



2013 Fennimore Business Walk Report

A Collaboration of

Fennimore Area Chamber of Commerce
Fennimore Industrial & Economic Development Corp.
City of Fennimore
University of Wisconsin Extension-Grant County

Compiled by



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September 13, 2013



2013 Fennimore Business Walk

A “Business Walk” is a day dedicated to learning more about your local businesses through face-to-face interviews on their turf. Local leaders and volunteers visit each business with the hopes of gathering the knowledge they need to help their community and to strengthen relationships. The primary goals of the walk are:

- To understand the issues facing your business community.
- To build working relationships between decision makers and local businesses.
- To celebrate and promote your local businesses.
- To provide local businesses with educational resources.

On Tuesday, August 6th, over a dozen volunteers led by the Fennimore Area Chamber of Commerce conducted their first Business Walk. They met with over 50 businesses face-to-face and collected over 20 businesses retention surveys online. This following text summarizes what was learned from their efforts.

The Questions

Volunteers were paired into groups of two and provided with a survey form. The questions on the survey were used to generate and to document discussion. The (3) primary questions were:

1. How's business?
2. What do you like about doing business here?
3. What can we do to help you succeed?

The volunteers followed up with a series of technical questions used to help sort the data from the initial (3) questions.

4. How long have you been doing business here?
5. What type of business is this?
6. Where is most of your competition?
7. Where do you purchase most of your supplies & support services?
8. How much does your business rely on the internet?
9. How many full-time & part-time employees do you have? How will that change over the course of the year?
10. How do you recruit new workers?

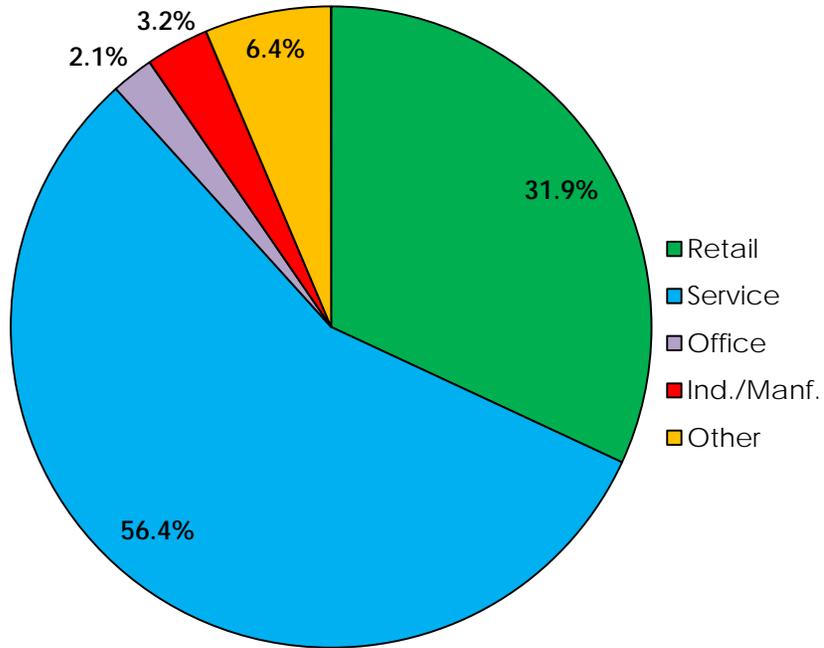
In addition to the standard Business Walk questions, the Fennimore Area Chamber of Commerce developed a second set of questions as follows:

1. In your opinion, what is or could be the brand for business in Fennimore?
2. Would you be interested in participating in a cooperative marketing promotion that would give you discount advertising and brand Fennimore as a whole to recruit more customers/business?
3. Are you interested in a mentorship program that would allow you to mentor a new business?
4. Are there any specific areas in which training or assistance might be helpful to you?

Who Responded?

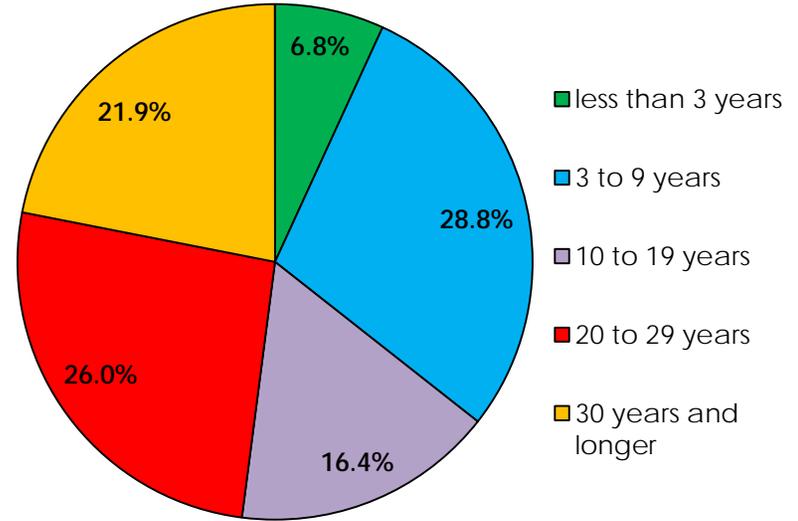
76 businesses participated in the Business Walk survey either face-to-face or online. Volunteers asked business owners and managers to define the type of business they operated (retail, service, office, industrial/manufacturing, or other). Roughly half of the businesses noted "service" and almost a third used "retail" as part of their definition. Very few identified themselves as being "industrial/manufacturing" and "office".

Figure 1: Who Responded?



In addition, volunteers were able to find out how long those businesses have been doing business in Fennimore.

Figure 2: How Long Have You Been Doing Business Here?



1. How's Business?

Businesspeople were asked, "How's business?" and were given the choices of: "very good", "good", "okay", "bad", and "very bad". Of the 76 responses, nearly 70% reported "very good" and "good" with only 4% reporting "bad" and "very bad".

Figure 3: How's Business? (All Types)

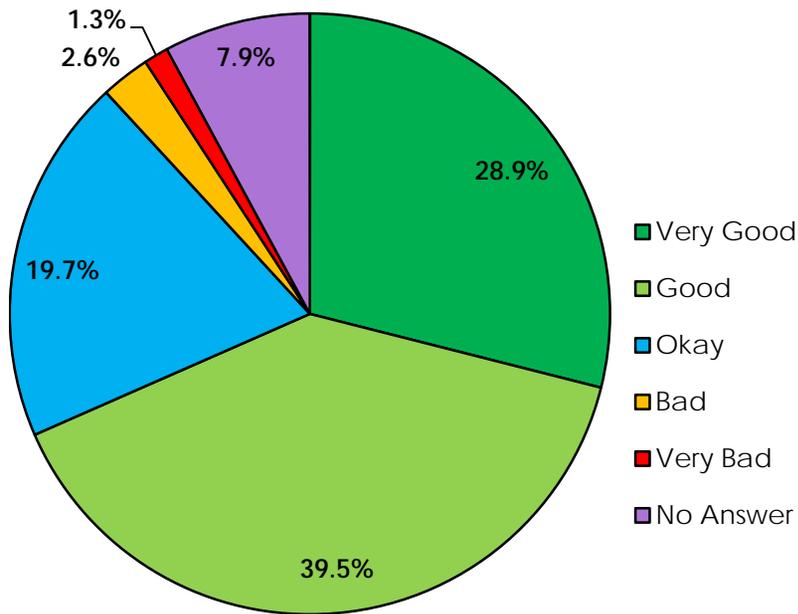


Figure 4: How's Business? (By Type)

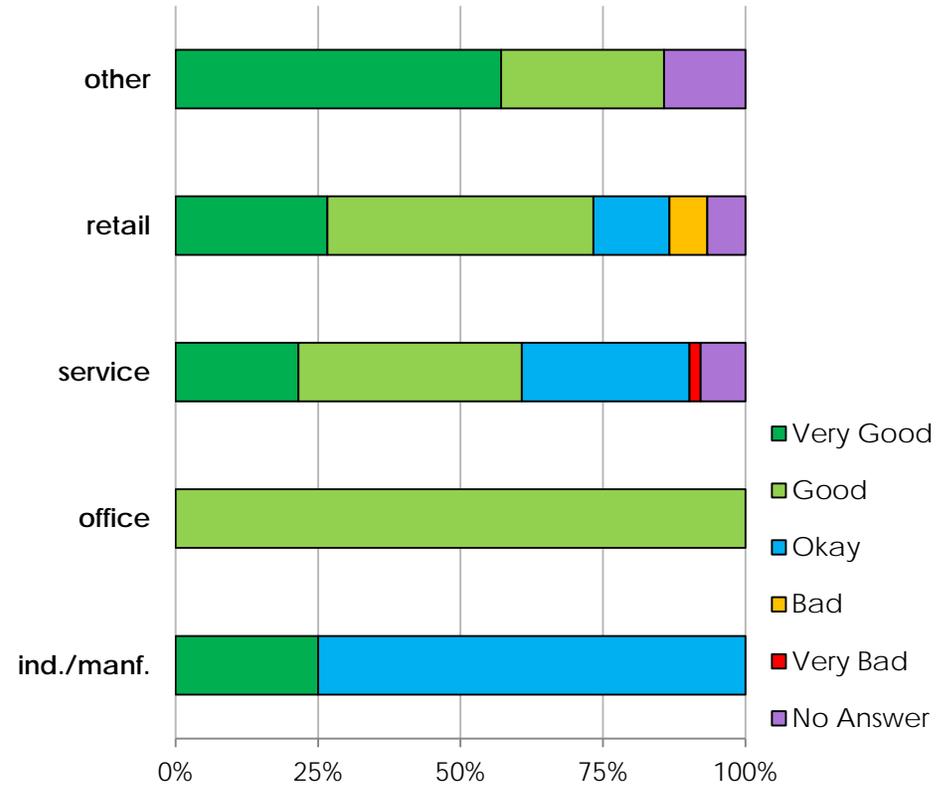
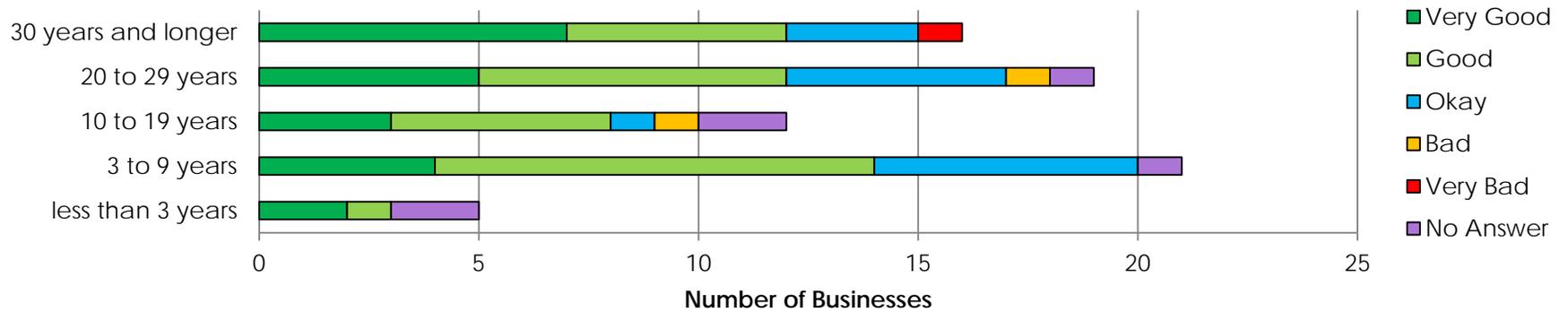


Figure 4 illustrates that while a majority of the businesses are doing well, different types are doing better than others. It should be noted that the small number of office and industrial/manufacturing firms who responded the survey paints a "distorted" image of how all other businesses of those industries are doing in Fennimore.

How's Business, By Tenure?

Business owners and operators have been in business for a variety of duration. Of those businesses who responded, the “youngest” business was (1) month old and the “oldest” business had been operating for (55) years.

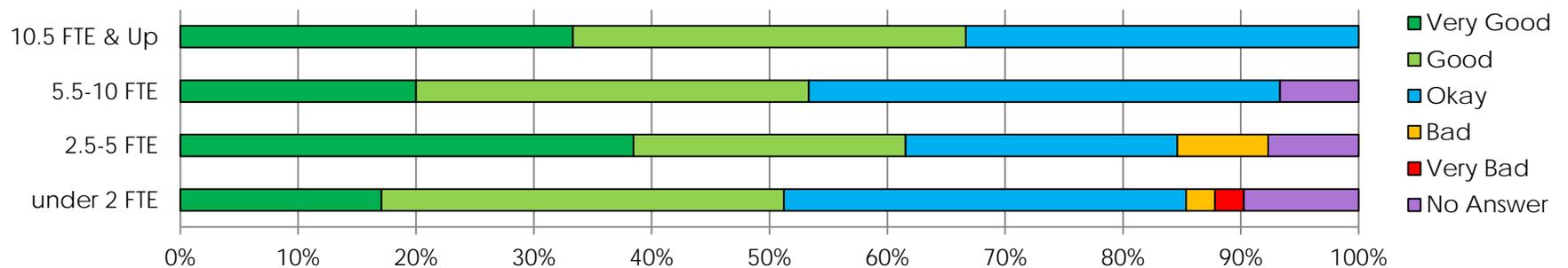
Figure 5: How's Business? (By Tenure)



How's Business, By Size?

Businesses reported the current number of full-time and part-time positions along with any projections they might have for the near future. Although part-time varies from business to business, in order to compare the size of businesses, part-time positions were assigned a value of ½ of full-time positions (FTE). Figure 6 shows how larger firms slightly better than those under 2 FTEs.

Figure 6: How's Business? (By Size)





Workforce

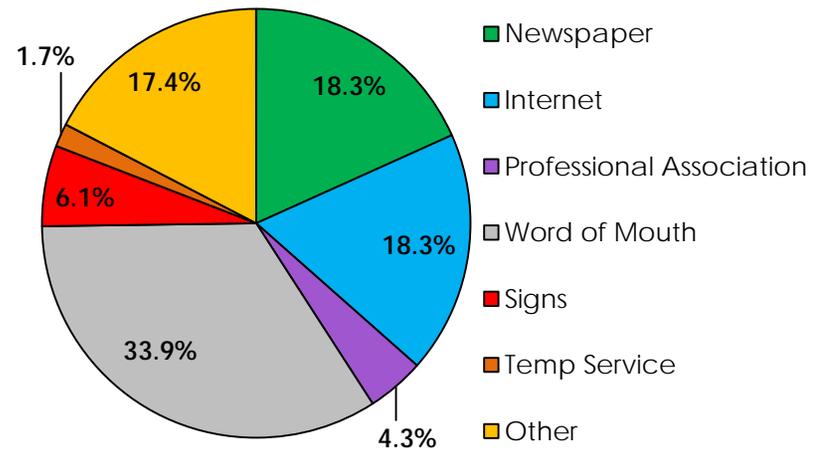
Volunteers were also able to collect information as to the future growth of these businesses. For the most part, many of the businesses are planning for limited growth over the next year. That said it is estimated that businesses in Fennimore will be adding an additional 15 full-time jobs and 16 part-time jobs within the year.

Figure 7: Current & Projected Employment (in 1 year)



A “Strong Workforce” was noted as one of the primary reasons why businesses like doing business in Fennimore. References were made to Southwest Technical College as a resource for finding new employees. When asked how businesses recruit new employees, most relied on “word of mouth”. Figure 8 illustrates how businesses find new talent.

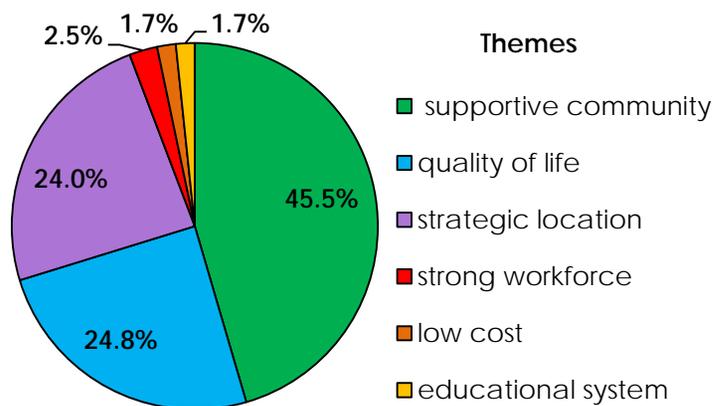
Figure 8: How Do You Recruit New Employees?



2. Why Fennimore?

Business owners and operators spent time with volunteers talking about why they like having their business in Fennimore. Responses varied greatly and were categorized into the themes shown in Figure 10.

Figure 9: Why Do You Like Doing Business Here?



Some specific examples included:

"It's good to be in a small town-a supportive community. I like to do business locally and businesses support each other."

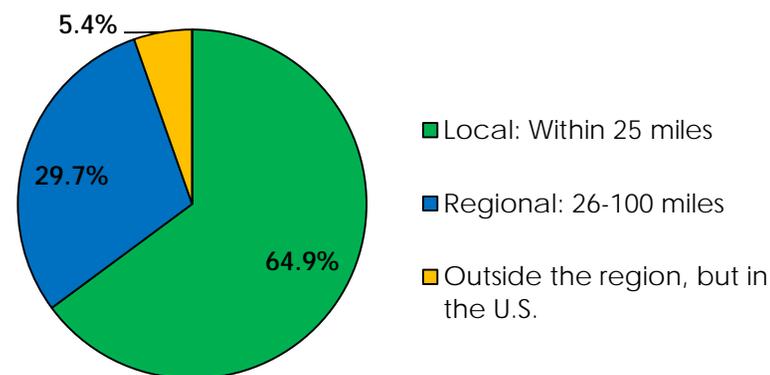
"The people, families, and community are close knit. People try to help each other when they can."

"...very supportive school board. Good partnerships with SWTC and CESA...Great community support."

Where's the Competition?

Volunteers were able to gather information about where businesses feel their competition comes from. Owners and operators were asked to choose between the following categories: "Local: 0-25 miles", "Regional: 26-100 miles", "Outside the Region, but in the U.S.", or "Outside the U.S.".

Figure 10: Where Is Most of Your Competition?



Because most of the businesses who responded were either service or retail, one can assume that this would contribute to the strong local and regional focus.

Where Do Businesses Purchase Supplies & Support Services?

Business owners and operators were asked where they purchased their supplies and support services. Most were able to find what they needed within 100 miles of their place of business. Only a small fraction (1.4%) needed to purchase something outside of the country.

Figure 11: Where Do You Purchase Most of Your Supplies?

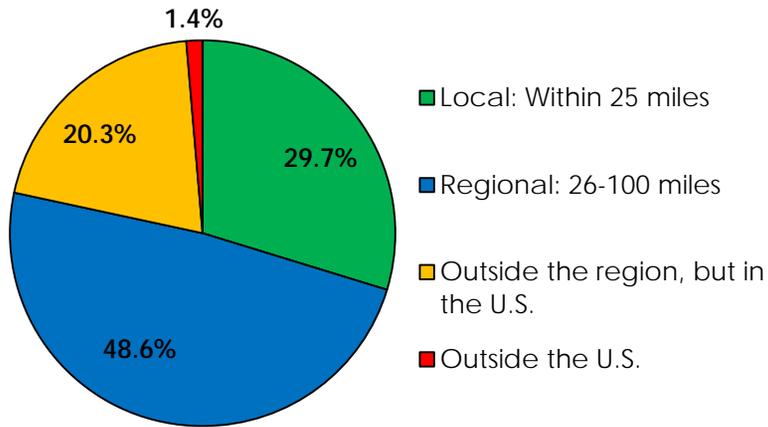
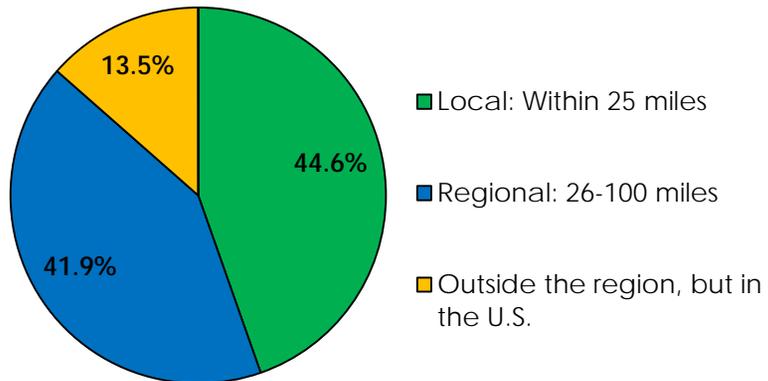


Figure 12: Where Do You Purchase Most of Your Support Services?



3. What Can We Do to Help You Succeed?

One of the most exciting aspects of the Business Walk is finding out from local businesses what they need to succeed. Open-ended responses varied, but were synthesized into the “themes” found in Figure 13.

Figure 13: What Can We Do to Help You Succeed?

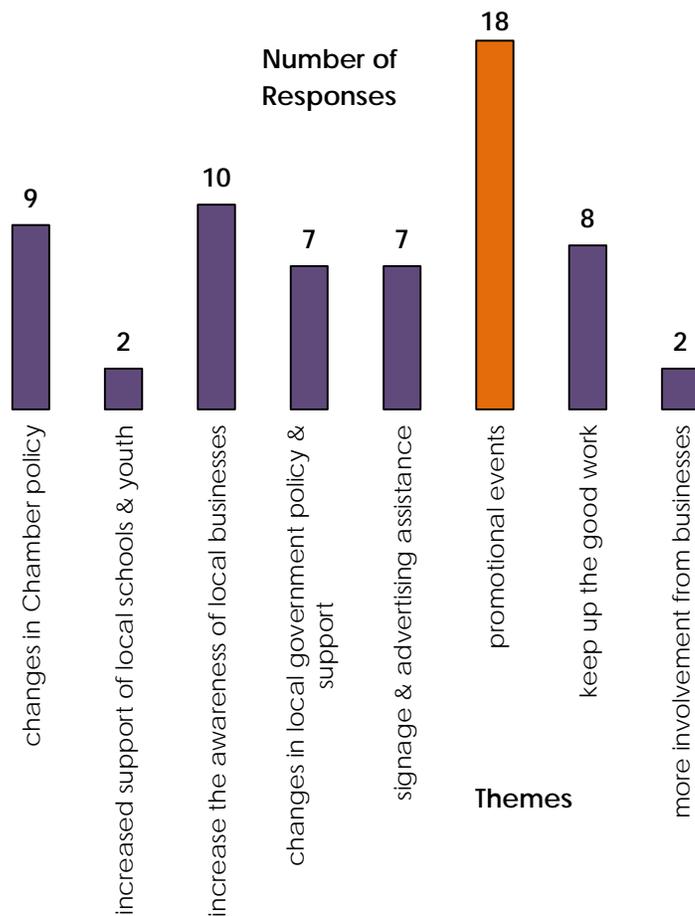


Figure 13 clearly illustrates that the most common theme among respondents was “promotional events”.

Some other comments from the survey included:

“Help me attract quality staff by making this a great place to live.”

“Chamber is doing good things. Keep doing what we are doing. Cohesive – build on strengths.”

“Billboard at the city entrances with featured rotating businesses.”

“Provide some type of medical insurance to lower costs.”

Training & Resources

Business owners and operators were given a list of topics from which training and resources could be made available (See Figure 14).



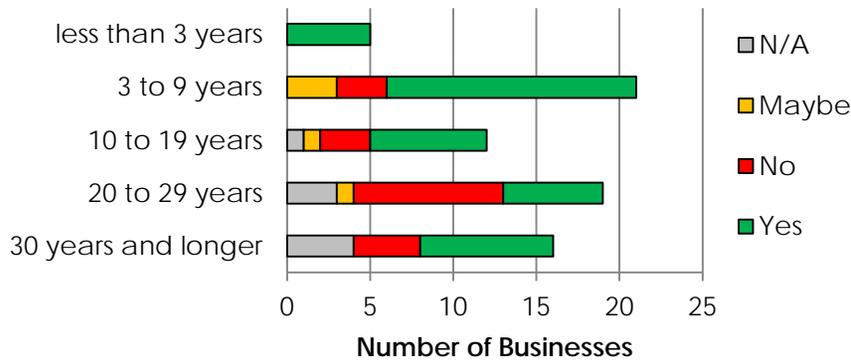
Figure 14: What Training or Assistance Might Be Helpful To You?



Cooperative Marketing

When asked about whether or not the business owner or operator would be interested in cooperative marketing, responses were somewhat favorable.

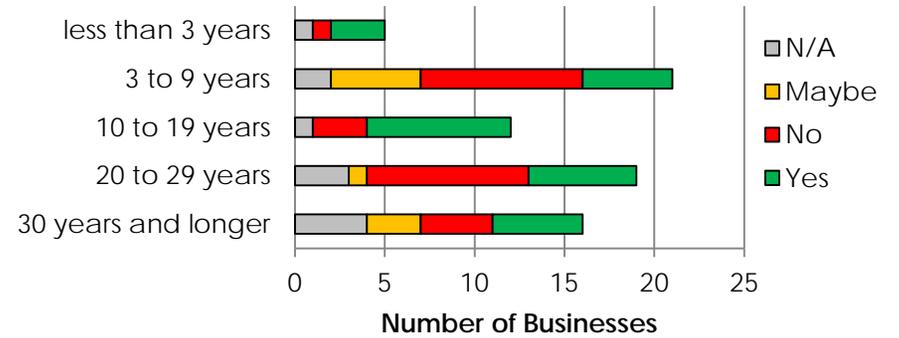
Figure 15: Would You Be Interested In Cooperative Marketing?



Business Mentoring

Volunteers asked businesses if they would be willing to serve as a mentor to a new business.

Figure 16: Would You Mentor A New Business?



The strongest support for mentoring a new business came from those businesses that have operated between 10 to 19 years.



Internet

Volunteers spent time with business owners and operators to find out how much businesses rely on the internet.

Figure 17: How Much Does Your Business Rely On the Internet? (All Responses)

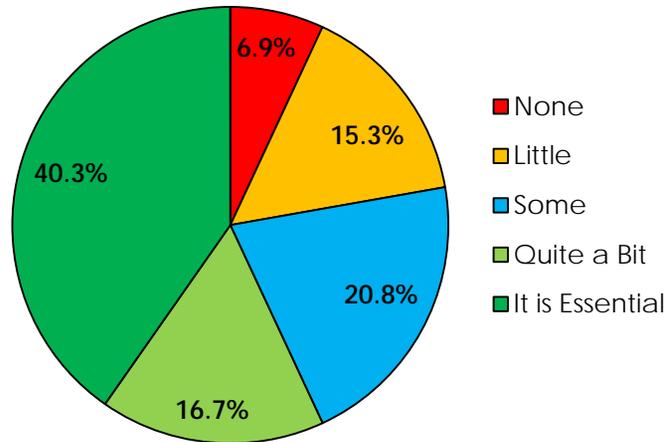
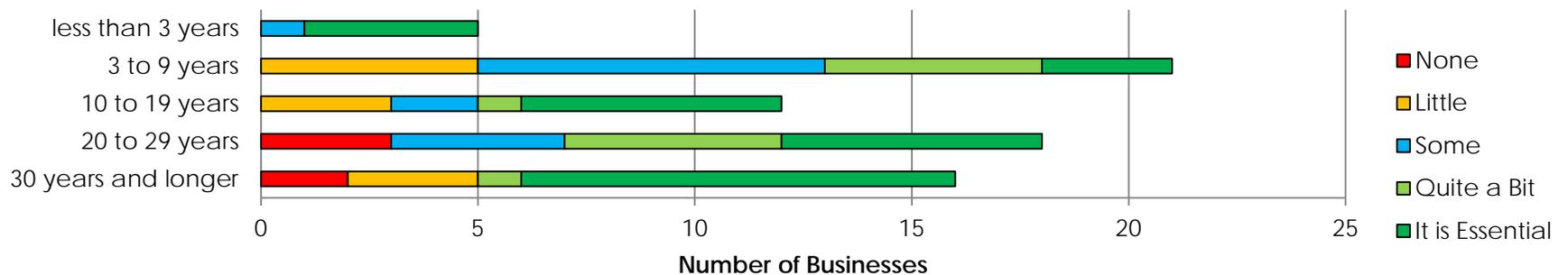


Figure 18: How Much Does Your Business Rely On the Internet? (By Tenure)



For the most part, the internet appears to be important to businesses in Fennimore regardless of tenure. “Older” businesses (20 years and longer) were the only ones reporting “None”. For the “younger” businesses, internet service is a high priority

Branding

Businesses were asked, "In your opinion, what is or could be the brand for business (as a whole) in Fennimore." The following responses were recorded:

- *SWTC/Tourism/Fishing and Hunting*
- *SWTC*
- *Hometown service*
- *Friendly and good people*
- *Lifestyle: School system, family connectedness. Good place to raise kids.*
- *Focus brand on progress. Limited use of brand/jingle because he works many communities.*
- *I like "City on the Move"*
- *Unique Shops/Hidden Treasures*
- *Slogan a joke for some*
- *Not much to work with as far as tourism and combine efforts in tourism with other regional events.*
- *Our customers enjoy the local sites and artisan type of businesses. We see lots of Carr Valley Cheese shopping bags and local wines & beers. Fennimore could use more small specialty shops. Having a local bakery, cheese shop and other shops would also keep the business in Fennimore rather than people shopping elsewhere.*
- *Never really thought about it before*
- *We have a lot to offer in rural setting-Education-Our kids can compete with top kids everywhere*
- *Igor - Agriculture Center*
- *Foster the potential of our location in the region. The heart of the region. Fennimore as a lifestyle choice.*
- *Railroad Theme*
- *We have a fishing destination here in the Driftless Region.*
- *I don't have a slogan, but Fennimore has a very capable and willing work force within a 25 mile*

radius. Our town is attractive, friendly, and forward thinking.

- *Hometown, small town shopping.*
- *Bring in more business - more fair-wages work options.*
- *Does like connection with railroad-good for business*
- *Small town*
- *Friendly*
- *Shop Local*
- *Fennimore Community "small and strong"*
- *Provide fewer reasons for people to take commerce elsewhere/make sure commerce remains that is essential (ex. Pharmacy, Dr, Grocery)*
- *Small town feel with small town prices.*
- *Not sure what you are asking.*
- *No brand awareness, used to have Fennimore cheese, no longer.*
- *City on the move for the last 13 years*
- *Neighbors helping Neighbors*
- *City on the move-needs to be changed*
- *What are we known for-wine country, cheese factory, agricultural*
- *Crossroads/SWTC(very important)*
- *Small town service.*
- *Local and honest*
- *"There's more in Fennimore"*
- *Crossroads. Work with the "More" in Fennimore. Emphasize: Recreation - Business - Education.*

The most common themes that derive from the list focus on:

- Education
- Small town quality of life
- Outdoor recreation
- Strategic location
- Community.

Conclusions

The 2013 Fennimore Business Walk was a success. It achieved the (4) primary goals:

- To understand the issues facing your business community.
- To build working relationships between decision makers and local businesses.
- To celebrate and promote your local businesses.
- To provide local businesses with educational resources.

The volunteers and businesspeople all found the Walk positive and enlightening. Several commented about when to conduct the next Business Walk. Hopefully, the information in this report can serve as a baseline from which future "Walks" will build from.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all the hard work done by the Fennimore Area Chamber of Commerce, the Fennimore Industrial & Economic Development Corporation, the City of Fennimore, and especially to our dedicated "walkers".

Questions

For questions regarding this report and "Business Walks", please contact:

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