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Chamber, AEDC, Young Professionals gear up for retail business survey

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Volunteers will soon fan out across the Ames business community to gather information for a business survey unlike any that has been done here for several years, according to officials for the Ames Chamber of Commerce and Ames Economic Development Commission.

The target audiences for the survey will be local entrepreneurs in retail and service businesses, and the city's convention- and tourism-based hospitality industry.

Ron Hallenbeck, vice president for existing business for the Chamber and AEDC, said a total of 700 business owners and managers are on a target list, but the exact number of participants will be closer to 600.

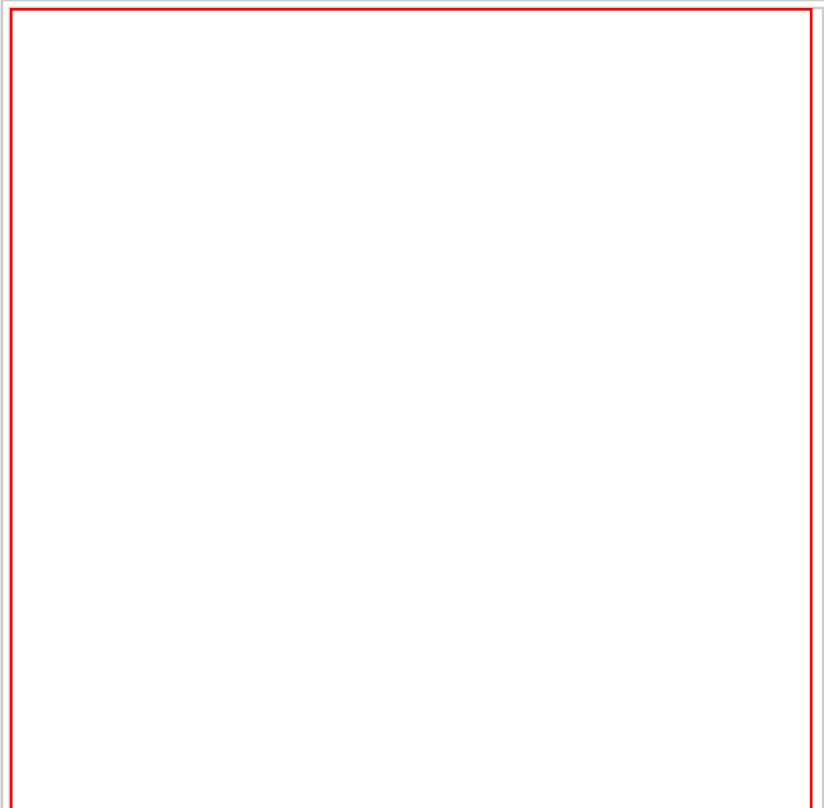
"Although the timetable isn't worked out yet, we are getting closer to starting the survey," Hallenbeck said during the second week of November.

None of the survey participants will be among those on the last "executive call survey" of major Ames and Mid-Iowa employers, he said.

It could take well into the new year to finish the survey, especially because of the importance of the holiday shopping season, Hallenbeck said.

"We'll take the time we need to do it, especially so we can get a good look at the attitudes of local businesses in the current economic environment.

"This is a make-or-break time of year for many of the retailers that we want to contact, so if we need to wait in order to get the best information, that's what we'll do."



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By Nirmalendu Majumdar/The Tribune
Lauren Panizzo, of Illinois, is helped by Tim Azeltine, left, and Craig Snyder while checking in at the Best Western Hotel and Inn on University Boulevard in Ames. An upcoming business survey will focus on the city's convention- and tourism-based hospitality industry.

Young Professionals of Ames will provide volunteers to help gather survey information, Hallenbeck said.

Finding willing helpers is a task now in the hands of the YPA executive committee, which includes acting president Barry Green, past president Michelle King, and committee members Dan Nutini, Lisa Frerichs, Travis Kramer, Matt Julich, Shane Jacobson, Michelle Benton, Shelly Greving, Nicole Gebhart and Courtney Bloxham.

"We will be working with YPA to develop a list of face-to-face contacts, while other businesses and professional people will take the survey online using a log-on username and password," Hallenbeck said.

The electronic survey could go live during December or shortly after the first of the year, he said.

The process will address Ames Chamber of Commerce members first but may be offered to nonmembers in its online format at a later date, Hallenbeck said.

Survey results will be reviewed at a future date and posted on the Chamber/AEDC Web site.

Hallenbeck said he expects the information to be shared with the city to combine with its residential survey.

The survey will use the intellectual property of Chicago-based Blane Canada, Ltd., which markets its retail/service industry product under the brand name of Synchronist CRTS. For more, visit: www.blanecanada.com.

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Convention, retail, tourism, service survey

Sample question

QUESTION: Please rate your satisfaction with the following utility services on a scale of:

1 (lowest) to 7 (highest)

- Water services
- Sewer services
- Solid waste removal
- Natural gas
- Electricity
- Telecommunications (voice)
- Cellular services

- Internet access
- Internet speed

Source: Blane, Canada Ltd., CRTS On-Site Visit Form

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