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## STRICTLY BUSINESS

## Christmas shopping season favors employees

By Cheris Hodges  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The chill in the air means more than December. It's also the apex of the Christmas shopping season.

For most students, Christmas break is a welcome event. The rush of finals is over. Now it is

time to rush to the mall and pick up gifts for special friends and family members. How are students supposed to buy these gifts without asking mom, dad, and the grandparents for the money? Simple. Get a job.

With unemployment in Mecklenburg County at 3.6 and a booming economy, many more

retailers are desperate to hire more seasonal employees. This puts more individuals, especially students, in position to make some quick cash.

"About a week ago, I was desperate for some help," Cooper's Watchworks manager Alicia Laumark said. "But just this week, I hired one high school and

one college student."

One look around Eastland Mall shows that many other retailers are hiring college and high school students for the holidays. West Mecklenburg High School senior Robinn Mitchell cashed in on the job rush by working at Lynn's Hallmark store.

"This job is for Christmas

(money)," she said. Mitchell, who has worked in the store for almost a month, said a job was easy to find and she has the freedom to set her own hours.

Starting wages are better in Mecklenburg than nationally, statistics show. The average starting salary for entry-level jobs locally is \$6.50 an hour, \$1.35 better than

the federal minimum. Even with better pay and employee benefits, businesses can't keep up with the demand for labor.

Stanley Norfleet, a junior at Vance High School, said he took his job at Foot Locker in Eastland "just to have money."

"I can't be broke," he said. See **JOBS** on page 9A

## What's in a name? Your reputation

By Pierre A. Clark  
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER  
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

"Branding" – creating a distinctive business name or trademark – is the buzzword of the 1990s.

Every entrepreneur knows the power and profitability of a well-known, well-respected brand name. The Internet, where you are known by your domain name, has focused even more attention on the value and power of brand names.

Who doesn't, for example, immediately know or recognize Playboy, Apple Computer, General Mills, Avis, Hertz, or any of a hundred other distinctive brand names? These brand names have established such a singular presence in their respective industries that companies trying to compete with them have an almost impossible task.

The brand name you establish defines your business as no other single asset can. That's why it's important to spend a great deal of time developing and promoting your business name, and once you've created a tradename or service mark, to protect it through registering it as a trademark, tradename or service name. Trademarks are extremely important, often the most important intangible asset you have or will develop in your business.

How much can a name be worth? In some cases, millions of dollars. Trademarks establish your unique idea and protect it and encapsulate an idea or concept that can make you millions of dollars. Take for example, the word "three-peat," which made former Los Angeles Lakers and current Miami Heat basketball coach Pat Riley millions of dollars when the Chicago Bulls won their third straight NBA basketball championship in 1993.

How can you create a distinctive trade name? In developing a trade name, there are two strategies: (1) Focus on a name that describes either the major product or service offered by your firm and (2) create a name that is easy to remember.

If your major service is auto repair, for example, you may want to design a tradename that describes your profession and attitude – the Wrench Master, the Grease Jockey, or a similar name. The most memorable tradenames are usually a maximum of three words long.

To solidify your tradename and maximize its visibility and impact, you should complete these additional steps:

1. Registration: What steps should you take to register a trade name? Complete an application to register your trademark-tradename with your state (\$10 to \$25) and federal trademark (\$100 with the Library of Congress through the Department of Commerce).

2. Marketing: What are the best ways to market your business using a trade name? Lend it to sponsorships. Display it prominently in your advertising, particularly in your Yellow Pages ads.

3. Recognizability: How can you enhance the recognizability of your trade name? Strategies to increasing the visibility of your trade name includes having it printed on T-Shirts, hats, pens and pencils. Lend it to sponsorships.



PHOTO/VICTOR POWELL

Actor-director Bill Duke, Donzell and Alisa Starks and "Amistad" producer Debbie Allen and actor Djimon Hounsou gathered in Chicago for the grand opening of ICE Theatres' Chicago multiplex. ICE wants to open a theatre in Charlotte

## Inner city theatre?

Chicago company wants to open facility in West Charlotte

By John Minter  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

A black-owned theater chain wants to put a multi-screen facility off Freedom Drive, adjacent to the Cityview Shopping Center.

The multiplex theater would be built on 27.5 acres of vacant land, according to Scott Hirsch of Norcom Development, which is handling the land sale for owner Cityview Development.

Hirsch referred questions about the deal to InnerCity Entertainment of Chicago.

ICE, owned by Alisa and Donzell Starks, claims to be the first black owned theater chain in the country. Former pro basketball player Magic Johnson has also developed a chain of inner city theaters and is reportedly interested in expanding into the Charlotte market.

The Starks company is partnered with Canadian-owned

Cineplex Odeon Theatres in three \$40 million multiplexes in Chicago, which opened last week.

They want to open similar centers in Charlotte, Gary, Ind., Baltimore, and Cleveland. All those centers would open in the late 1998.

Starks, a former investment banker, presented his plan to the Charlotte City Council Monday.

ICE was founded in 1993 with the aim of building state-of-the-art theaters and entertainment centers showing first-run feature films in urban communities. Creating job opportunities for minorities and family-oriented entertainment options were also goals.

The Chicago theaters opened with the premiere of the Debbie Allen-produced "Amistad," which is based on a true story of 55 African slaves who led a rebellion on board a Spanish slave ship. The movie opens

nationwide this weekend.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley praised the Starks project for generating "much needed" economic growth in Chicago's Lawndale, Chicago Lawn and Chatham neighborhoods, as well as providing a job training program for area youth.

Freedom Drive area residents and businesses were happy about the possibility of new development in the area, where several major companies have closed businesses in recent years.

Mary Hopper, who is spearheading an effort to change the area's image, said, "We need those jobs for our young people." She noted that none of the multiplex theaters in Charlotte are located on the westside.

Donzell Starks, ICE's president and CEO, said, "Part of our goal is to own and operate over 100 screens by the year 2000. We have an excellent

model here in Chicago and want to use ICE Theatres as a vehicle to revitalize communities elsewhere in the U.S. ICE will provide both entertainment and jobs for the community."

Alisa Starks, ICE's executive vice president for marketing, said that going to movies is the No. 1 entertainment activity for African Americans.

"African Americans are not monolithic moviegoers," she said. "We want to see a variety of films and it is important that we have ICE Theatres and access to films such as 'Amistad' and 'Eve's Bayou' to share our history with all cultures."

Other films showing at the Chicago openings were "Flubber," "Alien Resurrection," "The Jackal," "Anastasia," "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation," "Soul Food" and "Starship Trooper."

## Gallery showing should include pizzazz

REGINA LYNCH-HUDSON



Q. Dear Regina:

I am an artist who is joining together with three other artists to host a gallery type showing in the spring. We've never done anything like this before. Where do we start? How do we pull the right crowd who will buy our work? Our budget is limited.

A. Set aside a minimum of three months for advance planning. To some extent, the audience you draw will be influenced by the location you select. If the showing is to be held in a home or residential community – select a home-owner or country club

within an exclusive development who will allow you to utilize their space in exchange for original framed pieces. The win-win barter will save you rental fees. The same deal may be struck with an elegant bed and breakfast, or a unique and spacious art boutique. After all, if the showing is properly planned it will bring exposure to their place of business.

Because you are selling a visual product it is important that your invitations are top quality. Ideally, the invitations should feature the work of one or all of the artists or represent a graphically appealing theme for the art show. The country club or boutique may have a mailing list to incorporate with the client list you already have. Customers more readily participate in events that are tied in with the community or a good cause. If

your date is not set in stone, coordinate the show's date with a charity and be prepared to donate a percentage of the proceeds. Advertising is a plus even if it means pooling your funds to buy one small ad. Place it two weeks before the show.

Promotional materials that should be present at the show include: A description/price sheet of all of the works, and a professionally written bio on each artist. At the show, have guests sign up for a "giveaway" of a small art print thus, you have added to your mailing list. Don't forget the refreshments!

Q. Dear Regina:

As a young attorney who would like to get into the field of entertainment law, I have handled a few music and entertainment business clients but would like to handle more. How might I pro-

mote myself to that market?

A. It's not how many entertainment clients you've handled that matters, but how you handle the promotion of your abilities. For starters, develop a slick brochure that details what services you can offer a record label, performers or local entertainment. Mass mail these brochures to entertainment trade industry organizations.

Rub shoulders with key players in the industry – attend MOBE (Marketing Opportunities in Black Entertainment) when it comes to your area or a nearby city, and Atlanta's annual Jack The Rapper convention. Subscribe to entertainment trade industry publications such as BRE, and VIBE. BRE also publishes an annual BRE Black Book detailing events and dates of See **PROMOTE** on page 9A

## Consider investment cost to you

Professional advice is rarely free

OMAR DILLARD

Financial  
Focus



Suppose you needed a major operation. Would you shop around for the physician with the lowest cost? Would you solicit bids from hospitals? Probably not. Your main concern would be the quality of your results.

Most of us wouldn't put a price tag on maintaining good health and quality of life, but attention to our financial health is often compromised by cost. Investors will risk large sums of money simply because an investment doesn't appear to cost anything. Others pay an annual percentage of their assets to fee-based advisers or institutions touting no-load mutual funds that investors believe don't cost anything.

Professional advice, whether from a physician, attorney or financial professional, is rarely free. It's important to understand what your costs are and what services to expect in return.

When selecting mutual funds, a financial professional – whether commissioned or fee-based – should direct you to a mutual fund that's right for you. This means helping you develop a good financial plan with realistic expectations to meet your goals. The key words are plan, expectations and goals. Meet these, and costs are inconsequential.

Another important service of a financial professional is to be there for the long term – even through those inevitable market declines. For example, after the severe market crash of 1987, many financial professionals simply disappeared. At the same time, The Wall Street Journal discovered that investors were pressing for more reliable guidance. One large mutual fund group offered a worksheet to help investors set goals. There were 40,000 immediate replies. Another mutual fund group received several thousand requests in response to an advertisement offering a free brochure explaining how to be your own portfolio manager.

You're also paying your professional to help fine-tune your plan as your life changes. For example, the family whose plan focuses on children's education may look to retirement after the children are grown. The retiree may shift focus from growth to income. These are life events that call for adjusting an investment plan, and your representative should be there to give you direction.

Finally, your professional should be open and honest about costs and expenses. Financial experts suggest that, when considering costs, you should view commissions in the context of all expenses. The longer you plan to be in an investment, the less you should be concerned about the sales charge.

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