

## **Biography for Casey Willson**

Mr. Willson is currently the Retail Industry Manager at the Lead Center of the Maryland Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network at the University of Maryland in College Park. He brings 35 years of experience to bear in helping retail, restaurant, and tourism-related small businesses refine and promote their concepts to the public. Since 2004, he has presented more than 50 town meetings to over 800 businesses across Maryland in conjunction with the state's Dept. of Housing and Community Development. He meets personally with scores of small businesses throughout the state to provide confidential one-on-one counseling.

In 1989, Mr. Willson founded The Willson Company, a consulting firm that won several MAXI and Merit Awards from the International Council of Shopping Centers for its innovative training and customer service programs. In addition to 26 regional shopping centers as clients, The Willson Company worked with The Clyde's Restaurant Group, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Escada Laurel of NYC, and other organizations and businesses that depend on excellence in all aspects of their operations to attract and retain customers from all over the world. He has worked and lived in Taipei, Taiwan and was privileged to be Chief Operations Officer of The Aga Kahn Foundation, USA.

From 1985 to 1989, he was employed by Britches of Georgetown as Director of Employee Relations and Development and sat on the Operating Committee as that company expanded from 23 to 75 stores in a three-year period, ultimately reaching 110 stores before being sold. He joined the Delaware SBDC in 1996 and directed economic outreach and retail consulting throughout the state. As part of a turnaround team, he served as VP of Human Resources for BikesUSA, a \$31M/year chain of 23 bicycle shops, until joining the MDSBDC in 2001.

Mr. Willson's working knowledge begins with his early experience in owning/operating seven shoe stores, and opening and acting as Regional Director for thirteen optical shops. He holds an MBA from James Madison University and an MA from George Washington University, has taught in the School of Business at JMU, and is a veteran of the U.S. Army.