

Business_Resources_-_ISU_Library

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SPEAKERS

Steve Adams, host, Jeff Kushkowski

Steve Adams, host 00:10

Hello, and welcome to the Back to Business Iowa podcast from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. This podcast is a collaboration between Iowa State University Extension and Outreach and the programs including Community and Economic Development, Farm, Food and Enterprise Development, and the Iowa Small Business Development Centers. These podcasts cover relevant topics for businesses and individuals related to education, research and technical assistance during and post COVID-19.

Steve Adams, host 00:55

Hi, I'm Steve Adams again, field specialist III at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, part of the Community and Economic Development and your host for the podcast. In this podcast, we will be discussing the best resources for entrepreneurs and businesses through the Iowa State University Parks Library. Today our special guest is Jeff Kushkowski, professor, instruction and information services coordinator, and business and economics librarian. Thank you for being here today, Jeff.

Jeff Kushkowski 01:29

Thanks for inviting me, Steve.

Steve Adams, host 01:31

Can you provide us some background on your education experience and how long you've worked at Iowa State University?

Jeff Kushkowski 01:39

Sure, Steve. I have a master's degree in public administration and a second master's in library science, both from Indiana University, and I've worked at Iowa State University for 26 years as of this April.

Steve Adams, host 01:53

Well, I see with all the titles that you have. That's somewhat intriguing, there, Jeff—can you elaborate on what specifically do at the ISU library?

Jeff Kushkowski 02:04

Sure, Steve. I wear a bunch of hats. The professor title is the result of my working my way up to the faculty ranks. I was originally hired as the business and economics librarian. And in that role, I'm responsible for taking care of the library needs for students, faculty and staff in the Ivy College of Business and the economics department. So I purchase materials, do research consultations for students and faculty, do instruction sessions for classes at Iowa State, and develop research guides for different business areas.

Jeff Kushkowski 02:35

As the instruction and information services coordinator, I'm responsible for the instructional activities done by the library for any ISU alums that may be listening. If you took Library 160 when you were a student, I'm currently responsible for administering that class. I also coordinate library workshops, course-related instruction activities that our other library liaisons do, and provide training for front desk staff in answering reference questions.

Steve Adams, host 03:05

Sounds to me like there are a tremendous amount of resources available to the public. How does that work in today's environment with COVID-19 and the pandemic amongst us, and do folks off the street have access to this information in today's environment?

Jeff Kushkowski 03:20

Well, yes, they do. And actually, the first thing I want to mention that, because Iowa State is a land-grant university, the resources of the ISU library are available for anybody who physically comes to the library. And as a member of the public, if you visit the library, you have access to all of our print and electronic resources. We do have a sizable number of electronic business resources that can also be used in the building. One thing that I need to mention about our databases, the business databases that we have, is that remote access to those databases is limited to current affiliated ISU users—so, faculty, staff and students. And that limit on remote access is in place because of licensing agreements that we have with our vendors.

Steve Adams, host 04:06

Well, several of my colleagues have discussed the numerous resources that you've compiled for businesses. And as a member of the Small Business Team, we were a little shocked to find out that there were so many resources available. Could you maybe walk me through some of those resources and how they might be accessed, again?

Jeff Kushkowski 04:25

Sure. As I mentioned, like, just a second ago, one of the challenges for your listeners who aren't affiliated with Iowa State, non-affiliated users actually includes alumni, because our licenses are only valid for current faculty, staff and students, is that you can't directly access our databases do the license agreements. But these resources are available in person in the library—and unfortunately, we're closed at the moment—via research consultations with librarians and through county extension offices. So as a business person, if you were to contact me via email and say, Hey, I'm looking for marketing information for a particular for a particular business I'm interested in starting, I can access the databases, find information for you and send you that send you that information.

Jeff Kushkowski 05:21

There are also a huge number of free business resources and websites that are available through the federal government. For example, the Small Business Administration has information about starting a business. The Census Bureau has demographic information about businesses, and I just published a guide about free business resources and websites. And that link is going to show up on the page with the podcast once the podcast is available.

Steve Adams, host 05:47

Well, you kind of touched on my next question here just a little bit. So, suppose, let's say, that I am running a small coffee shop and I need some market data on that. Would I be able to access that then through the ISU Library system and how would I find it? Or would that strictly be something that, again, I would send you an email and then you would get back in touch with me via email?

Jeff Kushkowski 06:12

Well, that free business resources guide that I mentioned has information about market data for different industries. So through the census, the Census Bureau's census of manufacturers, you can get information about how many coffee shops there are available. You can use some other products from the census that will tell you population distribution in a city. So Ames recently, there seems to have been a boom in coffee shops. There have been three or four that have started up in the last year in Ames. And I use this as an example for my students in one of the classes I teach, and I said, Well, you know, one of the reasons that that this is happening is because of the number of people that come in and out of Ames to go to work.

Jeff Kushkowski 07:11

And we were able to look at some data from the Census Bureau that showed the number of people who work in Ames and live in Ames, the number of people who commute to Ames from somewhere else, and the number of people who commute to somewhere else from Ames. And I said, you know, the reason there are all these coffee shops is because people are either driving

to Ames and they need their coffee, or they're getting ready to leave Ames and they need their coffee. So there's a wealth of information available.

Jeff Kushkowski 07:40

The other option for folks is, while the library has great resources, and we're really interested in helping you, I want to make sure that people also know that the Small Business Development Centers and university extension are also resources they can take ... advantage of. There are some products, like there's a product called BizMiner that the ISU Library doesn't have access to, but extension does have access to. So there are multiple ways for people to get their business questions answered.

Steve Adams, host 08:20

Well, I appreciate the comment on the resources. And most of the organizations that you mentioned there, Jeff, we're partnered up with currently. And so that just helped strengthen that relationship a little bit. And again, you know, having you as a resource around is going to be very helpful. Jeff, I'm really intrigued by this free business resources and website page that you've got up now on the on the library site. I really want to dive a little deeper here. Because in this environment, obviously, things are changing. We hear the word pivot a lot. So if you had to pick two or three things off of that free business resources website, what would you say would be the most important things for businesses to look at today?

Jeff Kushkowski 09:10

Well, one of the things that happens in the environment that we're in now, is that there are a lot of businesses that are pivoting from being brick and mortar stores, to having an online social presence. And one of the things that you do, or that you need to do, as a business owner when you do this is, you need to have some way of tracking how is my social media presence helping or hurting my business. And there are some social media analytics tools that are available. Everybody's heard of Google Analytics, but there are other tools out there that people can use to track their social media and find out how is my social media being ... what kind of penetration do I have in the market, in terms of how many people are looking at me, and then what are they saying about me?

Jeff Kushkowski 10:02

In this guide, we have a list of the top 10 social media analytics tools that you can use, by a company called Predictive Analytics Today. And one of the nice things about having, or one of the reasons there are 10, there, actually there are more than 10 social media tools out there. But one of the advantages of having these, having this listing is, one, it's been curated by folks who knows social media and do it all the time. It also gives you, as a small business owner, the opportunity to sort of test drive a bunch of different software options and tools and decide which one is going to be best for your particular situation.

Steve Adams, host 10:42

Well, you had mentioned that this is new, I didn't realize how new it was. You just recently got the site up and going, right?

Jeff Kushkowski 10:51

Yeah, the site is actually live as of yesterday afternoon.

Steve Adams, host 10:58

That would be May 13. I noticed that there were some key words down at the bottom here, when it said subjects, and it was business, innovation and entrepreneurship. In this environment, obviously innovation, and we hear that word pivot a lot, innovation seems to be kind of the key right now. Would you agree or disagree?

Jeff Kushkowski 11:20

I would agree. I think one of the things that we talked about at the library is the ability, is the need to be adaptable, and take the systems that we've used and had in place for years and actually say, all right, well, now that we, in the library's case, now that we're closed, how are we going to provide information? How are we going to provide resources to people? One way is our electronic portal that we've had, but we've also started mailing books out to people. And we've actually been mailing technology, too. So if students need a laptop, we'll send them a laptop. So, but it is really important in this environment that businesses adapt and be innovative, and try to find the best way that they can adjust to the new circumstance and still retain customers.

Steve Adams, host 12:13

If I'm a small business, though, and it may be just me as a sole proprietor and maybe two or three employees, your days are pretty hectic anyway. So this is a resource that, for example, when the store doors close for the day, that you would have time to go in and look. And obviously, you've got links to everything from the SBA to SCORE to SBDC sites. So this is something that in their free time, so to speak, they can go and access at any moment.

Jeff Kushkowski 12:43

Correct. That's one of the beauties of having electronic access, is that the electronic access doesn't close just because the library is closed, or because it's after five. So these resources are available 24-7 to folks.

Steve Adams, host 13:01

Well, that's certainly going to help. But again, I think the key here is innovation and how we stay ahead of the game, so to speak, with COVID-19 and the pandemic, and that's what these podcasts are all about. Jeff, I'm going to give you the last words here, buddy, anything else you want to say?

Jeff Kushkowski 13:18

I guess the only other thing is that, in addition to that social media presence piece, there is a section in here that talks about software and internet support for businesses. You know, one of the things as you're going from brick and mortar to online, now you've gone fully online, you may be taking orders and then having to print them out and have people that show up and do curbside pickup. There are a couple of sites in this guide that talk about software applications for different retail sectors. So if I'm a slot owner or a grocery store or a gym, or a clothing store, there's information in there about the kinds of software applications that are going to be useful for your particular instance.

Steve Adams, host 14:09

And again, you said that was kind of industry specific in that regard. So that would be very helpful to those that fell into those various sectors of business.

Jeff Kushkowski 14:18

Correct. I guess the last thing I'll say is, I do want to give you the address for this guide, so that you can go and take a look at it at your leisure. It's also going to be posted on the podcast site, but I'll give it to you right now. It's instr.iastate.libguides.com.

Steve Adams, host 14:45

Thank you, Jeff, I appreciate that. I hope people do take advantage of it. And please look for that posting on the podcast. So I've got to imagine that in your line of work, you've had some unusual requests over the years. Could you tell us maybe about the most unusual request you've had?

Jeff Kushkowski 15:04

Yes. By far the most unusual request was one that I got, strangely not at Iowa State, it's a request that I got when I worked in another institution. It was my last day at work, and I got a call from the librarian for a feed manufacturer. And they wanted to know the distance from the Earth to the Sun for every day of the year. And I mentioned that the distances were never the same, you know, the distance on May 14 2020 is going to be a little bit different than the distance on May 14 2019. And I was curious why they wanted that information. And they said they had a researcher who was interested in seeing what effect the sun's gravitational pull had on feed intake of cattle. So I said, Well, you know, the moon is a lot closer and it has a much larger effect on things like tides. And I ended up sending them information for both the sun's distance and the moon's distance for, like, two years' worth of data. Because it was my last day at work, I never did find out how that project turned out.

Steve Adams, host 16:08

Well [laughter] that certainly is unusual. Star watchers, stargazers. And certainly, I think we all know about the moon and its effect on tides. So if I was sitting here again saying, Are there any best practices for the public to work with, when they come to the ISU Parks Library?

Jeff Kushkowski 16:32

Yes, well, at the moment, the library's closed to the public because of the COVID-19 issues that we're having. However, you can connect virtually with both our librarians and staff. We have a chat service that is available that's staffed by librarians from 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday, and noon to 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The easiest way to find that on our website, there's a tab at the bottom of the page that says Live Chat if there's someone available. You click that link, and you'll be connected with someone.

Jeff Kushkowski 17:06

Our staff are also available to answer phone and email questions. And our website has a link that says Find Your Librarian, where you can get contact information for subject librarians who provide research support for the library. And this will be a link to everyone. There are about 16 of us. But there are links with emails and phone numbers, so you can contact us easily with your questions. And we are all still working, even though the library's closed. We're all, mostly we're working remotely. But we do answer our phones and we will get back to you ... if you send us an email question.

Steve Adams, host 17:42

So operators are standing by, right?

Jeff Kushkowski 17:45

Correct.

Steve Adams, host 17:46

Okay, great. Hey, Jeff, I really want to thank you for joining us today. And again, for all of you that don't know, these business resources are free to the public. There are some restrictions to ISU faculty and students, but do be aware that they are there to help. And if you haven't spent any time in the library in awhile, once things get opened up again, I'm sure Jeff and the rest of the staff will welcome you with open arms. So, Jeff, I really truly want to thank you for joining us today and providing us with your insights. If someone is interested in contacting you for additional questions, how might they reach you? Phone number, email?

Jeff Kushkowski 18:30

Well, the best way to contact me is to visit our library website at www.lib.iastate.edu. And as I mentioned that Find Your Librarian is going to be the easiest way to get my contact information. Certainly be faster than me trying to spell out my email address. Or you'll also have a link to my

contact information and the free business resources guide that I mentioned available on your website.

Steve Adams, host 18:59

Once again for our listeners, how do people access and what's the address to the free business resources and websites guide?

Jeff Kushkowski 19:09

I'll give you that address, it's instr.iastate.libguides.com/freebusiness.

Steve Adams, host 19:27

So that address again is [instr.iastate.libguides.com/free business](http://instr.iastate.libguides.com/freebusiness). Well, if you have any questions about this Back to Business Iowa podcast, please feel free to contact me, Steve Adams, at stadams@iastate.edu, and thank you for listening. This podcast is a collaboration with Iowa State Extension and Outreach and the Small Business Development Centers of Iowa. Always Serving Iowans, #StrongIowa. Let's get back to business, Iowa. Our justice statement is as follows: This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, please go to www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext. Once again, thanks for listening and we'll see you all next time.