

First 'Apprentice' winner mentors Utah entrepreneurs

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MIDWAY — Becoming a reality star typically does not qualify most people to offer advice to an audience on how to succeed in business, but then Bill Rancic is not your typical reality celebrity. He holds the distinction of being the first-ever winner on the hit show "The Apprentice," which means he learned much of what he knows from billionaire businessman Donald Trump.

Like him or not, "The Donald" is respected by many in the business world, and Rancic's skill and savvy to beat out 15 other highly educated and motivated contestants is a feat worthy of respect in and of itself, judging by the attention paid by small-business owners in attendance Tuesday when Rancic was the featured speaker at the Rural Business Conference.

Set goals, "think big" and strive hard to reach those goals, Rancic told the crowd of about 180 people. He said that too often people let their fear of failure keep them from becoming truly successful but that sometimes falling short of success is necessary.

"Failure, I know, is a bad word, but it isn't always a bad thing," he said at the conference, organized by U.S. Sen. Bob Bennett, R-Utah. "True failure is when it happens multiple times and you make the same mistake multiple times."

Rancic added that failing to try because of fear is worse than not trying at all. Rancic added that when an idea doesn't work as planned or the business landscape changes, entrepreneurs should be willing to make adjustments and alter their approach for reaching their goal.



"You have to have agility, especially in this environment that we're going through right now," he said. "My competitors, they went to Harvard and Yale and very impressive business schools. But they only knew one way of doing things — the way they learned in school — and that doesn't always work."

Being successful also means managing risk and sometimes "micro-managing that risk" to "convert it into success," he said.

Rancic also said that one of the key lessons he learned from Trump was that the fundamentals of success in business do not change much at the billionaire level from the small-business level.

"People who can master the fundamentals of business and use that as their foundation ... can build upon that foundation in anything that they want," he said.

Since his win on "The Apprentice" in 2004, Rancic has authored two books on small business and now stars on the A&E series "We Mean Business." He told the audience that as small-business entrepreneurs, they would encounter many people who would "try to bring them down."

"I try to stay as far away from those people as I possibly can because I realized that those people are jealous...." Rancic said. "Those people wish they had ambition, the creativity and the drive that you guys have."

He said that continuing to believe in yourself and having a strong business plan would go a long way toward success.

The event was one of eight hosted by Bennett. Another small-business conference is scheduled for Friday in Brigham City at the Utah State University location at 265 W. 1100 South. Pre-registration for the free event can be completed at www.ruralutah.com or by calling Bennett's office at 801-524-5933.

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