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PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

ENTERPRISE

Small-business event scheduled

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PBN Staff Reporter

When PBEC hits Honolulu next week, small businesses will be alongside the big-business delegates, thanks to government and private efforts to maximize opportunities for Hawaii professionals.

Select PBEC delegates are scheduled to talk, golf and relax one-on-one with local businesspeople. That's the basis of a program sponsored by Hawaii's chambers of commerce, local economic development boards and Hawaii agencies including the state Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. It's among the programs aimed to help local small businesses maximize opportunities available through the state's hosting of the three-day conference.

If all goes as planned, ethnic chambers of commerce will act as go-betweens for small businesses and PBEC delegates who wish to make connections and ally with local companies.

Chinese Chamber of Commerce President Frances Goo has been corresponding with executives from China and other parts of Asia to match them with local businesses.

"They may want to meet and make a friend here in Hawaii We'll create that opportunity," Goo says.

The casual meetings could lead to long-term relations, says Stanley Hong, Chamber of Commerce president.

Such wheels may have already been set in motion. Thanks in part to DBEDT, one Latin American PBEC delegate is scheduled to tour Dole Foods' North Shore lychee plantation, and a Southeast Asian delegate has requested a business tour of Oahu.

Meanwhile, small businesses will also have a chance to pick the brains of select PBEC delegates in the PBEC Hawaii Business Forum, which runs all day Monday.

It's a chance for small businesses to learn from leading international companies, says Greg Wong, director of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Export Assistance Center in Honolulu and an event organizer.

"How often do we have access to giant whales of leaders steering the direction of the global economy?" Wong says.

A sellout crowd of 440 local business leaders paid \$100 to attend the PBEC opening session, a luncheon and keynote address, and an exclusive afternoon session with PBEC speakers discussing topics including e-commerce, entrepreneurship and financial services.

"I want to see what some of the CEOs have to say about what's happening in the Far East," says Johnson Choi, president of the Hong Kong Business Association of Hawaii. "This can help me get the most up-to-date information on a firsthand basis."

Choi also hopes to garner support for his upcoming construction-related Web site. Ideally, he'd like to strike up conversations with PBEC delegates in the architecture, engineering or high-technology industries, he says.

PacRim Marketing Chairman Ken Erdman also hopes to network with PBEC delegates. To prepare, he'll sift through the roster of 500 PBEC delegates and "pick out opportunities" to lead his company into countries otherwise hard to reach.

"We would find it normally very difficult to contact major leaders in other countries," Erdman says. "This affords an

opportunity to do it on a person-to-person basis. Ten minutes and the exchange of cards might open a door."

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