

# Business Savings

## Free Technology Seminars Help Businesses Maximize IT Spending

(NAPSA)—According to a recent brief, small and medium-sized businesses will increase their information technology (IT) spending by 15 percent in 2004 (Forrester Research: "Software and Services Plans of the SMB Market," Aug. 6, 2003). As businesses increase their spending on technology, the need to make effective and educated purchases becomes vital. However, business owners rarely have the time or information available to them to help them decide which applications their business would benefit from most.

Small businesses can get help with technology purchasing decisions by working with experts or attending technology seminars available in their area. In a few hours, seminar attendees can learn which new technology applications are right for their needs and how to implement technological tools to streamline processes.

Floyd Gilchrist, general manager of information technology for Regional Retail Concepts Inc., a specialty gift and airport-food retailer, often seeks such guidance. With approximately 70 employees, 20 desktop systems and 11 point-of-sale workstations, the company depends on an efficient technology infrastructure to manage everything from retail transactions to inventory tracking, financials and customer relationships.

Gilchrist regularly attends seminars offered by Microsoft Corp. to gain a better understanding of the technology and resources available to improve his company's overall performance. "By attending Microsoft's seminars I'm able to easily glean information about new technology offerings and make the best IT decisions for my business,"



**At special technology seminars, busy small business owners can learn to file away a few problems.**

Gilchrist said. "As a result I've been able to decrease system downtime, cut costs and achieve a measurable return on the investments we make."

Microsoft offers more than 2,400 free technology seminars a year tailored to small businesses, technology providers, resellers and developers in cities nationwide. For instance, the Microsoft Touch-Point Series offers attendees educational information on technology topics that affect them directly, such as tips on how to make their business more secure, streamline their marketing costs and manage their customer relationships. In addition, these seminars provide demonstrations on technologies such as servers and desktop software. For a more technical audience, the Microsoft seminars for Technical Sales Specialists (TS2) share in-depth technical product and resource information to help providers better meet and anticipate customer needs. Such seminars also give attendees an opportunity to network with their peers. For more information about these seminars or to register, please visit <http://www.connect-ms.com/> or call (877) 673-8368 (toll-free).