

**Have you ever
thought about...**

... coping with change?

BUSINESS OWNERS are putting their ventures at risk by failing to adopt long-term managerial strategies, according to research by the Chartered Management Institute.

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 UK companies, with only 38% claiming managing risks was important in the current climate.

"Questions need to be asked about how UK organisations will be able to manage in the future if they fail to address key operational issues," said Jo Causon, 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 organisation not see that coming'."

The research did find, however, that organisations 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: Press release



WORDS OF WISDOM

"Nothing happens unless first a dream."

— Carl Sandburg

BUSINESS

ALERT!

Hands-on help that works

Vol 9 No 2

Leverage your hidden assets

Every business contains a wealth of undiscovered and unused assets and often the value of having an adviser is in helping the owner or manager utilize those assets far more profitably.

by Natalie A. Gahrmann, M.A.

YOUR DATABASE OF customers and clients, even your list of competitors, are incredibly valuable assets!

How could you expand your network, or your community, and provide value to these people?

Find the answer and watch your business explode!

Here's a small example: A chiropractor routinely closed her office each evening and the building sat empty. By allowing other professionals (her colleagues and her 'competition') to use the building for workshops and seminars, she earned a small amount of rent but, more importantly, those people were advertising her location and building her reputation in the community.



The synergy proved extremely profitable!

Joint venturing

Thousands of businesses have discovered the value of "joint venturing" by allowing another business to announce a special service to their current customers. Others have discovered new markets or new uses for established products and seen their sales skyrocket!

What assets are you sitting on? What tools, knowledge or skills are not being shared with the world and not being used to expand your profits and enhance your community?

Find those hidden assets and put them to work! ■

Lessons in failure I learned from my two-year-old child

by Marnie L. Pehrson

2. Try until

There is no limit to his trying. He doesn't say, "Ok, I'm going to try to get that cookie 10 times and if I can't get it, I'll just quit." No, he tries until he gets it.

He may change his approach and try different tactics, but he tries until he gets what he wants. When he was learning to walk, he didn't give up. He tried until he could do it.

3. Driven by desire

Nate's ability to keep on trying is driven by his desire. He really wants that cookie or that toy and he lets that desire for what he really wants motivate him.

He has no hidden agendas. He does not con himself into believing that he wants a carrot when he really wants a cookie. He's totally honest about his desires and goes for them.

(concluded overleaf)

IN OREGON, USA, with its history of agriculture and forestry, the concept of 'sharpening your saw' has real meaning. It refers to keeping your tools, your skills and your attitude maintained — sharp and ready.

Recently I read an article about applying these principles to your computer and I thought about how they apply across the board in business. To expand your business or achieve any significant goal, you need the best tools you can find.

Whether the challenge is harvesting lumber, making a sale, or teaching high school, the person with the best tools will always do the best job.

Here are some critical areas to re-examine:

1. Your computer. Get and USE good maintenance tools. Run a thorough check for viruses, de-fragment your hard disk, and check it for errors at least once a week. Norton, McAfee and others sell tools that make this easy and automated. **Do it!**

2. Voice communication. Get and use a great voice mail system. If your clients, customers, friends and colleagues can't reach you, they won't do business with you. And NEVER require people to identify themselves before they call your business phone. Never make it difficult for people to do business with you!

3. Get and use a PDA or similar system. Every professional has a vital list of appointments, phone numbers, names and data that you must have with you at all times. **Don't leave home without it.**

4. Superb email and Internet services. It's not enough to "have" email. Make it work for you! Become an expert at quickly sharing articles, notes, data and humour with your clients and customers. If you're serious about business, get serious about your email.

5. Specific tools for your niche and profession. Every industry has its own tools, language, skills and standards. Become an expert in them, become known as an 'early adopter', the person who invests heavily in new technology and the latest solutions. It costs money; it pays in profits. ■

SOURCENOTE: Dr Philip E Humbert



Graham Walton

The way I see it...

Businesses cannot "advertise their way to success."

OF COURSE, there is a time and place for advertising. You have to let people know you exist, and you need to make a splash with new products or new services.

Advertising is a good thing, but you probably can't buy enough to build a business on it. And promotion, particularly self-promotion, has a similar limitation.

Obviously, if you believe in a product or service you must tell people about it and invite them to buy. You owe that to yourself and to customers who need and want your service.

Promotion has its place but, in the end, marketing is a different animal. Marketing is about your reputation. It's about customer satisfaction and retention. It's about your

relationships.

Marketing is about letting people know who you are, what you do and what you offer. Never keep yourself a secret! There is no advantage in being shy!

Marketing is about YOU more than your product or service. It's about your level of responsibility and your follow-through.

In the end, most marketing is free, in that it comes from being who you are and doing what you do to the best of your ability.

Many small businesses could do much better by scrapping their advertising budget entirely and invest the money in themselves, their skills, the quality of their products and their relationships. ■

CRM

Retaining customers in hard times

According to many economic commentators, businesses face hard times ahead; customers may spend less, budgets may reduce and suppliers could become limited.

IT IS AT THIS TIME that companies need to utilise aggressively their marketing spend more than ever.

By strategically and cost effectively marketing your company, you will not only retain existing customers but attract new ones, which is vital for consistent growth.

Here are three key methods for keeping those customers, all achievable through cost-effective and strategic marketing:

1) Firstly- Remind them of your services – update your target audience on the latest developments and advise them as to how you can benefit their business. Developing a focused, researched and planned marketing message that consistently reaches your target

audience through the best medium, can fulfil this.

2) Another tool is informing them why and how you differ from alternative companies. This should be communicated through every interaction with the customer, from your logo to your sales calls, every element should reflect and reinforce your brand values.

3) Rewarding your customers for their loyalty is an excellent tool to encourage them to use you again and again and helps initiate word of mouth. If planned and implemented professionally, tactical loyalty campaigns, such as offering discounts or holding a competition, can greatly boost sales quickly and strengthen your brand in the long term. ■

SOURCENOTE: Skala marketing

LESSONS IN FAILURE I LEARNED FROM MY TWO-YEAR-OLD CHILD — Concluded from page 1

4. No ego or pride to bruise

When he slips and falls or doesn't quite reach his objectives, he doesn't beat himself up for it. He doesn't let it make a crushing blow to his ego or take it personally. Sure, he's upset that he's struggling, but it doesn't make him feel worthless.

5) Take help from others

Nate is not above asking for help. If he can't reach something, he'll come tug my sleeve and grab my hand and point to what he wants. It doesn't offend him or make him feel less of a person because he has to ask for help. He takes help when offered and asks for it when needed.

6. Learn by imitation

He learns how to succeed by watching his older brothers and sisters.

He watches their mannerisms, listens to their words, and learns how to walk, talk and act by imitating those who are successfully accomplishing what he desires.

7. Be grateful

When Nate does get help, he's grateful for it. He'll give you a big hug, a kiss and a sweet smile to let you know he's grateful for what he received.

Perhaps we adults should remember what it is like to be children.

So what is failure? I think it can be best summed up in a quote that a friend of mine carries in her e-mail signature, "In one success a thousand failures lie forgotten. In one refusal to try, a thousand successes prematurely die."

The greatest failure is in the refusal to try. ■

SOURCENOTE: Marnie L. Pehrson is a writer, content provider and marketing coordinator who helps coaches and consultants get the online exposure they need to turn prospects into clients. She is the author of 10 STEPS TO FULFILLING YOUR DIVINE DESTINY and can be reached at webmaster@ideamarketers.com or http://www.pwggroup.com.

SELLING IS NOT a mechanical process; it's more like a focused conversation where all participants have agreed on the topic.

So as well as following a logical sequence, you need to respond to your prospect and recognise opportunities to get closer to agreement.

Many negotiators give up too quickly. But remember, selling isn't about being pushy, it's more about putting yourself in your prospect's shoes.

Here are seven ways to make your sales interviews more successful and help you sell smarter.

1. If you get turned down by a prospect, ask why.

Not only do you need to know the reason, you also want an opportunity to overcome their objection.

2. Hand out business cards — they're a cheap way of advertising. Always carry cards and never hold back from presenting one.

3. Get out and about. Develop a profile in your sector. Attend the events your customers attend. Ask good questions of speakers you hear. Be noticed.

4. Be memorable. Some of the best businesspeople have a physical 'trade mark'.

Branson doesn't wear a tie, others always wear a bow tie. Stand out from the crowd.

5. Read everything. Develop the habit of reading everything from press articles to office noticeboards.

You will become more aware of what you can do to increase sales.

6. Say your name. Whenever you meet someone, say your name as you introduce yourself.

This spares embarrassment and makes it easier for people to remember it.

7. Make news. Get to know the journalists who write for your marketplace. Keep them fed with stories about your business. Be helpful and co-operative when you deal with them and enjoy more publicity.

SOURCENOTE: Enterquest

Smart marketing

Measure your marketing efforts

Every small business has vital signs that tell you if the business is doing well or not. Your marketing efforts have vital signs as well that will tell you whether you are marketing effectively.

Here are three basic measurements you should be tracking on a constant basis:

- How many calls do you get per day?
- How many of those calls do you convert to leads?
- How many of those leads do you convert to sales?

How many of these do you measure and track? If you don't know your closing rate, how can you start to improve if you don't know where you stand today?

Importance of a phone call

You can spend a lot of money getting your phone to ring. One of the biggest mistakes a small business owner can make is to underestimate the importance of a phone call.

The important question about measuring the incoming number of phone calls is **not** how many you should be getting.

The question you should be asking yourself is **what is the trend?**

Are you getting more calls than last month? Are you getting more calls than this time last year? Is your trend going up or is it coming down? Or is it a plateau? What is the relative movement of the amount of phone calls?

If you aren't tracking this number, start today. Start a phone log with names and phone numbers.

The critical information that you need from every call is:

- How did the customer hear about your business?
- What is the customer's name, home

address, phone number and e-mail address?

Keep a detailed log on how customers heard about you. For instance, you should be able to determine how many visitors you get from one or more of the following marketing efforts:

- Phone calls;
- Shopfront sign;
- Yellow Pages advertisement;
- Newsletter offer;
- Newspaper advertisement;
- Radio advertisement;
- Referral;
- Direct mail;
- Website visit.

If you have set up a 24-hour information line, you can track the amount of calls you get from this line as well. A 24-hour information line is normally a recorded message line that offers free information to prospects and can take names and addresses to allow you to send them follow-up information.

You should see a dramatic increase in your call volume when you install a 24-hour information line.

But just because you're getting a lot more calls doesn't mean you're successful. You can get hundreds of calls and not have one customer make a purchase.

This would not be good, so you need to track how many of those calls actually result in a sale. ■

SOURCENOTE: For hundreds more practical tips and techniques to help you find new customers and increase sales on a shoestring budget, check out THE UK SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING BIBLE.

Recruitment

How you can fill senior positions

Over half of senior executives place work/life balance and flexible working higher than salary.

SMALL COMPANY BOSSES can attract senior staff by offering them a better quality of life through flexible working and homeworking opportunities, a new survey suggests.

Many small businesses struggle to recruit suitably-qualified staff, with those in top-end positions even harder to attract, as they cannot compete on pay with larger rivals.

But the poll by recruitment consultancy Blue Skies suggests that senior executives are no longer motivated exclusively by money and would be prepared to work for organisations that can offer them a better work/life balance instead of hard cash.

The survey found that 65% saw flexibility as more important than salary when it came to

job satisfaction.

"The survey findings challenge the widespread perception that money promotes a feeling of job satisfaction," said Ben Vickers, managing director of Blue Skies. "It is clear that the excesses of the 1990s are far behind us and colleagues in the boardroom place quality of life as a far more important priority than chasing a fat pay cheque."

"This could be down to executives having a slightly older profile and wanting to spend more time with their families, particularly if they've earned substantial sums earlier in their careers," he added. "We're seeing employers offering increasingly flexible packages to suit individuals' needs in a bid to attract the best candidates on the market." ■

SOURCENOTE: Newbusiness.com

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 31 March 2008, 5,137 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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—Thomas Jefferson,

Personal attitudes

The freedom of self-discipline

There is a great paradox about personal freedom. We all long for freedom and the ability to "do whatever I want."

AND YET, the people who seem to have the most freedom also happen to be the most disciplined, the most focused and self-directed.

For many people, personal freedom is about doing whatever they want, whenever they want. For them, freedom means being able to sleep all morning, to act on impulse, to charge their credit cards to the max and take vacations.

Now, none of those things are 'bad' but, taken to the extreme, they lead to something very different from personal freedom.

They lead to debt. They lead to chaos or conflict or frustration. An undisciplined life leads to disappointment and pain.

In fact, I've often thought that 'discipline' is inevitable. We either discipline ourselves or life brings other people to do it for us.

We either practise self-discipline or pretty soon our creditors 'encourage' us to work more hours. Our bosses 'encourage' us to work harder or longer or smarter.

Our families 'encourage' us to do our work, fulfil our responsibilities and 'behave ourselves'. Taken to the extreme, eventually people with

uniforms and titles like 'guard' or 'warden' will structure our time and our lives for us.

I know I'm painting a pretty grim picture, but I think it makes a point. We either learn to structure our lives around worth-while goals, or we pay a penalty. We either manage our lives on our own, or we lose the very freedom we cherish.

Children are not expected to know how to structure their lives, so parents teach them. Parents get them up for school and remind them to make their beds or do their chores. Parents are charged with teaching children that joy is the REWARD for effort and discipline.

I think this is one of the great benefits of competitive sports. As children practise, work hard and fulfil their commitments, they gain skill, and skill leads to victory and celebration on the playing field, and in life.

The paradox of freedom is that it is the RESULT of a great life, not the raw material. If we start by living a free and undisciplined life, true freedom slips away. It gets lost in a thousand petty or careless 'little' decisions that eventually deny us the life we want. ■

SOURCENOTE: <http://MyWorldClassLife.com>

Brief and to the point

Personal mastery

NEW OUTCOMES require new "road maps"

If your survival needs are taken care of — food, shelter, relative safety — chances are excellent that you have at least one or more goals that you'd like to see blossom into reality. Your goals might be related to your housing, location, wellness, relationships, or livelihood, or something else.

Yet many people who want to create new outcomes or new realities sabotage themselves right from the start, by failing to realize that if you want new outcomes, you need new road-maps and routes.

The great physicist, Albert Einstein, said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

He also said that the problems you face can't be solved by the same level of thinking that created the problems. Jesus commented that you can't put new wine into an old wine-skin; the Buddha counselled that "with your thoughts, you make your world."

In other words, to change your reality or your outcomes, transform your thoughts and your 'ways of doing'.

Change your road-maps and your routes, and you'll arrive at new destinations that may be more in keeping with your sense of true vocation.

You'll find the true treasure that can be found at a place of heart-fullness. ■

Have your say!



Add your voice to those of other business people on important business issues. Each issue of **Business Alert** will feature a Statement on which you can voice an opinion. Simply select the view that reflects your opinion and email it to me. Your opinion will be submitted to the Institute for Independent Business for inclusion in its continuing business research.

The Statement:

"The biggest problem I face is the Credit crunch"

Please email me with the letter (A-E) expressing your opinion from the following choices:

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree

C. Unsure

D. Disagree

E. Strongly disagree

MY EMAIL ADDRESS IS:

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For more information, please call Graham Walton on 01388) 823996