of the Ministry. New clients with existing businesses who need the exposure are also encouraged to participate.

The focus of the workshop is primarily to inform our new entrepreneurs of the basic, but essential, aspects of starting a business, as well as, to provide an understanding of the environment within which they will be operating. Topics include:

- ⇒ Overview of the SBDC
- ⇒ Business Idea Evaluation
- ⇒ Market Research
- ⇒ Importance of Inland Revenue Department (IRD) and the National Insurance Corporation (NIC)
- ⇒ Benefits of Business Name Registration.



Participants have indicated much appreciation for the sessions and have requested similar workshops such as Financial Management, Product Costing & Pricing, Marketing and Customer Service.

*By: Mr. Egbert Stevens
Business Development Officer
SEDU*

Consultancy to Strengthen the CSME Regulatory and Market Regimes

In accordance with Paragraph 2 (a) of Article 78 of the CARICOM Revised Treaty Establishing the Caribbean Community, one objective of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) is to create, “full integration of the national markets of Member States of the Community into a single, unified and open market area.”

In order to fully realize this objective, in July 2014 the CARICOM Secretariat initiated a consultancy to support the implementation of a project under the 10th European Development Fund entitled, “Strengthening Regulatory and Market Regimes in the CSME.”

The overall purpose of this project was to assist CARICOM Member States to improve and strengthen their regulatory, administrative and institutional arrangements, to enable achievement of the objectives of regional economic integration and the functioning of the Single Market in particular.

The consulting firm BKP Development, Research and Consulting was contracted to undertake a fact finding mission within Member States, to address three critical areas:

- ⇒ Intra-CSME Rights of Establishment
- ⇒ Strengthened Restrictive Business Practices, Enforcement and Administration
- ⇒ Intra-CSME Cooperation and Coordination System to Regulate and Enforce Consumer Protection



A key area under the intra CSME Right of Establishment regime was the drafting of a policy on the development of a Single Jurisdiction. Upon completion of the draft CARICOM Member States were required to undertake a review of the policy among key stakeholders through a consultation process.

In this regard, the Ministry in collaboration with the CARICOM Secretariat – CSME Unit convened a one day consultation with public and private sector representatives to comprehensively review the draft policy on June 11th, 2015, at the Coco Palm Resort.

The consultancy commenced with a presentation by Mrs. Gladys Young, Senior Legal Officer - CSME Unit on the core CSME regimes; single jurisdiction; strengthening of the competition and consumer protection framework; the Online Companies Registry; the Integrated Labour Market Information System and the CSME Application Processing System.

BKP Consulting then presented on key areas of the Draft Framework Policy. Discussions then ensued among attendees on areas concerning double taxation; complexities of reaching a single currency among Member States; standardization of business registration procedures; amendment of legislation and harmonization of administrative procedures among Member States to name a few.

Officials of the CSME Unit and BKP Consulting expressed satisfaction with the comments and recommendations of the public and private sector representatives on the draft framework policy on Single Jurisdiction. Saint Lucia was the first Member State to undertake a strategic review of the said policy.



By: Ms. Lydia Dariah

Information Officer

Commercial Information Centre

Computerized Management Accounting Systems

Workshop for MSMEs

The Ministry in Collaboration with the Caribbean Development Bank – Caribbean Technological Consultancy Services (CDB/CTCS) Network hosted a training programme aimed at improving the capacity of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Saint Lucia. This training was within the mandate of the Ministry and CDB/CTCS Network being to enhance private sector capacity and to exploit the many opportunities offered within the local, regional and international markets.

The training took the form of a four (4) day workshop in QuickBooks Accounting Systems, held at the ICT Centre from Monday, April 20th, 2015 to Thursday April 23rd, 2015, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Fourteen (14) MSMEs benefited from the hands-on training exercise. They were trained on using QuickBooks to better manage their accounting systems.

The workshop was hailed a resounding success by each participant and it is expected that a second workshop would be held sometime in the near future.



By: Mr. Jonathan Allain
Business Development Officer
SEDU

Let's Meet the Staff - Dr. Alison Gajadhar



Dr. Alison Gajadhar holds a Bachelor of Science Degree (First Class Honours) in Pure Chemistry and Food Chemistry from the University of the West Indies, Jamaica. Given her exceptional performance in this field of study, she was the proud recipient of the University Dean's Prize for best performance in the Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences in all three campuses. Subsequently, she was awarded a University Scholarship by UWI where she continued to pursue her lifelong passion and attained the Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry with High Commendation from UWI, Jamaica in 1999.

Dr. Gajadhar also holds a Certificate in Chemical Metrology from Jamaica, an Advanced Certificate in Quality Management and Productivity from the Productivity Standards Board Academy of Singapore and a Certificate in Project Management from the Project Management Institute of Pennsylvania. In addition to public and private sector administration, her areas of expertise include standardization, conformity assessment, quality management systems and technical barriers to trade .

A familiar face to many, Dr. Gajadhar has worn many hats having served in various capacities in both the public and private sector. From 2001-2007 she served as Executive Director of the Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards (SLBS), with responsibility for defining the strategic direction of the Bureau. Following which, she lectured on Quality Management for the Advanced Certificate Level Program for Project Management Professionals. Up until 2014 she served as Special Adviser on Technical Barriers to Trade for the CARICOM-Canada Trade Negotiations. From 2007-2012 she operated as Managing Director of Ecosun Inc. and AMK Inc., while undertaking some major consultancy work funded by the European Union and US-Aid which included among others, implementation of ISO9000 Quality Management System within the Ministry of Commerce. During the period 2007-2011, she also served as an Independent Senator in the Parliament of Saint Lucia.

In 2012 Dr. Gajadhar had a shift in career and joined the Government Service. Since then she has served as Permanent Secretary with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Infrastructure, Port Services and Transport.

On March 28th 2015 she was appointed as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs. With the Ministry's core mandate being private sector development, she brings to the Ministry her wealth of knowledge and experience from the private sector as well as an understanding of the challenges impacting the development of the business sector. Since joining the Ministry Dr. Gajadhar has commissioned a diagnostic review of the Ministry to help improve its strategic operations to better serve its clients.

In addition, Dr. Gajadhar has served and continues to serve on many Boards of Directors in the public and private sector, both at the national and regional level, and she is a proud mother of 3 beautiful girls.

Dr. Gajadhar is delighted to be with the Ministry as she works towards reshaping its approach to business development, investment, consumer affairs and trade.

Have you SMILED today?

SMILE

I once heard that - "a smile is an inexpensive way to improve one's looks." I have also heard that "a sincere smile really works." I am not sure what you have heard, but what I can tell you is, a smile makes you feel good and it sure makes people around you feel even better. We all face difficult days but through it all, if we at least try to smile, I am sure that our difficult days may lessen.

SMILE!

Not only because you are special, but because you are beautiful. Embrace life to the fullest as the next day is not guaranteed. Forgot about the past and live life positively.

Let's start each day with a smile - (a truly rare gem).



Smiles of SBDC Staff

*By: Mrs. Ruthanne Carasco-Phillip
Business Development Officer
SBDC*

Phonebay Inc

Business focused; driven; innovative; confident; determined and optimistic are just a few of the qualities which can be used to describe Mr. Chris Dahoma, Managing Director of Phonebay Inc. This young, industrious entrepreneur is highly self-motivated and even when faced with business challenges; he remains committed in making Phonebay Inc a cut above the rest.

Phonebay Inc was registered in 2011 through the Small Enterprise Development Unit (SEDU) of Ministry and is located at CDC Block H, Darling Road, Castries. The company offers internationally certified cell phone service and repair, while specialising in retail of new and refurbished phones. Through this approach the company is able to meet the budget of a wider range of customers.

Phonebay Inc. also provides cell phone related electronic devices, such as, Bluetooth products, as well as, specialized phones, such as, waterproof phones for customers who work in harsh environments. Phonebay Inc. is also one of the only companies in the Caribbean which has the ability to semi manufacture, customize and manipulate phone and tablet cases to fit most of the phones on the market. An innovative business approach which keeps customers satisfied with the services and products of the company.

When asked what was the inspiration which led to this business venture Mr. Dahoma indicated that, "having realized that the cellphone industry was booming, whereby practically everyone owned a cellphone; it was obvious that users would require constant services, upgrades, parts and accessories that would enhance their experience. Additionally, with several years of practical experience in cellphone repair and with a Certificate in Master Cellphone Repair Technician from Wildpcs Training Institute, USA, I decided to establish Phonebay Inc."

Since the establishment of Phonebay Inc Mr. Dahoma added that, "Customers are very satisfied and most times impressed with our international level of cell phone repair and our excellent customer service given that we put time and effort in catering to the needs of customers. They are also very impressed with our wide range of products which are unique to the market. We are labelled by customers as the store with the widest variety of accessories for mobile phones locally."

Mr. Dahoma however applauds the Ministry for the assistance provided with the development of his business. He has participated in several training programmes offered through SEDU such as Small Business Management; Peachtree Accounting; Financial Management and Customer Service Delivery, all of which has improved his overall business operations by helping him maintain more accurate accounting records.

He further expressed that, "the Ministry has helped me in understanding and applying standard business procedures to enhance my business operations. They have also facilitated access to opportunities for networking with public, private and even regional and international entities. I would therefore encourage other potential and existing entrepreneurs to visit the Ministry for assistance with business development and more importantly to participate in the various training workshops, trade shows and exhibitions to showcase your goods and services."



When asked what advice he would give to entrepreneurs who maybe experiencing challenges with their business operations, his words were, *"If the business does not pose a challenge, then it will not give you the drive that makes a successful entrepreneur. If you do not see a challenge, then something is wrong and you are missing a lot in effectively planning of the venture. You will then have to step back and do some more investigating and seek assistance with market research. The challenges are there and when you find them, tackle them through creative and innovative approaches."*

In concluding Mr. Dahoma indicated that being successful requires proper training in the management of finances as well as strategic networking. Above all it requires industriousness and focus.

The Ministry wishes Mr. Chris Dahoma continued success in his business venture and encourages other potential and existing entrepreneurs to follow the footsteps of Mr. Dahoma in seeking the assistance of the Ministry in helping to make your business dream a reality.

*By: Lydia Dariah
Information Officer*



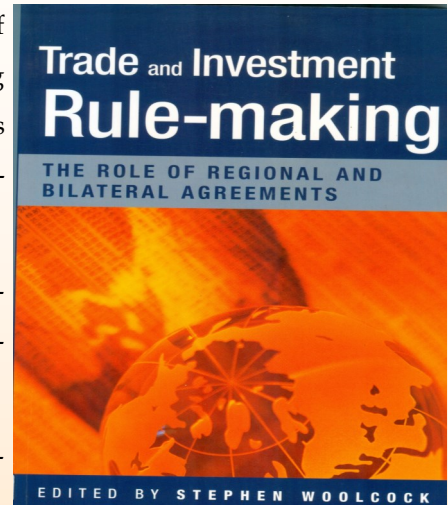
See What's Available at CIC

Regional and Bilateral Agreements play a pivotal role in shaping trade and investment rules globally. However, this has not been subject to much debate.

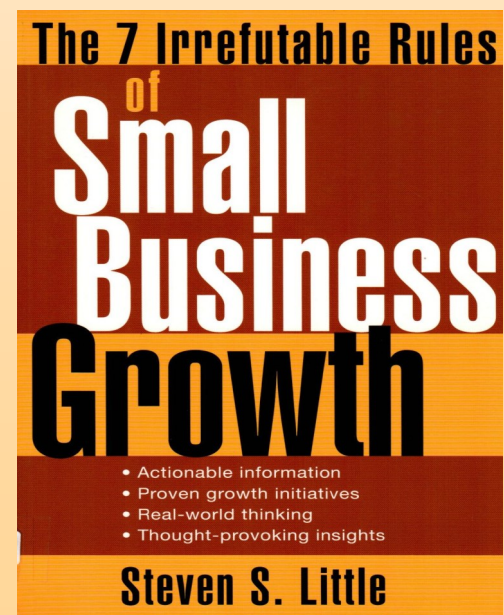
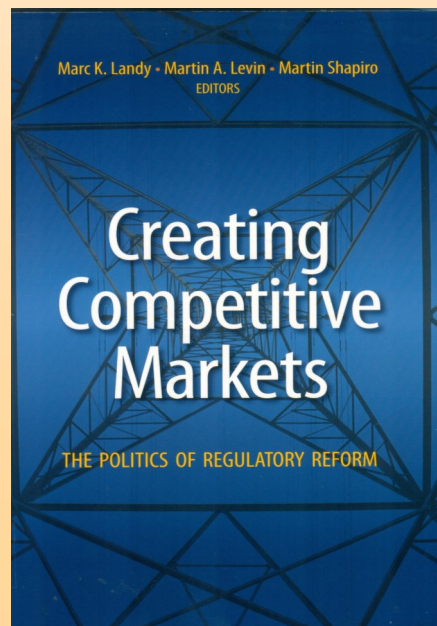
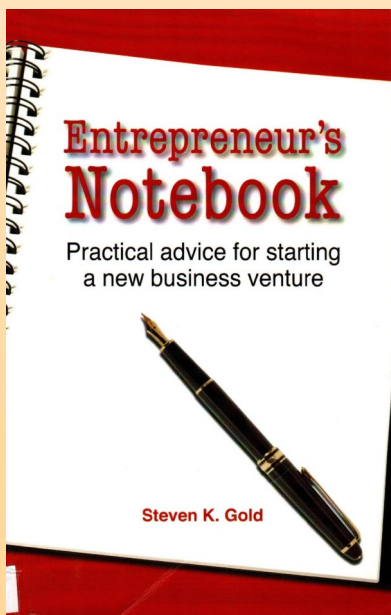
The publication entitled, "Trade and Investment Rule-Making : The Role of Regional and Bilateral Agreements" seeks to provide a better understanding of the role and impact of these agreements on rule-making. It also highlights the interaction between regional and other levels of rule-making in the international trade and investment regimes.

The book which is available at the Commercial Information Centre will appeal to anyone interested in gaining a deeper insight into the rules that govern trade and investment..

Feel free to visit the Centre to request this publication to enhance your understanding of trade and investment.



Other Publications Available at CIC Includes





“Success is a state of mind. If you want success - start thinking of yourself as a success. “

Dr. Joyce Brothers

The Ministry of Commerce, Business Development, Investment and Consumer Affairs welcomes your comments and suggestions towards improving this publication. The Ministry would also like to encourage all staff members to submit articles for the upcoming issues of *Commerce means Business*.

Kindly email the Commercial Information Centre at cic@govt.lc with your articles and feedback.

Thank you to all who contributed towards this second issue of Volume two of *Commerce means Business*.



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