

Calendar of Events

April 20, 2025

Easter Services
Grace Church
1325 E Jefferson St
Morton, IL 61550
07:30 AM - 10:30 AM CST
Grace Church, 309-266-9281
office@gracemorton.org

April 22, 2025

Learn About Becoming a Foster Parent with Children's Home
Avanti's Restaurant North Knoxville Location
8517 N. Knoxville Ave
Peoria, IL 61615
06:00 PM - 07:30 PM CST
SHARLENA NOFSINGER, 224-475-8914
sharlenanofsinger@letitbeus.org
LEARN ABOUT BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT WITH CHILDREN'S HOME

April 23, 2025

Grow with Google Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence 7-part webinar series
https://us06web.zoom.us/join/Nv6N5T4NRuW5TaCrQtR_4Q
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST
Jennie Hale, 309.677.2992
illinoisbdc@bradley.edu
The Illinois Small Business Development Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University is offering a 7-part webinar series on "Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence."
In today's fast-paced digital world, having an online store is just the beginning—knowing how to optimize it for growth is what sets successful e-commerce businesses apart. This webinar is designed to equip business owners with the essential strategies and tools needed to boost revenue, attract more customers, and thrive in the competitive online marketplace. Whether you're looking to enhance your website, improve customer retention, or maximize the impact of your marketing efforts, this session will provide actionable insights to help you scale your business effectively.

This training provides ecommerce businesses with the strategies and tools to increase revenue and expand their reach. Topics covered include website optimization, effective marketing campaigns, social media engagement, customer service and retention, and data analytics. This training is designed to help ecommerce businesses thrive and succeed in a competitive online marketplace.

By the end of this session, you will have the knowledge and tools to take your e-commerce business to the next level, unlocking new revenue streams and reaching more customers than ever before. Don't miss this opportunity to refine your strategy and accelerate your online success!

April 24, 2025

Introduction to AI: What is AI and How Can It Help Your Business

https://Bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/GUais_6aTlux7ROPeGicig

12:00 PM - 01:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 309.677.2992

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

The Illinois Small Business Development Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University is excited to offer a new webinar series, "Exploring AI for Entrepreneurs: Automating and Innovating Your Business." This series is specifically designed to empower small business owners with practical, actionable strategies that drive success. Each session focuses on giving participants clear, step-by-step plans that can be implemented immediately to enhance key areas of business operations, from streamlining tasks and improving customer engagement to making smarter data-driven decisions. Whether you're just starting to explore AI or looking to deepen your understanding, this series will equip you with the knowledge and tools to leverage AI for growth, efficiency, and innovation in your business.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) may sound like a complex, futuristic technology, but it's already here, and it's transforming the way businesses operate. In this workshop, we'll break down the basics of AI, showing you how it's not just for tech companies but an essential tool for small business owners today. AI can help you automate routine tasks, make smarter decisions, and improve customer experiences, all while saving you time and money. Whether you're looking to streamline operations, boost productivity, or gain deeper insights into your business, AI offers accessible and affordable solutions that can give you a competitive edge. By learning how AI works and how to implement it, you'll be empowered to grow your business more efficiently and effectively, staying ahead in today's fast-paced marketplace.

Topics:

?Why AI Matters for Small Businesses

?Key AI Concepts & Terminology

?Benefits of AI for Small Business

?Challenges & Risks of AI in Small Business

?AI Applications in Small Business

Webinar series presenters:

Our AI U Certified SBDC Advisers from the Illinois SBDC at Bradley University.

Theresa Bloom, Director of AI U & Social Media Adviser at Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

Amy Lambert, Assistant Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

Eric Sampson, Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

April 28, 2025
- April 30, 2025

RHMA's Small-Town Pastors' Conference
Grace Church
1325 E. Jefferson Street
Morton, IL 61550
06:30 PM - 08:00 PM CST
Karen Clarke, 309-263-2350
info@rhma.org

The Public is invited to join us On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday Nights, April 28, 29, 30 - 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.. The sessions are being held in conjunction with RHMA Small-Town Pastors's Conference at Grace Church, 1325 E. Jefferson Street, Morton, IL 61550. No costs for evening sessions.

Questions: Contact RHMA 309.263.2350 / info@rhma.org / <https://www.rhma.org>

Speaker: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday Nights - Phil Tuttle (President & CEO - Walk Thru the Bible)

May 1, 2025

Exploring AI for Entrepreneurs: Automating and Innovating Your Business | Creating Your Bu

<https://Bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/ZY7vsTu2T0mMklk3YQP1Qg>

12:00 PM - 01:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 309.677.2992

illinoissbdc@bradley.edu

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Developing a comprehensive business plan is crucial for setting clear objectives and guiding your company's growth trajectory. In this session, participants will learn how to develop a personalized business plan, incorporating AI-driven insights to inform decisions and strategies. Attendees will learn how to create a concrete plan and roadmap tailored to their business's unique needs and goals.

Topics:

Essential components of a business plan and their significance

Utilizing AI for in-depth market analysis and competitor research

Leveraging AI-assisted financial forecasting for accurate goal setting

Strategies for continuously updating and refining your plan with AI tools

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Amy Lambert, Assistant Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

Eric Sampson, Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

May 2, 2025

- May 3, 2025

Blain's Farm & Fleet Marks 70 Years with In-Store Celebrations and Giveaways

Blain's Farm & Fleet of Morton

150 East Courtland Street

Morton, IL 61550

08:00 AM - 08:00 PM CST

Gayla , 7139629020

gayla@gcw.agency

Blain's Farm & Fleet, a trusted Midwest retail destination since 1955, is marking its 70th anniversary with two-day celebrations you won't want to miss. The anniversary events will be packed with savings, giveaways, memorable experiences, and appreciation for the customers, associates, and communities who built the brand.

May 3, 2025

Central Illinois Watch & Clock Show and Sale

American Legion Hall

24 E Adams St.

Morton, IL 61550

11:00 AM - 02:00 PM CST

Patrick Wahlers, 3096435241

route66watchsocialmedia@gmail.com

The Route 66 Watch and Clock Club is sponsoring a free Central Illinois Watch and Clock Show and Sale on Saturday, May 3, 2025 at the American Legion, located at 24 E Adams Street in Morton, Illinois between 11 am and 2 pm. The show is free, and open to the public.

May 7, 2025

Building Stronger Teams Huddle 4

Morton Chamber of Commerce

415 W Jefferson St

Morton, IL 61550

12:30 PM - 03:30 PM CST

Janelle Reeb, 309-886-5018

jreeb@jeebconsulting.com

In today's fast-paced business environment, success requires more than just individual talent—it is built on trust. Our Building Stronger Teams huddle series is designed for businesses ready to invest in their Frontline leaders, equipping them with the skills to drive effective communication, foster accountability, and create a culture of collaboration.

Embracing Change :This huddle will provide you with the necessary tools and strategies to adapt to change adequately. You will discuss the Change Process and learn how to navigate through constant changes in our lives. You will reach an understanding as to why we react as we do to change and be given tips and techniques to manage the stress associated with change.

Huddle 1: Building Trust | February 12

Huddle 2; Effective Communication | March 12

Huddle 3: Leading to Inspire | April 9

May 8, 2025

Exploring AI for Entrepreneurs: Automating and Innovating Your Business | Researching Your

https://Bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/erWNbrE6RiaUTQ_k24ANng

12:00 PM - 01:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 309.677.2992

illiinoisbdc@bradley.edu

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Understanding and articulating a compelling value proposition is fundamental to attracting and retaining customers. This session will guide participants in developing a clear value proposition, supported by AI-enhanced research and data analysis. Attendees will learn to develop an actionable roadmap and a task list tailored to their business needs, ensuring their value proposition resonates effectively with their target audience.

Topics:

*Defining and refining your unique value proposition
Conducting comprehensive market research and competitor analysis
Employing AI tools to analyze trends and gather actionable customer insights
Implementing AI-driven feedback systems to personalize and enhance offerings*

Webinar series presenters:

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Theresa Bloom, Director of AI U & Social Media Adviser at Illinois SBDC at Bradley.
Amy Lambert, Assistant Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.
Eric Sampson, Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.*

May 12, 2025
- May 13, 2025

DigiMarCon Midwest 2025 - Digital Marketing, Media and Advertising Conference & Exhibition
Soldier Field Stadium
1410 Museum Campus Dr
Chicago, IL 60605
09:00 AM - 07:00 PM CST
DigiMarCon Midwest, 8008055385
events@digimarconmidwest.com

DigiMarCon Midwest – The #1 Digital Marketing, Media and Advertising Conference & Exhibition in Midwestern U.S.

Get ready to be inspired and informed at DigiMarCon Midwest, the premier annual conference and exhibition for digital marketing, media, advertising and business professionals in Midwestern United States, returning May 12-13, 2025 to the Soldier Field Stadium in Chicago, Illinois. Experience two action-packed days including keynotes, master classes and panels from experts and thought leaders with cutting-edge strategies and numerous networking opportunities. Also check out the next generation of technology & innovation; Internet, Mobile, AdTech, MarTech & SaaS Technology. Attend in-person or online to access the next wave of digital innovation, including insights in AI and ChatGPT, marketing automation, content creation, growth hacking, social media marketing, SEO, and more.

Highlights:

- *Top Industry Keynotes: Hear from visionary speakers who push the boundaries of digital marketing.*
- *Networking Opportunities: Connect with thought leaders, reunite with your peers, and expand your professional network.*
- *Emerging Trends: Discover strategies and latest technologies to move your business to the next level.*
- *Hands-On Learning: Master classes, case studies, and strategy sessions to equip you with practical solutions for immediate impact.*

This year's edition will feature topics such as:

- *Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT, and Marketing Automation*
- *Content Marketing, Email Marketing, Social Media Marketing, and Influencer Marketing*
- *Conversion Rate Optimization, Mobile Marketing, and Video Marketing*
- *Data Science, Big Data, Programmatic Advertising and Predictive Analytics*
- *UI / UX Design, User Experience, Omnichannel Marketing, and much more!*

Challenge traditional ideas, gain actionable insights, and discover how to thrive and succeed as a marketer in a rapidly evolving digital world. See why people keep coming back year after year to this must-attend event for any marketer wanting to stay ahead!

Register and secure your seat today at <https://digimarconmidwest.com>.

May 14, 2025

Starting Your Business in Illinois

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center, 801 W Main Street, Peoria IL 61606

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center, 801 W Main Street, Peoria IL 61606

Peoria, IL 61606

01:00 PM - 03:00 PM CST

Amy Lambert, 3096772992

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

This workshop is for aspiring entrepreneurs who want to learn all the components of how to start a successful business in Illinois. Get a realistic view of the requirements to start a business and the resources available to support your new venture. While attending this no cost 2-hour workshop, you will learn how to get your business name registered, where to obtain a tax ID number, which legal form to choose, business planning, taxes, financing options and much more. After attending the workshop, our team of certified business advisors are available to work with you, one-on-one, to navigate the process and help you succeed! This workshop is sponsored by the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Bradley University and co-sponsored by Morton Community Bank. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email.

May 14, 2025

Grow with Google Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence 7-part webinar series

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/Cz7NvYZWQeikeGdANsOfmA>

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Jennie Hale, 309.677.2992

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

The Illinois Small Business Development Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University is offering a 7-part webinar series on "Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence."

In today's digital-first world, being found online isn't just an advantage—it's a necessity. If customers can't find your business on search engines, you're missing out on valuable opportunities for growth.

Get Found, Got Growth is a training program designed to help businesses improve their online presence and increase their visibility on search engines. Led by expert trainer Maria Elena Duron, the program offers practical strategies to optimize your online presence and attract more customers. By attending this program, businesses can learn how to improve their search rankings, increase their online visibility, and thrive online.

By the end of this session, you will have the tools and knowledge to improve your search performance, stand out from competitors, and ensure your business is easily found by the right audience. Don't miss this opportunity to take control of your digital presence and drive lasting growth!

May 15, 2025

Exploring AI for Entrepreneurs: Automating and Innovating Your Business | Mastering AI for S

<https://Bradley.zoom.us/meeting/register/zPx-OrtSRR-II1VMkXEPRA>

12:00 PM - 01:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 309.677.2992

illinoissbdc@bradley.edu

The Illinois Small Business Development Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University is excited to offer a new webinar series, "Exploring AI for Entrepreneurs: Automating and Innovating Your Business." This series is specifically designed to empower small business owners with practical, actionable strategies that drive success. Each session focuses on giving participants clear, step-by-step plans that can be implemented immediately to enhance key areas of business operations, from streamlining tasks and improving customer engagement to making smarter data-driven decisions. Whether you're just starting to explore AI or looking to deepen your understanding, this series will equip you with the knowledge and tools to leverage AI for growth, efficiency, and innovation in your business.

In this workshop, we'll explore how AI can revolutionize your marketing and social media efforts. You'll learn how AI tools can save you time, increase engagement, and improve the effectiveness of your campaigns. By the end of the session, you'll have a clear understanding of how to use AI to automate and optimize your marketing strategies.

Topics:

*How to use AI for creating personalized content and automating social media posts
Creating compelling content and automating social media marketing with AI
Leveraging AI tools to analyze customer behavior and improve targeting
Mastering effective prompt techniques to achieve results that align with and enhance your brand identity*

Webinar series presenters:

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Theresa Bloom, Director of AI U & Social Media Adviser at Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

Amy Lambert, Assistant Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

Eric Sampson, Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

May 20, 2025

The Poverty Problem: A Pathway to Addressing Homelessness

Reclaimed Center for Work Readiness

1114 SW Jefferson

Peoria, IL 61605

05:00 PM - 06:00 PM CST

Larry Holt, ?(309) 657-9110?

lholt@pathwaypeoria.org

For the past five years, Pathway Ministries has been transforming lives through a whole-person approach to poverty—and we're thrilled to share the powerful results with you!

Join us for a light dinner and an engaging hour of discussion on May 20th from 5-6pm to hear how Jesus is using your support to change lives at Pathway Ministries.

Here's what you'll experience:

*Discover why we shifted our approach to poverty and the incredible impact it's had
Hear inspiring stories firsthand from men and women who have experienced lasting transformation*

Ask questions directly to our leadership team and learn more about the work happening at Pathway Ministries

Connect with others who share your passion for making a real difference in the lives of those in need

We can't wait to see you there!

Let us know you're coming. This is a free event but we ask everyone to register here.

May 21, 2025

Grow with Google Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence 7-part webinar series

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/0bN41tizTzy8Xor9xvf1PQ>

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Jennie Hale, 309.677.2992

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

The Illinois Small Business Development Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University is offering a 7-part webinar series on "Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence."

In today's data-driven world, understanding how customers interact with your business online is key to making smarter, more strategic decisions. Without the right insights, you could be missing opportunities to optimize your marketing, improve customer engagement, and increase revenue. This webinar will equip you with the knowledge and tools to harness the power of Google Analytics, enabling you to track key metrics, analyze trends, and make data-backed decisions that drive business success.

Learn best practices and analyze trends about how customers engage with your business online, then turn these insights into well-informed, actionable decisions.

Topics covered:

**An introduction to Google Analytics*

**Creating and understanding reports*

**Making goals*

**Using Analytics with other Google tools*

By the end of this training, you will have a solid foundation in using analytics to refine your marketing efforts, enhance customer experiences, and ultimately make better business decisions. Don't miss this opportunity to turn data into action and fuel your business growth!

May 22, 2025

Exploring AI for Entrepreneurs: Automating and Innovating Your Business | Financial Management

<https://Bradley.zoom.us/join/AgUIF117Q1WY6nouyAlvxQ>

12:00 PM - 01:00 PM CST

Katie Whalen, 309.677.2992

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

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Robust financial management is the backbone of a successful business. This session will equip participants with tools to develop a financial plan, incorporating AI to enhance accuracy and strategic financial decisions. Attendees will learn to create financial strategies tailored to their businesses for improved financial management, supported by AI-driven insights.

Topics:

Developing effective budgeting and forecasting strategies

Understanding and interpreting key financial statements

Utilizing AI for automated financial tracking and expense management

Enhancing financial decision-making with AI-driven insights and analytics

Webinar series presenters:

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Theresa Bloom, Director of AI U & Social Media Adviser at Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

Amy Lambert, Assistant Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

Eric Sampson, Director of Illinois SBDC at Bradley.

June 2, 2025

Golf with Pathway Ministries

Metamora Fields Golf Club

801 W Progress St

Metamora, IL 61548

08:00 AM - 06:00 PM CST

Larry Holt, ?(309) 657-9110?

lholt@pathwaypeoria.org

Join us for a fantastic day on the greens at Metamora Fields Golf Club on June 2 for our annual golf outing! Enjoy a fun-filled day of golf, great company, and exciting prizes on a premier course. Whether you're a seasoned golfer or just out for a good time, this 4-person scramble is the perfect way to kick off the summer. Spots are limited, so register below to secure your place.

June 4, 2025

Grow with Google Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence 7-part webinar series

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/z_1B7ewqQsGkVI4T6UKRVQ

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Jennie Hale, 309.677.2992

illinoissbdc@bradley.edu

The Illinois Small Business Development Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University is offering a 7-part webinar series on "Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence."

Expanding your business beyond local markets can open the door to endless opportunities—but knowing where to start can be challenging. With the right strategy and tools, reaching international customers is easier than ever. Whether you're considering exporting for the first time or looking to scale internationally, this session will provide the insights you need to grow your business globally with confidence.

With the right tools and international marketing strategy, businesses are expanding globally to meet new demands. This workshop introduces Google's Market Finder, a free tool that can help you identify new international business opportunities and plan for success.

Topics covered:

**Discuss the benefits of exporting*

**Introduce Google Market Finder*

**Show you how to use the tool to explore other markets*

By the end of this session, you will have a clearer understanding of how to take your business to new markets, increase revenue potential, and thrive on a global scale. Don't miss this opportunity to explore international expansion and set your business up for worldwide success!

June 7, 2025

Going the Distance

350 N. Illinois Ave

Morton, IL 61550

07:00 AM - 10:00 AM CST

5K Run / Walk The Salvation Army

June 7, 2025 7:00am

350 N. Illinois Ave (Parking in MHS Main lot)

Morton

Shoe collection bins at start line!

More info and registration: <https://www.goingthedistance5k.com>

June 11, 2025

Starting Your Business in Illinois

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center, 801 W Main Street, Peoria IL 61606

Peoria NEXT Innovation Center, 801 W Main Street, Peoria IL 61606

Peoria, IL 61606

03:00 PM - 05:00 PM CST

Amy Lambert, 3096772992

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

This workshop is for aspiring entrepreneurs who want to learn all the components of how to start a successful business in Illinois. Get a realistic view of the requirements to start a business and the resources available to support your new venture. While attending this no cost 2-hour workshop, you will learn how to get your business name registered, where to obtain a tax ID number, which legal form to choose, business planning, taxes, financing options and much more. After attending the workshop, our team of certified business advisors are available to work with you, one-on-one, to navigate the process and help you succeed! This workshop is sponsored by the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Bradley University and co-sponsored by Morton Community Bank. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email.

June 18, 2025

Grow with Google Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence 7-part webinar series

https://us06web.zoom.us/join/dh6JVil_SBSFAXPUPngF3w

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM CST

Jennie Hale, 309.677.2992

illinoisbdc@bradley.edu

The Illinois Small Business Development Center in the Turner Center for Entrepreneurship at Bradley University is offering a 7-part webinar series on "Mastering Google Tools to Build Your Digital Presence."

Running an e-commerce business from home offers incredible flexibility, but it also comes with unique challenges. To succeed, you need efficient systems, strong communication, and the right strategies to scale effectively. This webinar will provide practical tips and expert insights on how to build a streamlined, productive, and profitable remote e-commerce business. Whether you're just starting out or looking to optimize your operations before scaling, this session will equip you with the tools needed to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and drive growth.

The Thriving at Remote eCommerce training offers practical tips and strategies to create a successful eCommerce business from home. Our expert trainer will cover effective communication, time management, optimizing your workspace, streamlining operations, reducing costs, and increasing productivity.

By the end of this session, you will have a clear action plan to strengthen your remote e-commerce operations, setting you up for long-term success before scaling. Don't miss this opportunity to take control of your business and position it for sustainable growth!

September 10, 2025
- September 13, 2025

59th Morton Pumpkin Festival

Times Vary

We welcome you to the 59th Annual Morton Pumpkin Festival, September 10th - 13th, 2025.

We hope you and your family can join us to gather & give back to our community.

This year's theme is "Pumpkin Party of the Century"!