

## Windsor-Essex chamber hosting tech show to bring small businesses up to speed

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For today's small- to medium-sized business owner, incorporating technology isn't just a good idea, it's a necessity, the president of the local chamber of commerce has said.

The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a tech show Tuesday, November 8, featuring panel discussions on cloud computing, web design and social media.

In the past, the chamber has held three tech events, but chamber president and CEO Matt Marchand said those were more like "trade shows," whereas this time the emphasis is on directly supporting small businesses.

"We wanted it very user-friendly," he said. "Some of these areas may sound complex, but we're going to bring it down to a very local level and give them some ideas that they can implement right away."

The chamber made small business a priority this time due to its involvement with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's "Small Business – Too Big to Ignore" campaign as of late, said Marchand.

"We really want to emphasize small business because they are the driver of the region," he said.

The topics were chosen after the chamber surveyed its small and medium business about what they would like to learn to grow their enterprises.

Marchand said it's now "a 100 per cent must" for all businesses to incorporate technology in some way. With the Internet available through a device in most people's pockets, an online and social media presence is often the first way someone will learn about a business, he said.

"If you look at the trends, a lot of our younger generation, the millennials, a lot of them don't use a lot of cash," said Marchand. "They're very smart phone-based in terms of when they're looking for a business or when they're looking for a place to eat or looking for a place to buy something."

The tech show is co-sponsored by WEtech Alliance and the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation's Small Business Centre.

WEtech president and CEO Yvonne Pilon said it was a good way to connect her members with small businesses who need advice in using technology. She said it's "critical" for businesses to be up-to-date in their technology use.

"If you go down even to just websites, there's businesses which still don't have websites which are mobile-friendly," she said. "Look at payment options. Millennials these days, they will account for 75 per cent of the workforce by 2025 and how we're paying is different from how generations paid before."

Pilon said technology can be both a good time-management and cost-reduction tool.

Also attending the event for himself, Marchand said he hopes to learn ways to improve the chamber's service to its members.

The event, held Tuesday at the Giovanni Caboto Club, will begin at 8 am with a networking opportunity, followed by opening remarks, speeches and panels from 8:30 am to 12 noon. A "Cloud Lounge" reception will follow to allow audience members to ask the experts additional questions.

Tickets can be purchased through the Windsor-Essex chamber website .

Tom Morrison is a Windsor-based journalist. @TomMorrison12 on Twitter



WEtech Alliance CEO Yvonne Pilon discusses the new Windsor-Essex Entrepreneur Support Network during the Global Entrepreneurship Week kickoff at City Hall Nov. 16, 2015.



Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Matt Marchand participates in a discussion on small business Oct. 19, 2016.