

**U.S. Small Business Administration  
Interview with Jim O'Connor**

**"Peak Performance" Assessment & Strategies - How to Survive in  
a Slowing Economy**

Ron Johnson: Small businesses are one of the strongest engines for economic prosperity, employing about half of America's workforce. Today's slowing economy has hit small businesses hard and the credit crisis has added yet another blow. The small business community can use all the help they can get with their current situation while trying to develop strategies for the future.

Hi, I'm Ron Johnson with the Small Business Administration, Your Small Business Resource. And with me today is Jim O'Connor, the director of the Small Business Training Network, SBA's online training environment. Jim, it's good to have you back to discuss what tools SBA has available to help small businesses reach their peak performance.

Jim O'Connor: Thank you, Ron. It's a pleasure to be here.

Ron Johnson: I understand you've recently implemented an online assessment tool. Can you describe the tool and how small business owners will benefit from using it?

Jim O'Connor: Sure, Ron. First, let me say that the tool is called Peak Performance Assessment and Strategies. It's available on SBA's website at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) by clicking on the icon, "Free Online Courses." It is then highlighted in the topic section called "Surviving in a Down Economy." The tool, Ron, is very easy to use and features a quick assessment of your business and status and provides a series of survival strategies for your business. The assessment function asks the entrepreneur a number of relevant questions, questions like "Do you have a business plan that has been updated within the last three months?" Or, "Do you have a marketing plan and budget tailored to the changing environment?" It also asks multiple other questions, all designed to help a business owner evaluate the preparedness of the business during this challenging economic period.

Ron Johnson: Now, preparing for the future has to be vital to the success of a small business. So how will the online tool help small business owners develop strategies for success?

Jim O'Connor: Well, after setting the tone with the assessment function, the tool then provides a series of steps and strategies to help a business. Again, the tool is designed to assist businesses to overcome the challenges associated with the slowing economy. Strategies that are featured in the tool

include how to get lean and mean and then this is important, especially today, a company has to be lean. Also, it talks about how to maximize cash flow, how to find new opportunities, and other things as well. The goal, however, is to outline real world steps you can take to counter the effects of the slowing economy.

Ron Johnson: It sounds like a wonderful tool. What other SBA resources are available to assist small business owners?

Jim O'Connor: SBA offers many powerful resources for small businesses. One such resource, as you mentioned earlier, includes the agency's online business courses. All of SBA's online courses are free and they can be found by going to SBA's website at, again, [sba.gov](http://sba.gov), and clicking on "Free Online Courses" or using a search engine and typing the keywords "SBA training." On a typical day, some 2,000 small business clients benefit from SBA's online courses. But in addition to that, Ron, we have over a thousand Small Business Development Centers around the country which are very helpful to entrepreneurs in every state. We have 10,000 SCORE counselors, again, all over the country, designed to help mentor new and existing businesses. We have over a hundred Women's Business Centers. We have 68 SBA district offices, with at least one in every state. And in addition, we have a very powerful overall web

presence at [sba.gov](http://sba.gov), and at our website, in general, we get about two million visitors a month, which is quite significant.

Ron Johnson: That's a very significant number. Well, our thanks to Jim O'Connor, director of the Small Business Training Network, for introducing to us the valuable features offered by SBA's online training assessment tool, Peak Performance Assessment and Strategies. And you can learn more about all of SBA's resources at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov). Until next time, this is Ron Johnson with SBA, Your Small Business Resource.

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