

## **Lots of Legwork Keeps You on Top of the Game**

**By Karen E. Klein**

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**Q:** I own a small tech firm that's always scrambling to keep up with the latest innovations. How can my business remain competitive when market demands are changing so quickly?

**A:** Scramble faster. That means you and your key managers need to understand what's going on in the global "food chain" that affects your market.

Read everything published about your industry. "In today's online world, this is easy: Subscribe to all of the electronic newsletters that you can," advised Marty Shindler, chief executive of Shindler Perspective Inc., an Encino-based consulting firm. Regularly attend influential trade shows — not just those geared for your niche but also those relevant to your customers.

"In addition to the main [trade show] floor, cruise the start-up and back-of-the-hall areas. This is where companies with limited resources are often located — and it is this area where next-generation technologies are often found," Shindler said.

Meet your customers in person to talk about their new projects and market sectors. "This kind of attention will pay dividends as you work diligently to anticipate their needs," he said.

Be strategic in your approach to your clients by gaining a solid understanding of what their customers expect from them and what other vendors who serve them do to stay ahead on technology topics.

And keep scrambling, Shindler said: "A little fear is not a bad thing — it keeps us on our toes and makes sure we strive for excellence."

*Got a question about running or starting a small enterprise? E-mail it to [karen.e.klein@latimes.com](mailto:karen.e.klein@latimes.com) or mail it to In Box, Los Angeles Times, 202 W. 1st St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.*