

Have you ever thought about...

...The REAL secret to success?

by Angie Dixon

I USED TO SEE A CHIROPRACTOR who handed out a little leaflet entitled **DR. HICKMAN'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS IN BUSINESS.**

It was very nice, had his picture on the front and was professionally printed.

On the inside it said, "Get a job and go to work every morning."

There is a secret to success, believe it or not, and I'm going to tell you what those people who are 'successful' do, that people who are 'not successful' do not do, either because they're unwilling or because they don't know it would make the difference.

Successful people do the things no one likes to do.

They do the 'grunt work' of marketing and running their businesses. They stuff envelopes.

They follow up with prospects. They do the research and find web sites willing to link to them.

They do what no one else wants to do, and it pays off.

In my business, the things no one likes to do include asking, "Would you like to hire me as your coach today?" and finding links to my web site.

What are the things no one wants to do in your business? How can you make yourself do those things even though they're 'yucky,' tedious, boring and obnoxious?

What will the results be if you do those things? How will you know when you're successful?

If you'd like help discovering the things you need to do (that no one likes to do) or how you'll know when you're successful, email me ■.

SOURCENOTE: Angie Dixon helps small business owners get their acts together. .

SUCCESS TIP

There are several keys for achieving one success after another but the first foundation is an unshakeable commitment to personal development. No one is born knowing how to live well. No one is born knowing how to talk or walk or balance a checkbook. But we have the ability to learn. Winners learn the art of living well. They learn to be great parents, great lovers, great listeners, great people. Winners are committed to personal development and that makes all the difference. ■

BUSINESS

ALERT!

Hands-on help that works

Vol 9 No 1

Follow these steps to fire up your employees



What do professional athletes, newspaper editors, accountants and delivery drivers have in common...?
by Gary Ryan Blair,

... A SENSE OF URGENCY!

Whether they're trying to make the winning score, put out the morning edition, meet the tax deadline, or absolutely, positively get it there overnight, these workers know it's 'now or never'. But not all businesses operate with built-in deadline pressures.

So how do you develop a sense of urgency in your company?

• Pinpoint causes of complacency.

Before you can light a fire under your employees, you'll need to discover what's been dampening their enthusiasm. Are they burned out from overwork, frustrated by heavy-handed bureaucracy, confused about their mission? Meet with employees to discuss what's making them sluggish, then devise strategies for addressing those issues.

• Find opportunities to set deadlines. In an ideal world, employees would be inherently motivated to quickly achieve their goals.

But, in the real world, most people never do today what they can put off until tomorrow. That's where deadlines come in.

Deadlines create accountability, forcing people to follow through on commitments. But imposing deadlines on, say, how long retail workers should spend helping customers can backfire by encouraging poor service.

That's why you need to be creative. For instance, you could set a deadline for how long workers can try to resolve customer issues before handing off the problem to a supervisor.

Such deadlines would encourage—and empower—workers to do everything possible to quickly and effectively resolve customer problems.

• Reward desirable behaviors.

Once you've adopted a deadline-oriented approach, monitor progress to make sure your strategy is having the desired effect.

Promote buy-in by recognizing and rewarding the workers who embrace the need to act with urgency. ■

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY! by Gary Ryan Blair, on the Motivation Point website.

One-minute tip

What's on your 'Daily List'? Take care of yourself every day. Have some fun every day! Do the things that create and build the life you really want — and do them every single day.

What really winds up customers

SMALL BUSINESSES NEED to offer better means of online communication to meet growing customer demand, according to new research on customer service.

The most irritating trait a company can display is failing to have its contact details on its website, according to new research.

The study by **I&I INTERNET** found that 77% of people listed this as their biggest customer service bugbear, followed by being held in a telephone queue (also 77%), speaking to staff with heavy accents (56%), poor on-hold music (42%) and inflexible office hours (40%).

The poll also found 90% of consumers wanted the ability to interact with companies through live-chat, forums or call-me-back facilities, with one in three requiring it from a business they currently use.

But the vast majority of small companies (92%) do not offer such facilities and 42% had no plans to introduce them, the survey found. One in three businesses (35%) even said they felt there was no need to provide further online communication options.

"Our research clearly shows that struggling to contact a business from its website is a major cause of concern for consumers," said Andreas Gauger, chief executive of I&I Internet.

"There is also a clear discrepancy between how consumers and businesses value internet-based customer service," he added.

"Consumers now place a high value on the ability to talk to businesses in real-time online and businesses of all sizes need to respond to this trend or risk losing sales."

Despite the fact that 42% of customers would choose real-time online dialogue as their preferred contact method, 44% of companies believed there was no link between online customer support and sales revenue and almost half (47%) felt providing such facilities would not increase customer retention. ■

SOURCENOTE: Newbusiness.com



Thomas Long

The way I see it...

You gotta make some noise!

IN BUSINESS, you've GOT to make some noise!

Recently, I heard about two people who have become experts in marketing.

One is a man who has attended all the 'boot camps', read the books and taken seminars from the best marketing gurus around. The other is an American woman who told me her personal library of marketing and business books cost over \$100,000 in the past ten years.

Unfortunately, neither of them has applied what they know and their businesses have not grown.

These are classic examples of 'analysis paralysis'. They have studied their market and learned the techniques. They know how to write sales letters and they know the latest in online marketing techniques. They know about using endorsements, about using graphics and colors, about 'reversing risk' and identifying their target demographics.

What they don't know is how to make noise.

They've not taken enough action! One

business leader recently told me her greatest fear is "making a mistake!" Like, get over it already!

If you're going to be in business, you're going to make mistakes. (I suspect that's true in life; I know it's true in business.)

The key to building your business is taking action. Of course, it's good to know what you're doing. Sure, it's good to put the odds in your favor as much as you can. But in the end, you've got to take a chance and make some noise!

If you want your business to grow, think about what you'll do differently. What will you expand or contract? How much will you spend on advertising? What new products or services will you offer? Which ones will you cancel?

In the end, growing a business is about taking action. It's about making the best judgments you can and then taking the plunge.

If you'd like help with this, consider hiring a business coach. Being an entrepreneur means the responsibility is on your shoulders and that can be a lonely thing, so build your team! Get help. Get advice, get support, get someone to (figuratively) 'kick your butt' and get you into action. ■

Change management

Can you cope with change?

Business owners are making a grave mistake by prioritizing short-term concerns over more fundamental operational issues.

BUSINESS OWNERS are putting their ventures at risk by failing to adopt long-term managerial strategies, according to new CMI research.

The study revealed a discrepancy between the areas that were identified as potential weaknesses and the strategies being implemented to overcome these. Nearly two-thirds (60%) said skills and talent management was the key challenge facing employers but only 32% put 'developing talent' down as a significant issue.

Similarly, with a failure rate of 74% for IT projects, the number of respondents who thought that keeping abreast of technological change was a priority was just 24% and only 10% said effective use of IT and communications was a big challenge.

Other business priorities were protecting the company reputation (38%) and managing the impact of regulation, cited by 35%.

The findings also revealed a worrying level of over-confidence in some companies, with only 38% claiming managing risks was important in the current climate.

"Questions need to be asked about how organizations will be able to manage in the future if they fail to address key operational issues," said Jo Causen, director, marketing and corporate affairs at the CMI.

"Rather than simply focusing on 'what should be done today', the inability to plan properly might lead to questions of a more critical nature: 'what opportunities have I missed' or worse, 'how did the organization not see that coming?'"

The research did find, however, that organizations see themselves as up to speed when it comes to monitoring the competition (with 70% answering positively) and 65% said they were effective in identifying changes in society that could impact on the business.

"In the current economic environment the need for high levels of efficiency are all too apparent, so it is encouraging to see some positive signs," said Causen.

"However, it is not an excuse to become too comfortable with the situation as success depends on the 'principle of preparation': namely the ability to juggle tasks, manage change and meet market expectations." ■

SOURCENOTE: CMI press release

THE MAJORITY of people interviewing candidates for a job have poor interviewing techniques which result in picking the wrong person and can have a direct impact on the bottom line.

That's the message from a survey of heads of HR conducted for A&DC, which revealed that 74% of interviewers had poor techniques and 33% are poorly trained. Of those questioned, 35% said poor interviewing resulted in poor performance from employees and 24% thought it affected the company's financial performance.

The impact of a bad interviewing style doesn't stop there. Sixteen per cent of those polled said it resulted in candidates leaving interviews with a bad impression of the company, 9% thought it wasted both time and money and 7% claimed it created disaffection among existing staff.

"Interviewing well is a skill that is difficult to consistently get right across the entire organization, whether it's large or small," said Rory Fidgeon, senior consultant occupational psychologist for A&DC.

"The survey shows that few heads of HR see their people interviewing well, which backs up the stories we hear of so many interviewing with 'gut feeling' as their main guide.

Using this type of judgement in interviews doesn't work consistently. The results show huge scope to improve and simplify the interviewing process."

The main barrier to effective interviewing was a lack of training, according to a third of respondents, while 17% pointed to a lack of time.

A&DC recommends using competency-based interviews where evidence of an individual's past behavior is set against criteria for the job. "Recruiting the wrong person is expensive," said James Foster, marketing manager of A&DC. ■

SOURCENOTE: Newbusiness.co

Selling

Beware! — your true intentions are showing

When I opened the email, the first sentence jumped out at me: "I've just been to your website and your company is a perfect fit for our services!"

by Jill Konrath

CLEARLY, THE SELLER was really excited about his discovery. On the other hand, I was backpedalling as fast as I could go.

I wanted nothing to do with him. If he'd caught me on the phone, my instincts would have immediately erected barricades. If we were meeting in person, objections would be spewing from my mouth.

Why? Because he seemed to be too excited about selling me. Without even realizing it, his approach screamed 'self-serving' and I recoiled from it.

My reaction isn't unusual. In fact, it's the norm. You do the same thing. We all hate being sold!

Yet, invariably, I see sellers engaging in self-botaging behavior that can only lead to failure. For example:

- When their company introduces a new product or service, most sellers rush to convert their hottest prospects. Filled with passion, they unwittingly create insurmountable obstacles that actually derail their sales efforts or delay them indefinitely.

- When good-hearted, intelligent and talented people put on their sales hats, they suddenly morph into blathering idiots. It's as if they think this is what selling is all about — even though they're repulsed by their own actions.

- When well-intentioned sellers are fearful of meeting their quotas or even staying in business, their desperation to land a client or get the order causes them to push themselves on others.

Whether you want to or not, you always communicate your intent.

Prospective buyers sense it instantaneously and react accordingly. If they feel you have their best interests in mind, they're attracted to you.

Conversely, they're repelled by any behavior that smacks of self-serving intentions.

To be successful selling your prospect or service, focus on making your prospects successful. Use these strategies to re-jigger your thinking.

Change your question

Once you've targeted an account to go after, instead of focusing first on "How can I sell this to them?" ask yourself, "How can I improve their business?"

When this question is at the forefront of your thinking, you start behaving differently. You can't make calls until you've researched their firm, know their company's objectives and understand the challenges they're facing. You prepare for appointments with their success in mind, not yours.

Change your language

When your intention is to help your customer improve their operation, you don't talk about your product or service. Period. It's really quite irrelevant at the onset of your discussion. Even though you're really excited about it, you don't talk about it. Your offering is simply a tool that helps them achieve a very specific business objective. That's what's important.

It's all about them!

Change your role

Stop putting on your sales hat! Stop thinking of yourself as a seller. You are a business improvement specialist.

As a result of your work to improve your customer's operation, they will buy your product or service. Sales is the outcome of what you do, but it is not your purpose.

Many sales managers and business owners will rail at what I say. They want you to "go out there and sell, sell, sell." Marketers will push you to "tell your prospects all about our unique differentiators." Even you will likely feel resistance to making these changes.

But, truthfully, the more you need sales, the more important these strategies become. Top sellers know this. When you're in their presence, you never feel like you're being sold. So you open up and tell them more. That's how it works. And before long you're happily doing business with them.

Always remember: your intention is showing. **If it's all about you, you're toast.** The best way to make a sale is to make a difference. ■

SOURCENOTE: Jill Konrath, author of *SELLING TO BIG COMPANIES*, is a recognized sales strategist in the highly competitive business-to-business market. A popular speaker at sales meetings, she helps her clients crack into corporate accounts, speed up their sales cycle and generate demand for their offering.

The Way We Work Brand challenge

An organization's brand has a multifaceted role to perform. It must communicate with multiple audiences, such as consumers, employees and shareholders, as well as a wider community of commentators and pressure groups.

As companies outsource more of what they do to 'external' individuals or organizations, they need to ask themselves how best to manage the impact of external agents on their brand. It will not always be obvious that your reputation is at stake or who is responsible when things go wrong. ■

The Institute for Independent Business

FOUNDED IN 1984 in the UK, the Institute for Independent Business (IIB) is now one of the world's largest international networks of business advice providers.

As of 30 December 2007, 5,022 carefully-selected men and women had been accredited worldwide as IIB Associates.

Experienced professionals

Experienced senior business people in their own right, who have elected to become self-employed business advisers, Associates and Fellows of the IIB have received additional training to enable them to focus accurately and cost-effectively on the needs of clients and prospects.

This ensures that Associates' clients receive the "practical advice that works"—the Institute's motto in every country in which the Institute operates. ■

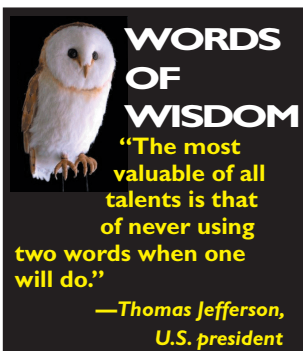
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WORDS OF WISDOM

"The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do."

—Thomas Jefferson,
U.S. president

Communication

Ask the question: 'How am I doing?'

Assess the bottom line and culture of your organization to keep it healthy.

Here are the questions you'll need to answer and the steps you'll take, divided into four key parts:

Part 1. Key financial drivers

- "What makes us money?"
- "What costs us money?"
- "What's our long-term vision?"
- "What are our key strategies?"
- "How are we performing?"

Action steps:

- Review the financial reports and indicators.
- Assess anything that's unclear about the operation's financial performance.
- Spend time with your financial people to talk about specific drivers and indicators.

Part 2. Understanding the business

- "What functions directly affect our fiscal performance?"
- "What's the primary role of each functional area?"
- "How do functional strategies affect our overall performance?"

Action steps:

- Assess your working knowledge of each functional area.
- Identify the appropriate subject matter experts.
- Schedule an informational interview with each expert.
- Prepare for the interviews by drafting an outline of issues and questions.

Part 3. Corporate culture

- "Do we value everybody's ideas?"

- "How hierarchical are we?"
- "Do we promote cross-functional development?"
- "Does our climate promote open and honest communication?"

Action steps:

- Reflect on your own view of the culture and seek insights from colleagues.
- Judge how well the culture aligns with your own belief system.
- Gauge your potential for long-term success in the existing culture.

Part 4. Political climate

- "How political an environment do we live in across units, departments, divisions and organization-wide?"
- "How does this environment align with my beliefs and personal goals?"
- "Am I overly influenced by my own agenda? How about others?"
- "Am I a good steward of the organization?"

Action steps:

- Draw your own conclusions about the political environment.
- Ask others up and down the line for their opinions.
- Observe how other leaders behave.
- Determine how well the climate feels in light of your beliefs and goals, then decide whether you'll thrive in it, change it or leave. ■

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from CORPORATE CONFIDENTIAL: WHAT IT REALLY TAKES TO GET TO THE TOP, by Susan A. DePhillips.

Meet the Publisher

SOLID OAK CONSULTING FOCUSES on Chicago-based small business growth.

Growing a small- or medium-sized business is a challenge in an environment where 80% of business startups do not last 5 years.

How To Grow? Growing a small business successfully not only requires increased sales, but profitable sales. To do this, all elements of a business need to work as a finely tuned system. This requires skill and coordination of management, finances, operations, people, marketing, sales and overall change.

Why Grow? Growth should not be an end in itself. After all, aren't you growing your business in order to sell or transition it someday? Chicago has many businesses in transition, should yours be one?

Business Advisor Managing this overall approach to business growth for a small business or a medium-sized business often requires an outside perspective. Someone with no agenda or vested interest in the business: a business advisor.



Small Business Growth through consulting is our business.

Helping your acorn business grow into a solid oak.

Better work habits

Successful people typically show more self-discipline than others. They have formed good habits like punctuality, organization and persistence.

The good news is that you can learn better work habits within three to four weeks, says time-management authority Merrill Douglass. "A habit is simply behavior done so often that it becomes automatic," he explains.

"Force yourself to keep good records and you will see the day when you keep them as inevitably and efficiently as you bathe," agrees management expert Ted Pollock, in SUPERVISION.

"Drive yourself to be punctual and you will soon keep your appointments on time as naturally as you eat three times a day.

"Make yourself plan your days and weeks in advance, and planning will become second nature," he adds.

Deliberately training yourself into good habits requires you to exercise stern self-discipline at first, says Pollock.

But once those habits become second nature, the payoff is considerable: "Good habits save effort, ease routine, increase efficiency and release power. ■"

SOURCENOTE: Supervision, Vol. 59, and ABC Time Tips, by Merrill Douglass

For more information,

please phone Thomas Long at 708 524 0886