



**SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN:**

# SMALL BUSINESS SUMMIT 2026

## Practical AI & Analytics for Owners



**Brian Maynard**  
What I'd Do Differently If I Started My Business Today



**Arthur Havlicek**  
How Small Businesses Contribute to the Regional Economy



**Dr. Kimberly Pichot**  
AI and ESG Leadership: Building Trust with Stakeholders



**Dr. Williams Peprah**  
Simple Ways to See Problems Before They Hurt



**Armand Poblete**  
Digital Transformation and AI for Operational Excellence



**Betty Gibson**  
Making Better Decisions With Less Guesswork

**March 31, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Chan Shun Hall**

The Small Business Summit 2026 is a one-day, applied working session for operating business owners who want clearer visibility, stronger systems, and better decisions – without adding complexity.

This summit is a structured day focused on helping owners:

- Detect problems earlier
- Understand what drives profit and retention
- Reduce daily operational friction
- Use AI and analytics as practical support tools

**SIGN UP NOW**

Participants will leave with specific signals to monitor, simple frameworks to implement, and a 30–90 day action roadmap.

Program Objectives:

- Identify the key financial signals that indicate early risk or opportunity
- Monitor cash flow and margin patterns with greater clarity
- Understand what drives repeat customer behavior
- Evaluate marketing efforts based on measurable outcomes
- Recognize operational bottlenecks that depend too heavily on the owner
- Implement simple systems to improve consistency and reduce daily friction
- Apply structured decision-making frameworks to reduce guesswork

Use AI and analytics as practical support tools – not complex technology

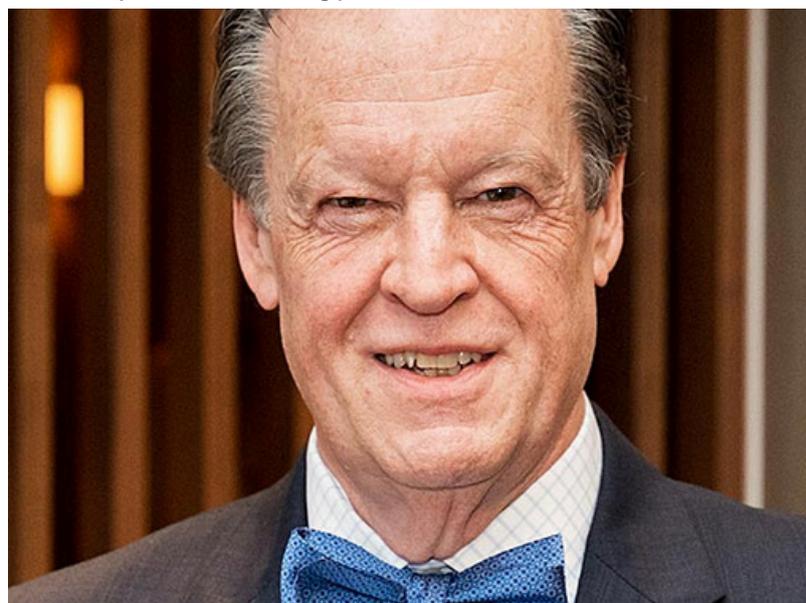
### **BRIAN MAYNARD**

Founder & "Benevolent Overlord," Forté Coffee

**Keynote:** What I'd Do Differently If I Started My Business Today

Brian Maynard shares the hard lessons behind building Forté Coffee – early missteps, financial blind spots, hiring mistakes, and systems implemented too late.

A practical, experience-driven keynote that grounds the day in real-world business leadership.





## **ARTHUR HAVLICEK**

President/CEO, Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber

Arthur Havlicek opens the summit by framing the importance of regional collaboration and the role small businesses play in shaping Southwest Michigan's economic future. Drawing from his experience leading the regional chamber and working at the intersection of business, policy, and community development, he will highlight how entrepreneurs, local leaders, and institutions can work together to strengthen the region's economic ecosystem.

## **DR. KIMBERLY PICHOT**

Dean of the College of Professions,  
Professor of Marketing

AI and ESG Leadership – Building Trust with Stakeholders

Trust is a powerful advantage for small businesses. See how owners can use AI to strengthen the accuracy, consistency, and transparency of ESG communication and reporting. Learn how to build greater confidence with customers, employees, lenders, investors, and community partners while avoiding the risks of weak systems and over-reliance on automation.



## **DR. WILLIAMS PEPRAH**

Associate Professor of Finance,  
Andrews University

Financial Visibility: Simple Ways to See Problems Before They Hurt

Most businesses do not fail suddenly. They weaken quietly.

In this practical session, Dr. Peprah helps owners identify the financial signals that reveal trouble early – before cash flow tightens, margins erode, or pressure compounds. He breaks down what to review weekly, what to review monthly, and what can safely be ignored.



## BETTY GIBSON

Associate Professor of Information Systems & Computer Science, Andrews University

Decision-Making & Analytics: Making Better Decisions With Less Guesswork

This session considers how boards can respond when suppliers violate labor or environmental standards. Using analytics and AI, participants will examine tools for oversight, accountability, and compliance while balancing ethical responsibility against cost pressures.



## ARMAND POBLETE

Executive Director of AUCORE, Faculty of Information Systems, Andrews University

Digital Transformation and AI for Operational Excellence

Many businesses stall not because of market conditions, but because too much lives inside the owner. This session addresses operational dependency directly. Armand helps participants identify where decision fatigue, repeated interruptions, and informal knowledge are slowing growth. The focus is not on adding complexity – it is on extracting structure from what already exists.



## SIGN UP NOW

Join us on March 31 for a day of practical learning that will support your business leadership and growth.

On the campus of Andrews University  
Chan Shun Hall  
4185 East Campus Circle Drive  
Berrien Springs, MI

Find Solutions for your business now

**SIGN UP NOW**



Andrews University  
Center for Organizational  
Resilience & Excellence

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