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## Brenner Business Development targets U.S., German firms

BY ERIC REINHARDT  
 JOURNAL STAFF

ONONDAGA — Mark Lesselroth was born in Germany, now lives in the town of Onondaga, and speaks both English and German fluently.

Lesselroth also operates his own business that helps executives find new business opportunities and develop sales and marketing tools to reach their company's objectives.



Lesselroth

In some cases, that could mean seeking new markets overseas.

Lesselroth is the sole proprietor of Brenner Business Development (BBD), a company he founded in July 2004 and named after his grandfather, Hans Brenner.

When asked about the purpose of his firm, Lesselroth says, "Brenner Business Development is about creating partnerships between two companies who previously may not have known each other but can mutually benefit from one another."

His firm provides training, market development and analysis, sales and marketing plan development, and international business development, according to the firm's Web site.

Based on his background, one of the services Lesselroth offers is helping businesses determine if they could possibly export their products or services into countries, such as Germany.

Just this year, Lesselroth formed what he terms a "strategic partnership that is just shy of a true joint venture" with CEO advise GmbH. That's a business-development firm based in Aichtal-Neuenhaus, Germany that Lesselroth is familiar with through the New York City-based German-American Chamber of Commerce. Both firms are dealing with clients that are interested in reaching markets in the other's country.

Lesselroth cited a New Jersey-based startup that CEO advise learned about through an acquaintance. The N.J. company agreed to work with CEO advise due to its affiliation with BBD. Even though the German firm made the initial contact, the

partnership allows Lesselroth to handle business-development activities for the firm, he says.

### Belief in international markets

Lesselroth believes most U.S. businesses that expand into Europe tend to focus on the United Kingdom and Ireland because the language is the same. He advises domestic firms, particularly those based in Central New York, to take a look at what else is out there.

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," Lesselroth says.

He points to the Internet and international chambers of commerce (such as the German American Chamber of Commerce) as ways to research the potential for a given product in the German or another foreign market.

He also mentioned the Central New York International Business Alliance (CNYIBA), an organization comprised of local businesses and service providers that's aimed at educating the business community on opportunities outside the United States.

Lesselroth is a current board member for CNYIBA, he says.

In looking at European markets, Lesselroth says companies often look at dollars and cents and facts and figures, instead of the human factor in conducting business.

"If you want to be successful in doing business in someone else's country ... you [should] make it a point to understand certain cultural nuances," Lesselroth says.

The nuances could include how people do business and conduct themselves.

Lesselroth notes he always advises his American clients to have patience when dealing with a German partner because Germans take their time in making decisions.

"The up side to that is once they come to a decision, they usually stick with it," he says.

With American business people, Lesselroth has found they'll make a decision and then change their mind a few months or even a few days later.

"That's a good example of a cultural difference between the two countries," he says.

Lesselroth tells German clients that Americans are curious and gather infor-

mation before making a purchasing decision, so Germans should increase their marketing efforts on a product or service Americans might not know about.

### About the firm and owner

Lesselroth operates Brenner Business Development from an office at his home in the town of Onondaga. He has no plans to hire any employees for at least one year.

He declined to disclose the revenue total his firm generated in 2009, but said the figure was down 20 percent from 2008. Lesselroth is projecting 20 percent revenue growth in 2010.

Brenner Business Development has worked with 40 clients since starting six years ago, and of that figure, the firm is actively engaged with 10, Lesselroth says.

Local clients include Stressdesign, a Syracuse-based communication-design firm, and Harden Furniture, Inc. of McConnellsville in Oneida County.

Lesselroth was born in Germany in the late 1960s, and moved to the Syracuse area in July 1977. His father, Benjamin Lesselroth, is a native of Binghamton, and his mother, Waltraud Lucente, is from Germany.

Lesselroth graduated from Jamesville-DeWitt High School in 1984. He earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Le Moyne College in 1989. He later earned a graduate degree in industrial and organizational behavior from Otto Friedrich Universität Bamberg in Bamberg, Germany.

After completing his graduate degree, Lesselroth returned to the Syracuse area to serve as director of international business development at Cowley Associates in Syracuse. He then served as director of business development for Sage Marketing Communications between 1994 and 2000.

Later in 2000, Lesselroth accepted a position as the manager of the e-business channel for the Web site Bestroute.com, a DeWitt-based online distributor of electrical equipment. The following year, he joined Eric Mower and Associates as director of business development, before leaving in 2004 to pursue his own business. □

Contact Reinhardt at  
 ereinhardt@cnybj.com