

On the Road With Megabus.com

Megabus.com's bright blue, large double-decker buses boldly touting low-cost fares are hard to miss. Beyond its eye-catching appearance, what is it that makes this transportation service different?

While many wonder whether the highly-touted \$1 fee (plus 50 cents to book) truly exists (it does), this marketing tactic attracts travelers. The actual price you end up paying for a ticket fluctuates, depending on how far in advance travel is booked.

Megabus.com launched in 2006, offering buses to and from Chicago. Today it has 12 main hubs across the nation that allow travel to over 100 cities. It serves six million customers each year, more than 25 million total since its inception.

Megabus.com has wide appeal, attracting the college student who is trying to get home or take part in spring break on limited funds, as well as those who wish to work while they travel.

Hoosiers can travel to and from Indianapolis via Megabus.



Megabus.com offers free Wi-Fi and power outlets.

com to several surrounding cities, including Chicago, Nashville, Louisville, Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio. Indianapolis is currently the only Indiana stop.

Resource: Megabus at www.megabus.com

Fixing the Prison Problem

With 2.3 million people behind bars in the United States, which accounts for nearly a quarter of all people imprisoned in the world, many states are starting to make changes to sentencing procedures. Indiana is one of those adjusting the way that criminals serve time.

In May, Gov. Mike Pence signed House Enrolled Act (HEA) 1006 into law. This is a rewrite of the Indiana Criminal Code, which had not been revised in over 30 years. Representatives Jud McMillin (R-Brookville), Rep. Matt Pierce (D-Bloomington) and Rep. Linda Lawson (D-Hammond) authored the bill.

The new law will put non-violent, low-level felons on work-release and related programs rather than moving them into the prison system. It will also create tougher penalties for B and C felonies, computer crimes, sex crimes and hazing, and place tighter restrictions on serious offenders' ability to get out of prison early by requiring them to serve 75% of their sentences instead of the current 50%.

The Legislature expects these changes will cut state prison costs and provide fair and consistent policies for victims and offenders.

Other states have made similar changes, including California, where counties were given more responsibility to determine which offenders would be sent to state prisons and funding was moved to the county level. The capacity of state prisons dropped from 200% to 146%.

For years, increases in Indiana state funding for corrections had exceeded other budget areas. With HEA 1006, there is strong potential to reallocate future funds for education, workforce development and other state programs.

"Indiana should be the worst place in America to commit a serious crime and the best place, once you've done your time, to get a second chance," the governor said in signing the legislation.

HEA 1006 will go into effect on July 1, 2014.

WPO Chapter Launches in Indianapolis

Female business leaders in Indiana have a new networking opportunity. The first Indiana chapter of the Women Presidents' Organization (WPO) was recently launched in Indianapolis. Kathy Pedrotti Hays, co-owner of Indianapolis-based Social Legends, is the chapter chair.

WPO was founded in 1997 to connect women who own multi-million dollar companies. The 20 females in each chapter drive their corporations to the next level by working through the issues their companies are facing. There are currently 101 chapters in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Peru and South Africa.

In February, WPO hosted a launch luncheon for women business owners across Indiana. About 30 attended. Since then, nine have become members.

Hays describes WPO as "networking at its highest level."

"Members must be held accountable to attend meetings and participate since they learn from each other," she says. "It is all about peer learning so the peers need to be there. There is a certain level of expectation beyond the financial obligation (the application indicates an \$1,800 membership fee)."

Hays is excited to see how the chapter will progress. "So many women in these positions that own their own companies are unaware of others who are in similar positions. One of the things that is really nice is to just create a kind of safety net for the members to come and discuss their pressing issues and to see how that relationship develops."

Resources: Kathy Pedrotti Hays, Social Legends, at Kathy@sociallegends.com

Women Presidents' Organization at www.womenpresidentsorg.com

Shorts written by Danniella Banks

A New Kind of Tracking Taking Place

Imagine that you are asked by your employer to wear a badge, about the size of a smartphone, around your neck every day for a few weeks to track your interactions and movements at work. The data collected will help company leaders determine if the work environment is boosting productivity.

This scenario may seem intrusive. Many companies, however, including Bank of America and Kimberly-Clark, have turned to electronic sensing badges made by Sociometric Solutions, Inc. to improve efficiency by examining the workplace atmosphere.

Employees wear the badge on a voluntary basis. Even though participation is optional, about 90% of workers choose to wear the badge during the workday, according to Dr. Ben Waber, co-founder and CEO at Sociometric Solutions.

The goal, through evaluating collective behaviors of

employees, is for companies to make changes in the workplace to help operations run more smoothly. These include such items as moving people to locations in which it is easier to collaborate with colleagues or remove cubicle walls for a more open environment.

“I do not believe there is an invasion of privacy as employers have a right to know where employees are during the workday and the work they are producing,” explains Angie Brawdy, director of the Indiana State Council for the Society of Human Resource Management. “The key would be in communicating the rollout with the employees, so they have a clear understanding of the intent.”

Resource: Angie Brawdy, Indiana State Council for the Society of Human Resource Management, at abrawdy@scvl.com

Brand Battle: New Versus Traditional

In the past, grocery stores were filled with established, historic brands. People bought the same items that lined the shelves of their parents’ and grandparents’ homes. Back then, “new” often meant untested, unproven and unfamiliar.

Fast forward to today and you’ll find many consumers prefer anything labeled “new and improved” over the more traditional products.

Trendwatching.com, a global trending firm, is calling these new offerings “clean slate brands” because they do not face the increasing challenge of having had to maintain a positive image over a number of years. Its research shows only 33% of Americans trust big brands today.

Clabber Girl, a Terre Haute-based business for more than 150 years and synonymous with baking power since the late 1800s, has observed the emergence of newer brands in the market. Company leaders understand that today’s baker is not the same as those in previous generations, but that its well-established brand will continue to be valuable.

“We have to communicate differently and provide additional products that provide solutions for our customers,” offers Meredith Wilson, Clabber Girl’s executive director of marketing. She adds, however, that “our brand evokes an emotion for people of a simple happy experience in their lives. I don’t think many brands can say that.”

Resources: Meredith Wilson, Clabber Girl, at mwilson@clabbergirl.com

www.trendwatching.com

Fashion Trucks Rolling Onto Scene

New locations for purchasing clothing, shoes, jewelry and home décor are gaining attention across the nation. Trucks, following the lead of their food counterparts, are becoming a “fashionable” way to purchase these items.

Entrepreneurs are creating their own retail stores by retrofitting trailers and delivery trucks into mobile stores and specialty boutiques. Some are using social media to inform shoppers of their next location.

Fashion trucks have been popping up in Los Angeles, Boston and everywhere in between, but have become particularly popular in the last year. Their demand has soared as customers realize they can purchase products that can’t be found at local stores or even on this continent.

These fashion trucks often sell only handmade items that are one of a kind, while others have products from local designers and boutiques. Some products come from South America, Europe and Africa. The merchandise can cost as much as \$1,000 or as little as a few dollars.

Fashion trucks have already started arriving in Indianapolis. Be alert for their presence in other cities.

Possible fashion truck finds: one-of-a kind merchandise from local and international designers.

