

Better Business Focus

Expert inspiration for a Better Business

June 2012

The Business Magazine that Business owners love to read

Better Business Focus is the essential key for business owners and managers. It achieves that by focusing on the way in which successful businesses compete and manage their organisations. It focuses on how people are recruited, coached and developed; on how marketing and selling is undertaken in professional markets as well as in markets with intense competition; on how technology and the Internet is reshaping the face of domestic and home business; and on how people are being equipped with new skills and techniques. In short, it offers expert inspiration for a better business.



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7 Tips From *The Apprentice* That Will Boost Sales

By Gavin Ingham

Welcome to the latest Gavin Ingham monthly article, full of tips, strategies and stories to help you to make more sales and be more successful. This month, there are 7 sales tips from the *Apprentice* and it doesn't matter whether you watched it or not, you will still be able to apply them to make a positive difference in your sales.

So we've reached week 8 of the *Apprentice* and we're getting to the point where there are few people for our Apprentices to hide behind.

With the teams now reduced to 4 against 5 and with 3 required to enter the boardroom from the losing team, everyone has to make sure that they perform well every week.

The latest task was to select two urban artists per team and then sell their paintings to both the public and to a corporate client selected by Lord Sugar. With both teams "competing" to persuade the artists to pick them this is a double sale... first to the artists and then to the clients.

Team leaders for the week were Gabrielle and Tom. Both claimed some expertise / experience in this area although, as we will see, a little knowledge can go a long way to ruining your sales prospects when wielded incorrectly.

Both teams set about visiting artists to decide who they would like to represent, meeting with their corporate client to see what their requirements were and then finally held an evening exhibition to sell as much art as possible. There were plenty of lessons to be learnt...

Sales lessons for selling art (or anything else that you might want to sell)...

Tip 1: Ask plenty of questions

One of the most basic sales maxims is that salespeople should do more asking and listening than talking and telling. Every salesperson knows this yet on my travels as a motivational speaker this is not what I see on a day to day basis. Too many salespeople are far too quick to talk and far too slow to listen. Not only do you miss valuable information this way but you also negatively impact your connection with your clients and prospects.

When Tom visited Renault he started off by telling them what he thought they needed. There was a pause and then the client said that the first thing they wanted was something "French." He could have just asked.

Over on the other team: Gabrielle and team were doing even worse.

As Karen Brady pointed out to the camera, they didn't ask about the size of painting the client (Beefeater Gin) wanted, the location in which it was going to hang nor the budget. These were basic mistakes but they missed a whole lot more too...

The client started by saying that they wanted something that said, "this is fantastic" something that said, "everything about the brand", "everything about London", "history", "heritage"... This was enough for Gaby and team to say they knew what they meant but I didn't.

How could you? Where were the questions about these statements?

How did they know what they meant by them? How could they possibly select a painting based on these broad-brush words? They needed to ask questions about them... but they didn't.

Tip 2: Don't be a know-it-all

I mentioned a little earlier on that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing and Tom had more than a little knowledge. He seemed to think that this knowledge would improve his credibility with his clients by demonstrating his expertise in this area but they were not impressed. Or even if they were they didn't care. No-one likes a know-it-all. But what you do need to do is...

Tip 3: Show genuine interest

Over to Gaby's team: Gaby had told her team that the artists got to pick them (not the other way around) and that her team must be enthusiastic and passionate about the artists' works. This created a much more natural and engaging atmosphere that ultimately led to one of the artists coming to Gaby's team rather than Tom's.

Tip 4: Believe in what you're selling

This was one of the most important points in the show for salespeople and business owners. One reason for Tom losing was the fact that he lost out on one of his first choice artists, Pure Evil, to Gaby. With no back-up plan he took the high risk strategy of going with more highly priced paintings from James Jessop. One sale of one of these paintings would have seen Tom's team romp away with a win but they never made one.

Whilst I cannot guarantee that they would have made one, it was fairly obvious that they never were going

 This article is about... Lessons to be learned from *The Apprentice*.

to because they didn't really believe that they would. Tom said, in one short comment to the camera, that he thought they were, "a lot of money" and that, "I think paying 10k is a big ask." We heard a lot of talk about these paintings being too big, too niche, too hard to sell, not suitable for private purchasers. All negative beliefs and all based on their personal perspectives.

If you do not believe in what you're selling then why would anyone else?

Tip 5: Don't negotiate before you have to

Don't negotiate before you have to. It devalues your products and services. It demonstrates that you are not in demand. It shows that you are over-pricing to start with. It reduces the chances of clients buying from you. And worst of all it almost guarantees that you are going to leave money "on the table."

When faced with some interest in one of the James Jessop paintings, Tom said outright that he would negotiate even before the client expressed any opinion about the price. I call this negotiating with yourself. Not a good idea if you want to run a successful business.

Tip 6: Treat your clients like they are special

On Gaby's team they couldn't have done a better job of destroying any credibility they had with Beefeater. They ignored them at the door of the exhibition, didn't introduce them to the team and then failed to say goodbye to them. You couldn't even make up the following conversation with Stephen (oh please, he has to go soon) if you tried. It's beyond ridiculous...

Stephen (rather too late in the day):
"Do you want a glass of wine?"

Beefeater's GIN: "Hoping for a G&T!”

Stephen: "I wish."

Sounds silly but END OF SALE. I'd like to say I haven't seen this kind of lack of thought in the real world but I have.

Tip 7: Engage brain when selling

I think that point makes itself!

In the Boardroom...

Back in the boardroom it was a close run thing. With commissions at 40%, Gaby's team had made £4580 and Tom's team made £4442. A game of two halves with Gaby's team under-performing because they had failed to sell anything to Beefeaters but having performed well selling to the public.

Tom elected to bring back Jade and Laura, partly because they have both been in the final three before and partly because the only other option was Adam and he had actually made half of the team's sales so that was a non-starter. I'd have probably lost Tom because he could be held responsible for the loss of their first choice artist and also because he did not have a back-up plan but Laura had been in the firing line several times so she must have used up a few of her lives...

Who would Lord Sugar go with?
"Tom, you're fired."

Share your thoughts on this page
<http://bit.ly/K0n6Pw>.

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About the Author

With a unique background combining sales experience with personal development and communications technologies, Gavin brings an inspirational yet real approach to sales training and coaching. Unlike most trainers Gavin excelled as a sales professional winning a European sales award for a FTSE company in his first year of selling and progressing rapidly through to a hands-on managerial role.

After a successful project growing a business from zero to £5m within 3 years, Gavin moved to his most recent role as a Sales and Marketing Director for a FTSE 250. Here Gavin combined high level hands-on selling skills with strategy, staff development and full budgetary responsibilities. Gavin knows how important it is that every investment in training produces real sales results and that is his sole objective

when delivering sales training and coaching.

Gavin is an NLP Master Practitioner and a trained coach and his depth of sales experience allows him to share true life anecdotes and examples which resonate with sales staff. This shared experience encourages greater learning and application of the skills taught because the trainees know that Gavin understands them. Nowhere is this clearer than in Gavin's approach to objection handling where he does not rest until the delegates have beaten every objection they can think of! Or in his telesales training where trainer and trainees alike get on the phone and make lives calls to clients. How many trainers will do that?!

During his career Gavin has won business with a multitude of blue-chip clients including IBM, Lloyds TSB, AT&T, Siemens, Vodafone and Citibank and has trained and coached successful telesales teams, sales professionals and sales managers. Whether you want telesales skills, sales presentations or negotiation skills, Gavin will design a course that exactly meets your needs and wins you more business.

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The man who can drive himself further once the effort gets painful is the man who will win.

Roger Bannister, the first sub-4 minute miler

”



How to Succeed Without Recruiting Expensive Stars

Results of five-year study shifts focus from 'high fliers' to 'average people'

By Colin Coulson-Thomas

Many widely adopted approaches to improving corporate performance are time consuming, expensive and disruptive according to Colin Coulson-Thomas author of a new report *Talent Management 2* on better alternatives. The University of Greenwich investigator argues "by the time many initiatives are implemented, requirements and priorities may have changed, while opportunities are often missed during transformation journeys."

The report follows a five-year investigation of different corporate practices. It sets out a more affordable approach to creating high performance organisations. According to Coulson-Thomas: "We need to shift the emphasis from recruiting and developing high fliers for an unknown future to helping people to excel at activities that are crucial today and to handle challenges as, when and wherever they arise."

The evidence examined by Coulson-Thomas suggests the approaches of many organisations are costly and doomed to disappoint. Over three quarters of practitioners participating in a poll during the investigation thought talent management is not delivering. About a half thought opportunities are being missed.

Coulson-Thomas finds "Talent wars to attract 'the best people' can push up salary costs, be distracting and involve collateral damage. Talented people can also be difficult to manage and retain. A person who is exceptional in one area may be average in another. It may be cheaper to work with the people one has and put the right support environment in place to enable them to succeed." The professor's study found "Large amounts are spent on expensive people who are not engaged, effectively used, or appropriately

supported. Views of what represents 'top talent' can also quickly become outdated. We need more flexible ways of making it easier for affordable people to understand complex issues, and helping them to do important, difficult and stressful jobs."

Talent Management 2 focuses on particular jobs and the requirements for succeeding in them. It involves assessing the roles and tasks that contribute most to priority objectives and ensuring that people in these jobs are enabled to excel by putting relevant critical success factors in place and providing the workgroups concerned with appropriate performance support.

The *Talent Management 2* report draws upon a programme of critical success factor surveys. The experience of twelve adopters of performance support was examined to assess their results and implications. The evidence suggests performance support is a focused, relatively quick and cost-effective way of securing large returns on investment. It can engage people and meet a talent-on-demand requirement.

Coulson-Thomas feels: "Paying for talented people may make little sense for organisations that cannot harness, or capture and share, what they do differently. We need to move on from single-issue initiatives such as preparing a few 'high fliers' for an unknown future to boosting the performance of today's key workgroups and quickly delivering multiple benefits for both people and organisations."

He concludes: "We also need an affordable approach which can achieve improved results by taking people as they are, rather than as we would like them to be. Performance support offers a way of achieving a high performance organisation and multiple objectives with the people one has - average people who do not cost an arm and a leg to recruit and

retain - and an existing corporate culture."

Talent Management 2 by Colin Coulson-Thomas is published by Policy Publications and can be obtained from www.policypublications.com Reports on critical success factors for key corporate activities and what high performers do differently in these areas are also available from Policy Publications, along with *Transforming Public Services* which applies lessons from the investigation to the public sector, *Winning Companies*; *Winning People* on helping average people to excel at difficult jobs and *Developing Directors* on building an effective boardroom team.

Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas, author of *Talent Management 2*, *Transforming Public Services*, *Winning Companies*; *Winning People* and *Developing Directors* has received international recognition for his work as a change agent and transformation leader.

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About the Author

Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas, author of *Winning Companies*; *Winning People* and a new report on talent management and creating high performance organisations, is an international consultant who has helped over 100 boards to improve board and corporate performance. He is chairman of Adaptation, process vision holder of complex transformation programmes and a business school academic at the University of Greenwich. Reports covering his investigations are available from

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This article is about...
Different corporate practices on helping people excel in what they do.



Taking The Next Step

By John Stanley

I recently had the honour of being a judge for some retail awards. It allowed me to analyse what is happening in retail-land across a number of different aspects of marketing. It really highlighted that what the winners are doing is a model we should all be looking at and adapting to our own needs.

The global financial crisis is now old news and the world has moved onto a new marketing situation. This situation is scary and challenging, but also reveals opportunities; alas many retailers are still looking backward rather than forwards.

What are the lessons that came out from this exercise for me?

Have a Sale and watch the customer get bored

I can still walk thorough many shopping malls and see Sales signs displayed. In my own town many retailers are using a "50% off" sales to try and generate new business. This is now old news, alas, the customer expects lower prices and the sale sign is irrelevant. In today's retail world lower prices are part of the normal retail practice and the day of the sale has long gone and will not return for many years. Aiming to drive traffic by trying to convince consumers that we have genuine sales is old news. Today's consumer expects everyday low prices.

Trying to attract every passing customer to generate sales

Every person that walks past your business is a prospective customer...wrong. In today's developed market you need to focus on a specific market. K Mart in Australia used to be the department store that targeted

everyone. In the last few years they have re-looked at their strategy and made a decision that their best investment is in targeting mothers. A look at their bottom line will show this has been a successful strategy. The key is to decide on who you are going to focus on and then market specifically to that demographic sector.

Only using one marketing channel to get your message across

Consumers today get the message, as long as you are prepared to send that message via a number of different channels. That includes traditional avenues and "click" avenues that include Twitter, Facebook, You-Tube and the like. Gone are the days when consumers will look at one source of marketing to get the message.

Make sure you stand out from the crowd

There is a lot of messaging going on in the world and to be noticed you need to be different. If you are following the pack, you will not be heard. This means you have to "dare to be different" to ensure your message is heard. Brain storming ideas, preferably amongst your own team, and coming up with unique messages and messaging will ensure that you will be heard. The key is then to get the consumer to act on your message.

Be seen as the expert

The experts are brilliant at stock management. They know what areas of product they need to be "deep" in and what ranges of products they need to be "shallow" in. The result is they have better sales because of a more focused approach to retailing. For example, if I were a specialist butcher, I may have a deep range of different cuts of meats and more unusual meats, but I would only carry a small range of spices and condiments and recommend them as the best as I am the expert. Providing too wide a range of the wrong

products can say to the customer you are generalised rather than an expert.

Make sure your team are the experts

The consumer is relying less on salespeople to get advice and more on information they are sourcing on the internet. One reason for this is that over the last few years many retailers have "chopped" the training budget. They are relying on fewer salespeople with less knowledge.

The winners think in reverse, as the economy gets tight, they actually invest in their team to ensure they are better at customer service and product knowledge than the competition. This means that the trust between salesperson and consumer gets stronger rather than weaker. The team are a critical part of the next step.

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About the Author

John Stanley is a conference speaker and retail consultant with over 20 years' experience in 15 countries. He regularly contributes to retail magazines around the world and has co-authored several successful marketing and retail books including the bestseller *Just About Everything a Retail Manager Needs to Know* (obtainable from Amazon: ISBN-10: 0975011804/ ISBN-13: 978-0975011805).

John Stanley Associates produces an e-newsletter specific to retailing; this includes innovative ideas and advice to help you grow your profits. If you would like to receive a regular copy, please visit www.johnstanley.com.au or email newsletter@johnstanley.com.au

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This article is about... What's happening in the retail world today.



Only Do What Only You Can Do

By Paul Sloane

Leaders at all levels could significantly improve their performance if they observed this succinct seven-word precept: only do what only you can do.

The problem is that many bosses get too involved in details, in day-to-day issues, in fire-fighting and in micro-managing their staff. The more senior you are, the more time you should spend on strategic rather than tactical issues. Leaders can dramatically improve if they focus much more on leadership matters. The best way you can do this is by delegating the tasks that others can do and thereby concentrating on the tasks that only you can do.

Here are some of the things that leaders could delegate more:

- Status meetings
- Operational problems
- Performance reviews
- Process issues

Here are some of the things they should spend more time on:

- Strategy planning and review
- Communicating the vision and strategy
- Meeting staff
- Recognizing and praising good people
- Interviewing candidates
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Meeting customers

You might think that recognizing and praising good people is something that can be delegated to a lower level manager but when he or she does it, the praise does not have the same impact as when the leader gives it. Similarly with communicating the mission, goals and objectives; it is best if this message comes straight from the leader – delivered with passion and conviction. If it is delegated, the message can be watered down or misinterpreted.

Of course the leader cannot ignore all operational issues and problems but the normal practice should be for the appropriate manager to manage these topics and flag up significant exceptions. Management is working in the business; leadership is working on the business. So if you are a leader try to step outside the routine, delegate more and focus on the things that only you can do.

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About the Author

Paul Sloane writes and speaks on innovation. He is the author of *The Innovative Leader*.

Paul was part of the team which launched the IBM PC in the UK in 1981. He became MD of database company Ashton-Tate. In 1993 Paul joined MathSoft, publishers of mathematical software as VP International. He became CEO of Monactive, a British software company which publishes software asset management tools. In 2002, he founded his own company, Destination Innovation, which helps organisations improve innovation. He writes and speaks on lateral thinking and innovation. His latest book is *The Leader's Guide to Lateral Thinking Skills* published by Kogan-Page.

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Sam Goldwyn said it



Sam Goldwyn - American film producer born in Poland, founded Goldwyn Pictures Corporation which later merged with Metro Pictures and became Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM).

Sam Goldwyn's (born Schmucl Gelbfisz) name is synonymous with the American movie scene from its beginnings through its golden age. Goldwyn's story is a pioneer story, a folk story, a movie fantasy that came true; it is a story about creativity, ambition, money, drive ... about a time in America when there was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Sam was well-known for his amusing, yet poignant quotes. Here are a few of them:

- *A Hospital is no place to be sick.*
- *Anyone who goes to a psychiatrist ought to have his head examined.*
- *I don't think anyone should write their autobiography until after they're dead.*
- *I don't want any yes-men around me. I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their jobs.*
- *I had a monumental idea this morning, but I didn't like it.*
- *I never put on a pair of shoes until I've worn them at least five years.*
- *I read part of it all the way through.*
- *If I could drop dead right now, I'd be the happiest man alive.*
- *Spare no expense to save money on this one.*
- *You've got to take the bitter with the sour.*
- *A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.*

This article is about...
Advice for leaders: Don't get involved in the nitty-gritty.



Five Ways That Content Can Help Build Your Niche Business

By André Anthony

Did you know that content can do more to build your business and profits than just about any other resource or service available? Yes? No? Don't know? Here are five key ways that content can help build your traffic, subscribers, and customers starting today!

1. Boost your search engine ranking and daily visitor count by posting keyword rich articles and content on your web-site. For example, if your business involves offering products and services related to fitness, posting fitness related articles and content will attract unlimited prospective customers on a regular basis!
2. Generate double or even triple the number of newsletter subscribers you do currently, simply by offering content in the form of "special reports" or manuals as bonuses for subscribing to your publication. People love freebies, so give them what they want and watch as your results increase!
3. Create an automated cash flow by using content to formulate multi-part email training courses with related web-site or affiliate links "sprinkled" throughout each course. Use an auto responder service to automate the delivery of your training course (such as a part training course delivered over a 5 day period). Training courses can also serve as excellent bonus offers for your prospective newsletter subscribers.
4. One of the most important keys to a successful online business is not JUST having a list of subscribers... It's about building a trusting relationship with your subscribers (i.e., "cultivating" your list). By sending informative articles (content) to your list on a regular basis you will establish

yourself as an expert on your topic of business, as well as gain the trust of your subscribers over time. As a result, your subscribers will be EAGER to take advantage of your "paid" product and service offers.

(Just make sure that you NEVER take advantage of the relationship you develop with your list by offering products or services of poor quality just to make a quick buck!) If there is one "constant" in Internet marketing, it's this: "A cultivated list of subscribers is as good as money in the bank" Now write that down and never forget it!

5. Another excellent way to generate no cost traffic is by submitting ready-made articles to "content hungry" web-site and newsletter publishers with your "resource box" attached. A resource box is nothing more than a little 3-6 line "bio" about you and/or your web-site -including a link to your site (or even instructions on how to subscribe to your newsletter)

When submitting or offering your article(s) for reprint purposes, just make sure to specify that each article is to be reprinted "as is" with your resource box attached. Even one article can go a LONG way towards generating no cost traffic and visitors for you. Just imagine your article being sent out to a newsletter subscriber base of 100,000 individuals - many of whom will be reading YOUR included resource box and clicking on your URL to learn more about what you have to offer!

Well there you have it, five no cost, sure ways to build your online business exponentially with the help of articles and content...

With the declining effectiveness of many of the online advertising

methods that we've relied on in past years, content is only strengthening its position as the ultimate KEY to generating unlimited traffic, subscribers, and customers!

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About the Author

André Anthony has been running his own businesses since 1983, where he learnt the hard way the importance of marketing to niches. Prior to this he had a successful 17 year career in Purchasing and Materials Management with a number of high profile multinational electronics companies where he was frequently used as a management trouble shooter. André owns Niche Market Know-How, an Internet based resource for beginning Niche Marketers.

Why not visit:

www.nichemarketknowhow.com where you will find resources for effective niche marketing on the Internet. He also offers simple web design for small businesses and consulting services.

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A superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions.

Confucius, (551–479 BC) was a Chinese politician, teacher, editor, and social philosopher.



This article is about...
Five ways that "content" can help build web traffic, subscribers and customers.



How To Maximise Your Marketing Budget Through Effective Content Re-use

By John Bancroft

As marketing budgets tighten and there is a need for marketing campaigns to deliver even higher returns on investment, John Bancroft looks at ways to maximise your marketing budget.

We know that the following ideas will enable you to do just that and help you to stretch your marketing budgets further.

Component Approach To Developing Content

Maybe I have been involved in the IT industry for too long, but the basic idea of content re-use has come about through my experience gained in this sector.

When IT programmers are writing code they will naturally identify portions of code that can be re-used, as well as develop specific code ideal for re-use. In essence, this is the basic idea. I believe you need to introduce to the content, creation elements of your marketing programmes to maximise your marketing budgets.

For example, when you are writing a case study or briefing somebody else to do it, some of the paragraphs could be re-used at the time to generate a press release. Top and tail it with different content to suit your target media and you have just saved time and money. From a copywriting point of view, it is just as easy to write that bit more at the time when the work is being carried out.

There are many other ideas for using content that can be changed in minor ways to support the wider sales and marketing operation.

Taking the case study as an example, why not ask your copywriter to produce key bullet points that could be included in a PowerPoint presentation for your sales team. It gives them something new to talk about and creates a library of case study slides that could then be used depending on the particular prospect you are selling to.

Taking it a step further some of the key points made in the case study could be used to formulate the core elements of an article that could be sold in to your target media.

Keeping the train of thought going, customer quotes from case studies could be used on your website, your e-mail footer, a new brochure, and fact or data sheets as well as many other ways. Where the quote appears a link or reference to the case study should also be included. You could also create a short case study that could be used on the website and a longer one for print.

Integrated Copy Is The Key

The skill is to produce copy that is integrated with the overall piece, but can be used in isolation. When you have started to master the art you then simply create new marketing collateral almost totally from existing material.

For instance, you may want to focus your sales and marketing effort on to one particular sector.

If you already have several case studies that have been written with content re-use in mind you can take elements from each to create an application case study for that market.

Again, there may be a need to write some introductory copy, but this would take minimal effort to pull together.

Content re-use may not be something you have not considered before, but we believe that it will help you to maximise your marketing budget. It also helps to create new collateral and content that keeps your message fresh and gives your sales and marketing team much more to work with as they carry out sales and marketing campaigns.

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About the Author:

John's talent for effective selling began at the age of 15 selling ice-creams from a cart! Since then his selling career has gone from strength to strength. Following a brief appointment with IMRglobal, a leading IT solutions provider, he assisted in the development of the new business function, and then joined Sapiens, an international IT Tools vendor. John then became Executive Vice President establishing the sales & marketing operation for Performative plc after which he set up his own business called Incognate helping companies to grow more business revenue.

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Building Sales Is About Building Relationships

By John Stanley

Over the last few months I have been working with clients in eleven countries. All of them have had economic difficulties. Some retailers are looking at the state of the economy and complaining about lost sales whilst others are looking at the same economy and seeing business opportunities.

Some of these retailers are in the same retail sector and it is interesting to see how attitude can make a difference, but apart from attitude there are other important points that create the point of difference.

Customer Service is not the Answer

During my travels I came across sales staff who were exceptionally good and others who were just interested in processing me and sending me on my way. Before I left Australia I presented at a conference where one of the other speakers was Sue Anderson of Australian Retail Association. She gave an excellent presentation on customer service and why it was not working. She introduced the concept of "Day Makers": that in the new economy the aim of someone in retailing is not to serve the customer, but to make their day. This concept stuck in

my mind as I travelled and visited various retailers. It is the day Makers that actually grow sales for businesses.

Making a person's day is about recognising them as an individual and listening to their needs. The irony is that you can be a day maker without having any product knowledge. Day makers can relate to the consumer and ensure that the consumer leaves the business relationship with a bigger smile than when they entered the relationship

Care for Your Community

In recent months, I have seen a shift in marketing. Businesses are now connecting more closely with their own community and helping local causes. This has always been a part of marketing for business, but in recent months there has been a change of focus. Research indicates that consumers want to support local business and especially those local business that support local communities. Caring business will be growing businesses.

Retailers and suppliers need to look at what are the needs and wants of the local community and how they can help improve the local situation.

Providing the Consumer with Value

Consumers have started to look for value; many retailers are looking at discount and confusing this with value. More expensive items can provide value to the consumer. I have just been talking to our local electrician who is doing some work in our office. He mentioned we could go to the local supermarket and purchase some light bulbs, he then followed it up by saying the local electrical shop also had light bulbs that were about 10% more expensive, but would last three times longer.

The more valuable proposition is initially the more expensive proposition, but will soon provide a return on our investment. Astute retailers realise that value and discount are two completely separate things.

Confusion Can Reduce Sales, it does not have to be always new

Whilst I was in America I worked for some garden centres and they were telling me about the amount of new plants that were entering the market. In fact I am told that 75% of plants on sale now in America did not exist ten years ago. Unless you are a "Plant Nut" the result is confusion. One retailer told me of the challenges that he was facing as a retailer the plant he was offering last year as the best in the market place for its type, has been replaced by another improved form this year. If this is happening occasionally than the customer can understand upgrades and improvements, but when it happens at such a rapid and regular occurrence the customer starts to get suspicious and feels this is a ploy to get more money out of them rather than offering an improved form,. As retailers we need to be careful about how we introduce new items if we are to keep building a strong relationship with our customers. This is especially important at present when consumers are looking towards nostalgia items rather than it must be new items.

Building relationships with consumers is a high priority for retailers at present. It is time to invest in relationship building before it is too late and the customer decides it is less stressful to go online for all their shopping need and wants.

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This article is about...
New angles on succeeding in the retail sector.

About the Author

John Stanley is a conference speaker and retail consultant with over 20 years' experience in 15 countries. He regularly contributes to retail magazines around the world and has co-authored several successful marketing and retail books including the bestseller *Just About Everything a Retail Manager Needs to Know*.

John Stanley Associates produce an e-newsletter specific to retailing; this includes innovative ideas and advice to help you grow your profits. If you would like to receive a regular copy, please visit www.johnstanley.com.au or email newsletter@johnstanley.com.au

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Executives owe it to the organization and to their fellow workers not to tolerate nonperforming individuals in important jobs.

Peter Drucker - one of the best-known and most widely influential thinkers and writers on the subject management theory and practice.



Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is defined by results not attributes.

Peter Drucker



Here are some reasons why your people don't perform as you expect:

Clarity

Perhaps the performer is not clear on what is required from them. What would you be willing to bet that your view of your employee's accountabilities and expectations matches their view?

Task priority

Sometimes failure is due to the performer's perception that what you expect is not really all that important.

Competence

Sometimes failure can be due to a simple lack of skill. People can't do well if they don't have the know-how.

Obstacles

Real or perceived: A computer system that doesn't allow employees to easily step between different customer accounts is a real problem. Being told by a fellow employee: 'Don't spend more than 70 seconds on a call. Long phone calls are the easiest way to get fired around here,' whether that rule is real or hearsay, makes it real to the employee.

Reward for failure

Sometimes there's more reward for poor performance than for good performance if your reward system is skewed. Also, bizarrely, people who get attention (however negative) when they do poorly and are ignored when they do well may stop doing well just to get a reaction.

Performance feedback

Do you provide clear, timely information that helps your people evaluate and refine their performance? Or is it meaninglessly general, only oral and subject to swings in emphasis that can confuse and disorient?

Role/person mismatch

When all else fails, you may need to re-examine whether the performer would be more successful in a different role or a different team. But take care in jumping directly to the 'he/she can't hack it' assessment. If the employee has been away from the front line for a while, or is new to the pace of a live workload, his or her performance can improve quickly, with a little encouragement and help from you. Waiting and watching is critical to making the right decision.



Exploiting Corporate Know-How

By Colin Coulson-Thomas

Could you and your colleagues quickly secure new income streams and transform the productivity of your current operations by better exploiting what is already known? The most promising opportunities for revenue and profit growth are being overlooked in many companies. Processes for exploiting corporate know-how simply do not exist.

Many people overlook relatively easy ways of improving corporate performance and delivering greater shareholder value. They devote insufficient attention to the development, sharing and exploitation of information, knowledge and understanding. They are also unaware of how relevant knowledge, critical success factors and the approaches of high performers can be built into work processes and support tools.

An investigation of the differing approaches of successful companies (winners) and their unsuccessful competitors (losers) has identified many opportunities for boosting profitability and generating additional revenue streams by better exploiting corporate know-how. The findings set out in *The Knowledge Entrepreneur*, a handbook with exercises for crafting new knowledge-based offerings and checklists of questions that individuals and boards need to ask, reveals the full extent of the possibilities.

Opportunities for income generation exist at all levels and many areas of the companies

examined. For example, thirty one distinct learning support services were identified that a typical training and development unit could offer external customers. The investigation reveals how a new generation of knowledge-based support tools can enable key workgroups such as new business and customer relations teams to adopt the approaches of superstars and emulate their behaviours.

However, even the most successful of the companies examined are overlooking their existence and potential. Corporate policies, systems and procedures are heavily biased towards physical assets and tangible activities. Considerable effort is devoted to protecting and maintaining physical assets, keeping records of them up to date, and ensuring they are properly depreciated and fairly valued in annual accounts, and physically verified by the auditors at the year-end; while intellectual assets are inadequately managed.

Losers do little to capture, value and protect corporate know-how. In comparison, winners are more aware of how information flows, support tools, knowledge transfer, and the exchange and sharing of relevant understanding impact upon performance. They are more alert to the possibilities for knowledge entrepreneurship.

Reporting systems and performance indicators used by losers focus upon data that is easy to collect rather than the areas that are intrinsically of greatest importance. Few of them systematically assess, monitor and reward learning or the creation and exploitation of new intellectual capital. Many companies would benefit from tracking indicators such as net income from new knowledge-

“Many people overlook relatively easy ways of improving corporate performance and delivering greater shareholder value. They devote insufficient attention to the development, sharing and exploitation of information, knowledge and understanding.”

based ventures and offerings in relation to the value of available intellectual capital.

Winners are more aware of certain aspects of knowledge entrepreneurship such as fostering creativity or measuring and reporting intellectual capital.

However, even among the more successful companies systematic strategies for creating and exploiting know-how across all functions and areas of operation were extremely rare.

Key Questions

The findings of the continuing investigation suggest certain key questions that need to be asked if entrepreneurs, boards and management teams are to create environments that are more conducive of knowledge entrepreneurship:

Q Does the company operate in a sector in which know-how accounts for an increasing proportion of the value being generated for customers? If so, what are the implications?

Q Do members of the board and management team understand the requirements for success in the knowledge society and information age? How many of them are knowledge entrepreneurs?

This article is about...
Not overlooking the promising opportunities you already have for revenue and profit growth.

Q Does the company have a convincing rationale and clear purpose? Is there a shared, distinctive and compelling vision? Does it reflect opportunities for knowledge entrepreneurship?

Q Have the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the company been effectively communicated and shared? Have the various elements of capability, including relevant know-how, needed to achieve them been assembled?

Q Is there an explicit strategy for the acquisition, development, sharing and exploitation of information, knowledge and understanding?

Q Who has specific responsibility for it?

Q Do people have the knowledge-based support tools they need to quickly communicate what is special and distinctive about the company and its offerings? Who ensures that important workgroups have the support tools they need to excel in their jobs?

Q Are members of the board and management team role models in relation to learning and the sharing and exploitation of information, knowledge and understanding?

Q Are the corporate culture and the attitudes, values and perspectives of the people of the organisation conducive of knowledge entrepreneurship? In particular, what action needs to be taken to break down barriers and overcome obstacles to the acquisition, development, sharing and exploitation of know-how?

Q Is there effective two-way communication between the corporate centre and business units, and horizontal

communication across functional, process and unit boundaries?

Q Is the organisation moving up or sliding down the information, knowledge and understanding value chain within its sector of operation? Is priority given to the company's customers and the acquisition, development and application of the know-how needed to deliver more value to them?

Q What explicit steps are being taken to create and support a community of knowledge entrepreneurs, create new knowledge based offerings and build practical support tools that make it easier for people to do their jobs and emulate the success of superstars?

Q Have the key processes for the acquisition, development, sharing and exploitation of know-how been identified? Do information, knowledge and understanding flow effectively up, across and down the organisation and around its networks of relationships?

Q Are there opportunities for different individuals, work groups, business units, venture teams and business partners to develop ideas for new knowledge-based offerings and seek appropriate support? Are feedback loops built into the company's operating, learning and entrepreneurial processes? Are they regularly reviewed and refined?

Q Finally, are the intellectual assets of the organisation safeguarded as effectively as its financial and physical assets? How effectively and systematically are they being exploited? Is performance in these areas monitored?

The culture, policies, processes and practices of an organisation should enable the effective acquisition, development, sharing and exploitation of know-how.

Shrewd investors assess how effective companies are in these areas, and the extent to which people derive meaning and create opportunities, value and intellectual capital from various forms of information and knowledge. In essence they assess a board and management team's ability to encourage and enable knowledge entrepreneurship.

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About the Author

Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas, author of *Winning Companies*; *Winning People* and a new report on talent management and creating high performance organisations, is an international consultant who has helped over 100 boards to improve board and corporate performance. He is chairman of Adaptation, process vision holder of complex transformation programmes and a business school academic at the University of Greenwich. Reports covering his investigations are available from www.policypublications.com

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Checking the results of a decision against its expectations shows executives what their strengths are, where they need to improve, and where they lack knowledge or information.

Peter Drucker



If The Job Could Talk

By Jennifer C. Zamecki

What would a job say to us about superior performance if it could talk? Would it tell us both what hard and soft skills we would need for top performance? Would it describe the necessary behaviors? How about what attitudes or values are required to excel in the position? Even IQ and EQ (Emotional Intelligence) should be discussed.

We all know “jobs” can’t talk... but we can talk to superior performers in the job. The key is to know what questions to ask.

The latest issue gaining attention is the difficulty of finding technical talent with “people skills”. The leading experts are strongly suggesting that organizations review all existing job descriptions and conduct a thorough job analysis on which defensible hiring decisions can be made. They are also suggesting that organizations take a good look at their needs for management skills versus leadership skills for all management positions. Today, “behavioural interviewing” is being used in the hiring process by more and more organizations.

Top management is now talking about the value of “soft skills”. Peter Drucker’s latest book is pushing “managing one’s self”. Coaching continues to grow worldwide and corporations are talking about managing human assets.

Can you imagine how to manage your human assets *without* understanding first what truly makes a human an asset? A good start begins with benchmarking the job, not the people. Human

asset management needs to be job-related, not yours or someone else’s opinion of what they think the assets are.

To benchmark a job, we must look at the job from three views: behaviour, attitude and skill required. Then you can look at people currently performing these jobs to clarify the performance correlations. Only by comparing factors of the job to the same factors on people will we be able to identify the real performance issues.

The most progressive organizations have human resource strategies that call for competency-based (skill) selection and performance management systems. These organizations understand the importance of hiring the right people, placing them in the right position and managing them effectively in order to gain a competitive advantage.

One difficulty organizations have in implementing effective HR strategies is in defining the selection criteria most important for performance in positions. Before an organization can design selection systems aimed at hiring top performers, they must first identify what it takes to achieve superior performance in a position. In many of today’s flatter, leaner organizations, soft skills have become at least as important, if not more important than technical skills. Look for competency-based position analysis that will help your organization define the soft skills or core competencies required for top performance.

For information on our upcoming seminars and competency assessments, please feel free to contact us.

“Before an organization can design selection systems aimed at hiring top performers, they must first identify what it takes to achieve superior performance in a position.”

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About the Author

Jennifer C. Zamecki is the Founder and President of Well-Run Concepts, a Human Resource Consulting Firm based in Ocala, Florida, founded in 1997, whose mission is to help organizations to define and develop top talent. Jennifer has over 20 years of human resource management and executive operational hotel experience.

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*Efficiency is doing things right.
Effectiveness is doing the right things.*
Peter Drucker


This article is about...
Identifying what it takes to achieve superior performance



Identifying A Fragmented Board

Boardroom disputes can harm growth

By Mike Robson

A lack of agreement or, worse still, outright conflict at board level is one of the biggest barriers to success that a company can face. Mike Robson, director of Azure Partners, explains four reasons why your board might not be aligned.

Boardroom argument frequently leads to a muddled company direction, slow and ineffective decision-making, confused staff, and personal stress for the directors. The end result is usually a company that is underperforming significantly.

But actually conflict is rarely due to some directors being 'difficult'. There is usually a problem that can be analysed, understood, and then solved – or at least reduced to a level where both company and individuals can thrive.

Some of these issues may be historic, and will even stem from the businesses start-up phase: accidents of birth if you like. While in an initial launch phase, it is much more likely that there will be proper alignment, this does not mean there are not sometimes issues right from the start; different levels of the initial shareholding allocation are often a cause for friction.

More commonly we find that once a business has been trading for a number of years the initial impetus and alignment that helped get the business started can begin to disintegrate. In my experience there are four main underlying causes of this boardroom friction.

Firstly, there may be divergent personal circumstances and therefore divergent personal needs, goals and attitudes to risks

among directors and shareholders that lead to different views about the course the company should take. People marry, have children, divorce, get bored and/or lose ambition.

For a number of our clients, differences in personal wealth or personal financial needs have led to different levels of commitment where some shareholders treat the company as a lifestyle business whilst others need the business to create significant wealth for them. As retirement approaches, differences in the age of directors and shareholders can result in opinions as to the direction of the business that may be difficult to reconcile.

Secondly, the personal characteristics of individual board members have an effect. For example: an innovative and highly driven marketing and sales director may have difficulty in communicating his plans and ideas in a way that highly technical and analytical colleagues from an engineering or scientific background can understand and endorse. The marketing and sales director feels his ideas are being stifled, the technical people wonder why he cannot support his ideas with verifiable data. Paralysis may result.

Thirdly, a perception of different value sets can lead to a breakdown in trust and conflict can occur unless some fundamental processes and communication mechanisms are in place. You need more than just good people on your board; they need to be able to understand colleagues' motives and trust them to work effectively together.

And finally, a number of boards, particularly in family businesses, have little experience of what a

“Boardroom argument frequently leads to a muddled company direction, slow and ineffective decision-making, confused staff, and personal stress for the directors. The end result is usually a company that is underperforming significantly.”

board does and why it is important. Parents set up a business; children join it; it expands; it hits a ceiling because the skills and processes needed to move it to the next stage are absent. In some cases directors and shareholders will identify and fill the gaps, but in many cases inexperience leads to sterility.

One or more of the above is likely to result in individual frustration, conflict and dysfunctional working relationships. It happens to numerous companies, and it will invariably act like an anchor, holding back the business from growth.

Business owners need first to identify which of these scenarios applies to them and then, with that self-knowledge, create a plan of action that addresses these fundamental issues.

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About the Author

Mike Robson is an experienced and entrepreneurial businessman with Board level experience as Chief Executive or Chief Financial Officer in a number of industries both in the UK and internationally. Mike joined Azure Partners 2004 and now enjoys actively assisting a range of owner-managed businesses to develop and, where appropriate, exit their businesses.


This article is about...
Dealing with a fragmented board of directors.

For seven years Mike has actively helped business owners through the different development stages (growth, plateau, and exit) and with people issues including management structure and the sourcing, hiring, assessing, rewarding and motivation of senior staff. He specialises in merger evaluations, non-financial due-diligence, setting KPIs, dealing with banks and auditors, and helping to run effective boards. With colleagues at Azure Partners he is involved in developing efficient and effective marketing and sales capabilities and processes for clients.

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Knowledge has to be improved, challenged, and increased constantly, or it vanishes.

Peter Drucker



Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is defined by results not attributes.

Peter Drucker



Working with an unhappy customer

Most business owners would be happy if customer complaints were resolved quickly and courteously every time. However, that's an impossible goal, because some problems can't be fixed (or at least immediately). But you can keep your customers very happy with your service and even raving about it, if you implement this simple policy:

- Begin with an immediate, sympathetic apology - even if the complaint is unfounded, misdirected, or just plain idiotic.
- Repeat the complaint to the customer to verify that you understand. This should get the customer to (i) say "yes" - a very important first step - and (ii) pause in anticipation.
- Then say either "I can solve that problem for you right now" or "I'll start working a solution immediately."
- Explain that your business has a policy of compensating customers with problems. Tell him about some inexpensive but valuable gift you are going to send him. Good examples might include information products that can be delivered via email to reduce your costs. Ask where the gift like that should be sent. Again, this should help to neutralize the complaint.
- Tell the customer exactly how you are going to solve the problem. Ask if that is acceptable.
- If the customer's expectations can't be met, tell the customer you will speak to your superiors to see if something further can be done. Sometime later, your superior should call to offer some additional compensation.



The \$62,000 Comment

By John Stanley

A report was recently released that showed women shoppers would look on retailers who load their purchase into the car more favourably than those that do not. They mentioned it was one of the highest customer service offers that would impress them when they went shopping.

I recently presented at a conference in the USA where I mentioned this and I was assured by all the owners in the room that this was a common practice in their business.

This started me thinking about the gap between what the owners think is going on in their business and what actually happens on the shop floor. I doubt very much that all the retailers in the room had a complimentary car loading service that was implemented and if they did I wonder how it was implemented.

A few years ago my wife experienced this first hand.

The \$62,000 Comment

Our local supermarket has a loading your car service to differentiate itself from the other food retailers in town. For many years it was a service which we never used. Then, Linda, my wife, broke her back and was in a back brace for 12 months. She was bed ridden for many months and then slowly regained her walking capability. Eventually she was able to drive to the shops and do shopping. She camouflaged the brace as it was not something she wanted people to see. She did her shopping at the local supermarket and then went to the cashier and mentioned that she had broken her back and was unable to carry the shopping to the car.

The cashier was excellent. She called an assistant and asked the woman to load Linda's shopping into the car for her, she did not however mention Linda's disability. The assistant duly took the shopping to the car and loaded the car. Once the shopping was in the car Linda thanked the assistant. The assistant looked at Linda and in a sarcastic voice said "Don't go exerting yourself today will you," and then swaggered off.

Linda is very independent and was uncomfortable having to ask for help in the first place. That comment humiliated Linda. Linda was so upset at the assistant's comment that she refused to go back to that supermarket for 6 years. Linda told me that her average weekly spend at the supermarket had been \$200 per week. Over 52 weeks she spent \$10,400 and over the 6 years she refused to enter that store, that assistant's comment cost our local supermarket \$62,400. Even today if Linda needs assistance with her shopping, which occasionally she still does, she shops elsewhere rather than be humiliated at that store again.

The owner had set a policy in place, the policy was implemented, but not all the team members understood the reasoning or the implications of their role in the policy.

They could be a "day breaker" or a day maker". In this situation the sales person made the decision that they would be a "day breaker".

The unfortunate thing was they were thinking they were having a "go" at a customer, when in fact they were reducing the income of the business and affecting their own and their team's job security. How often does this situation occur because team members do not understand why certain policies are put in place by businesses?

Make Sure the Team Understand their Role in the Customers Journey"

Customers judge how good a business is on the key "human touch points." Touch Points are the critically important customer relationship points in your customer's mind when they are dealing with your business. If those touch points are ignored or handled badly they can affect your business's bottom line in a big way.

Every business has touch points. They will differ based on the style of business, the business values and company policy.

Many business owners are often not aware of where those key touch points are in the customer's journey and as a result they do not monitor them closely enough. They often feel that this is "common sense" when in reality they are areas of "rare sense."

In a hotel the touch point can include how the room cleaner communicates with the customer.

In a restaurant it is the relationship the waiter has with the customer. In a retail store it may be the relationship the cashier and car loader has with the customer.

The key to success is as follows

1. Identify the key touch points in your customers' journey
2. Train your team to be aware of and understand the importance of these touch point
3. Introduce a RAK, {Random Act of Kindness,} strategy at your business's touch points to ensure your customers becomes impressed with your business at this point in their journey through your business.
4. Measure to make sure that what you think is happening is actually happening. It could put another \$62,000 on the bottom line.

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See Page 5 for John Stanley's bio and contact details.





First Impressions Count! Lasting Impressions Sell!

You can bet your Business Card on it

By Karen Saunders

Your business card is often the first - and perhaps only - impression prospective clients may see. Will it encourage them to find out more about you and your business? Having a good logo design and a clean layout leaves them with a favourable first impression that you're a credible professional businessperson.

It's the trade show of the year, and you're poised to meet, greet and network up a storm because the precise buyers for your product or services are here. Business card? Check. Sales brochures? Check. Product samples, informational literature, or other appropriate peripherals? Check.

But wait. Let's go back to item #1 - both in the list above and the all-important first step in creating a strong, lasting and favourable impression. In other words, what you looked like or said may not be remembered when potential customers are back home, but your business card will be in the pile he'll sift through to separate the wheat from the chaff; the business she'll want to follow up on.

What's your card saying about you? Here are some of the most common mistakes you've no doubt seen and reacted to negatively. Tossing the card into the wastebasket is inevitable.

The paper is too thin. Your card is wimpy and bends or crumples in your hand or briefcase. And it screams cheap. It might be an indicator of your other business practices and products.

Pre-printed perforated cards you run through your computer printer. More cheap impressions, plus your card may look like dozens of others because of the

limited pre-printed designs available.

There's much more. Boring. Bad choice of type face and size. Too much or too little information. No focal point, muddy graphics - the list goes on and on.

13 Easy Ways

Here are 13 easy ways for you to do what the professional designers do; insider secrets about business cards that go right to your first impression and bottom line.

1. Create a focal point or central place that draws a reader's eye.
2. Allow white space to help balance the layout. Don't fill up the card with text.
3. Use a clear, strong logo that looks good when reduced in size on your business card.
4. Use a highlight colour sparingly. Make sure coloured elements highlight the one main message you want to convey.
5. Be sure the highlight colour you choose is appropriate to your business. For example, using green on a lawn care business card would be far more appropriate than say red or orange.
6. Limit your selection of type fonts to no more than two, which may also include their "families." For example, a font family includes styles such as bold, italic, or bold italic versions.
7. Format text to be smaller, more compact, and more professional looking.
8. Choose appropriate fonts for your business, avoiding trendy, or overly embellished versions.
9. Avoid using all capital letters because they are more difficult to read, and look unprofessional.
10. Use a grid to align text and objects to each other.

11. Don't use illustrations that are too detailed or delicate, as they may look muddy when printed at a small size.
12. Stay away from amateur-looking or dated clip art (unless you are going for the "retro" look). Find good quality resources.
13. Select a beefy cover stock for your paper. You can get a free swatch book from your printer or paper representative. The swatch book will give you the opportunity to examine and feel the various sheets for finish, thickness, stiffness, opacity (translucence), and colour.

Impress your clients with your cards as though your business depended on it! Cards are small in size but huge in importance to your business success. Start employing these design tips to ensure your cards are doing the biggest possible job for you.

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About the Author

Karen Saunders is the author of "Turn Eye Appeal into Buy Appeal: How to easily transform your marketing pieces into dazzling, persuasive sales tools!" Learn about her book and get free instant access to her eCourse: "5 Deadly Design Mistakes that Could Kill a Sale and How to Avoid Them" and audio class: "Put the Bling Into Your Brand" at <http://www.macgraphics.net> or call toll free (001) 888 796-7300.

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This article is about...
The lasting value of your business card.



How to Craft a Raving Fan Strategy

By Rob Garibay

I've previously discussed the Customer Ladder of Loyalty, starting with Suspect and peaking at Raving Fan – one of your business's most valuable assets. Imagine what your business would be like if you had 500 Raving Fans on the street? Better than sales people in one respect, they have greater credibility. This article will describe a step-by-step process for creating a Raving Fan strategy, which involves developing the ideal buying experience for your customers.

Step 1: Draft a list of possible touch points that your business has with your target market, starting with advertising and any other method that you might use to reach out to your Suspects.

Step 2: Detail, expectations for each touch point in the process (i.e. how would the customer like the process to work in an ideal world). What matters to your customers most is how you make them feel. In this step it is critical that you identify factors that you think are most important to the customer. You should also include a few positive surprises, CNEs, (Critical Non-Essentials). CNEs are little touches that will result in your customer's experience significantly exceeding their expectations. Obtain input for this section from your own experience as well as customer research and feedback information to which you might have access. A well designed survey will also provide valuable insight.

Step 3: Describe your recommendation for the ideal process that can actually

be executed by your company. While this recommendation has to be realistic, it should address the customer expectations in a way that will differentiate you from your competitors. It is possible that you cannot meet every customer expectation down to the smallest detail, due to organizational constraints or some other very good reason. But keep in mind that if you cannot operate at a level that exceeds their expectations, there is no competitive advantage to be gained. Your recommendation should be aimed at the best that your company can accomplish, not average or good enough. Provide as close to the customer ideal as possible. However, the main focus must be on delivering, at a superior level, those experiences that are most important to your current and future customers.

Step 4: Detail how the new process will be implemented. This section should include a description of the changes required, new standards to be implemented, who will do the implementation, how they will be paid (if there are financial implications for the change), and how the changes and the reasons for the changes will be clearly communicated to all involved employees. You will also need to ensure that the expectations of your customers are clearly communicated to each employee.

Step 5: Provide the measures and goals associated with each new customer experience initiative. For example: a new measure might be the percentage of deliveries completed as promised to the customer, with a goal of a 95% compliance - i.e. 95% of deliveries are completed as promised to the customer. This section will also indicate who will be responsible for the development of the measurement

process and tools (e.g. development of an Excel template to be used by all stores or departments), who will be responsible for the weekly tracking/data entry, etc. This section should also include a sample template for the measurement process.

Step 6: Create an implementation timeline that illustrates when the process will be developed, when it will be implemented on a test basis, when will it be reviewed and fine tuned, etc. Be sure to include human and other resources that will be required in your timeline planning.

Step 7: Describe how you will measure customer reaction to the new customer experience enhancements. There are numerous ways to accomplish this, from surveys and refer-a-friend rewards programs to simple POS (Point of Sale) questions.

Step 8: Create a plan to ensure that the changes and new processes will be sustained. These new enhancements should become an integral part of how each store or department functions. Remember, what you don't measure will eventually fade away.

In summary, never underestimate the effort required to create effective organizational change. Not all employees will embrace the change in the beginning. In fact, some will openly resist it. Clear communication of what is being done, why it is being done, and your expectations for each employee, along with a healthy dose of persistence will lead to success. In most organizational change efforts, setting aggressive, but realistic expectations of all employees is your greatest source of leverage. Employees will rise to


This article is about...
A step-by-step process to crafting a raving fan strategy.

your expectations if they understand why the change is important and what you want them to do. Involve employees in the development of the new processes. Many times they will have a different perspective than the owner or your coach. We can benefit from that additional perspective.

Now it's time to enjoy the benefits of an ever increasing Raving Fan base, as long as you are in a continuous improvement mode regarding your customer's experience. We all know that there is no standing still in business. We are either getting better or going backwards. It's up to you!

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About the Author

Robert Garibay is an ActionCOACH Business Coach. He is no stranger to success as both business owner and competitive player in the corporate world. With an engineering degree from Case Western Reserve University, he has a successful track record in sales, marketing, management, team building, strategic planning and leadership; both in his own companies and in the corporate world. His professional career spans building businesses in manufacturing, R&D, distribution, retail and IT.

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*He who exercises
government by means of
his virtue may be
compared to the north
polar star, which keeps its
place and all the stars
turn towards it.*

Confucius

Ten low-cost ways to boost your business

By Alan Stevens



You don't have to spend a fortune to bring in customers. Here are tips that work that won't break the bank.

- 1) Ask for referrals.** Your existing customers are some of your best salespeople. Don't be afraid to ask them to pass your details on, or suggest other people that you might approach. If you can call a prospective client and mention that a mutual friend passed on their details, you will definitely be listened to.
- 2) Keep in touch.** Even if you can't imagine any way of selling something to a previous customer, make sure that you keep in touch with them by adding them to your newsletter list (you do have a newsletter don't you?), or by sending them something of interest, such as a link to a website. One day they will call you with a referral (see above), or maybe even some more business!
- 3) Give stuff away.** In business, you have to give to get. Offer people help and advice, free of charge, and don't expect an immediate return. You'll find that the more you give away, the more comes back.
- 4) Copy the best.** If you see people in your line of business having tremendous success, try doing something similar. I'm not suggesting that you should plagiarise their ideas, but look at the way they do business, and see how you can adapt things to your offering.
- 5) Write it down.** Decide what you want to achieve – five new clients, increasing turnover by 50%, or whatever. Put a timescale on it, write it down, and pin it up near your desk, where you see it every day. Keeping your goal in mind at all times will focus your behaviour, and make your goal happen.
- 6) Be responsive.** Develop a reputation for getting back to people very quickly. Once you get into the habit, you'll find that it is easy to send a quick response to an email, or a phone message. Most people value a brief, quick reply more highly than a detailed response several days later.
- 7) Know what you do.** Far too many small companies – and even sole traders – try to offer too many options to their customers. If you were going into hospital, would you rather be operated on by a generalist or a specialist? People respect expertise, and know that no-one can be an expert in everything. People want to do business with experts.
- 8) Hone your presentation skills.** No-one is a natural presenter, and everyone in business has to present from time to time. Make sure that you know how to perform professionally, and your business will benefit.
- 9) Practice what you preach.** The best advert for your business is you. If you are providing advice on business efficiency, make sure that your business is super-efficient. If you are a website designer, make sure that your website is as usable as possible.
- 10) Become an expert.** Offer to speak to groups about your area of expertise. Write articles, give interviews, and make yourself available to answer questions from journalists. Becoming known as a recognised expert in your field is one of the best ways of bringing in new clients.

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About the Author:

Alan Stevens is the Director of MediaCoach, helping individuals and companies to get their message across on TV, radio and in presentations. He had a 21-year career at Which? Magazine as media spokesman, journalist and business manager. He is a former advisor to the Cabinet Office, and a regular speaker at events and conferences around the world. He is available for interview at any time.

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MediaCoach is a division of WaringWell Ltd, an organisation specialising in all areas of communications, including reputation management, business practice and media expertise.



5 Free or Cheap Small Business Marketing Tactics

By Stacy Karacostas

Facebook... Email marketing... Twitter... Vimeo... YouTube... Flickr... Yelp... FourSquare... Groupon... Google+... Does it ever end? Let's face it, it's easy to get overwhelmed when it comes to marketing your business. Or to spend a lot of time getting caught up in the next "big thing"- especially online. It's because new tactics are sexy and have buzz. Plus everyone else is doing it, so you feel as if you probably should too.

When you're an entrepreneur, the real problem with all these bright, shiny options is they're so distracting that you end up overlooking the low-hanging fruit. So you spend too much time and/or money on the new trendy stuff compared to the results you create (i.e., sales, clients, customers and revenues).

To help put an end to this costly syndrome, I'm sharing five powerful marketing tactics with you. Each is either free to use, or really darned cheap. Plus, all are simple to implement and can pack a powerful punch.

1. Email Address Marketing

Get an email address that's attached to your Website domain so it reads me@mywebsite.com (Your Web hosting service should provide at least a few emails for free). This looks more professional. It gets your name and URL in front of prospects. Plus people are going to go to your website because they see it in your email. If you like getting your email via Yahoo, Hotmail, Gmail or some other service, simply have your email forwarded there from your corporate email address.

2. Business Card Marketing

You have to invest in business cards no matter what. It's worth the tiny

additional investment to make use of the back side. You can put: an offer for something they can download from your Website in exchange for their name and email (a great choice to build your list!)...A list of your specialties...A helpful tip along with info on how they can get more...A special discount coupon...All your locations... Really, the sky is the limit depending on your target market's needs and your goals.

3. Telephone Marketing

In this age of electronic communication, picking up the phone and calling clients and customers is an especially powerful tactic. Sure, it takes a bit of your time. But you'd be amazed how much they appreciate it. And how many more sales you get as a result. Depending on your business, you may be able to have an employee make calls for you.

4. One-Sheet Marketing

Don't think cheap, brightly coloured flyer here...Think helpful, informative or entertaining material combined with a powerful call to action—all on one of sheet of paper you can print in your office. For example, you might provide a short article with 5-7 tips plus a call to action to contact you. Or a sales sheet with product information and details on how to order. Even a short sales letter sharing what your products or services can do for them can work. Again, the sky is the limit as long as it's of interest and value to your prospect, and convinces them to take an action that helps you achieve your goals.

5. Marketing Tables

Many networking meetings offer the option to display your wares on free or paid marketing tables. Even if you sell services, you can still have your business cards, one-sheets, portfolio samples, a prize drawing (a great way to collect contact info), etc. I launched my old copywriting business and landed most of my initial clients this way. Just make sure your ideal clients, customers and/or potential referral partners are there. Then commit to having a table at least three times in a

row. Do this and you're bound to start seeing results.

As you can see, marketing tactics don't have to be difficult, time sucking, new or expensive to be effective. And there are loads more free or cheap, and easy, tactics out there.

The key is to pick three that work together well to achieve your goals, and then implement them. Be sure to keep track of your results (list growth, calls, sales), so you know which tactics work best for you and you are able to allocate your future marketing funds and efforts accordingly.

Practical marketing expert and business lifestyle architect Stacy Karacostas is on a mission to end entrepreneurial overwhelm! Discover how to grow your business with less effort -- so you can help more people, make more money AND still have a life - by grabbing your copy of the FREE "Success without Shackles Starter Kit" at The Unchained Entrepreneur.

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About the Author

After running four small businesses of her own, and working with more than 100 satisfied clients, Stacy truly understands the unique difficulties entrepreneurs face. So, although her impressive client list includes large organizations like the Small Business Administration, Eddie Bauer, Philips Medical Systems and REI, her passion and expertise lie in helping small businesses grow.

Stacy has written more than 100 articles on marketing, copywriting, sales and small business success.

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This article is about...
Five powerful marketing tactics.



Making Your Suggestion Scheme Make Sense

By Ron Kaufman

Markets today demand greater innovation. Changes are coming faster than ever before and your competitors are ever more nimble. Customers have rising expectations. You need new ideas, better processes, more innovative products and services, and more effective ways to build strong futures with those customers.

Market research, Research and Development, customer focus groups and surveys are valuable tools for innovation. In the current economic climate though, it is time to revisit the “Staff Suggestion Scheme” – a low-cost yet effective technique when done right. Companies can no longer survive with staff members who expect management to provide “all the right answers”. Today, companies require a steady flow of ideas and solutions from those who are closest to the processes and the customers, those with their “ears to the ground”.

To maintain an adaptable and responsive organization, you must develop a culture that actively solicits input and recommendations from every level of your staff. Most leaders and senior managers are more receptive to this approach than ever before. But how can you transform the mindset of staff, who, for years or even generations, were trained to “keep your mouths shut, lay low, just follow orders”? How can you encourage your frontline staff to open their minds, explore new ideas and share their best recommendations?

The “Staff Suggestion Scheme” is a time honoured process of wooden boxes and pre-printed forms for staff to write out their ideas and submit them for management consideration. Many companies have tried this approach, but few can report real satisfaction with the number, consistency, or quality of staff contributions. Even fewer can report widespread enthusiasm for their “Suggestion Schemes” at all. Here are six ideas you can implement right away to make your suggestion scheme more effective:

1. Respond to all written staff suggestions immediately (within one week) and in writing

Be candid. If the answer is no, say so. If the answer is yes, state when staff will see implementation. If the answer is maybe, explain the issues involved and give a date for further reply. And stick to it. Nothing builds trust and credibility faster than making new promises... and keeping them.

One exception: do not reply to obscene or abusive suggestions. A strong company culture has no place for such destructive “input”. Your best response is not to reply.

2. Respond to suggestions publicly, for all to see

Usually, when one staff member writes, she speaks what is on the mind of many. Reply openly on a designated bulletin board, in a weekly printed update, or by electronic mail. Thank the writer(s) for their query or contribution. Include staff names on suggestions to be implemented.

“In the current economic climate though, it is time to revisit the “Staff Suggestion Scheme” – a low-cost yet effective technique when done right. Companies can no longer survive with staff members who expect management to provide “all the right answers.”

3. Give an award, prize or monetary incentive for best suggestions, and give it right away

Many Suggestion Schemes invoke a multi-step process for evaluation and eventual granting of an award. First, the suggestion boxes are emptied (sometimes only once a month). Second, a Committee sifts and sorts for “realistic” submissions. Third, a Management Committee appraises the freshness, viability, cost savings or increased revenue from each suggestion. Fourth, someone in “Senior Management” decides upon the amount of reward to be given to the appropriate staff members. And finally, an actual awarding of the “prize” is conducted.

The cycle time for this process is usually four weeks or more. In some cases the senior management review is only conducted once a quarter. What is your company’s cycle time for awarding prizes to a staff suggestion? Would you be inspired if you had to wait that long?

Try this approach: Dedicate \$1200 (or your local equivalent) to the project. Give the money away in \$100 increments every month for one year. Each month, give \$50 to the best idea, \$20 for the second best idea, and \$10 each to the 3rd, 4th and 5th best suggestions. In the first months, few may believe that you will give out the money in a timely manner, and possibly only a handful of staff

This article is about...
 Reviving the staff suggestion scheme in your company.

will participate. But no matter how small or meagre the suggestions, give out the money anyway! As soon as staff realise you are serious, the boxes will be filled with suggestions.

4. Establish different categories for your awards

Clear categories can help staff focus and generate new ideas. Here are examples of categories you can use: Ideas that can be implemented immediately, ideas for getting closer to our customers, suggestions for cost savings or increasing revenue, new ideas focusing on a chosen theme for the month, ideas that most dramatically challenge the current paradigm of your thinking, recommendations for the future direction of our business.

5. Make a big event out of awarding your suggestion scheme prizes

Some companies use lunches, staff teas or monthly meetings to award prizes. One company makes up large, special "dollar bills" for each winning suggestion. In the centre is the face of the staff member who contributed. In the corners is the amount of money his or her suggestion earned. And surrounding the portrait is a description of the suggestion itself.

These "dollar bills" line the wall of the staff lounge and company cafeteria. The result is popular group recognition for winners and a "culture building" impact that keeps the suggestion scheme going strong. At the end of the year, give recognition to the volume of suggestions received, the winners who have been rewarded, and the changes enacted as a result. Then, pose a challenge to everyone to double the volume of suggestions in the coming year.

And, if the quality of ideas warrant, double your cash prizes, too. Four winners a month last year? Increase it to eight winners per month next year. If the ideas are good, it's certainly worth your investment!

5. Most of all, implement

Act upon what your staff suggests. Nothing demonstrates your commitment to this approach better than a staff suggestion recognized, rewarded and immediately put to work.

Are there even more practical ways to improve your company's suggestion scheme? Sure there are. Got a suggestion?

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About the Author

Ron Kaufman is an internationally acclaimed innovator and motivator for partnerships and quality service. He is the author of the best-selling book, "UP Your Service!" and the FREE monthly newsletter, "The Best of Active Learning!" For more information and FREE copy of the newsletter, visit: www.RonKaufman.com Last month, he unveiled his most comprehensive work to date: "UPLIFTING SERVICE: The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues and Everyone Else You Meet"

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“Ability will never catch up with the demand for it.”
Confucius

“Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without.”
Confucius

Don't worry if you don't know what these economics terms mean...

- **Business Cycle** - The tendency of economies to move, over time, through periods of boom and slump and occurs when real GDP moves away from its trend path. The business cycle is the fluctuations in the rate of economic growth that take place in the economy. It is the aim of all governments to try to dampen the effects of the business cycle and get more balanced long-term growth. The peak of the business cycle is usually referred to as a boom, and the trough as a recession or depression.
- **Business Sector Output** - Total economic output of the economy less the activities of the general government sector: that is general government consumption and gross capital formation.
- **Buyer's Market** - The quantity of goods for sale exceeds the amount consumers are willing and able to buy at the current market price. Characterised by low prices.
- **Canons of Taxation** - A set of criteria developed by Adam Smith that could be used to judge whether or not a tax was a "good" tax. They were: (1) The cost of collection must be low relative to the yield; (2) The timing and amount to be paid must be certain to the payer; (3) The means and timing of payment must be convenient to the payer; (4) Taxes should be levied according to ability to pay.

Source: Bizezia's Glossary of Economics Terms is available through Bizezia's Online Business Library, the UK's leading online business library with 650+ self-branded publications. Visit: www.bizezia.com



Email Management

Easy ways to lighten the load

By Celina Lucas

Electronic mail. Does anyone ever call it that anymore? Email has become so familiar it seems hard to believe that it's only been in popular use for the last twenty years or so (although the invention dates back to the 1970s).

Email can be both a blessing and a curse in the office. Marvellous for speed and efficiency (although now becoming superseded by the immediacy of media such as Twitter and Instant Messenger), it is also insidious, open to misinterpretation, and most of all, relentless.

Anyone who has come back from holiday to find 748 unread emails waiting for them in their inbox will recognise the sinking feeling at the realisation that you'll spend most of the day opening, reading and dealing with your messages.

How can you lighten the email load?

- Get to know the Rules and Alerts function. By setting up rules, you can channel emails into specific folders, set up auto-responders and automatically flag emails for follow up.
- Don't be a slave to your inbox. Unless you really have to be constantly available, set specific times to check your emails – try first thing in the morning, lunchtime and last thing before you log off for the day.
- Disable the new email notification so you won't be distracted by it popping up on screen. If you're worried about being out of the loop, set an auto responder that will tell people what you're doing and they won't expect an instant response. Remember, if it was that urgent, they'd call you.

- You can also colour code your emails so you'll be able to find the one you need more easily.
- Be very selective about subscribing to email newsletters. Go through the ones you already receive. If you've not read it within a month, you're never going to. Unsubscribe and that's one less email to worry about reading.
- When organising your mailbox folders, if you name them with an '@' symbol at the front (i.e. @Receipts and Invoices), Outlook will file them in alphabetical order, making it much easier to sort your emails.
- Have a regular purge. Anything more than two months old can normally be deleted completely. If it's important, it should be filed in a separate folder, not left clogging up your inbox.
- Always, always check that you're replying to the correct person, not to 'Reply All' if you don't want to. This is how things go viral. It's always the emails that you don't want sent that seem to get distributed to the masses.
- Know how to recall something quickly. You really don't want to be frantically scrolling through the Help topics, trying to find out how to do it, when your email commentating most unfavourably on your co-worker's appearance is winging its way through cyberspace to a million and one destinations.
- On the same note, tone of voice does not translate well over email - this is why emoticons became so popular. Be very sure that your wry and sarcastic comment isn't going to be interpreted as being abrupt and rude.

Like a lot of modern technology, email is supposed to save you time and used properly, it can do. Implement a few of the strategies above and with a few quick tweaks, your inbox will soon be under control again.

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About the Author

Celina Lucas owns Office Alchemy, which provides virtual assistance in secretarial, business writing and creative support to small to medium enterprises, entrepreneurs, sole traders and partnerships. She is a published author and regularly contributes articles to various online sites.

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By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.

Confucius



This article is about...
How to cope with Emails.



Go to most small business seminars, or read any motivational sales book, and there's one theme that will be consistent – you can grow your small business to be the biggest in your market if you shoot for the stars!

I'm all for aiming high...but what if there were a proven strategy you could use to accelerate your growth and become a strong second choice for your customers in your chosen market. The number 2 coffee shop. The second busiest accountant. The number two web-based SEO consulting firm.

Taking a Different View - The "Alternative" Strategy

There are many examples of famous brand name companies raking in profits by deliberately trying to be the second choice in a given market, using an "alternative" strategy.

Pepsi sells billions of dollars in cola every year, thanks to their strategic decision to stop fighting with Coke over who was number 1 in the cola business. Coke was the original cola with the highest sales in the business. Rather than continue to fight toe to toe with the established leader, Pepsi let Coke have that territory, and turned their focus to cola buyers who didn't have an established cola preference yet – teenagers.

They changed their marketing strategy to use pop icons like Michael Jackson (hey, it was the 80s), which was a distinct alternative to Coke's use of Bill Cosby to support its more traditional image.

Being The (Second) Best

The benefits of employing a "Pepsi" strategy for your small business

By Will Dylan

The result was that Pepsi became everything Coke couldn't be - a youth-oriented cola with a strong hold on a growing market. In doing so, Pepsi became the top alternative choice to Coke. If you were one of the people who didn't want a Coke, there was a very clear second choice for you to try – Pepsi.

It happens in all kinds of businesses...

There are plenty of other examples. Burger King is deliberately positioned as the alternative to McDonald's – they cook their burgers differently, and market their food more to the male young adult segment of the market, instead of to kids and families as McDonald's does.

It's also worth noting that it's not necessary to be the opposite of the market leader in everything to be an alternative. Pepsi is sold in the same stores and usually for the same price as Coke. The "alternative" component of their offer to customers is mainly in their marketing and their target market.

It works in your business too

Who is the number one business in your chosen market? What is it that they offer to the market that has put them on top?

If you want to play the game like Pepsi and other successful "alternative" businesses, then let other businesses compete with the market leader on their turf. You focus on the huge part of the market that chooses not to deal with the market leader. Be what the leader can't be. Find the alternative territory where a client demand exists.

"...if you are one of the pack in your current market, you have a lot to gain by breaking away from the pack and taking up the number 2 position in your market."

There are many factors on which you could base an alternative offer, including:

- Type of client being targeted
- Level of service offered
- Geographic trade area
- Price point
- And many others

It's also a well-recognized fact that in most businesses, there's money in being number 1 and number 2 in any market, and not much money left over for the rest of the pack.

So if you are one of the pack in your current market, you have a lot to gain by breaking away from the pack and taking up the number 2 position in your market.

Where there's a leader, there's an opportunity

As business people, we are often taught that to be as successful as the leader in any market, we should emulate the approach that made them successful.

The reality is that market leading businesses are very good at something, but can't be good at everything. There may be a great opportunity for competing agents in taking up an alternative position rather than mimicking the leader's marketing tactics.

Coke's firm grip on tradition gave them the lead in the cola business, but also left a huge opportunity on the table for Pepsi to lock up number 2 by targeting younger customers.

This article is about...
What you might gain by breaking away from the pack and taking up the number 2 position in your market.

What opportunities is the market leader in your market leaving on the table for you to lock up?

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About the Author

Will Dylan is a Marketing Manager for a major corporation. The majority of his work experience comes as a marketing manager for companies with small marketing budgets. Will has made a career of stretching a small budget and limited resources into a competitive marketing plan. Will realized how valuable his success in low-budget marketing could be to small business owners everywhere. Small Businesspeople are often working with limited marketing resources and are too busy to dedicate much time to the marketing of their company's product or service.

Will is the author of "Small Business, Big Marketing", one of the web's most popular ebooks on small business marketing. It can be downloaded at no charge from www.marketingyoursmallbusiness.com

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Faced with what is right, to leave it undone shows a lack of courage.

Confucius



Who Needs Copywriters?

By Leif Kendall

Have you ever wondered what a copywriter does? Or why you might need one? Leif Kendall is a freelance copywriter, and here he explains how people like him help businesses like yours. Copywriters are marketing professionals – they exist to help you sell. There are various ways they do this, but all involve putting words to work.



Writers With Marketing Skills

Copywriting is quite different to normal writing. So, while you might be a talented poet or letter writer, you might not understand the selling and marketing principles that copywriters can use to your advantage.

A good copywriter will write with many things in mind. Copywriters must consider how to address several personality types simultaneously, how to allay fears, mention features, highlight benefits, mix in social proof (testimonials) – all while being persuasive.

An Outside View Of The Inside

One big bonus of employing a copywriter is that you get a fresh brain thinking about your business. This fresh brain might spot something you've missed or something you could make better. A good copywriter will put thought into their work, looking for ways to help you communicate more effectively to more people.

Speaking Their language

A common failing in business communication occurs when the people writing the copy forget that the public (your audience) are not aware of your business and your industry jargon. A copywriter writes with your readers in mind – so that your copy will address their needs, in their language.

Traffic-Stopping Web Copy

Writing for websites requires even more specialist knowledge than offline copy. Web copy requires an understanding of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), calls to action, usability, internet conventions and conversion rates, as well as the marketing and advertising principles mentioned above.

Investing In Your Corporate Voice

It's worth remembering that words do a lot of talking for your business, so it's worth investing in the best copy you can afford. Unprofessional communications and marketing material can actively work against you, telling potential customers things you didn't intend to say. The right copy can work in harmony with your operations and help you to be heard in a crowded market.

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About the Author

Leif Kendall is a freelance copywriter who specialises in clear communications that get results. When he's not writing sparkling copy, he's busy reading, parenting, cycling and cooking spicy curries.

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Top Tips for Effective Networking!

By Kevin Stansfield

Some business owners I meet complain that, although they attend networking events, they don't actually get any work through them and question whether it is worthwhile bothering, given that there are 101 other things they could be spending their time doing.

Clearly, networking isn't going to be an appropriate marketing tool for all businesses, but for many I believe it is. After all, if you needed a builder/ accountant/ IT specialist, wouldn't you prefer to deal with somebody you have met and chatted to rather than somebody you didn't know at all.

If you are going to use networking as a marketing tool for your business, as with any marketing tool you use, you first need a clear strategy in order to make it work well for you. I will share with you my 'top ten tips' to effective networking to help you develop your own approach.

1. Choose the networking groups you attend wisely - you need groups of proactive business owners, not ones that just meet to chat and feel good about themselves!
2. Go along to the meetings with a goal in your mind for the number of cards you are going to hand out and the number of meetings that you are going to book.
3. Be clear on the type of business you are looking for - think about the size, type and location of companies you would like to work with.
4. Make it easy for people to refer work to you by having a clear and concise offer.
5. Ask the people you meet about themselves and their businesses - don't forget that people buy from people they like and showing interest in what others do will help build that relationship.
6. Have a great story to tell and be enthusiastic - make people interested in what you do, never try to just sell what you do.
7. Don't forget to take enough business cards with you!
8. Always follow up on the people you have met after the event - remember, networking is the start of the sales process, not the end.
9. Don't forget to have fun!
10. Finally, make sure you measure the results of your efforts - it is NetWORKING, after all!

So now you have a guide to effective networking, get out there, take action and make it work for you!

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About the Author

Kevin is one of the top business coaches in the UK and has been part of ActionCOACH, in itself the world's #1 business coaching firm, for over 5 years. Helping businesses of all shapes and sizes mainly on the South Coast of England, Kevin has attained numerous Regional, European and Global awards. He is also a global speaker and trainer and has qualifications in areas as varied as an MBA, NLP, ECI and DISC. His life prior to coaching was as a Chartered Accountant where he was a freelance FD of various fast growth companies. He has always worked in and around businesses and followed in his late father's footsteps, as he too was a Chartered Accountant who set out in business.

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This article is about...
Tips on how to network effectively.



7 Small Business Marketing Tips

By Bob Leduc

Here are 7 low-cost but highly effective marketing tips to help any small business find customers and generate sales quickly.

1. Don't Advertise Like a Big Business

Big businesses advertise to create name recognition and future sales. A small business can't afford to do that. Instead, design your advertising to produce sales... now. One way to accomplish this is to always include an offer in your advertising - and an easy way for prospective customers to respond to it.

2. Offer a Cheaper Version

Some prospective customers are not willing to pay the asking price for your product or service. Others are more interested in paying a low price than in getting the best quality. You can avoid losing sales to many of these customers by offering a smaller or stripped down version of your product or service at a lower price.

3. Offer a Premium Version

Not all customers are looking for a cheap price. Many are willing to pay a higher price to get a premium product or service. You can boost your average size sale and your total revenue by offering a more comprehensive product or service ...or by combining several products or services in a special premium package offer for a higher price.

4. Try Some Unusual Marketing Methods

Look for some unconventional marketing methods your competitors are overlooking. You

may discover some highly profitable ways to generate sales and avoid competition. For example, print your best small ad on a postcard and mail it to prospects in your targeted market. A small ad on a postcard can drive a high volume of traffic to your website or generate a flood of sales leads for a very small cost.

5. Trim Your Ads

Reduce the size of your ads so you can run more ads for the same cost. You may even be surprised to find that some of your short ads generate a better response than their longer versions.

6. Set up Joint Promotions with Other Small Businesses

Contact some non-competing small businesses serving customers in your market. Offer to publicize their products or services to your customers in exchange for their publicizing your services to their customers. This usually produces a large number of sales for a very low cost.

7. Take Advantage of Your Customers

Your customers already know and trust you. It's easier to get more business from them than to get any business from somebody who never bought from you. Take advantage of this by creating some special deals just for your existing customers ...and announce new products and services to them before you announce them to the general market.

Also, convert your customers into publicity agents for your business. Develop an incentive for them to tell associates and friends about the value of your products or services. An endorsement from them is more effective than any

amount of advertising - and it is much cheaper.

Each of these 7 marketing tips provides a simple, low-cost way for any small business to find customers and generate sales quickly.

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About the Author

Bob Leduc spent 20 years helping businesses like yours find new customers and increase sales. He has released a new edition of his manual, *How To Build Your Small Business Fast With Simple Postcards* and launched *BizTips from Bob*, a newsletter to help small businesses grow and prosper. You'll find his low-cost marketing methods at: <http://BobLeduc.com> or call: (001) 702-658-1707 After 10 AM Pacific Time/Las Vegas, NV, USA

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I'm not the smartest fellow in the world, but I can sure pick smart colleagues.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States (1933-1945)


This article is about...
4 simple ideas to make more money for your business.



10 Steps Of The Client Journey

By Sandra Martini

Every time a “customer” (usually called “lead” or “prospective client”) visits your site, emails you, or contacts you in any way, whether she realizes it or not, s/he’s about to embark on a journey with you.

And you have a choice:

- Let the customer take the journey alone; or
- Create the path, take his/her hand and lead him/her on the journey.

Successful business owners are creating the path. Ultra-successful business owners are creating the path **and** leading customers on the journey.

First, you should know that every business includes several different journeys:

- There’s the journey of simply doing business with you – from that first awareness to eventual completion
- There’s the journey of each product or program – from awareness to purchase then consumption and completion

The steps to each journey are relatively simple – provided they’re done in the right order and the right way. No worries though...the steps are intuitive and chances are you’re already doing most of them in your business.

7. Eliminate risk
8. Why now?
9. Actual purchase
10. Nurturing the relationship

Not sure about what each of the steps includes? Download a new free report on The Client Journey from:

<http://www.on2url.com/app/adtrack.asp?MerchantID=84108&AdID=486439>

Now that you know the steps, it’s time to implement them! I’d love to hear how you’re implementing the above and we’ll talk more about leading your customer on the journey in a future post.

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About the Author

Sandra Martini is a strategic marketing and productivity consultant who helps entrepreneurs create sustainable businesses without losing their integrity. She provides services such as coaching, client systems development, consulting and Team Sandy Done 4 You Online Business Marketing & Management as well as a variety of informational products.

Visit Sandy’s website (see address below) to pick up your free audio series “5 Simple and Easy Ways to Put Your Marketing on Autopilot” today.

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Sandra’s Definitions:

Conversion = Turning “customers” into paying clients and, when done well, more customers become clients faster and with the least possible cost.

Clients = People who’ve purchased (they’ve paid you money) something from you at least once.

Customers = Leads or prospects.

Individuals who have recently become aware of you/your website, maybe sent you an email, signed up for a free teleclass, etc., but have not yet purchased anything.

Extreme Client Care™ = Think of how you want to be treated and then go a step further in everything you do. Ensure that your clients walk away from EVERY contact with you feeling served.

Nurturing Sequence = Automatic follow-up with customer or client. Usually sent via email autoresponder.

Shopping Cart = An online system which allows you to (1) sell products and collect monies when combined with a merchant service or paypal, (2) create and send unlimited autoresponders, (3) send email broadcasts/eazines, (4) have an affiliate referral program with built-in tracking and tools and much more.



This article is about...

How to help your client or prospect on a journey to achieve the best results.

10 Steps of the Client Journey

1. Attract and Connect
2. Ideal Client match?
3. Interest in solving problem?
4. Do you have THE solution?
5. ROI on solving the problem
6. Make an offer



Love Me Tender

By Barry Urquhart

There is a certain “sameness” about Tenders. Compliance to the provisions of the tendering process promotes commodisation of tendered documents and the tendering entities. The sole point of difference is the quoted price. Little wonder the concepts of value, originality, innovation, relationships and negotiated, mutually rewarding agreements are discounted and, often, dismissed.

Politicians may well promote, endorse and revel in “level playing fields”. Commercially, it is an ill-advised limiting strategic option in which there is only one winner... occasionally and rotationally. In the longer term no one wins and costs rise because of unallocated expenses which must be amortised on all projects and stock items.

In the prevailing straitened economic circumstances and with a price sensitive marketplace, an increasing number of business owners and managers are adopting the attitude that they and their entities cannot afford not to pursue every opportunity. Inadvertently, they do so at their own cost and detriment.

Saying “No” and turning one’s back on an invitation to submit a tender takes mental strength, a strong and singular focus, complemented by the resilience of a sound corporate philosophy. It is a refreshing, appealing alternative to being one of a long list of compliant, non-differentiated tenderers.

Being the same, soon develops into a market image of being... “same ol’, same ol’”.

Similar templates and market consequences can be applied to those “bricks and mortar” businesses which choose to compete on price on-line with their global cyber space competitors and substitutes.

Street-smart and tech-savvy consumers and clients are well connected, informed, discerning and price sensitive. They are also becoming increasingly numerate. Two-structure pricing policies (in-store and on-line) quickly disconnect the value of brands, services, businesses, physical presence and loyalty.

In the book “*The Jindalee Factor*”, which provided insights on Australian entrepreneurs, Professor Roger Smith and I were able to highlight the belief of several sustainably successful leaders of commerce that it is prudent not to pursue all available deals.

The profit incentive is not desirable. It is an imperative. Profits pay for premises, stock, staff and service, without which an entity “wilters on the vine” and the client is left unsatisfied and unfulfilled.

“Unprofitable profitability” could only ever be considered and accounting term which measures cashflow. One cannot profitably invest cash flows in the long term. A general slowdown in economic activity accords opportunity to review, refine and develop operations, strategies and to pursue those prospects which represent genuine, on-going value.

Brutal Reality

There is no tenderness in the tendering process. It is a statistical and historical reality that only a percentage of tendered submissions and entities will be successful and profitable. One need look no further than the appallingly poor recent track record of major engineering and construction corporations which won business with successful tenders and have recorded consistent, significant and increasing losses. Losing such tenders has proven to those tenderers who were not granted the contracts to be winners.

Non Compliance

Whether the objective is to win custom on-line or in a tender, non-compliance is an appealing attribute because it provides scope for difference, enhancement and betterment

At Worst

At the very least, entities that are requesting tenders should be made to pay for such. Decisions to participate

in tendering processes should, and often can be complemented with a creative drive to find a better, faster and cheaper way than that stipulated in the tender document.

Remember, rules are for guidance, not obedience. One should never apologise for being original, innovative, creative and profitable. Each is an attribute and building block for growth, sustainable competitive advantage and the delivery of value through quality products, services and experiences, and relationships.

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About the Author

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director, Marketing Focus, Perth, is an inspiring speaker, author of Australia’s top two selling books on customer service and an international consultant on dynamic innovation and creativity. Barry is author of six books, including the two largest selling publications on service excellence in Australasia. His latest is: “Marketing Magic – Streetsmart Marketing”. Barry is a regular commentator of consumer issues on ABC radio, is featured on a series of interview topics on “Today Tonight” and contributes articles to 47 magazines throughout the world. His latest presentation is: “Insights on ‘The Big Picture’ - Future-Proof Your Business”. He is one of Australia’s most active keynote speakers and is an internationally recognised authority on quality customer service, consumer behaviour and creative visual merchandising. Marketing Focus is a Perth based market research and strategic planning practice. The firm and Barry consult to multinational, national and local entities in the private sector and the public sector. He is a former lecturer in Marketing and Management at the Curtin University of Technology and has degrees in marketing, political science and sociology.

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This article is about... How to succeed when you tender for business.



21 Success Secrets of Self-Made Millionaires

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How to organise your time so you get more done and contribute more value.

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How to continually upgrade your talents and abilities to earn more money;

8. Pay Yourself First:

The most powerful process of wealth accumulation ever discovered and how you can use it;

9. Learn Every Detail of the Business:

How to become an expert in your chosen field and double your income.

10. Dedicate Yourself to Serving Others:

The starting point of all personal fortunes and how to begin.

11. Be Absolutely Honest With Yourself and Others:

How and why personal integrity goes hand in hand with financial success.

12. Set Priorities and Concentrate Single-mindedly:

The importance of focusing on your most important tasks all day long.

13. Develop a Reputation for Speed and Dependability:

Give yourself the winning edge in everything you do.

14. Be Prepared to Climb From Peak to Peak:

Learn how to recognise the cycles and trends that can make you rich.

15. Practice Self-Discipline In All Things:

Develop the most important quality for financial success.

16. Unlock Your Inborn Creativity:

Learn how to solve any problem, overcome any obstacle, achieve any goal;

17. Get Around The Right People:

The importance of surrounding yourself with winners at each stage of your career.

18. Take Excellent Care of Your Physical Health:

Develop and maintain high levels of energy and fitness.

19. Be Decisive and Action Oriented:

Identify the most important action steps you can take immediately;

20. Never Allow Failure To Be An Option:

Overcome the fears that hold most people back.

21. Pass the "Persistence Test":

Learn how to bounce back from defeat and never, ever give up.

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