

Leadership by design

Corporate training programs' curricula pay off for local execs

JULEKHA DASH | STAFF

Some people might balk at the thought of dropping \$25,000 to join a networking and leadership development group.

But not Dan Cahill, vice president of sales at Hunt Valley's WebbMason Inc.

The executive has recouped his investment from joining Accelerent many times over by winning new business. That includes getting a \$400,000 deal to print marketing materials for Nemaocolin Woodlands Resort in Pennsylvania. He credits Accelerent for allowing him to strike up new relationships with a slew of top executives whom he would otherwise not know.

Though the dismal economy is hindering some executives from dropping that kind of money, executives who join leadership development programs say the experience is invaluable — and in some cases, an eye-opener.

Beyond the cocktail receptions and business classes, many programs expose students to Greater Baltimore's most serious issues, including crime and homelessness. And they do that by taking students on a ride with a policeman through crime-ridden neighborhoods, visiting a prison and spending the night at a homeless shelter.

Terri Harrington, a commercial real estate broker at MacKenzie Commercial Real Estate Services, has done all of those things as a member of the [Greater Baltimore Committee's Leadership program](#). The experience taught her about the serious challenges Baltimore faces. "My head was shoved way down in the sand," Harrington said.

But before you sign up for any program, keep in mind that you have to invest a lot of time. Accelerent, for instance, hosts 33 events in 10 months. Though you don't have to attend all — or any of them — you can't expect to gain new clients and skills by just writing a check. You only get something out of leadership programs if you invest time and energy, participants say.

But if you are prepared to make that time, here are some resources that can help:

Leadership Maryland

Cost: \$6,800

No. of people in the group: 50

Length: April to November, two days per month

Activities: company site visits, networking events, classes on issues fac-

Please see **LEADERSHIP**, Page 22

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Companies involved: Comcast, Verizon, Constellation Energy Group Inc.

Who can participate: Senior executives

What it takes to get in: Application and interview; selection committee looks for community involvement and diversity in class in terms of age, ethnicity, geography and profession.

What it takes to stay in: Can't miss more than two days.

Accelerent

Cost: \$15,000 to \$25,000

No. of people in the group: 50 companies

Length: One to three years

Activities: Sharing business leads, cocktail receptions, motivational speeches, monthly breakfasts and roundtables where you pitch your business

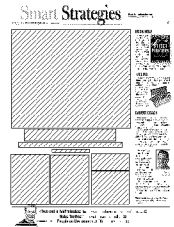
Companies involved: Baltimore Business Journal, InterContinental Harbor Court Baltimore, the Hippodrome

Who can participate: "C" level executives and senior business development executives

What it takes to get in: Tapped by Accelerent or recommendation from another member; companies that pull in \$10 million to \$500 million in revenue.

What it takes to stay in: Active participation; no attendance rules.

The Leadership (a program of the Greater Baltimore Committee)



Cost: \$6,800
No. of people in the group: 50
Length: 10 months; January to October

Activities: Monthly full-day sessions tackling education, safety, health care; community days at nonprofits, evening cultural events; two mandatory overnight retreats.

Companies involved: MacKenzie Commercial Real Estate Services Inc., DLA Piper, PNC Bank, McCormick & Co. Inc.

Who can participate: Senior business and nonprofit leaders

What it takes to get in: Organization must nominate you; interview; three references.

What it takes to stay in: Opening session and retreats are mandatory; shouldn't miss more than one full-day session.

Leadership-Baltimore County

Cost: \$5,950
No. of people in the group: 40
Length: September to June

Activities: Monthly day-long seminars, meetings with policy makers, site visits at homeless shelters and nonprofits, visits to theaters and museums

Companies involved: Associated Black Charities, Johns Hopkins Health System, SunTrust Bank

Who can participate: Senior leaders involved in their communities through volunteering, boards, etc.

What it takes to get in: Nonprofits and businesses nominate an executive; individuals can also apply; selection committee looks for people who are passionate about helping the community and not just networking.

What it takes to stay in: Mandatory orientation retreat; no more than two seminar absences.



Dan Cahill, a vice president at WebbMason in Hunt Valley, joined Accelerent to help drum up new business.