

Better Business Focus

Expert Inspiration for a Better Business

June 2011

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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.



The simple sales secret

By Ian Segail

Today I really and truly "got it!" There is a single natural sales approach that all sales greats and great marketers get instinctively. It's what makes them so good. It's what gives them their edge. This one instinctive and in many cases totally unconscious selling method is what all too often separates the good from the great. I can give you the secret in one quick sentence. You and your people probably already know what it is and yet it as Stephen Covey observed in in his bestselling book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "To know and not to do is to not yet know." This powerful and yet simple concept smashed me over the head this past week and I have finally got it! I mean really got it!

It's all about them

For years, I, like many sales people, have been taught that when you sell if you really want to be effective, you must be genuinely interested in helping them solve their problems and do what makes best sense for them. You have to be customer centric in your approach. Dale Carnegie (*How to win friends and influence people*) taught us way back in the early 1930's that you should be more interested than interesting. And whilst I have always understood the concept intellectually and even taught the power of seeing things from the customer's perspective, I have never really understood it viscerally until this week just past.

The biggest sale of my career

For the last two weeks, I have

been working on what may potentially be the biggest sale of my career. For a whole bunch of reasons, I had become obsessed with my need to bring this sale home. Ever had that feeling? Ever put everything else on hold and obsessively focussed on closing a particular sales opportunity? Sure you have. If you've been in sales for longer than six months then you'll know what I am talking about. I had become guilty of single sales obsession!

The big issue, when one has so much invested in making a particular sale, it's very hard to get all empathetic and truly consider the opportunity un-selfishly from the prospects point of view. If we are really truly honest with ourselves our focus is very much "ME" centric. It becomes all about our own need to make the sale. What accomplishing the sale will mean for us, our sales goals, our sales career etc. We very often lose sight of what the customer/prospect wants.

The short-list presentation

I had been short listed out of a number of highly respected, local and international sales development companies to present my sales management coaching solution to a large multinational sales organisation based here in Sydney Australia. My prospect had set up a selection panel of seven key executives, and I, along with two other top flight candidate organizations were chosen to formally present our recommendations for turning around their lagging sales.

I had been working and tweaking and re-tweaking my sales presentation for days. I had rehearsed and practiced and I was as ready as I was ever going to be. I don't mind admitting publically that I was as nervous as a kitten. I hadn't been this anxious about presenting in years. So I am driving to the prospects offices and I am mentally rehearsing, (for the 1000th time) and doing the old, if they ask me this, I'll say that, thing.

Suddenly I become aware of my thinking. I became aware of my stress levels. I was off the charts highly strung with tension and apprehension. Now I have been training sales people and sales management long enough now to recognise that I am a walking disaster and I am about to blow a great opportunity.

The epiphany

So I ask myself, how come when I am coaching or training or facilitating a workshop I am always completely resourceful and un-stressed? It always amazes me that no matter how challenging the problem faced by my client/s, or how pressurising the environment, I always seem to have the ability to think fast and creatively on my feet. I always seem to either, ask the right question or provide the client with the most creative answer. Just what they needed, at just the right time. And yet there I was, driving to present to a panel of selectors, which I've done many times before, stressed out of my head. Like a schoolboy going on his first date. What was the major difference?

If you will get the answer that came to me, not just intellectually, but emotionally, it will transform the way you or your sales people sell forever.

You see, when I am coaching my focus is all about the coachee. When I am running a workshop or presenting a keynote speech, my attention is on my audience. It's always about them and what's genuinely best for them. This is lesson 101 in public speaking. Yet here I was with my focus set firmly on me. My focus was dialled in on what I wanted. I wanted the prospect to pick me and my solution.

So I asked myself, if I was coaching this prospect what outcome would I really want for them?

- Would I want them to "pick me!?"
- Would I want them not to ask me any curly questions or hit me with objections or concerns that I had no answers for?
- Would I want them to buy me for my expertise or my solution?
- Would I want to "close the sale"?

The answer I came up with wasn't any of the above. As a coach, my focused outcome would certainly have been:

- How can I support this prospect to make the best possible decision for themselves?
- How can I support them to choose what will work best for their business, in their circumstances?
- What would make best sense for them, whether it be to select me, or choose one of my competitors or even none of the above?
- What would be in their very best interests? (Even if it meant selecting someone else or canning the whole project completely)
- Was there even a better and more profitable way to solve their problem?

It was very clear to me that as their coach, my goal as a coach would be to help them facilitate the best decision for them. My coaching would never have been about "choose me!" it would have only have been about "choose right!"

Choose what's right for you, not what's right for me!

Eureka! Talk about putting a pin to the balloon. The moment I truly got that my presentation wasn't about me and my credentials as the super strategic sales management coach. The moment that I got that it wasn't about how I could outperform my competitors. It wasn't about having all the answers. As I drove on my way to the presentation, I got that it was about me supporting my group of prospects to make the best possible decision for their business. That was the moment that all of my stress went out of the window. I instantly calmed down completely and my whole focus shifted from me to them.

I changed the introduction to my presentation from: "Here are the 3 things I want to cover with you today" to "Having seen and read my proposal and having sat through presentations presented by my esteemed industry colleagues, what do you need to hear, see or get a sense of from me today that will help you to make the best possible decision for your business?" And then I shut up and listened.

Fulfilling my role

Now I don't know if I will get the work or not. But here's what I do know.... I know that

- I never presented "at them"
- I never ran out of time and never had to cut short the Q&A which is often typical with these sorts of presentations
- There was a whole lot of engagement and questions from the panel of decision makers
- I got more "show and tell time" than my competitors

- I showed them only those PowerPoint slides that were meaningful, so there was very limited "fluff n puff"
- I was given no "objections" to handle
- The presentation atmosphere was relaxed and jovial and I was completely spontaneous and creative
- I had no stress
- My motives were clear
- I maximised my chances for success

Out of all of this I realised the simple truth when it comes to selling, when you focus on what's right for the customer as opposed to what would be right for you, your odds of making the sale become infinitely increased in your favour.

I know that even if nothing comes from this particular sales opportunity, I have learned a very valuable lesson. I have become a far better sales person and presenter as a result. I know now what's been missing from my sales repertoire. I also know what's missing from the repertoire of many other sales people who are failing to make the grade when they've come so far along the sales funnel. I know that when I don the sales person's hat as I often have to, I have discovered a key principle of successful salesmanship. It's never about you.... It never was.

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About the author:

Ian works as a Strategic Sales Performance Coach with both experienced and novice sales managers and business owners across a wide variety of industries and selling disciplines, including: Microsoft, St George Bank, AMP Astra Zeneca, Rebel Sport, JVC ... to name a few.

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Online or offline... do you have a choice?

By John Stanley

Retailing is moving at such a fast pace, it is a challenge for retailers to keep up with all the developments.

I recently met a retailer who commented that he had been in retailing for 30 years and nobody could teach him anything, he knew it all. When I asked about online shopping he told me that he did not have an e-mail or web address. Retailing has definitely moved on quickly and our retailer with thirty years experience has been asleep for the last five years of them. He has been left behind and he does not yet know it.

Many retailers are finding traditional "In-Box" selling techniques are becoming more difficult and they are now looking at new ways of growing sales. It is interesting that even a few months ago leading retail personalities were saying that online retailing would not affect their business and that business would go on as normal.

Within a few months those same people are developing and launching Online Virtual shopping as part of their retail mix.

Many experts are saying that consumers are changing to Online shopping to save money and that online is a result of the global recession. I believe this is not the real reason and that all retailers need to be considering their online marketing strategy before they get left behind.

Consumers are not loyal

We keep being told that consumers are not loyal and will shop around for the best deal. To a certain degree I believe this to be the case. If a consumer can buy the exact same product at another source for a cheaper price they will go to that source. A result of this is an increase in Online shopping using businesses that were not in retailing a few years or months ago. But, retailers have woken up to this trend and we are now seeing the traditional "Bricks" retailers offering a "Clicks" offer to the consumer. The key is how retailers develop the relationship between "Clicks" and "Bricks" retailing.

Firstly, it is essential that as a retailer who plans to be in the game for the next few years you join the Online retail trend and establish a virtual shop. The real key to success is how you integrate your online strategy with your existing marketing strategy. Take a look at my website for tools to help you develop your marketing strategy www.johnstanley.com.au. Accept that your customers want a choice; at times they want to enjoy the experience of visiting a store and at other times they want the convenience of ordering products from their home.

Products on offer can be split into two distinct groups. Customers are aware that for some product purchase they need ideas and inspiration. They know then that it is a better investment in their time to visit your store to discover ideas and the best solutions.

At other times they are looking to buy a basic product which they look on as a commodity. In this case, they feel it is a waste of time to visit a store to pick the product of the shelf and they would prefer to order the product online. It is these products you should be promoting as part of your online range of products on offer.

Online marketing strategy

What strategy should you consider to develop your own online presence?

1. Accept that in the future online retailing will be part of your marketing strategy.
2. Initially, select commodity lines that can go onto your online shopping list. At the same time provide encouraging suggestions on solutions and ideas that can be found when consumers visit your store.
3. Offer a click and collect service. This is where the consumer orders the product from their home, but collects it from your store. Some retailers are finding this is the most profitable option. The consumer can order commodity and then look around the store for ideas.

You can provide incentives for the consumer to visit the store for the collection. For example a delivery to their door price compared to a collect at your store price. Or, you could include a coupon for those that come to the store for collection.

4. Be bold and promote your online service in store, in your newsletter, on social media sites and on your webpage. It is something you should be promoting as a major step forward for your business. The aim of the online virtual shop is to try and keep your customers with you. The last thing you want is for your customers to go directly to the manufacturer or supplier or to another retailer of your product, whether that be a "brick" store or a "click" store.

The main thing is to accept that consumers can now buy what you sell online. You need to look at this as an opportunity to have a relationship with them directly in their homes rather than ignore "click" retailing and pretend it is a fad that will go away.

I think if we look into our crystal balls we will see the consumer will be having a close relationship with businesses that that understands their needs. What the consumer is asking for now is for retailers to provide them with commodity products when they need them, but at the same time allow them to visit the store and enjoy the shopping experience when they want to enjoy it.

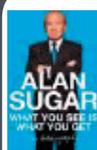
Develop your online strategy now before it is too late.

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About the author:

John Stanley (CSP) one of the top 10% of speakers in the world today, is an acclaimed retail consultant and author of several marketing, customer service and retail books including the best seller "Just About Everything a Retail Manager Needs to Know".
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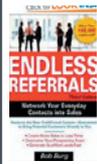
Bestsellers



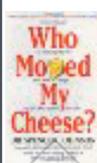
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(Paperback) By Alan Sugar
Pan (6 May 2011)
Price: £7.99



- 2 **The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine**
(Paperback) By Michael Lewis
Penguin (27 Jan 2011)
Price: £6.99



- 3 **Endless Referrals: Third Edition**
(Paperback) By Bob Burg
McGraw-Hill Professional; 3 edition (1 Nov 2005)
Price: £13.29



- 4 **Who Moved My Cheese: An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life**
(Paperback) By Spencer Johnson
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Price: £3.59



- 5 **The Secret**
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Price: £8.44



BOOK OF THE MONTH

Light Your Firebrand: Re-igniting Your Business and Your Brand [Paperback]

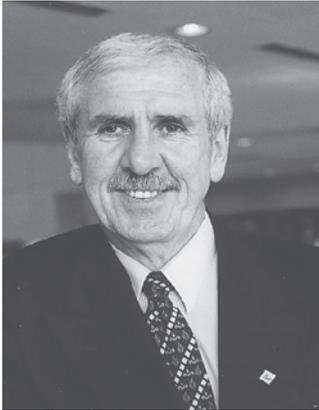
By Mike Symes

Published by Ecademy Press (14 Mar 2011)

Price £15.19 plus P&P

Light Your Firebrand - re-igniting your business and your brand. If you believe that a brand extends to a place far beyond a logo mark, then you'd be right. A Firebrand is to be found in an entirely different dimension. An individual one. A distinctly personal one. And increasingly, in this age of hyper-competition, an emotional one. When the future was an extension of the present, it was reasonable to assume that what worked today would also work next year. That assumption must now be cast aside. During times of change, it can almost be guaranteed that what used to work well in the past will not work at all next time around. The old approaches are at best simply too incremental at a time when success needs to be measured by growth that is exponential. To achieve sustained success in today's challenging environment, the new imperative for all businesses is to fight fire with fire. It's time to Light Your Firebrand™. The Light Your Firebrand process shows you how you can re-ignite your business, align your brand to your burning ambition, harness the 4 attributes of world-class brands, illuminate your points of difference, develop Unique Value Propositions, spread your evocative messages like wildfire.

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The plan is to plan

By Barry Urquhart

Two words. That's all it takes in business for the inert to become action. It's a short shift from a noun to a verb.

Most organisations have a plan (a noun). Few of those are fully understood, embraced and implemented. The real learning, progress, fun and achievements are derived from the investment in and the commitment to plan (a verb).

Former United States of America President and World War II military strategist, General Dwight D. Eisenhower once said: "Plans are nothing. Planning is everything."

Planning deficiency

One notable deficiency of an overwhelming majority of business plans is the lack of a goal to regularly plan. Accordingly, most planning documents are frozen in a given point in time, most often in the past. Few are regularly updated and refined. The dynamics of economies and marketplace quickly ensure that such become obsolete and irrelevant.

It seems mad not to commit to and schedule regular planning sessions.

Dr Roger Smith, Professorial Fellow at the University of Western Australia in his publication "Management Allsorts", quoted the theorist Nietzsche, who declared: "Madness is the exception in individuals but the rule in groups."

A cause of much frustration and the measure of madness within organisations is the oft stated comment by participants at the conclusion of planning sessions..... "Good, that's over. Let's get back to work."

Wrong! Effective planning is the essence of productive work and development. The activity provides, or should provide a framework to question, review, refine, update and replace established philosophies, practices and ultimately, outputs.

The challenge

Good planning is challenging and often confronting. It should be a fun experience and is fundamental to integrating efforts, securing commitments from team members, fostering pride and informing those in the entire network.

Accordingly, planning and its consequences should not be limited to a select few. The content of the planning process must not become privileged or an instrument utilised in the exercise of power.

Consistently, the best performing entities are those that have open channels of communication which share information and invite feedback, input and analyses from the full spectrum of departments, locations and people.

Highly structured organisations, with structures which impede information flow and exchange

inevitably suffer. In such cases information is not allowed to be progressed to intelligence. Military leaders like Eisenhower, Monash and Montgomery knew the value of intelligence, and utilised it adroitly.

Bonding retreats

The conduct of bonding retreats for management teams has been a regular event for numerous companies and entities.

High rope exercises and team building activities are typically fun, a break from the routine of work and can be insightful learning experiences. Their frequency has fallen since the onset of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. Another casualty of budget belt tightening.

Widespread anecdotal evidence shows that the most effective means for company team members to bond, to become motivated and to give commitment to the ideals and objectives of the entity is participation in periodic, goal orientated planning sessions.

Confidentiality assured

Counter-intuitively, respect for the confidentiality of the issues addressed and the goals, objectives and targets set in planning sessions is increased by broadening the numbers involved in the planning process.

It is a consequence of "shared ownership" of the resultant document and commitment to the attainment of the established



milestones and performance measures.

Measure of success

Effective planning processes and planning documents detail quantifiable, monitorable goals, assign authority, responsibility and accountability to individuals and groups, specify time horizons and facilitate and encourage ongoing revision, refinement and development.

Starting point

How ironic. Most planning documents are long on outcomes and goals.

Too few focus on and determine the starting points.

As a result, the why question in the planning process can be left unresolved.

Consideration will typically be given to what needs to be done and most time, effort and resources are dedicated to how the goals will be achieved.

The emphasis and outcomes need to be inverted for a truly actionable plan... that is a good starting point on which to conclude.

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About the author:

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director of Marketing Focus, Perth is a former lecturer in Management and Marketing at the Curtin University of Technology.

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The secret to becoming rich

By Elise Fisher

Napoleon Hill, the author of *Think and Grow Rich*, believes that a person does not have to be a genius to become rich. Any person can become wealthy if he thinks positively and has a deep desire to achieve his goal.

Positive thinking:

You must see your financial dreams and know that you will be able to attain them. You must already own them.

If you begin making up every rationalisation under the sun why you can't succeed, pinch yourself. You have to discipline your body and mind to think positive thoughts. Teach yourself that those kind of thought patterns are unacceptable. You can obtain greatness, even if you are not the smartest, most talented, or best looking person in the world. Success is your if you'll just allow it to come into your life. Don't underestimate the power of your thoughts.

Burning desire:

Hill tells a true tale of a man named Edwin Barnes who desired to become Thomas Edison's partner. Most of us would have scoffed at him had we lived back then. Edwin Barnes was a nobody. Nevertheless, he had a deep desire, a life dream, and he was determined. He went to Thomas Edison and convinced him to hire him. He did not instantly achieve his dream, but he worked hard and ultimately became Thomas Edison's partner. This was a feat everyone thought was impossible.

Edwin Barnes followed these 7 steps to gain this great success:

1. Choose a definite dream.

- 2.** Put all your energy into that dream.
- 3.** Be willing to do menial work at first.
- 4.** Visualise your dream.
- 5.** Form a strategy.
- 6.** Endure through the hard times.
- 7.** Eliminate any way to retreat.

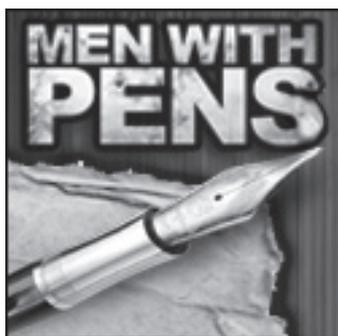
As you focus on obtaining your goals, answer these questions: What is the exact amount of money I want? What am I willing to sacrifice for it? What exact date do I want this money by? What is my strategy?

Don't forget, to successful people, there is no such thing as "defeat." What looks like defeat is no more than a great opportunity. Start creating opportunities out of failures and being successful today!

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About the author:

To learn more about obtaining wealth visit our Rich Dad Poor Dad page. A college student herself, Elise Fisher enjoys writing articles to help students learn more <http://About-Student-Loans.com> and other finance options.



When you write a post for your blog, your headline is the last thing you should be thinking about.

There's a lot of emphasis on writing a good headline. Hell, I've written posts about how to write an eye-grabbing title myself. My colleague Brian wrote an entire series on headlines (including a post on why you should always write your headline first), and he's been known to come up with some pretty catchy ones.

But while crafting a good headline is critical to getting people to read a blog post, open the email, or get past the headline to the copy, it's actually the last thing you should be thinking about when you first sit down to write.

Who's your audience?

Get this wrong and you can mess up a lot of potentially awesome headlines.

Your headline could fit the perfection checklist to a T. It could be a list with a number. It could have action words. It could be creative, intriguing, ask a question, be a little crazy, hint at a secret. But if it isn't written for the right audience, you're screwed.

5 powerful headlines that get you all the chicks — and how to write them

That's a pretty decent headline right there. But if the majority of your audience is work-from-home mothers, that headline isn't going to get you as far as it would if you were writing for an

Why you should always write your headline last

By James Chartrand

audience of straight single men.

Know who your audience is, and know what kind of language appeals to them. Lexi Rodrigo wrote a post not too long ago about feminine words that sell. There were plenty of responses to that post in the comment section, some of them from women saying which words wouldn't necessarily appeal to them, and why.

You have to get in the brain of your audience, and you have to know the words that work for them.

There are no short cuts. It's not just about appealing to women or men — the question is, which women or men. You have to figure out your precise audience, and you have to write directly to the way those specific people are feeling when they read your post.

What do you want them to do?

If your blog attracts new customers and enthusiasts, then every single post you write should let your audience know what you want from them.

Now hang on there — before you run away because you run a strictly informational, no-sales blog, we're talking to you too. Even if you have no intention of getting sales from your blog, you still want your readers to do something.

You want them to think about what you've written. You want them to feel something. You want them to take some sort of action. You want them to comment. You want them to get into conversations with other people.

You want them to follow you on Twitter or friend you on Facebook. You want all kinds of stuff. And yeah, sometimes you even want sales. But before you scribble down that headline and start writing, you need to know what you want. Then you need to leverage your headline to make sure you get it.

What are you going to give them?

Brian recommends writing your blog title before you write the post, and I agree with that as a general rule. Writing down your headline reminds you of what the focus of your post is supposed to be.

But even if you haven't written the post yet, you still need to know what you're going to be writing about. This makes logical sense — and oddly, a lot of people don't seem to think about it.

They say they're going to offer you "10 Secrets of Copywriting" and they write that headline down, but what they end up writing about is common knowledge on every marketing blog out there.

If your title is going to be about secrets, you need to be prepared to write about secrets. If you're only prepared to write about what someone already knows, then you're not going to be able to deliver on the promise of your title.

Before you write your headline, you need to know you'll back up the promise it's making.

All right, then. Have you thought about all that? Good. Now you're



ready to tackle the last thing you need to think about:

What's your headline going to be?

Your headline might need to be last on your task list, but last doesn't mean least important. Often, it means just the opposite. How about you? What else do you think people need to do before they get to their headlines?

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About the author:

James Chartrand is the copywriter setting your business priorities in the right order. Check out Men with Pens for more tips, tricks and techniques on how to write better blog posts, or better yet, sign up for the Men with Pens RSS feed by visiting: www.menwithpens.ca

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4 ways to increase your company's sales

By Marc Entz

When faced with diminishing sales or a shift in profitability, sometimes a company will seek opportunities to expand sales by using different marketing methods. These time-tested marketing principles are used by businesses to seek out new opportunities to satisfy the needs of the consumer.

There are 4 ways to increase sales and expand revenue for your company. It is not necessary to use more than one of these methods. The best choice of the 4 methods is the one that will meet the needs of the company and the consumer best. This will provide a win-win situation for all concerned.

To increase sales consider one of the following methods for seeking opportunities in your target market:

1. Market Penetration:

Increase the market share of your current products in your present market. By up scaling your marketing mix you can increase your sales. To do this you advertise your present products more frequently and promote your company's image to the public through institutional advertising and publicity.

2. Market Development

You can also try to sell your present products in new markets. You have to do some market research on the needs of the consumers in these markets first. Your product may have other demographic groups that need it as well. This is a recommended area to investigate for more profit. Often your present products are in demand in other locations, with other age groups, or professional groups. This is an opportunity for more sales many companies look for.

3. Product development

You can increase your sales by offering new and improved products to your

present market. This will give you an edge over your competition. Your customers will view your company as being progressive and up to date. This is not only a great way to increase sales, but your customers will remember your company because of the unique product you sell.

4. Diversification

If you are well established in one line of business, you may wish to diversify into a totally new one. This means moving into a new market with a new product. This can keep your profits on the rise. Here again, market research and marketing plans have to be made first.

As you can see there are opportunities for gaining sales in all four areas. The best choice for your business depends on your goals and the resources you have. The best way to capitalise on these strategies is to start with your present strengths and look for market opportunities that complement them. Then do your market research and planning. The sky is the limit when you plan ahead using these proven marketing tactics.

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About the author:

Marc Entz is the Editor of The SavePress Smart Money Directory, a new upbeat site for people who like valuable resources for saving money. You can read several articles with tips for business or pleasure, or catch up on a variety of related news at our website online now: <http://www.money.savepress.com>



Perfect M&As: Value vs Egos

By Paul J. Siegenthaler

Many merger proposals are motivated by the desire to become the biggest in the industry. In economic terms size matters, being 'big enough' is important, but this does not mean that bigger is automatically better because size is also a factor of complexity and can potentially lead to lack of focus. But regardless of the cogency of the merger proposition, the team at the top of the organisation will have their moment of glory in the media and be the talk of the town.

There is, to my knowledge, no systematic research on this topic, but somehow I strongly suspect that many mergers, and indeed some of the mega-mergers such as those that have occurred in the past ten to fifteen years, are motivated at least as much by the ego of the people at the helm of those organisations as by any rational economic value-adding proposition. It is not hard to imagine how proud an individual would feel by creating overnight the largest company of its industry. Such a venture fulfils the quest for power and domination that is buried deep in the subconscious of many humans, certainly among many of the males of the species. The prospect of significant personal wealth is another factor, but then wealth is nothing more than another vector of power.

No person in their right mind would be willing to admit in public that the main reason for the merger or acquisition they

recommend is to provide them with a fantastic ego trip, and so some form of post-rationalised benefit needs to be thought of, in the hope of convincing the shareholders of the soundness of the proposed plan. If that proposal is sufficiently convincing to sway the shareholders towards a positive vote, it had better be compelling enough to also achieve acceptance and buy-in from the organisations' employees, or else the integration journey will be a tortuous one. A former Chairman Kraft Foods International Jack Keenan compared merging companies with pulling out teeth, saying it can be done "quick and painful" or ... "slow and painful": nobody wants to opt for the "slow and painful" approach if at all avoidable!

Ruthless focus on a good benefits case

The better and more convincingly a benefits case can be articulated, the easier the integration will be, because everyone involved will have clarity as to the end purpose of the efforts they will be required to make during the transition period. And while in almost every case the benefits of a merger or major acquisition will be economic profit, it is worth remembering that many of the drivers of economic value can also be quite palatable to employees, consumers, local communities or the tax authorities.

Justifying the choice that was made

Read the trade press or in-house company communication: too often, company mergers or

major acquisitions are presented almost as a fait accompli, the only possible choice. And yet, the benefits proposition could appear that much stronger if one had taken the time to explain what the alternatives were and why the proposed way forward chosen. In what way it is better than all the possible alternatives? You can generate real 'buy-in' by showing how much better the strategy is compared to those alternatives, because for most of the members of staff and management, knowing they are working for a smart organisation which is one cut above the rest will be a strong source of pride, satisfaction and identity.

Our intellectualised approach of business makes us shy away from 'obvious' solutions – there is nothing very remarkable about embarking on an 'obvious' path. And yet, what you want the people in your organisation to think throughout the integration process is: "of course we should be doing this". But to achieve that "of course", the reason why must be obvious, self-explanatory. This does not prevent your project from being ambitious and bold, maybe even a little scary to some. Nonetheless, remember that every individual who is acquired to the idea that "of course we need to do this", will be a self-fuelled proactive player and valuable catalyst for change throughout the integration journey.

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About the author:

Paul is the author of 'Perfect M&As' (£23.99, Ecademy Press), a book which goes straight to the root causes of most M&A failures, and hones in on the specific elements that senior and middle managers can use or develop to deliver an orderly business integration, a smoother experience for the individuals in the organisation, and the realisation of the benefits that the initiators of the merger had promised to deliver.

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Have you ever heard the saying 'work always expands to fill the time available'? So what does that mean? It means that the longer you have to get something done, the longer you will take to do it.

One of my clients recently committed to taking every Friday off. He blocked out the time in his diary and guess what? He gets the same amount of work done in the 4 days. Because we've been working together, his business is running much more effectively which has made it easy for Gary to step away.

I must admit that I used to always plan to have Fridays off myself and did for a long time. Then gradually I let other things get in the way and found myself working on my business on that day instead.

I realised that I had better take my own advice and reclaimed that day back and felt much better for it. Let's face it as a business owner there is always something to do.

Working harder is not the answer. We all need time off to unwind. As a business owner you need it more than anyone else.

So if you really want to work one day less a week, here's what you do:

1. Decide which day you want off
2. Block that day out in your diary
3. Plan what you'll do on your day off (very important otherwise you may end up working because you don't know what to do with yourself)

How to work one day less each week

By Lorraine Pirihi

4. Do it! If you're so snowed under and overwhelmed running your business that you feel you couldn't possibly work less hours then you need to know how to do things differently and get much better results. After all if you do know 'what' and 'how' to work less you'd be doing it!

The 'Productivity and Profit Home Study System' includes everything you need to know to free up your time and get organised so you make much more money and get a life! You'll easily be able to have an additional day off a week.

You can read the success stories and get your own copy by visiting my website. See below for details.

If you need a helping hand and have difficulty taking action on your own, find out how we can help you. Send an email to admin@productivityqueen.com

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About the author:

Lorraine Pirihi, The Productivity Queen is Australia's Leading Productivity Specialist. She's committed to helping small business owners and entrepreneurs work less, earn more and have a life!"

She's also a powerful speaker and her dynamic presentations are ideal for conferences and business events.

You can learn more about Lorraine at www.productivityqueen.com

“It doesn't matter how many times you fail. It doesn't matter how many times you almost get it right. No one is going to know or care about your failures, and neither should you. All you have to do is learn from them and those around you because... All that matters in business is that you get it right once. Then everyone can tell you how lucky you are.”

Mark Cuban



The 26 hour work day

By Iris Clermont

Author Iris Clermont talks about the necessity to prioritise workload in order to be top dog and wave goodbye to unnecessary stress and overtime.

Have you ever faced the situation hurrying along the floor from meeting 'A' to meeting 'B'; while being aware of an increasing action points list and finding hardly any time to concentrate on those? Your day feels like a 26 hour work day while losing the big picture, the intention, the meaning of your work with the increasing speed of your own rushed steps.

A pure focus on quality and on the related work on details would lead to a 26-hour day for most employees involved. Especially in corporate telecom businesses running through various cost and headcount reduction programs, and with the rise in complexity of the tool landscape, engineers no longer have the time or funding to 'plug and play' with the tools. I invite you to take your time to consider what your workload and work task situation looks like. Look at all the activities and actions written on a blank piece of paper, keeping the whole picture of your company's, your team's and your own life's focus and goals in your mind. The big picture helps you to make your best decisions, and to prioritise all the planned activities you own and take care of as beneficial as possible.

We all want top quality from the perspective of the customers and the company as well as from our own motivation drivers to add value to our work. What I noticed during my projects, interviewing and observing engineers inside

Research and development, engineers from other departments from corporate companies, is a tendency to;

- raise the quality no matter how much time is spent, and
- create more and more ideas and want to implement the ideas without looking
- from the real customers' perspective (which means asking the customers and listening to their response),
- enjoy complexity and move away from simplicity and usability.

This trend leads to the opposite of a rise in quality as;

- timelines pass by and projects are delayed,
- services launched are used mostly by supportive, non-paying customers,
- managers are requesting more stuff, and
- a list of activities related to details seems to be endlessly increasing.

This typical engineering behaviour lowers the profit of corporate companies. The first step is to be aware of this behaviour in your teams, and the second step is to change those habits towards an optimal usage of the work time. Prioritisation supports your day by giving you a clear structure; it speeds up the decision making process as it helps to clearly focus on top action points, moving you forward achieving your aims.

Whenever you need to decide which of your activities or meetings need a higher priority from your company's perspective, the following model is meant to support you to 'unwind'

your time:

- Calculate the impact of the activity to be performed on the goal and give it a percentage number n .
- Calculate the financial benefits your activity gives to the company and give it a number m .
- To evaluate the priority of an activity use the formula $n*m$ and give the activity with the highest number the highest priority.

This model gives you the basis to make fast decisions and to give clear messages to your colleagues as well as having a basis on which to say "no" to the less important activities. The calculated prioritisation helps to keep arguments in your mind and avoid emotional conflicts.

What simplifies your work is to include a prioritisation in your open action point list. You find this advice in every time management or 'simplify your life' book. Even with this awareness and knowledge, I see engineers and managers not doing what would be beneficial for them. I want to encourage you to act upon what you already figured out, and what helps you achieve your goals in the minimum amount of time.

The 'starting each day' questions below are meant to support you and to motivate you to simplify your day with an optimal usage of prioritisation.

- On which actions do you want to work today?
- What do you want to achieve by the end of the day?
- What results do you want to reach by the end of this week and how are the results measured?



- Go through your action point list and think about which of the actions has the highest probability of helping you to reach your objectives to attain optimal results.
- Which of the actions help you to measure the results?

Start prioritising now with priorities 1, 2, 3. Make priority 1 the action with the closest deadline and with the highest customer impact or with the highest management attention, which is in line with the company's mission and vision. Work on priorities 1 and 2 and you can go home as planned.

Skipping the lowest priority tasks leads to more quality. By saying no to the lowest priority tasks (3–5) from your open activity list and to handling low priority e-mails, and instead focusing on the highest priority tasks that bring the most value to your company and to your customers, you can use the saved time to take breaks so that creativity, motivation and positive thinking are part of your day. Imagine you can go home or enjoy your private life, your hobbies, and do things that raise your positive feelings.

This priority setting approach including skipping lower priority tasks requires courage and active thinking to step out of habits and behaviours into new areas of experiences with the effect of a balanced work and life and with highly effective individual and team motivation as well as team results. I wish you great success with an 8 hour work day and a smile on your face.

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About the author:

Iris Clermont is an international certified coach and process consultant, the author of the book 'Team Magic' and a single mother of three teenagers.

Further information can be found from her web page:
www.aiccoaching.com



Customer service excellence is an undertaking that should never have exceptions. Even job applicants who don't make the cut deserve your very best. Treat them like any other customer and your business might just benefit.

How do you measure up in regard to customer service excellence?

When you hire new staff, or put projects out to bid, do your advertisements state: "We regret only selected applicants will be informed?"

Think about this policy from the applicant's point of view. What a horrible fate to endure. As days go by, hope slowly withers and turns to anxiety, resignation or despair. This is not an example of customer service excellence!

Would it be so difficult for your company to call, send a letter or a simple e-mail thanking unsuccessful applicants for their time – and wishing them all the best?

Unsuccessful applicants are active members in the ever-changing business world. They might apply for another position with you in the future. Perhaps they will talk about their experience with your company among their friends and family members. Perhaps they will form an impression of what your company is really like based upon how long they waited for a reply...but never heard a word.

Now, imagine what kind of impression you will leave if you care enough to call back. Even if the applicant doesn't get the job, they will know your firm is a class

Unsuccessful applicants deserve customer service excellence, too

By Ron Kaufman

act that cares what people think and feel.

Key learning point

Customer service excellence should extend to everyone, even those you choose not to engage or hire. Applicants demonstrate an active interest in your organisation. Let them know you appreciate their effort.

Action steps

Examine the full range of your company communications. Look for situations where people are left unknowing and out-of-touch; missing call backs, late updates, absent acknowledgements and more. Find the gaps and close the loops. Your reputation will grow and your culture of customer service excellence will begin to entrench itself, as well.

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About the author:

Ron Kaufman is the world's leading educator and motivator for upgrading customer service and uplifting service culture. He is author of the bestselling "UP! Your Service" books and founder of UP! Your Service. To enjoy more customer service training and service culture articles, visit: www.UpYourService.com.



Cold calling sucks and it's going to get worse

By Gavin Ingham

I was the motivational speaker at a sales conference the other day and one of the Sales Directors came up to me to ask about the future of cold calling. He explained that he had a team of some 100 plus salespeople and that they all had to set up their own appointments and that one of the primary ways of doing this was on the phone. He went on to describe what a nightmare this was and how it was seemingly getting harder every day.

I won't bore you with the whole conversation but I am sure just a few snatches of it will feel familiar

"... changing markets... increased competition... no names policies... voicemail... gatekeepers... competition from abroad... clients getting too many calls... client indifference... inability to distinguish calls... just a numbers game... necessary evil... falling conversion levels... more calls required to stand still... demotivated staff..."

In frustration, he had searched the internet high and low looking for an answer but, far from finding one, all he had found was oodles of expert opinion and networks of websites dedicated to tolling the bell for the death of cold calling, gurus explaining how it would not/could not/will not work and explanations for why social media, new marketing and sales 3.0 were the only way forward...

Sheesh! Cold calling is one of the most divisive subjects in selling.

You cannot start a conversation on cold calling in any sales training forum without igniting the age old debate...

Does it work, doesn't it work, is it dying...?

Lah! Lah! Lah! You might as well argue about chickens and eggs but I have my metaphorical fingers firmly in my metaphorical ears because I don't care...

Truth 1

Cold calling doesn't work and is a fruitless activity for most sales and business people. They might as well give up as it does not get them results.

Truth 2

Cold calling is an incredibly powerful strategy that many top salespeople utilise ALONGSIDE other lead generation strategies to acquire new prospects, clients and business.

Difficult to reconcile? Not really.

The more flexible you are in your approach to sales and marketing and the more options you have at your disposal, all the better. As with many things in life, you can choose to believe whatever truth you want to believe so my question to you is simple...

Would it be more useful for you to have some really good reasons and arguments for why cold calling doesn't work anymore or would it be better if you had proven, cold calling strategies that win new business in any economy?

If your answer is the first one then good luck and goodbye to you but if it is the latter then that is what I'm going to help you to attain... and I am going to do it in a way that even the most phone shy, nervous cold callers can

understand and implement.

The world has changed, the economy has changed, your market has probably changed and so too your approach and habits need to change.

If you work with a sales team or friends who would benefit from these awesome tips and strategies then email them now and tell them to sign up to my sales success newsletter here: <http://bit.ly/fq1SZP>

To ensure that they get cold calling secrets right into their e-mail box. Here are what just two of my delegates had to say after one of my half day seminars last month...

"It was realistic, motivational, client focused and entertaining. Result: 4 very significant meetings booked, doors opening and winning more business. I would recommend Gavin and his product without question. Do it!"

"Brilliant day with Gavin, with immediate results. Meetings booked immediately after going to the course."

Here's a thought to get you thinking about things...

Why do most cold calls fail?

I'll start to answer this in my next article but in the meantime, and if you already know how much impact my unique seminars have then you can book on the first full day open cold calling seminar I have run in several years here <http://bit.ly/ezxCcE>.

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**About the author:**

Gavin is considered by many to be the leading expert on sales psychology and sales performance in the UK today.

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Brand yourself and success will come

By Royleena Nicholas

The internet is growing daily with folk who are looking for ways to earn a comfortable living from their home base. However, the sad truth is many online business owners never make a profit online! Sadly, even in today's online market, many business owners have no idea how to effectively market their internet business. In addition, they don't understand the importance of "branding" their name to build a quality online presence and reputation.

To welcome online success, "branding you" should be the number one online business owners' priority. When beginning an online Internet career, it is detrimental to online longevity that the online promoter cultivate a squeaky clean image.

Many online business owners tarnish their name, by promoting worthless downloadable software and eBooks. It is a good idea to test-drive any eBook or software package before you decide to promote the product as an affiliate marketer. It's not an intelligent idea to promote worthless products to your opt-in list, so be careful what you endorse online.

Another way you can ruin your branded name and good reputation is opportunity jumping or program hopping. To highlight this point, I will talk about only five popular online business programs that are heavily promoted online. The programs are Perfect Wealth Formula, edc Gold, Passport to Wealth, Wealth Magnet System and Roadmap to Riches.

Lets go back to when Passport to Wealth launched in February 2007. Since then I have seen the same top earners, jump from:

(1) edc Gold to (2) Passport to Wealth to (3) Perfect Wealth Formula to (4) Wealth Magnet System and now to (5) Roadmap to Riches.

What a great way to earn instant cash daily! Now. I am not saying, that all these business opportunity promoters are all tarred with the same brush, but in amongst this group of business promoters are a few bad eggs, that like nothing more than to take your hard earned money and thereafter never return your e-mails or phone calls.

The good news is it doesn't take long before the online internet community, catches onto these dirty quick cash generating tricks and unlike the offline business world, this type of underhanded home business owner can't move to another state or country, and start all over again!

To profit quickly on the net, firstly brand and protect your name. Next make sure you do your research and only promote quality products. To explode your success online, in your first year, it is a good idea to find yourself a personal eCoach to educate yourself in online advertising and marketing methods.

To conclude, every new internet business promoter should understand that online marketing success doesn't happen overnight; sometimes it can take 2-3 years to build a successful online presence. I believe, perseverance is the key to success, with any Internet business and online marketing endeavour.

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About the author:

Royleena Nicholas, aka "The Success Diva", has been successfully promoting online for over 7 years, is an eCoach and author of eBook "The Secret 2 Financial Freedom".



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