

# 10 SECRETS ALL BUSINESS OWNERS SHOULD KNOW

That You Didn't Know To Ask About



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That You Didn't Know To Ask About

**by Cary Prejean**

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# Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to the hundreds of business owners I've worked with over the last 37 years and to those I will be working with in the future. You have all been great teachers, especially the stubborn ones who made working together more like a wrestling match than a collaborative effort. I learned a lot about what makes entrepreneurs show up the way they show up in life, what drives them, and how to help them channel their energies and focus their vision to achieve ultimate satisfaction in owning a business. I also dedicate this book to all those who read it. I hope you, the reader, can get at least a few to many "aha" moments in reading this book. That's the only reason to write this book.

To Your Success,

*Cary Prejean*

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# Introduction

Congratulations and welcome to this book. I've written it specifically for business owners and entrepreneurs. Congratulations on being open to possibilities you maybe didn't know existed to help and expand your business. Here's a question to begin with. What issue/problem do you have that you don't want, or conversely, what is the solution you want and don't have? And yes, there can be more than one.

Most business owners get into business because of two things. First, they see possibilities/opportunities to take care of some concern(s) in some marketplace and secondly, they know how to generate revenue from taking the opportunity and making it happen. Here's what they don't see in their optimism and ambition of starting a business. They don't know how to manage and grow a business. That's a different skill set. It's not their fault. They haven't been trained in accounting or shipping or HR or employee benefits or manufacturing cost management or construction work in process reports or marketing or a host of other skills that are needed to successfully run, manage and grow a business. At some point they get stuck trying to grow the business. The business stagnates because they've reached the limit of what they can personally handle and manage. There's a

lot of stress, suffering and wondering how/why things got so hard and employees just don't seem to get it.

If that's where you are this book should help you start a path so you can lead your business to the next level. Maybe that's not you. You're doing well enough and you're looking for ways to build an even better business. Wherever you are, this book should offer you at least five or more different ways to improve your business efficiency, increase your revenue and your profits and make your life a lot more enjoyable on your path from being a business "operator" to a business "owner."

My 35 plus years as a business coach and consultant have taught me a lot. More than anything, it's taught me that business owners are great people who get thrown into dealing with things they know little to nothing about and they're looking for help. This book should be a source of at least some of that help. Happy reading. Be willing to live in the question of "what don't I see here?" rather than the answers of "so what" and "I know that."

If you'd like to schedule a free consultation with me, you can set up an appointment with me on my website located at <https://strategicbusinessadvisors.us/> I'd love to hear from you.

*To Your Success,*

*Cary Prejean*

# One

## Define Your Target Market

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### What is a Target Market?

Many businesses can't answer the question: *Who is your target market?* They have often made the fatal assumption that *everyone* will want to purchase their product or service with the right marketing strategy.

A target market is simply the group of customers or clients who will purchase a specific product or service. This group of people all have something in common: age, gender, hobbies, or location.

Your target market, then, are the people who will buy your offering. This includes both existing and potential customers, most who are motivated to do one of three things:

- Fulfill a need
- Solve a problem
- Satisfy a desire

To build, maintain, and grow your business, you need to know who your customers are, what they do, what they like, and why they would buy your product or service. Getting this wrong, or

not taking the time to get it right, will cost you time, money, and potentially the success of your business.

## **The Importance of Knowing Your Target Market**

Knowledge and understanding of your target market is the keystone in the arch of your business. Without it, your product or service positioning, pricing, marketing strategy, and eventually your business could very quickly fall apart.

If you don't intimately know your target market, you run the risk of making mistakes when it comes to establishing pricing, product mix, or service packages. Your marketing strategy will lack direction and produce mediocre results at best. Even if your marketing message and unique selling proposition (USP) are clear and your brochure is perfectly designed, it means nothing unless it arrives in the hands (or ears) of the right people.

Determining your target market takes time and careful diligence. While it often starts with a best guess, assumptions cannot be relied on, and research is required to confirm original ideas. Your target market is not always your ideal market.

Once you build an understanding of who your target market is, keep up with your market research. Having your finger on the pulse of their motivations and drivers (which naturally change)

will help you to anticipate needs or wants and evolve your business.

## Types of Markets

### **Consumer**

The Consumer Market includes those general consumers who buy products and services for personal use, or for use by family and friends. This is the market category you or I fall into when we're shopping for groceries or clothes, seeing a movie in the theatre, or going out for lunch. Retailers focus on this market category when marketing their goods or services.

### **Institutional**

The Institutional Market serves society and provides products or services for the benefit of society. This includes hospitals, non-profit organizations, government organizations, schools, and universities. Members of the Institutional Market purchase products to use in the provision of services to people in their care.

### **Business to Business (B2B)**

The B2B Market is just what it seems to be: businesses that purchase the products and services of other business to run their operations. These purchases can include products that are used to manufacture other products (raw or technical), products that

are needed for daily operations (such as office supplies), or services (such as accounting, consulting, and legal).

## **Reseller**

This market can also be called the “Intermediary Market” because it consists of businesses that act as channels for goods and services between other markets. Goods are purchased and sold for a profit, without any alterations. Members of this market include wholesalers, retailers, resellers, and distributors.

## **Determining Your Target Market**

### **Product / Service Investigation**

The process for determining your target market starts by examining exactly what your offering is and what the average

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Does your offering meet a basic need?</b>   |  |
| <b>Does your offering serve a particular want?</b>   |  |
| <b>Does your offering fulfill a desire?</b>  |  |
| <b>What is the lifecycle of your product / service?</b>  |  |
| <b>What is the availability of your offering?</b>  |  |
| <b>What is the cost of the average customer’s purchase?</b>  |  |
| <b>What is the lifecycle of your offering?</b>   |  |
| <b>How many times or how often will customers purchase your offering?</b>  |  |
| <b>Do you foresee any upcoming changes in your industry or region that may affect the sale of your offering (positive/negative)?</b> |  |

customer's motivation for purchasing it is. Start by answering the following questions:

## **Market Investigation**

**On the ground.** Spend some time on the ground researching who your target market might be. If you're thinking about opening a coffee shop, hang out in the neighborhood at different times of the day to get a sense of the people who live, work, and play in the neighborhood. Notice their age, gender, clothing, and any other indications of income and activities.

- **The competition.** Who is your direct competitor targeting? Is there a small niche that is being missed? Observing the clientele of your competition can help to build understanding of your target market, regardless of whether it is the same or opposite. For example, if you own a children's clothing boutique and most middle-class mothers shop at the local department store, you may wish to focus on higher-income families as your target market.
- **Online.** Many cities and towns (or at least regions) have demographic information available online. Research the ages, incomes, occupations, and other key pieces of information about the people who live in the area you operate your business. From this data, you will gain an understanding of the size of your total potential market.
- **With existing customers.** Talk to your existing customers through focus groups or surveys. This is a great way to gather demographic and behavioral information, as well as genuine feedback about product or service quality and other information that will be useful in a business or marketing strategy.

## **Who is Your Market?**

Based on your product / service and market investigations, you will be able to piece together a basic picture of your target market and some of their general characteristics. Record some notes here. At this point, you may wish to be as specific as possible or maintain some generalities. You can further segment your market in the next section.

# Consumer Target Market Framework

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Market Type:</b>        | Consumer  |
| <b>Gender</b>              | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female   |
| <b>Age Range:</b>          |   |
| <b>Purchase Motivation</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Meet a Need<br><input type="checkbox"/> Serve a Want<br><input type="checkbox"/> Fulfill a Desire              |
| <b>Activities</b>          |   |
| <b>Income Range</b>        |   |
| <b>Marital Status</b>      |   |
| <b>Location:</b>           | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> City<br><input type="checkbox"/> Region <input type="checkbox"/> Country |
| <b>Other Notes</b>         |   |

# Institutional Target Market Framework

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Market Types:</b>              | <b>Institutional</b>  |
| <b>Institution Types:</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Non-profit<br><input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> University<br><input type="checkbox"/> Charity <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Church |
| <b>Purchase Motivation:</b>       | <input type="checkbox"/> Operational Need<br><input type="checkbox"/> Client Want<br><input type="checkbox"/> Client Desire   |
| <b>Purpose of Institution:</b>    |   |
| <b>Institution's Client Base:</b> |   |
| <b>Size:</b>                      |   |
| <b>Location:</b>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> City<br><input type="checkbox"/> Region <input type="checkbox"/> Country   |
| <b>Other Notes:</b>               |   |

# B2B Target Market Framework

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Market Type:</b>                  | <b>Business to Business (B2B)</b>   |
| <b>Company Size:</b>                 |   |
| <b>Number of Employees:</b>          |   |
| <b>Purchase Motivations:</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> Operations Need<br><input type="checkbox"/> Strategy<br><input type="checkbox"/> Functionality |
| <b>Annual Revenue:</b>               |   |
| <b>Industry:</b>                     |   |
| <b>Location(s):</b>                  |   |
| <b>Purpose of Business:</b>          |   |
| <b>People, Culture &amp; Values:</b> |   |
| <b>Other Notes:</b>                  |   |

# Reseller Target Market Framework

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Market Types:</b>        | <b>Reseller</b>   |
| <b>Industry:</b>            |   |
| <b>Client Base:</b>         |   |
| <b>Purchase Motivation:</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Operational Need<br><input type="checkbox"/> Client Want<br><input type="checkbox"/> Client Desire             |
| <b>Annual Revenue:</b>      |   |
| <b>Age:</b>                 |   |
| <b>Location:</b>            | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> City<br><input type="checkbox"/> Region <input type="checkbox"/> Country |
| <b>Other Notes:</b>         |   |

## Your Target Market: Putting It Together

Based on the information you gather from your product / service and market investigation you should have a clear vision of your realistic target market. Here are a few examples of how this information is put together and conclusions are drawn:

### Target Market Sample 1: Consumer Market

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Business: Baby Clothing Boutique</b>   | <b>Business Purpose:</b>  |
| <b>Market Type:</b> Consumer  | <i>Meet a need</i> (provide clothing for infants and children aged 0 to 5 years)  |
| <b>Gender:</b> Women  | <i>Serve a want</i> (clothing is brand name only, and has a higher price point than the competition)  |
| <b>Marital Status:</b> Married  |   |
| <b>Market Observations:</b><br>located on Main Street of Anytown, a street that is seeing many new boutiques open up, proximate to the main shopping mall two blocks from popular mid-range restaurant that is busy at lunch                                  | <b>Industry Predictions:</b><br>large number of new housing developments in the city and surrounding areas<br>two new schools in construction<br>expect to see an influx of new families move to town from Anycity  |
| <b>Competition Observations:</b><br>baby clothing also available at two local department stores, and one second-hand shop on opposite side of town  | <b>Online Research:</b><br>half of Anytown's population is female, and 25% have children under the age of 15 years<br>Anytown's population is expected to increase by 32% within three years<br>The average household income for Anytown is \$75,000 annually |
| <b>TARGET MARKET:</b> The target market can then be described as married mothers with children under five years old, between the ages of 25 and 45, who have recently moved to Anytown from Anycity, and have a household income of at least \$100K annually. |   |

## Target Market Sample 2: B2B Market

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Business:</b> Confidential Paper Shredding</p>   | <p><b>Target Business Size:</b> Small to medium</p>  |
| <p><b>Market Type:</b> B2B (Business to Business)</p>  | <p><b>Target Business Revenue:</b> \$500K to \$1M</p>  |
| <p><b>Business Purpose:</b><br/>Meet an operations need (provide confidential on-site shredding services for business documents)</p>   | <p><b>Target Business Type:</b><br/>produce or handle a variety of sensitive paper documentation accountants, lawyers, real estate agents, etc.</p>                            |
| <p><b>Market Observations:</b><br/>there are two main areas of office buildings and industrial warehouses in Anycity<br/>three more office towers are being constructed, and will be completed this year</p>   | <p><b>Industry Predictions:</b><br/>the professional sector is seeing revenue growth of 24% over last year, which indicates increased client billing and staff recruitment</p> |
| <p><b>Competition Observations:</b><br/>one confidential shredding company serves the region, covering Anycity and the surrounding towns<br/>provide regular (weekly or biweekly) service, but does not have the capacity to handle large volumes at one time</p>      | <p><b>Online Research:</b><br/>Anycity's biggest employment sectors are: manufacturing, tourism, food services, and professional services</p>                                  |
| <p><b>TARGET MARKET:</b><br/><i>The target market can then be described as small to medium sized businesses in the professional sector with an annual revenue of \$500K to \$1M who require both regular and infrequent large volume paper shredding services.</i></p> |  |

## Segmenting Your Market

Your market segments are the groups within your target market, broken down by a determinant in one of the following four categories:

- Demographics
- Psychographics
- Geographics
- Behaviors

Segmenting your target market into several more specific groups allows you to further tailor your marketing campaign and more specifically position your product or service. You may wish to divide your ad campaign into four sections, and target four specific markets with messages that will most resonate with the audience.

For example, the baby clothing store may choose to segment its target market by psychographics or lifestyle. If the larger target market is *married females with children under five, between the ages of 25 and 45, who have a household income of at least \$100K annually*, it can be broken down into the following lifestyle segments:

- Fitness-oriented mothers
- Career-oriented mothers
- New mothers

With these three categories, unique marketing messages can be created that speak to the hot buttons of each segment. The more accurate and specific you can make communications with your target market, the greater impact you will have on your revenues.

## Market Segmentation Variables

### Understanding Your Target Market

| <i>Demographic</i> | <i>Psychographic</i> | <i>Geographic</i> | <i>Behavioristic</i> |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Age                | Personality          | Region            | Brand Loyalty        |
| Income             | Lifestyle            | Country           | Product Usage        |
| Gender             | Values               | City              | Purchase             |
| Generation         | Attitude             | Area              | Frequency            |
| Nationality        | Motivation           | Neighborhood      | Profitability        |
| Ethnicity          | Activities           | Density           | Readiness to Buy     |
| Marital Status     | Interests            | Climate           | User Status          |
| Family Size        |                      |                   |                      |
| Occupation         |                      |                   |                      |
| Religion           |                      |                   |                      |
| Language           |                      |                   |                      |
| Education          |                      |                   |                      |
| Employment         |                      |                   |                      |
| Type               |                      |                   |                      |
| Housing Type       |                      |                   |                      |
| Housing            |                      |                   |                      |
| Ownership          |                      |                   |                      |
| Political          |                      |                   |                      |
| Affiliation        |                      |                   |                      |

Once you have determined who your market is, make a point of learning everything you can about them. You need to have a strong understanding of who they are, what they like, where they shop, why they buy, and how they spend their time. Remind yourself that you may *think* you know your market, but until you

have verified the information, you'll be driving blind with your marketing strategy.

Also be aware that markets change, just like people. Just because you knew your market when you started your business 10 years ago doesn't mean you know it now. Regular market research is part of any successful business plan, and a great habit to start.

## **Types of Market Research**

### **Surveys**

The simplest way to gather information from your clients or target market is through a survey. You can craft a questionnaire full of questions about your product, service, market demographics, buyer motivations, and so on. Furthermore, anonymous surveys will produce the most accurate information since names are not attached to the results or specific comments.

Depending on the purpose (whether it is to gather demographic information, product or service feedback, or other data) there are several ways to administer a survey.

### **Telephone**

Telephone surveys are a more time-consuming option but have the benefit of live communication with your target market. Generally, it is best to have a third party conduct this type of

survey to gather the most honest feedback. This is the method that market researchers use for polling, which is highly reliable.

## **Online**

Online surveys are the easiest to administer yourself. There are many web-based services that quickly and easily allow you to custom create your survey and send it to your email marketing list. These services can also analyze, summarize, and interpret the results on your behalf. Keep in mind that the results include only those who are motivated to respond which may slant your results.

## **Paper-based**

Paper surveys are seldom used and can prove to be an inefficient method. Like online surveys, your results are based on the feedback of those who were motivated for one reason or another to respond. However, the time and effort involved in taking the survey, filing it out, and returning it to your place of business may deter people from participating.

Keep in mind that surveys can be complex to administer and consume more time and resources than you have planned. If you have the budget, consider hiring a professional market research firm to lead or assist with the process. This will also ensure that the methodology is standard practice and will garner the most accurate results.

## **Website Analysis**

Tracking your website traffic is an excellent way to research your existing and potential customer's interests and behavior. From this information, you can ensure the design, structure, and content of your website is catering to the people who use it and the people you want to use it.

User-friendly website traffic analytics programs can easily show you who is visiting your site, where they are from, and what pages of your site they are viewing. Services like Google Analytics can tell you what page they arrive at, where they click to, how much time they spend on each page, and on which page they leave the site.

This is powerful (and free) information to have in your market research and easy to monitor monthly or weekly, depending on the needs of your business.

## **Customer Purchase Data (Consumer Behavior)**

If you do not have the budget to conduct your own professional market research, you can use existing resources on consumer behavior. While this data may not be specific to your region or city, general consumer research is actual data that can be helpful in confirming assumptions you may have made about your target market.

Your customer loyalty program or Point of Sale system may also be of help in tracking customer purchases and identifying trends in purchase behavior. If you can track who is buying, what they're buying, and how often they're buying, you'll have an arsenal of powerful insights into your existing client base.

## **Focus Groups**

Focus groups look at the psychographic and behavioristic aspects of your target market. Groups of six to twelve people are gathered and asked general and specific questions about their purchase motivations and behaviors. These questions could relate to your business or to the general industry.

Focus group sessions can also be time consuming to organize and facilitate, so consider hiring the services of a professional market research firm. You may also receive more honest information if a third party is asking the questions and receiving the responses from focus group participants.

For cost savings, consider partnering with an associate in the same industry who is not a direct competitor and who would benefit from the same market data.

## Two

# Creating a Powerful Offer

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I'm not going to beat around the bush on this one:

Your offer is the granite foundation of your marketing campaign.

Get it right and everything else will fall into place. Your headline will grab readers, your copy will sing, your ad layout will hardly matter, and you will have customers running to your door.

Get it wrong, and even the best looking, best-written campaign will sink like the Titanic.

A powerful offer is an irresistible offer. It's an offer that gets your audience frothing at the mouth and clamoring over each other all the way to your door. An offer that makes your readers pick up the phone and open their wallets.

Irresistible offers make your potential customers think, "I'd be crazy not to take him up on that," or "An offer like this doesn't come around very often." They instill a sense of emotion, of desire, and ultimately, urgency.

Make it easy for customers to purchase from you the first time and spend your time enticing them back.

I'll say it again: get it right, and everything else will fall into place.

## The Crux of Your Marketing Campaign

As you work your way through this book, you will find that nearly every chapter discusses the importance of a powerful offer as related to your marketing strategy or promotional campaign.

There's a reason for this. The powerful offer is often the reason a customer will open their wallets. It is how you generate leads, and then convert them into loyal customers. The more dramatic, unbelievable, and valuable the offer is, the more dramatic and unbelievable the response will be.

Many companies spend thousands of dollars on impressive marketing campaigns in glossy magazines and big-city newspapers. They send massive direct mail campaigns on a regular basis; yet don't receive an impressive or massive response rate.

These companies do not yet understand that simply providing information on their company and the benefits of their product is not enough to get customers to act. There is no reason to pick up the phone or visit the store, *right now*.

Your powerful, irresistible offer can:

- Increase leads
- Drive traffic to your website or business
- Move old product
- Convert leads into customers

- Build your customer database

## What Makes a Powerful Offer?

A powerful offer is one that makes the most people respond and take action. It gets people running to spend money on your product or service.

Powerful offers nearly always have an element of *urgency* and of *scarcity*. They give your audience a reason to act immediately, instead of putting it off until a later date.

Urgency relates to time. The offer is only available until a certain date, during a certain period of the day, or if you act within a few hours of seeing the ad. The customer needs to act now to take advantage of the offer.

Scarcity relates to quantity. There are only a certain number of customers who will be able to take advantage of the offer. There may be a limited number of spaces, a limited number of products, or simply a limited number of people the business will provide the offer to. Again, this requires that customer acts immediately to reap the high value for low cost.

Powerful offers also:

### **Offer great value**

Customers perceive the offer as having great value – more than a single product on its own, or the product at its regular price. The offer takes the reader’s needs and wants into consideration.

### **Make sense to the reader**

They are simple and easy to understand if read quickly. Avoid percentages – use half off or 2 for 1 instead of 50% off. There are no “catches” or requirements and no fine print.

### **Seem logical**

The offer doesn’t come out of thin air. There is a logical reason behind it – a holiday, end of season, anniversary celebration, or new product. People can get suspicious of offers that seem “too good to be true” and have no apparent purpose.

### **Provide a premium**

The offer provides something extra to the customer, like a gift, or free product or service. They feel they are getting something extra for no extra cost. Premiums are perceived to have more value than discounts.

Remember that when your target market reads your offer, they will be asking the following questions:

- What are you offering me?

- What's in it for me?
- What makes me sure I can believe you?
- How much do I have to pay for it?

## The Most Powerful Types of Offers

Decide what kind of offer will most effectively achieve your objectives. Are you trying to generate leads, convert customers, build a database, move old product off the shelves, or increase sales?

Consider what type of offer will be of most value to your ideal customers – what offer will make them act quickly.

### **The Free Offer**

This type of offer asks customers to act immediately in exchange for something free. This is a good strategy to use to build a customer database or mailing list. Offer a free consultation, free consumer report, or other item of low cost to you but of high perceived value.

You can also advertise the value of the item you are offering for free. For example, act now and you'll receive a free consultation, worth \$75 dollars. This will dramatically increase your lead generation and allow you to focus on conversion when the customer comes through the door or picks up the phone.

### **The Value-Added Offer**

Add additional services or products that cost you very little and combine them with other items to increase their attractiveness. This increases the perception of value in the customer's mind, which will justify increasing the price of a product or service without incurring extra hard costs to your business.

### **The Package Offer**

Package your products or services together in a logical way to increase the perceived value. Discount the value of the package by a small margin and position it as a "start-up kit" or "special package." By packaging goods of mixed values, you will be able to close more high-value sales. For example: including a free inkjet printer with every computer purchase.

### **The Premium Offer**

Offer a bonus product or service with the purchase of another. This strategy will serve your bottom line much better than discounting. This includes 2-for-1 offers, offers that include free gifts, and in-store credit with purchases over a specific dollar amount.

### **The Urgency Offer**

As mentioned above, offers that include an element of urgency enjoy a better response rate, as there is a reason for your

customers to act immediately. Give the offer a deadline or limit the number of spots available.

### **The Guarantee Offer**

Offer to take the risk of making a purchase away from your customers. Guarantee the performance or results of your product or service and offer to compensate the customer with their money back if they are not satisfied. This will help overcome any fear or reservations about your product and make it more likely for your leads to become customers.

## **Create Your Powerful Offer**

### **1. Pick a single product or service.**

Focus on only one product or service – or one product or service *type* – at a time. This will keep your offer clear, simple, and easy to understand. This can be an area of your business you wish to grow, or old product that you need to move off the shelves.

### **2. Decide what you want your customers to do.**

What are you looking to achieve from your offer? If it is to generate more leads, then you'll need your customer to contact you. If it is to quickly sell old product, you'll need your customer to come into the store and buy it. Do you want them to visit your website? Sign up for your newsletter? How long do they have to

act? Be clear about your call to action, and state it clearly in your offer.

### **3. Dream up the biggest, best offer.**

First, think of the biggest, best things you could offer your customers – regardless of cost and ability. Don't limit yourself to a single type of offer; combine several types of offers to increase value. Offer a premium, plus a guarantee, with a package offer. Then, look at what you've created and make the necessary changes, so it is realistic.

### **4. Run the numbers.**

Finally, make sure the offer will leave you with some profit – or at least allow you to break even. You don't want to publish an outrageous offer that will generate a tremendous number of leads, but leave you broke. Remember that each customer has an acquisition cost, as well as a lifetime value. The amount of their first purchase may allow you to break even, but the amount of their subsequent purchases may make you a lovely profit.

## Three

# Systemizing Your Business and Developing Effective Processes

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One of the biggest mistakes a business owner can make is to create a company that is dependent on the owner's involvement for the success of its daily operations. This is called working "in" your business. You're writing basic sales letters, licking stamps, and guiding staff step-by-step through each task.

There are several problems with this approach. One is redundancy. You're paying your staff to carry out tasks that you eventually complete. The second is poor time management. You're spending your day – at your high hourly rate – on tasks as they arise, leaving little room for the tasks you need to be focused on.

However, the biggest issue I have with this approach is that countless intelligent business owners are spending most their time operating their business, instead of *growing* it.

A good test of this is to ask yourself what would happen if you took off to a hot sunny destination for three weeks and left your cell phone and laptop at home. Would your business be able to continue operating?

If you said no, then this chapter is for you.

Systemizing your business is about putting policies and procedures in place to make your business operations run smoother – and more importantly – without your constant involvement. With your newfound free time, **you will be able to focus your efforts on the bigger picture: strategically growing your business. What got you in your business in the first place? Your ability to see possibilities (be a visionary) and turn them into profitable revenue generation. That’s your gift. That’s your most valuable contribution to your business. Getting lost in the weeds of accounting, logistics, HR, etc., etc., etc. is a waste of your time or your least valuable contribution to your business at best. Not only that, do you really enjoy going through accounting reports, scheduling trucks, reviewing group insurance plans? I’ll bet you’d rather have your teeth scraped.**

## Why Systemize?

For most small business owners, systems simply mean freedom from the day-to-day functioning of their organization. The company runs smoothly, makes a profit, and provides a high level of service, regardless of the owner’s involvement.

Systemizing your business is also a healthy way to plan. You're not going to be working forever. What happens when you retire? How will you transition your business to new ownership or management? How will you take that vacation you've been dreaming of?

Businesses that function without their ownership are also highly valuable to investors. Systemizing your business can position it in a favorable light for purchase and merit a high price tag.

A system is any process, policy, or procedure that consistently achieves the same result, regardless of who is completing the task.

Any task that is performed in your business more than once can be systemized. Ideally, the tasks that are completed on a cyclical basis (daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly) should be systemized so much so that anyone can perform them.

Systems can take many forms, from manuals and instruction sheets, to signs, banners, and audio or video recordings. They don't have to be elaborate or extensive but just provide enough information in step-by-step form to guide the person performing the task.

### **Benefits of Business Systems**

There are unlimited benefits available to you and your business through systemization. The more systems you can successfully implement, the more benefits you'll see.

- Better cost management
- Improved time management
- Clearer expectations of staff
- More effective staff training and orientation
- Increased productivity (and potentially profits)
- Happier customers (consistent service)
- Maximized conversion rates
- Increased staff respect for your time
- Increased level of individual initiative
- Greater focus on long-term business growth

### **Taking Stock of Your Existing Systems**

The first step in systemizing your business is taking a long look at the existing systems (if any) in your business. At this point, you can look for any systems that have simply emerged as “the way we do things here.”

How do your staff answer the phone? What are the processes customers go through when dealing with your business? How are employees hired? Trained? How is performance reviewed and rewarded?

Some of your systems may be highly effective and not require any changes. Others may be ineffective and require some reworking. If you have previously established some systems, now is a good time to check-in and evaluate how well they are functioning.

Use the following chart to record what systems currently exist in your business.

| <b>Existing Systems</b>   |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Administration</b>     |  |
| <b>Financials</b>         |  |
| <b>Communication</b>      |  |
| <b>Customer Relations</b> |  |
| <b>Employees</b>          |  |
| <b>Marketing</b>          |  |
| <b>Data</b>               |  |

## Seven Areas to Systemize

There is no doubt that system creation, especially when none exist to begin with, is a daunting and time-consuming task. For many businesses, it can be difficult to determine where to start to make the best use of their time from the outset.

Here are seven main areas of your business you can systemize. Begin with one area and move to the other areas as you are ready. Alternately, start with one or two systems that are most dysfunctional/don't work well, cause the biggest headaches and never seem to improve. Each business will require its own unique set of systems.

## 1. Administration

This is an important area of your business to systemize because administrative roles tend to see a high turnover. A series of systems will reduce training time and keep you from explaining how the phones are to be answered each time a new receptionist joins your team.

| Administrative Systems  |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| › Opening and closing procedures                                    | › Filing and paper management |
| › Phone greeting  | › Workflow                    |
| › Mail processing   | › Document production         |
| › Sending couriers  | › Inventory management        |
| › Office maintenance (watering plants, emptying recycle bins, etc.) | › Order processing            |
|   | › Making orders               |

## 2. Financials

This is one area of systems that you will need to keep a close eye on, but that doesn't mean you have to do the work yourself. Financial management systems are everything from tracking credit card purchases to invoicing clients and following up on overdue accounts.

These systems will help to prevent employee theft and allow you to always have a clear picture of your numbers. It will allow you to control purchasing and ensure that each decision is signed-off on.

## Financial Systems

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| › <b>Purchasing</b>                    | › <b>Profit / Loss statements</b> |
| › <b>Credit card purchase tracking</b> | › <b>Invoicing</b>                |
| › <b>Accounts payable</b>              | › <b>Daily cash out</b>           |
| › <b>Accounts receivable</b>           | › <b>Petty cash</b>               |
| › <b>Bank deposits</b>                 | › <b>Employee expenses</b>        |
| › <b>Cutting checks</b>                | › <b>Payroll</b>                  |
| › <b>Tax payments</b>                  | › <b>Commission payments</b>      |

### 3. Communications

The area of communication is essential and time-consuming for any business. Sales letters, internal memos, reports, and newsletters are items that need to be created regularly by different people in your organization.

Most of the time, these communications aren't much different from one to the next, yet each are created from scratch by a different person. There is a huge opportunity for systemization in this area of your business. Systemized communication ensures consistency and company differentiation.

## Communication Systems

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| › <b>Internal memo template</b> | › <b>Sales letter template(s)</b> |
| › <b>Letterhead template</b>    | › <b>Meeting minutes template</b> |
| › <b>Team meeting agenda</b>    | › <b>Report template</b>          |
| › <b>Sending faxes</b>          | › <b>Internal meetings</b>        |
| › <b>Internal emails</b>        | › <b>Scheduling</b>               |
| › <b>Newsletter template</b>    |                                   |

## 4. Customer Relations

Another important area for systemization is customer relations. This includes everything the customer sees or touches in your company, as well as any interaction they might have with you or your staff members.

Establishing a customer relations system will also ensure that new staff members understand how customers are handled in *your* business. It will allow you to maintain a high level of customer service, without constantly reminding staff of your policies. It will also ensure that the success of your customer relations and retention does not hinge on you or any other individual salesperson.

| Customer Relations Systems   |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Incoming phone call script</li><li>› Outgoing phone call script</li><li>› Customer service standards</li><li>› Customer retention strategy</li><li>› Customer communications templates</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>› Sales process</li><li>› Sales script</li><li>› Newsletter templates</li><li>› Ongoing customer communication strategy</li><li>› Customer liaison policy</li></ul> |

## 5. Employees

Create systems in your business for hiring, training, and developing your employees. This will establish clear expectations for the employee and streamline time consuming activities like recruitment.

Employees with clear expectations who work within clear structures are happier and more productive. They are motivated to achieve ‘A’ when they know they will receive ‘B’ if they do. Establishing a clear training manual will also save you and your staff the time and hassle of training each new staff member on the fly.

| <b>Employee Systems</b>                |  |
|--|--|
| › <b>Employee recruitment</b>          | › <b>Staff uniforms or dress code</b>                  |
| › <b>Employee retention</b>            | › <b>Employee training</b>                             |
| › <b>Incentive and rewards program</b> | › <b>Ongoing training and professional development</b> |
| › <b>Regular employee reviews</b>      | › <b>Job descriptions and role profiles</b>            |
| › <b>Employee feedback structure</b>   |  |

## **6. Marketing**

Marketing is likely an area in which you spend a large part of your time. You focus on generating new leads and getting more people to call you or walk through your doors. These efforts can be systemized and delegated to other staff members.

Use the information in this book to create simple systems for your basic promotional efforts. Any one of your marketing team should be able to pick up a marketing manual and implement a

successful direct mail campaign or place a purposeful advertisement.

| <b>Marketing Systems</b>     |                                 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| › Referral program           | › Regular advertisements        |
| › Customer retention program | › Advertisement creation system |
| › Regular promotions         | › Direct mail system            |
| › Marketing calendar         | › Sales procedures              |
| › Enquiries management       | › Lead management               |

## **7. Data**

While we like to think we operate a paperless office, often the opposite is true. Your business needs to have clear systems for managing paper and electronic information to ensure that information is protected, easily accessed, and only kept when necessary.

Data management systems help you keep your office organized. Everyone knows where information is to be stored, and how it is to be handled, which prevents big stacks of paper with no place to go.

Ensure that within your data management systems you include a data backup system. That way, if anything happens to your server or computer software, your data (and potentially your business) is protected.

## Data Management Systems

- |                                  |                             |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| › IT Management                  | › Client file system        |
| › Data backup                    | › Project file system       |
| › Computer repairs               | › Point of sale system      |
| › Electronic information storage | › Financial data management |
| › Passwords                      |                             |

## Implementing New Systems

If you completed the exercise earlier in this chapter, you have a good idea of the systems that are currently in place in your business. The next step is to determine what systems you need to create in your business.

To do this, you will need to get a better understanding of the tasks that you and your employees complete on a daily and weekly basis. If you operate a timesheet program, this can be a good source of information. Alternately, ask staff to keep a daily log for a week of all the tasks they contribute to or complete. Doing so will not only give you valuable insight into their how they spend their time daily, but also involve them in the systemizing process.

Review all task logs or timesheet records at the end of the week, remove duplicates, and group like tasks together. From here you can categorize the tasks into business areas like the seven listed above or create your own categories.

You will then need to prioritize and plan your system creation and implementation efforts. Choose one from each category, or one category to focus on at a time. The amount you can take on will depend on your business needs and the staff resources you have available to you for this process.

**Remember that system creation is a long-term process, not something that will transform your business overnight. Be patient and focus on the items that hold the highest priority.**

### **Creating Your Systems**

There is a significant variety of ways you can create systems for your business, depending on the type of system you need and the type of business you operate. Some systems will be short and simple (i.e., a laminated sign in the kitchen that outlines step-by-step how to make the coffee) while others will be more complex (i.e., your sales scripts or letter templates).

One thing all your systems have in common is steps. There is a linear process involved from start to finish. Begin by writing out each of the steps involved in completing the task and provide as much detail as you can.

Next, review your step-by-step guide with the employee(s) who regularly complete the task and gather their feedback. Once you have incorporated their input, decide what format the system needs to be in: website, online process software, manual,

laminated instruction sheet, sign, office memo, etc. Here's a big easy button – have your management team spearhead this. Why? Because if you're like most entrepreneurs, this will be painful for you and likely to drag out longer to much longer than is necessary. Additionally, if you write it up and spearhead this project, who's going to "own it"? Hint: not your employees. It'll be "the boss' process." By having your 1) management team, even if it's just one person, lead this project, 2) gather input from all employees involved in each process and 3) gaining consensus on how a process should work will make your team (the people who actually use the process to get things done) the "owners" of the process they create.

### **Testing Your Systems**

Now that you have created a system, you will need to make sure that it works. More specifically, **you need to make sure that it works without your involvement.**

Implement the new system for an appropriate period (a week or month) then ask for input from staff, suppliers and vendors, and customers. Evaluate if it is informative enough for your staff, seamless enough for your suppliers, and whether it meets or exceeds your customer's needs. Again, the management team leads this. Your one and only contribution is to declare what results you want the process to create consistently. It's your team's job to create a process that works.

Take that feedback and revise the system accordingly. You will rarely get the system right the first time, so be patient.

Systems will also need to be evaluated and revised on a regular basis to ensure your business processes are kept up to date. Structure an annual or bi-annual review of systems and stick to it.

### **Employee Buy-In**

It will be nearly impossible for you to develop effective systems without the involvement and input of your employees. These are the people who will be using the systems and who are completing the tasks on a regular basis without systems. They have a wealth of knowledge to assist you in this process.

Employees can also draft the systems for you to review and finalize. This will make the systemization process a much faster and more efficient one.

It is also important to note that when you introduce new systems into your company, there may be a natural resistance to the change. People, including your employees, are habitual people who can become set in the way they are used to doing things.

### **Delegation**

The final step to systemizing your business is delegation. What is the point of creating systems unless someone other than you can use them to perform tasks?

This doesn't have to mean completely removing your involvement from the process, but it does mean giving your employees enough freedom to complete the task within the structure of the systems you have spent time and considerable thought creating.

After that, allow yourself the freedom of focusing on the tasks that you most enjoy, and most deserve your time, like creating big picture strategies to grow your business and increase your profits.

Systems and processes allow you to go from being a **“business operator”** to a true **“business owner”** and makes your business much more attractive and valuable to prospective buyers. It is the key to your freedom to the lifestyle you want.

## Outline for Successful Process Documentation:

1. Know the results to be consistently produced by process. What is the purpose of the process?
2. Get everyone involved in the process to provide input into what needs to happen, when and in what order.
3. Clearly identify who is responsible for what actions/results and by when.
4. List specific actions in order of their optimal sequence.
5. Write process in outline or “recipe” form for ease of reading and absorption. Long narratives don't work for most people.
6. Make sure you get the input of every employee involved in making the process work. Have manager(s) involved

lead the process, but include the workers involved on a granular level.

7. Designate a good note taker to capture all input and outline the process at every meeting.
8. This will probably take several meetings for any complex process. Have individual groups come up with their piece of a process if it's specialized to their department. It's okay to assign "homework" for these parts of the process. Make sure there are clear deadlines for completing and turning in "homework."
9. Run through the process for any steps you left out because you think "everyone knows this." Be looking for gaps.
10. Test the process and see if it produces the desired results. Make sure everyone knows their role and the roles of others they are going to operate with.
11. If the process works, congratulations. Make sure to update the process if at some point it becomes dysfunctional or doesn't represent what actually happens in reality. Almost every process will need to be updated at some point.
12. If the process doesn't produce consistent results, gather input for what is missing, not working, miscategorized, etc. and edit it until you have a process that consistently produces desired results.
13. Make sure everyone has a copy, understands their role and everyone else's role in the process and that there's a central copy available on a department basis.

## Four

# Staff Recruitment, Training, and Development

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The people you hire to work for your business can be your biggest assets and your biggest headaches. They can support and help you to achieve the vision you have for your company, but they can also prevent you from reaching that vision. The best business strategy is only as good as the team that will implement it. Great strategy with a mediocre team will produce mediocre results.

Too many businesses overlook the role of employee recruitment and retention when planning for the success of their organization. Staffing is an important exercise that needs to be purpose-driven and strategic, just like marketing. When it comes down to making your business a success or a never-ending struggle, your talent pool, those people who generally dedicate 33% or more of their daily life to your business, are the ones who will make it or break it. Good employees are your most valuable asset – bar none.

It is vital to understand that in today's market, the relationship between employee and employer is a two-way street. Now, more than ever, employees have a “What's in it for me?” attitude that

extends beyond salary and benefits expectations into incentive and rewards programs. The days of simple compensation structures are over.

This may sound like a big headache but it's a good thing! With some simple systems and open dialogue, you will be able to effectively create – and keep – your dream team.

## **The Power of Your Dream Team**

How much of your own personal time has human resources (staff hiring, firing, issues management, etc.) taken this year? No doubt, staff recruitment and retention are some of the biggest challenges facing any business owner today.

The truth is, if you spent half as much time on human resources as you do on marketing, I guarantee your sales would increase dramatically.

Customers know the difference between happy employees and disgruntled ones, and it makes a difference when it comes to purchase decisions. Would you rather have your car serviced by a grumpy mechanic who doesn't feel his good work is rewarded, or a pleasant one who just stepped out a weekly team meeting?

A successful business owner has confidence in the people who work for him because he believes they are the best people for the job. Employees who know their employer believes in their skills

and abilities will go over and above to get the job done, to make the sale.

Successful business owners invest time and money in finding and keeping the right people. These are the people who share and support the collective vision for the company. How is that done? By showing them, reminding them of their part of the bigger vision, showing them where they fit in, how they're a part of where this ship is going.

I'm not talking about a complicated formula or magic concoction. I'm talking about some careful thought and a proactive strategy that will make your business shine from the inside out.

## **Finding Your Dream Employees**

Building a dream team starts by finding and hiring the right people for the job. Sounds simple enough. You post an ad, find someone who has the necessary qualifications, and hire them on.

Not so fast! Recruitment is a complex process that can dramatically impact your business operations. Just as is the case with finding and selling to the right customers, finding, and hiring the right candidates requires pro-active planning and careful evaluation.

If you currently work with a recruiting agency to build to your team, now may be a good time to stop and evaluate the effectiveness of their service. While a recruiting agency can save you the time and hassle of working through the hiring process, it can also cost more money in the long run.

I always recommend creating an internal recruitment system, not because recruiting agencies do a bad job, but because no one knows your business like you do.

An internal recruitment system ensures that the true essence of your business culture is communicated, from advertisement to interview. You also can communicate expectations from the outset, instead of relying on the recruiter to relay this information. The middle-man's thoughts and impressions are eliminated, leaving you to make decisions based on your impression of the candidate, not that of anyone else.

### **Step One: Advertise the Opportunity**

The first step in recruiting candidates is obviously letting potential candidates know about the opportunity with your company.

But before you pick up the phone to place a classified ad, remember that advertising for potential employees requires just as much consideration and planning as general advertising for your business.

You need to ask yourself:

- Who is your ideal candidate?
- What are their skills and qualifications?
- What is their personality or demeanor?
- What are they passionate about?
- What are they looking for in a job?

Once you have a mental picture of your candidate, then you can begin to write an ad that will not only reach them, but also inspire them to act (and submit an application).

When writing this ad, be as specific as possible and focus on the benefits of the job. Remember that potential candidates screen job postings with an eye for “What’s in it for me.” Tell them exactly that.

Here are a few sample job postings:

### **Are you the Marketing Assistant we need?**

About You

You’re fun, friendly, and have a keen eye for detail. You’re always two steps ahead of your colleagues and eager to take on new and exciting challenges.

You’ll be the glue that keeps the marketing team operating in a seamless fashion, responsible for website updates, copywriting,

event coordination, and client relations. You'll be punctual, responsible, and well put together.

You'll ideally have an undergraduate degree in marketing or English, and some previous office experience, but a fast learner with a great attitude will also get our attention.

About Us

We are a collaborative team of young professionals. We offer a competitive salary, great benefits, and performance incentives.

Think you fit the bill? Email your resume and cover letter to John Smith at [jsmith@email.com](mailto:jsmith@email.com) by Friday at 4pm.

## **Are Computers Your Life?**

About You

You are smart, outgoing, and a whiz when it comes to computer programming. You're on your friend's speed dial for computer emergencies, large and small. Helping people understand the complex digital world is your passion.

You'll be our Lead Computer Technician, managing our computer repair counter and five Junior Technicians. You'll have great people skills, mounds of patience, and enjoy working as part of a dynamic team.

About Us

We operate Anytown's leading computer repair store and are known across the region for our customer service. We work hard, play hard, and offer a competitive benefits package to our employees.

Tell us why this job is for you. Email your resume and cover letter to [info@computerworld.com](mailto:info@computerworld.com) by Thursday, September 23.

Both job postings speak directly to a very targeted audience. They're friendly, colloquial, and communicate the job requirements in an informal way.

Every job posting should:

- Be colloquial (written in the way that you talk)
- Be specific
- Describe benefits
- Include skills, qualifications, duties, and job title
- Be written in the present tense
- Have a great headline
- Call the reader to action
- Be simple, in word choice and sentence structure
- Be more exciting than the competition

Now that you have a great ad to post, you need to decide where you are going to publish it. This depends on the level of the job (junior to management) and on the specific type of candidate you are looking to recruit.

## **Here are the five major places to advertise your opportunity:**

### **Government Employment Center**

These are great places to find blue-collar or junior level employees. Candidates register with the center which keeps their resumes on file. Be cautious with this route: it can produce a wide variety of candidates who are not qualified.

### **Local Newspaper**

This is a great place to post junior to mid-level employment opportunities. You're looking for basic qualifications from local applicants, perhaps even for part-time positions, with minimal cost.

### **Regional or City Newspaper**

Senior employment opportunities that require specific high-level qualifications are best advertised with a broad scope. This incurs a greater cost but will return a greater variety of candidates.

### **Online**

This is a cheap way to tap into a massive database of job seekers. Post your ad online on sites like [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com) and watch the resumes come flooding in. Many highly qualified job seekers who do not wish to register with a recruitment agency will use these services.

## **Referrals**

The ideal way to find candidates is through your existing network, including associates, colleagues, employees, friends, and family. These candidates come to you already vetted by a trusted source. You may also wish to consider giving your staff an incentive to refer their qualified friends and associates to you.

You should also brainstorm a list of any other niche areas that your target market may look for a job. Consider industry publications, industry associations, small publications, etc.

Once you've posted your ad, your next step is to manage the inquiries that come flooding in.

## **Step Two: Screen Candidates**

This is one of the most time-consuming aspects of the recruitment process so you will need to work out a system to manage the response to your job posting.

A system will also allow you ensure you ask all potential candidates the same questions and provide them with the same information about the role as well as about your company.

### **1. Decide whether all inquiries will be handled by one person or several.**

This will depend on your staff resources and capacity. A system will allow multiple employees to assist in the process.

For example, if your candidates have been instructed to submit their resume and cover letter to you through email, designate a single email address and inbox for receiving and responding. This way, you or another staff member will not be bombarded by emails and can designate an hour of time each day to managing the inquiries. If your candidates are calling in, designate a unique phone number or answering machine to this purpose.

## **2. Decide how inquiries will be responded to.**

This can be as simple as an email acknowledging receipt of the resume, or specific instructions on an answering machine. Ensure everyone receives the same information and that you receive the same level of information from all candidates (resume, cover letter, portfolio, references, and other relevant information).

If you have asked candidates to call you instead of submitting their resumes through email, create a standard checklist of questions to ask them, as well as of information to provide them with. You may wish to create a script. Some questions might include:

- What kind of job are you looking for?
- Why do you think you would be well suited to this position?
- Tell me a bit about yourself.
- What makes you interested in our company?

Use this opportunity to get a feel for the applicant's personality and trust your initial impression. Create a form on which to record this information and file it with their resume when you receive it.

### **3. Devise a process for reviewing resumes or applications.**

The easiest and most time efficient way to do this is in a single session, after the stated deadline, and not as you receive them. You may wish to enlist the assistance of a senior colleague to provide a second opinion.

Review the resumes and application materials and divide the applications into three piles: interview, no interview, and maybe. From here you can begin to call candidates and set up a first interview.

It is also a good idea to be in touch with unsuccessful candidates and politely let them know that you will not be asking them in for an interview. If you anticipate your response rate will be overwhelming, you may wish to consider stating in your advertisement that only successful applicants will be called.

### **Step Three: First Interview**

The first interview is also a screening interview; your objective is to develop a first impression of the candidate as a person and to determine if they are qualified for the position. If you feel you have found an ideal candidate, this is also your opportunity to

convince them to choose your company over any others they may be considering. Good people don't stay in the market long.

### **Interview Structure**

You will need to decide on a structure, or system, for the interview process as well. Will you be conducting the first interviews or will another manager? Will the interviews be conducted one-on-one, or will several employees participate? If you are replacing an employee, you may want to consider inviting that employee into the interview to provide insight into the role.

### **Interview Materials**

Just as you are asking the potential candidate to come prepared to the interview, you must be as well.

- Have an outline prepared of what you would like to cover. Topics include company history, job description, interview questions, compensation structure, availability, and room for advancement.
- Bring two copies of a typed job description. Include all tasks the candidate will be responsible for completing or assisting with.
- A company profile or overview document (other marketing collateral will also work here).

### **Interview Attitude**

Begin to build a relationship with each applicant. The purpose of the interview is not just to discuss the job description or for the

applicant to get all the interview questions “right.” It is to determine if this person has the right attitude for the job and whether they will fit in with the company’s culture and its employees.

Keep the interview professional but make sure the applicant is comfortable. Interviews test our ability to perform under pressure, but you will want to gain an understanding of the applicant’s true nature. Remember that even if the applicant is not well suited to the role they have applied for, they may be suited to a future opportunity with the company.

### **Interview Questions**

The questions you decide to ask the candidate are highly specific to your company and the role you are hiring for. Take some time to brainstorm what you really need to know about each person, and what questions you can ask to get that information.

Keep in mind that part of the objective of the first interview is to get a sense of the candidate’s personality. You will want to ask questions about their responses and begin to establish a real relationship with them.

Here are some starter interview questions to get you going:

- Tell me a little bit about your background.
- What was your first impression of our company/product/ services?

- Tell me about a time when [insert a likely scenario they will encounter in the position]. How did it make you feel? How did you handle the situation?
- What advantages do you feel you have over the other candidates?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- Tell me about an achievement you're proud of.
- Why did you leave your last position?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- ...and so on.

Make sure you take good notes or ask a junior member of your team to take notes for you. Also record your impression of the candidate after each interview. You will want to be able to reflect on each interview before inviting the candidate to the next phase of the selection process.

When the first interviews have been completed, review your notes, and discuss your first impressions with other employees involved in the process. Then, decide who you would like to invite back for a second interview and let the unsuccessful candidates know they are not right for this role.

For those candidates that you want to see in a second interview, I highly recommend having them screened through a Predictive Index assessment. Predictive Index (PI) has been around since the 1950's and has tested millions of people, bringing a vast

wealth of knowledge and data to a highly accurate predictor of how a person will show up in a work environment in four specific areas.

1. Are they more of a team player, or more independent and dominant?
2. Are they extroverted and gregarious or more reserved and formal?
3. Do they like a steady, unhurried pace at work doing similar tasks repeatedly throughout the work week, or do they prefer a faster pace, a change of types of work and maybe even excel in periods of chaos?
4. Do they prefer structure and rules, knowing what's expected of them, or would they rather have a lot more latitude, little structure and be able to figure things out as they approach different circumstances.

There are no “good” or “bad” traits here. Different jobs require different traits for the person to be a good fit for the job. A job requiring someone who's going to open new markets, develop new distribution channels and introduce new products to the market requires one type of profile versus a job that requires someone to work on a factory floor producing highly precise engineered machine parts day in and day out versus a retail store manager who must manage sales staff, inventory, customer service, store maintenance and displays, etc. Comparing a candidate's profile to the ideal profile can be used to have the software **generate great second interview questions** to validate what

strengths the candidate has as well as evaluate their weaknesses.

For an introduction to PI, please go to this website: <https://www.predictiveindex.com/learn/support/understanding-your-behavioral-assessment-results/>

If you want to take the **free test**, here's a link: <https://assessment.predictiveindex.com/bo/4V35/CFOConsultingPI> Just let me know you took the test so I can email you the assessments from the website. My email is [cary@strategicbusinessadvisors.us](mailto:cary@strategicbusinessadvisors.us).

I've used this technology with dozens of clients and it's remarkable at the quality of hires they get by eliminating nice people who don't have the innate traits for specific jobs. This technology also helps us avoid the trap of hiring in our own image. You can create an ideal profile or let the software do it for you and then compare your candidates' profiles to see if they're a good fit. How much do you spend on a bad hire? The national average is in the range of \$44,000 by the time you account for wasted opportunity, training, onboarding, etc. Even if your average cost is half that, wouldn't it pay you to spend a few dollars to garner a much higher chance of making the right hire versus what you've been doing that doesn't work so well? That's the mind set you need to look through.

PI is also valuable in employee retention, optimizing your team, analyzing where your company is in terms of employee morale, engagement, satisfaction with programs to help you turn it around.

## **Step Four: Second Interview + Reference Check**

The second interview is used to confirm your impressions of the applicants you believe are well suited to the job. It can also be used to get more information or to compare two solid candidates more closely.

Make sure you only offer a second interview to those you are considering hiring. If you are on the fence about a candidate, chances are your instincts are right and bringing them in for a second interview is a waste of their time and yours.

### **Callbacks**

When you call a candidate to invite them to come in for a second interview, remain professional and don't make any allusions to a job offer. If your impression of them changes during the second interview, you do not want to have to go back on something you said. Let them know what you thought of them based on the first interview and ask if they would be interested in meeting with you a second time.

Give yourself and the candidate a day or two between interviews to reflect on the first interview and prepare for the second.

## **Interviewer**

You may wish to change the person or team of people who conducted the first interview. Usually, the second interview is conducted with more senior team members at the table.

## **Interview Questions**

While the second interview is often less structured than the first (a relationship has already begun to be established), you should still prepare a list of questions for the candidate. I also highly recommend using Predictive Index to help generate interview questions based on the candidate's profile compared to an ideal profile for the position. It takes a lot of the guess work out of the interview.

These questions should focus on the specific tasks related to the job and on providing more information about the culture, systems, and values of the company. You can also use the second interview to ask questions you may not have had the chance to in the first interview.

## **Office Tour + Introductions**

Once you have determined that you have found the candidate for the job, take them on a tour of your office or business and introduce them to your staff members. This is a good way gaining an initial understanding of how the candidate might interact with your existing staff members.

## **Calling References**

This is the final (and arguably the most important) step to make before offering the job to the candidate. You should ask your candidate for at least three employment references and perhaps one character reference.

Call each reference contact and explain who you are and why you are calling. Then ask if they have a few moments to answer some questions about the candidate. You will want to find out information about punctuality, professionalism, skills, and their reason for leaving. Cross-reference this information with your interview notes to ensure consistency between the candidate and their reference.

## **Step Five: Hire Your Employee**

Provided their references are solid, now is the time to make them an offer of employment.

Call the candidate personally to offer them the job. Make sure you congratulate them and express your enthusiasm in welcoming them into your team. You will also need to follow up your conversation with a letter or email that includes the job offer document or contract. Your offer letter should include at a minimum, job title, start date, compensation, benefits, paid time off (vacations, holidays and paid time off), a copy of the employee handbook and a clear job description (which you should have already covered in detail in the interview process). Get a

signature on an acknowledgement that the employee handbook was received, read, understand and agreed to abide by.

In the case a candidate declines the job offer, you may wish to do a reference check on your second pick candidate and make them an offer.

Once the candidate accepts, you should have a solid **onboarding process** that 1) gets them into your company's system (W-2, I-9, state tax withholding forms, employee benefit forms, etc.) 2) gets them whatever tools/equipment (office/cubicle/workspace, computer, phone, tools, PPE, vehicle, etc.) they might need and gets them introduced to the people they'll be working with, along with whatever protocols are in place for communication, reporting etc.

## **Training Your Dream Employees**

Once you have landed your dream employees through a rigorous recruitment process, it is essential that you continue to invest in your decision by putting them through a thorough training process.

Training is an element of recruitment. A new employee's orientation and training sets the tone for their entire employment; this includes their impression of your business, its systems, and respect for its leaders. This has an impact on your

ability to retain good people and avoid unnecessary or redundant recruitment processes.

Too often, businesses rely on junior employees to train new ones without any guidelines or ‘curriculum.’ New employees are thrown into the deep end without clear expectations or an understanding of ‘how things are done around here.’

These elements affect how an employee perceives their own required level of effort or performance. A business that doesn’t give much thought to planning, expectations, and preparation will end up communicating to a new employee that the same lack of attention is expected from them.

Here are some things to ensure you implement when you create your comprehensive training system:

### **Prior Learning / Existing Knowledge**

Acknowledge your new employee’s prior learning, and don’t overestimate or underestimate their existing knowledge.

### **Choice of Trainer**

Make sure the person or people who will be training the new employees are sufficiently qualified and experienced. If an administrator is leading a salesperson’s training and orientation, consider asking another salesperson or more senior team member to assist on specific days or sessions.

## **Training Materials**

Have all the required training materials handy. This includes company manuals, industry guidebooks, common reference materials, work samples, and anything else that will aid in the training efforts.

## **Training Tools**

Also ensure you have the tools available to train your recruit. Will the training be held at their workstation, or another workstation? Do you have all the software you need? All the equipment required? Doing so will ensure the training runs smoothly and the time provided will be used effectively.

## **Time**

Provide more than ample time for training – including time for questions and elaboration. Rushing training benefits no one, including your profits.

## **Testing**

Consider including some ‘tests’ or checks to ensure the recruit understands each component of the training. Ask the trainer and the trainee to sign-off on each section.

## **The Big Picture**

Each team member’s role is part of a larger picture—the whole company. Ensure the trainee understands how their role contributes to the big picture on each level. If they are a junior

member of a department, they should understand how their job contributes to the department, as well as how the department contributes to the entire company.

### **Feedback**

The trainee should be able to ask questions and review information at any time, including after the training process. Create an environment that encourages open dialogue and encourages employees to ask questions when they are unsure of a task.

The other common mistake that many companies make is ending training after the first few weeks of a new recruit's employment.

Training is an ongoing process for every single member of your team and there should be a system or structure in place to ensure that staff training and development happens on a regular basis. This can include cross-training, employee development, and new systems orientation. Regular training not only benefits your staff and improves their performance, but it allows you, the business owner, to:

- Implement new policies + procedures
- Invest in your staff, thereby improving confidence and morale
- Evaluate staff performance at an individual and team level

- Reward staff based on performance improvements
- Provide a regular arena for feedback and discussion, including positive and negative experiences and issues

### **One-on-One Training + Evaluation**

An effective system of ongoing training may include weekly, monthly, or quarterly staff reviews. When conducted one-on-one, this provides a forum for regular communication with employees to review performance and identify areas for improvement. A one-on-one environment will encourage more open and honest dialogue than if the session were conducted as part of a team.

These sessions are valuable sources of information and insight into the strengths, weaknesses, and motivations of your team.

If you have a large staff, consider pairing junior staff with senior staff and establishing mentorship relationships. This is a powerful way to build the synergy of your team and frees you up from weekly meetings with each staff member. Instead, each senior staff member can report back to you on the results of their regular training sessions, and you only need to conduct these sessions with your senior staff.

### **Team Training**

Team training events are great team builders and provide insight into how your entire team interacts. These can take the form of “lunch and learns”, where senior staff or guest speakers conduct

an hour-long session with staff members, or more social team building exercises with a less formal program.

Team training exercises will shed light on the leaders and followers in an organization and bring together employees who may work outside of the office. These can be especially helpful if you and your senior staff do not see the team ‘in action’ daily.

## **Keeping Your Dream Employees**

Now that you have spent hours of time and potentially hundreds or thousands of dollars recruiting and training your staff, your human resource job is done, right?

I suppose you’ve done what you’ve set out to do: get the right people working for you. But what happens when those people get bored? Or stolen by another company? Or feel they’ve “done all they can do” at your company?

The final step in the overall recruitment process is employee retention. This includes keeping your employees satisfied, supporting their development, and giving them incentive to continuously improve their performance.

### **Environment**

The environment you create for your staff has a huge impact on your employee retention rates. This includes the interior design

and layout of your office or business, the lighting, plants, and kitchen amenities available. It also includes the culture of the company: What is the general working atmosphere? Are most people loud? Quiet? Is there a buzz or hum to the office space?

The bottom line is that employees should enjoy and feel comfortable coming to their workplace; they do spend most of their waking hours there.

Spending a little more on comfortable office furniture and amenities like coffee, tea, snacks, and social spaces will go a long way toward keeping your employees happy at work.

### **Recognition, Rewards, and Incentive Programs**

Did you know that many employees place more value on positive public recognition for a job well done than they do on salary?

Recognition and rewards are powerful tools when it comes to keeping employees happy. Positive feedback from those in more senior positions has a higher perceived value than a 3-5% salary increase, and it costs the business little to nothing to implement.

Incentive programs are a formalized way of rewarding employees for their achievements and successes. Clear targets and milestones are identified and when an individual or team reaches those milestones they are rewarded with bonuses or prizes.

Recognition, rewards, and incentive programs are an important part of employee retention, as well as team building.

### **Professional Development Programs**

Another common reason that employees choose to leave their positions is professional development. Many feel they need to move to another company to develop their careers or gain more responsibility. They may not necessarily dislike their current role but become bored or stagnated and believe they have ‘done all they can do’ at that company.

Keeping good people means providing opportunities for growth and advancement within your company. This benefits the company because you can hire from within and save money and time on recruiting and training new staff. It also benefits your employees and increases their loyalty toward your business.

Professional development programs are an important part of staff retention, but they are also an important part of business growth and development. A company with staff who are always increasing their knowledge and improving their skills will stay on the ‘cutting edge’ of their industry and have an advantage over the competition.

Ongoing training and development should be a primary focus for any growing business.

Here's why:

- Increases productivity
- Increases staff retention
- Increases workplace safety and morale
- Increases customer service
- Increases sales

Professional development programs typically focus on the big picture ambitions of the company and its staff members. The longer-term goals and career ambitions are recorded and taken into consideration.

Professional development can be easily worked into your ongoing one-on-one training systems. Keep a folder or binder for each staff member that outlines current role responsibilities, short- and long-term goals, and areas for improvement, and review it during your weekly or monthly meetings. Identify specific areas for growth and develop plans of action for that growth.

For example, if your marketing assistant wants to grow into a marketing coordinator or manager role and needs to improve her people management skills, consider putting her through a management course.

Maintaining this program doesn't have to be a time-consuming task. With some simple system tools and a commitment to regularly scheduled meetings, you can have a clear and effective program for your staff.

- Evolving job description documents to monitor role responsibilities and tasks
- Regular performance evaluations
- Goal planning worksheets
- Continuing education programs at local business schools
- Regular meetings between staff and supervisors
- Rewards and incentives

## Five

# Profits Through Building a TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More)

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The people you employ contribute, directly or indirectly, daily to the strength and vitality of your business. You can't run your business alone, so you rely on their skills and support.

In simpler words, your employees help you to make money.

But your employees are not just the people who arrive at your office every day and exchange their effort for a paycheck. Their role is not just to build capacity and sell more or serve more.

Your employees are part of a potentially powerful group of people that you can leverage to put your business on the fast track to success. Your staff is more than the people who work for you. They are members of your team—the group of people who are collectively working to achieve the same objective or reach the same vision.

I say they are more than just employees because their collective, cohesive value is much higher than their individual worth.

We all know that more people working on the same task will ensure the task is completed faster. In business, when you have more people working together on the same task, you save time, increase brainpower, and ultimately, **make more money**.

Your team is the engine that will deliver your lifestyle, build your wealth, enhance your identity in the community as a business owner and ultimately make you a success or a failure. Your best business strategy is only as good as your team. Build a strong, loyal team and treat them well for your success. This is a secret that most business owners don't know.

## Corporate Culture

Corporate Culture has become a common buzzword when it comes to building a successful business and rightly so.

Your corporate culture is the environment in which you run your business and the environment in which your team members work. It is rooted in the vision, mission, and beliefs of the organization, and dictates the “kind of office” and “kind of people” that work in that office.

Corporate culture is something that typically develops organically. The business owner and senior employees create a positive or negative environment based solely on who they are as

people and how they behave as leaders. You simply can't avoid creating some type of corporate culture when you run a business. You can, however, avoid creating a negative or unproductive corporate culture. Whether you are just starting out or seeking to improve your workplace, you do have control over the type of environment in which you run your business.

Like most things in business, this won't happen overnight. However, with a clear idea of where you want to go, and what you want to create, you'll be well on your way to getting there. You are the seed of everything that happens in your business – the culture, the mood, the morale, the productivity, the profitability – every freaking thing. As I tell my clients repeatedly, **“everything starts with you and rolls down hill from there.”**

## **Vision**

Your company's vision statement should be a bold, clear, short sentence that every single one of your employees knows and understands. It is a roadmap to your idea of success; if you don't know what that looks like, how will you know when you achieve it? **If you don't/can't declare what will satisfy you in terms of success, you will never be satisfied.**

If your goal is to create a highly profitable company, what does highly profitable mean? \$1 million in annual sales? \$3 million in annual profit?

Do you seek to become the industry leader in sprocket production? How will this be measured? How many sprockets will you have to produce to reach this goal?

The vision statement is a short summary of the long-term objective of the company—what the company will look like, produce, achieve; it is how you know the company is “successful.”

Many companies either do not have a vision statement or they keep it a secret from their employees. It is only discussed in board meetings or management meetings. For a team to collectively work toward a goal, they need to know what the big picture objective is. They need to have buy-in in the company’s direction and be communicated with on a regular basis. An employee can only be engaged and empowered by knowing what part of the vision/mission is theirs. What’s in it for your employees if all they get is a paycheck? Would you give your heart and soul for someone else’s vision if all you got was a paycheck? Didn’t think so.

Be proud of your vision. Keep it visible for staff, post it on the wall, include it in internal communications, and connect day-to-day activities to it as often as possible. Communicate with employees in showing them their roles in the bigger picture and how they’re contributing to the vision that is bigger than you and them.

## Sample Vision Statements

Here are some real examples of corporate vision statements:

Apple's vision statement is **"to make the best products on earth, and to leave the world better than we found it"**.

This statement reflects Apple's commitment to creating high-quality products that improve people's lives.

Costco's vision statement can be summarized as **"to be a place where efficient buying and operating practices give members access to unmatched savings,"** emphasizing providing high-quality products at the lowest possible prices through a membership model, with a focus on member satisfaction and value through exclusive services and a wide selection of merchandise

"To build the largest and most complete Amateur Radio community site on the Internet." – eHam.net

Notice, none of them talk about profits, wealth or making money. If that's your focus, no one's going to be interested in helping you join the lifestyles of the "rich and shameless."

## Creating a Vision Statement

The process of creating a vision statement is something that you can work through alone, or in collaboration with your team. It is highly recommended to review the draft vision statement with

your employees to ensure they understand and support the goals and objectives of the company.

Keep the following points in mind when crafting your vision statement:

- **Think big** – Why did you start or buy this business? What was your dream or purpose in doing so?
- **Think long-term** – Vision statements should last five to 10 or even 25 years
- **Be specific** – Use numbers, dates, ratings systems, and other ways of measuring success
- **Be succinct** – Use clear, short, simple sentences that are easy to repeat and remember

## **Mission**

Your mission statement is a general description of how you are going to achieve your vision. This is a longer and more detailed statement that should include what your business is, who your customers are, and how you are different from (better than!) the competition.

### **Sample Mission Statements**

“The Mission of McGill University is the advancement of learning through teaching, scholarship and service to society: by offering to outstanding undergraduate and graduate students the best education available; by carrying out scholarly activities judged to be excellent when measured against the highest international standards; and by providing service to society in

those ways for which we are well-suited by virtue of our academic strengths.” – McGill University, Montreal, Canada

“Starbucks purchases and roasts high-quality whole bean coffees and sells them along with fresh, rich-brewed, Italian style espresso beverages, a variety of pastries and confections, and coffee-related accessories and equipment -- primarily through its company-operated retail stores. In addition to sales through our company-operated retail stores, Starbucks sells whole bean coffees through a specialty sales group and supermarkets. Additionally, Starbucks produces and sells bottled Frappuccino® coffee drink and a line of premium ice creams through its joint venture partnerships and offers a line of innovative premium teas produced by its wholly owned subsidiary, Tazo Tea Company. The Company's objective is to establish Starbucks as the most recognized and respected brand in the world.” – Starbucks

### **Creating Your Mission Statement:**

Here is a recommended process for completing your mission statement:

**Step One:** List your company’s core strengths and weaknesses. What do you do well? What do you need to work on, or avoid doing?

**Step Two:** Who are your primary customers? Describe the types of customers you serve, both internal and external.

**Step Three:** What do your customers think of your strengths? What strengths are most important to them? Go ahead and ask them if you need to.

**Step Four:** Connect the strength that each customer values with its customer type. Write it in a sentence. Combine any redundancies.

**Step Five:** Organize your sentences in order of importance

**Step Six:** Combine your sentences into a paragraph or two. Elaborate on points as needed. This is your draft mission statement.

**Step Seven:** Consult with your staff and customers and ask for their feedback. Do employees support the statement? Can they act on it? Do customers want to do business with a company with this mission statement? Does it make sense?

**Step Eight:** Incorporate the feedback received and refine the statement until you are happy with it. Then publish it – everywhere!

## Culture or Values Statements

Your culture or values statement is the next step in the process. It describes how you and your staff will go about taking action (your mission statement) to achieve your objective (your vision statement).

Much like every family has their own belief system and way of doing things, from cooking to cleaning to raising kids, every company has their own set of values when it comes to running a business. It reflects the unique personality of the organization.

## **Sample Culture Statement**

### **Our Culture**

At John Deere, we recognize that our greatest strength lies in our people. Together, we create exceptional products and solutions that enable our customers to fulfill the food, fiber, fuel, and infrastructure needs of communities worldwide.

We believe in the power of our core values—Integrity, Quality, Humanity, Commitment, and Innovation—to guide us in meeting our higher purpose: We Run so Life can Leap Forward.

John Deere & Company

At Remington Arms, we strive to maintain a culture of innovation, excellence, and respect. We strive to create an environment where everyone is comfortable to share ideas, express their opinions, and work together to achieve our goals.

Remington Arms Company

Serving our customers and our local communities is a privilege. Serving with consistency, integrity and excellence is a responsibility. Great service means exceeding customer

expectations, giving back to our local communities generously and supporting our employees and partners in every way we can.

Our company values are our personal values. They're recorded in the choices we've made, the relationships we've developed and the contributions we've made to our local communities. These values inspire us to continually push the boundaries of excellence in coffee — and to consistently deliver on our commitment to be the best coffee company in America.

Community Coffee Company

## **Creating Your Culture Statement**

Involve your team in creating your company's culture or values statement. Generally, this is a point-form document that reflects the beliefs of the company, its employees, and its customers.

It can be helpful to think about the type of people you currently employ, as well as the ones you may wish to employ. What are they like? What are their belief systems? What are their most important values?

Remember that the culture or values statement is usually the longest of the three statements—and that's okay.

## **Your Team Leaders**

The strength of a team lies in the strength of the people who lead it. No group of people is effective without strong leadership, just

like no business is effective without a strong owner or management team.

Building a strong team means knowing who your leaders are, both in job description and natural ability.

Understanding the strength of your natural leaders and the skills of your natural followers will allow you to strategically structure your team for maximum effectiveness and efficiency. It will give insight into who is best suited for management promotions, project management, and which team members can assemble and motivate their peers.

Your leaders need to have a high degree of passion for your product or service and truly believe in the company's vision. They need to be able to handle a high level of responsibility and manage a range of people to achieve a common goal.

Your leaders are your team builders. They present new ideas, build consensus, and encourage the involvement of others. Without leaders, all you have is a disheveled mob.

Types of Leaders

There are four main types, or styles, of leaders. Chances are you've experienced each type at some point in your career.

| Type              | Description   | Ideal Use   |
|-------------------|---|---|
| <b>Autocratic</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Classical or "old-school" approach</li> <li>› Manager holds all power and decision-making authority</li> <li>› No employee consultation or input</li> <li>› Orders are obeyed</li> <li>› Rewards/punishment structure</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› New, untrained employees</li> <li>› Detailed orders and instructions are required</li> <li>› No other leadership style has been effective</li> <li>› Limited time available</li> <li>› Department restructuring</li> <li>› High production requirements</li> </ul> |

## **Communication**

The only way to build and maintain a strong team is through strong, consistent communication. This is often an overlooked or neglected aspect of business management and is easily forgotten during periods of high stress or heavy workload.

Avoid letting communication fall on the backburner by creating a regular meeting schedule and sticking to it. Depending on the size and type of your business, daily, weekly, or monthly team meetings are an important cornerstone of a strong team. Regularly scheduled team meetings are like Sunday dinners with a busy family. They give you, the owner, a regular forum with

|                      |  |   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Bureaucratic</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› “By the book” approach</li> <li>› All is done to specific procedures/policies</li> <li>› All tasks outside policies referred to higher management</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Routine tasks performed</li> <li>› Standards and procedures need to be communicated regularly</li> <li>› Safety or training</li> <li>› Cash handling</li> <li>› Dangerous equipment</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Laissez-faire</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› “Hands-off” approach</li> <li>› Employees have almost total freedom</li> <li>› Little direction or guidance is provided</li> <li>› Employees must make own decisions, set own goals</li> <li>› Employees must solve own problems</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Highly skilled and experienced employees</li> <li>› Employees are highly driven and ambitious</li> <li>› Consultants are being managed</li> <li>› Employees are trustworthy</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Democratic</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› “Participatory approach”</li> <li>› Employees part of decision-making process</li> <li>› Employees well informed</li> <li>› Leader has final say, but involved others</li> <li>› Collaborative approach</li> <li>› Encourages employee development with guidance and assistance from leader</li> <li>› Leader recognizes and rewards achievement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Collaborative environment</li> <li>› Employee development and growth is the focus</li> <li>› Changes or problems affect employees and require their input to create a solution</li> <li>› Team building and participation is encouraged</li> </ul> |

your staff to implement company-wide training initiatives, announce results, establish goals and targets, or share new visions or directions. They also give your staff a forum to share feedback and air grievances.

## **Effective Team Meetings**

By now you're probably thinking, "Sure, I hear some company's team meetings are effective, but we tried them, and it didn't work," or "I held regular team meetings, but after a while, no one showed up."

There is a difference between team meetings held for the sake of having team meetings and well-prepared team meetings with a purpose.

You need to start holding team meetings with a purpose.

## **Establish a Schedule That Everyone Can Commit To**

Scheduling is potentially the biggest challenge when trying to set up a team meeting. Often, all your staff members are busy going in eight different directions to fulfill their roles and operating on dramatically different schedules.

This is one reason why regular team meetings are important. Ad hoc meetings require ad hoc scheduling and reduce the likelihood that all your team members will be able to attend.

Ask your team to block off one hour (or two) each week (or month) for the team meeting in a time slot that is convenient for everyone. Establish a clear attendance expectation from everyone. This will exclude that time slot from the scheduling of other meetings and avoid conflict.

If you find that a team meeting is not necessary one week, you can always cancel it.

### **Know Your Purpose**

Each team meeting should have a purpose and clear objectives.

Is it to educate? Build consensus? Gather feedback?

Once you have established a purpose for a particular meeting, send an agenda to your staff confirming the meeting and outlining your objectives. This is a good time to ask if anyone has a subject they would like to raise at the meeting.

If you find you do not have a clear purpose or objective, ask yourself if a team meeting is the best use of time for that week and consider postponing it to the next regularly scheduled time slot.

### **Plan Each and Every Minute**

The biggest complaint from employees about team meetings is the length. Too often team meetings run out of control and end up taking three hours instead of one. You will quickly lose team focus and respect for the regular meeting this way. By establishing a clear agenda and staying on topic, you can run an efficient, succinct meeting.

Your detailed agenda should include:

- meeting purpose or objective
- list of topics and associated speakers

- list of decisions that need to be made/agreed to
- time allocation for each topic
- opportunity for additional topics at the end

Circulate your draft agenda in advance of the meeting and request input and feedback. When all team members have reviewed and contributed to the agenda, you will increase their level of ownership and buy-in into the process.

### **Establish the Facilitator**

Choose one person to chair the meeting and keep it on track. This is generally the business owner or a senior member of the team with some authority over junior staff and a high level of respect.

It is the responsibility of the facilitator, or chairperson, to create an environment of open dialogue and trust, and to keep the meeting on schedule.

### **Create a Follow-up Schedule**

Assign the task of taking detailed meeting minutes to a team member or rotate this responsibility on a regular basis. It is important to record what happens in team meetings, just as you would in a client-related business meeting.

In the minutes, establish a system for tracking the action items that arise from decisions made in the meeting. This can be set up as a simple chart in a Word doc or a Google Sheet.

| Decision | Action | Responsibility | Deadline |
|----------|--------|----------------|----------|
|          |        |                |          |

Make sure that these responsibilities are assigned and agreed upon in the meeting and clear deadlines are established. Reviewing or following up on this chart can serve as a regular topic during team meetings.

Circulate meeting minutes to all attendees and ask for input or revisions. You may wish to circulate meeting minutes with the agenda for the next team meeting and gather feedback at the same time.

## **Motivations + Incentives**

A big challenge in team building is coming up with new ways to foster and maintain a high level of motivation. How do you keep teams of people excited and driven to succeed over long periods of time? How do you keep your team motivated to improve their performance and increase their achievements?

It is important to note that we're not just talking about individuals but teams of people working together. It is simple to motivate a single person, but an entire team of motivated people will generate significantly higher results.

The key here is to give incentives for individual and team accomplishments. Incentives that offer rewards based on collective achievement require people to work together and motivate each other to succeed.

Before we start talking about monetary and incentive-based rewards, it's important to look at motivational factors that are not incentive-driven.

### **Room to Work**

Employees who feel their managers and supervisors believe and trust in their abilities are happier and will always perform at a higher level than those who do not. They are motivated to “prove them right” and feel supported in their efforts.

Micromanagement quickly reduces morale. It is essential that you and your managers clearly express confidence in your team members. You hired them to do a job, perform a role, so you must ensure they have the space to do so.

When you put effective systems in place and establish clear expectations, you create a clear context or boundary system for employees to work within. They understand the decision-making hierarchy and the general way ‘things are done around here.’

Your team should be encouraged to take initiative and to take risks within this context. You have hired your team based on

their skills and intellectual capabilities and thus should be able to trust in their choices and decision-making abilities.

### **Incentives**

Incentives are great motivators. An incentive is a reason to perform or act in a certain way. For example, if your team increases sales by 40% by month's end, they will be treated to an expensive dinner.

Incentives need to be specific and have deadlines to be effective. In the example above, sales need to increase by 40% by the end of the month for the team to receive their dinner. If sales only increase by 30%, or if they increase by 40% at the end of the second month, the team does not earn their reward.

Time-specific incentives increase the sense of urgency and encourage staff to work harder to achieve the objective. If the incentive is not time-bound, there is no reason to work faster or harder, since staff will assume that they will reach their milestone "eventually."

Rarity is also a key component of effective incentive-based team building. If the reward is ongoing (i.e., if staff receive an expensive dinner every month sales are over \$75,000), then "there's always next time." There is a lesser incentive to push performance to receive the reward. Some team members may care one month but not the next.

## **Monetary Incentives**

Bonuses and salary increases are a popular way to give your team an incentive to perform. These can include:

- Commissions
- Bonuses for completing a challenging project, or hitting a target
- Rewards for highest producing employee
- Salary increases based on met targets

It's up to you how you choose to structure your monetary incentives, based on your budget and resources. Remember to ensure that the terms of each incentive are clearly outlined and that both parties (you and your employee) understand the agreement.

A caveat on increasing salaries. Giving raises especially raises that are above market rates can be disincentives. Salaries or base pay are generally seen as the “minimum pay for minimum production.” Employees tend to see salaries or base pay as some form of entitlement and anything done above and beyond the minimum expectations should be rewarded. I usually advocate for market rate salaries or base pay with performance bonuses for unusually positive results. Bonuses should be earned based on laid out metrics that are measured to determine merit. Bonuses or base pay that are a given regardless of performance don't produce outstanding performance. They generally produce mediocrity and are next to impossible to reverse.

## **Gift Rewards**

Physical, tangible gifts are an inexpensive way to reward your team for achievements and improvement. These rewards show that you have given some level of thought to what they might enjoy or appreciate in exchange for a job well done. They're also a great way to surprise employees.

Here are some ideas:

- Spa gift certificates
- Books (consider motivational or business-related topics)
- Meals (lunch or breakfast)
- Other gift certificates (gas, food, meals, local shops)
- Movie or theatre tickets
- Weekend getaway (hotel, meals, etc.)
- Flowers
- Gym memberships

Ask the employees what they'd like as a gift bonus. I had an employee who had been a drummer in an 80's rock band. His dream was a set of electric drums that he could practice/play on at home and not disturb his wife and children. He performed above and beyond the desired results. I had the drum set brought to his office when he was out and had it set up. When he returned to his office, he was so elated he played his drum kit for several hours. He was most grateful and continued to look for ways to outperform expectations.

## Six

# Profiting from Internet Marketing

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Is your business online? If not, it should be.

The Internet is today's primary consumer research tool. If your business does not have an online presence, it is harder for customers to find and choose your business over the competition. With 95% of North Americans online, it is no wonder that individuals and businesses in all industries are looking to the internet to enhance their marketing strategies.

Luckily, it has never been easier to establish and maintain a comprehensive online presence. Internet marketing, also referred to as online marketing, digital marketing, online advertising, or e-marketing, is the fastest growing medium for marketing.

But it is not just company websites that users are viewing. Blogs, consumer reviews, chat rooms, and a variety of social media have exploded in popularity.

The Internet is a very powerful tool for businesses if used strategically and effectively. It can be a cost-saving alternative to

traditional marketing approaches and may be the most effective way to communicate with your target consumer.

A major advantage of the Internet is that you are always open. Users can access your business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and depending on your business and the purpose of the website, visitors can also purchase goods at any time.

## **Internet Marketing for Everyone**

The Internet is a great way to create product and brand awareness, develop relationships with consumers, and share and exchange information. You can't afford to miss out on online marketing opportunities because your competition is likely already there.

Internet marketing can take on many different forms. By creating and maintaining a website for your business, you are reaching out to a new consumer base. You have full control over the messaging users are receiving, and you have a global reach.

Internet marketing can be very cost effective. If you have a strong email database of your customers, an e-newsletter is cheaper and more effective than post mail. You can deliver time-sensitive materials immediately and can update your subscribers instantaneously.

## **Top 10 Websites Globally (Dec. 2022)**

1. Google
2. YouTube
3. Facebook
4. Twitter
5. Instagram
6. Baidu
7. Wikipedia
8. Yandex
9. Yahoo
10. WhatsApp

You will notice some of these websites are search engines. An increasing number of consumers are first researching products, services, and companies online, whether it be to compare products, complete a sale, or look for a future employer. Most people today of *any* age group obtain all their information online, including news, weather, product research, etc. The remaining sites are interactive sites where users can upload information for social networking, or information sharing.

## **Internet Marketing Strategies**

Internet marketing, like all other elements of your marketing campaign, needs to have clear goals and objectives. Creating brand and product awareness will not happen overnight so it is

important to budget accordingly, ensuring there is money set aside for maintenance of the website and analytics.

Be flexible with ideas and options—do your research first, try out different options, then test and measure the results. Metrics and evaluations can be updated almost immediately and should be monitored regularly. By keeping an eye out for what online marketing strategies are working and which are not, it will be easier to create a balanced portfolio of marketing techniques. You might find that in certain geographical areas, certain marketing strategies are more effective than others.

This list is by no means the full extent of options available for marketing online, but it is a good place to start when deciding which options are best suited to your company.

### **Create a website**

The primary use for the Internet is information seeking, so you should provide consumers with first-hand information about your company. You have more control over your branding and messaging and can also collect visitor information to determine what types of Internet users are accessing your website.

### **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**

SEO is the process of getting "free" traffic from natural or organic search results on search engines. It targets high quality leads and brings higher conversion rates. If your business can't

be found on the first page of a search result, then prospects won't know you even exist.

Since search engines comprise 50% of the most visited sites globally, you can go through your website to make it more search engine friendly with the aim to increase your organic search listing. An organic search listing refers to listings in search engine results that appear in order or relevance to the entered search terms.

### **Pay Per Click Advertising**

If you find that visitors access your website after searching for it first on a search engine, then it may be beneficial to advertise on these websites and bid on keywords associated with your company.

These advertisements will appear at the top or bottom of the page of the search results on a search engine. You can have control over the specific geographic area you wish to target, set a monthly budget, and have the option on only being charged when a user clicks on your link.

### **Online Directories**

Listing your business in an online directory can be an inexpensive and effective online marketing strategy.

However, you need to be able to distinguish your company from the plethora of competitors that may exist. Likely, you will need

to complement this strategy with other brand awareness campaigns.

### **Online Ads (i.e., banner ads on other websites)**

These advertisements can have positive or negative effects based on the reputation and consumer perception of the website on which you are advertising. These ads should be treated like print ads you may place in local newspapers or other publications.

### **Online Videos**

With the global popularity of sites such as YouTube, it is evident that people love researching online and being able to find video clips of the information they are seeking. Depending on your small business, you may want to upload informational videos or tutorials about your products or services.

### **Blogging**

Blogging can be a fun and interactive way to communicate with users. A blog is traditionally a website maintained by an individual user that has regular entries, like a diary. These entries can be commentary, descriptions of events, pictures, videos, and more. Companies can use blogging to keep users updated on current information and allow them to post comments on your blog. If blogging is something you wish to invest in, make sure that it is regularly updated and monitored.

## **Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid**

### **Failure to measure ROI**

Which metrics are you using? Are your visitors motivated to purchase or sign up? If the benefits of your online campaign are not greater than the costs incurred, then you may wish to re-evaluate your strategy.

### **Poor Web Design**

This can leave a poor impression of your company on the visitor. A poor design could result in frustration on the visitors' part if they are not able to easily find something on your site to search. That leads to distrust. If consumers do not trust your company or your website, you will not be able to complete the sale and develop a longer relationship with that customer. You also need to include privacy protection and security when building trust.

This also includes ensuring all information on the website is current and having customer service available if users are having trouble or cannot find the information they are seeking. This could be as simple as providing a 'Contact Us' email or phone number for support.

### **Becoming locked into an advertising strategy early**

Remember your marketing mix when creating a marketing strategy and avoid putting all your eggs in one basket. Online marketing is a very valuable tool, but depending on your business

and your target markets, other marketing campaigns may be the best option for you. Especially if this is your first time making a significant investment into the online sector, you want to remain flexible and able to adapt your strategy based off feedback received by researching and analyzing different options.

### **Acting without researching**

Similar to becoming locked into an advertising strategy early, this mistake implies not dutifully testing and researching different online marketing options. For example, if your target consumer is aged 65+ and you are spending all your marketing efforts into creating a blog (where the average ages of blog visitors is 30 - 39), then you are likely not going to have a successful campaign.

### **Assuming more visitors means more sales**

You must go back to your original goals and the purpose of your company. More visitors may not mean more sales if your website is used primarily for information and consumers purchase their products elsewhere. This is also vice versa. You could have an increase in sales without an increase in unique visitors if your current consumer base is very loyal and willing to spend lots of money.

Often people will collect information online about products they wish to purchase because it is easier to compare options, but they purchase in person. They might just be coming to your site for

information, so you must be competitive with brick-and-mortar stores.

### **Failing to follow up with customers that purchase**

Return sales can account for up to 60% of total revenue. It's no wonder that organizations are always trying to maintain loyal customers and may have customer relationship management systems in place. It's easier to get a happy customer to purchase again than it is to get a new customer to purchase for the first time.

### **Not incorporating online marketing into your business plan**

By ensuring that your online marketing plan is fully integrated and accurately represents your organization's overall goals and objectives, the business plan will be more comprehensive and encompassing.

### **Trying to discover your own best practices**

It is very beneficial to use trial and error to determine the best online strategy from your company, but do not be afraid to do your research and learn from what others have already figured out. There will be many cases where someone was in a very similar position as you and they may have some suggestions and secrets that they wish to share. Researching in advance can save a great deal of time and money.

### **Spending too much too fast**

Although it may be cheaper than traditional marketing approaches, internet marketing does have its costs. You must consider the software and hardware designs, maintenance, distribution, supply chain management, and the time that will be required. You don't want to spend your entire marketing budget all at once.

### **Getting distracted by metrics that are not relevant**

As we will discuss in the following section, there are endless reports and measurables that you can analyze to determine the effectiveness of your campaign. You will need to establish which measurables are relevant to your marketing.

### **Testing and Measuring Online**

As with any element of your marketing campaign, you will need to track your metrics and measure them against your investment. Otherwise, how will you know if your online marketing is successful?

These metrics, or KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) need to be recorded and analyzed as to how they impact your overall return on investment.

Some examples of metrics are:

- New account setups
- Conversion rates
- Page stickiness
- Contact us form completion

Due to the popularity of online marketing and the importance of having a strong web presence, companies have demanded more sophisticated tracking tools and metrics for their online activities. It can be very difficult to not only know what to measure, but also HOW to measure.

Thankfully, it is easier than ever to get the information you need with the many types of software and services available, including Google Analytics, which are free and relatively accurate.

## 8 Metrics to Track

The following are the key measurables to watch for when testing and measuring your internet marketing efforts:

### **Conversions**

How many leads has your online presence generated, and of those leads, how many were turned into sales? Ultimately, your campaign needs to have a positive impact on your business.

Regardless of the specific purpose of the campaign – from lead generation and service sign-up to blog entries – you need to know

how many customers are taking the desired action in response to your efforts. Your tracking tool will be able to provide you with this information.

## **Spend**

If you are not making a profit, or at least breaking even, from your internet marketing efforts, then you need to change your strategy. Redistribute your financial resources and reconsider your motives and objectives for your online campaign.

An easy way to do this analysis is to divide your total spend by conversions. This could also be broken down by product. You could also use a tracking tool and view reports on the 'per visit value of every click,' from every type of source. Your sources can include organic/search engine referrals, direct visit (i.e., person typed your web address into their address bar), or email/newsletter.

## **Attention**

You need to keep a close eye on how much attention you are getting on your website. One of the best ways to analyze this would be to compare unique visitors to page views per visit to time on site. How many people are visiting? How many pages are they viewing? What pages are they viewing? How much time are they spending on the site?

A unique visitor is any one person who visits the website for a given amount of time. For example, if Evelyn visits her online

banking website daily for an entire month, over that one-month period, she is one unique visitor (not 30 visitors).

You may also want to incorporate referring sources as well – the places online that refer customers to your website. You'll be able to determine what referring sources offer the 'best' visitors.

## **Top Referrals**

Know who is doing the best job of referring clients to your website *and* note how they are doing this. Is it the prominence of the link? Positioning? Reputation of the referring company?

Understanding where most of your visitors are coming from will allow you focus on those types of sources when you increase your referral sites. They also allow you to gain a better understanding of your online market and target audience.

## **Bounce Rate**

The bounce rate is the number of people who visit the homepage of your website, but do not visit other pages. If you have a high bounce rate, you either have all the necessary information on your homepage, or you are not giving your customers a reason to click further.

## **Errors**

It is important that you track the errors that visitors receive while trying to access or view your website. For example, if someone

links to your website, but makes a spelling error in typing the link, your users will see an error page in their browser and will not ultimately make it to your website.

You can also receive reports on errors that customers make when trying to type in your website address in their browser. You may wish to buy the domains with common spelling mistakes and link those addresses to your true homepage. This will increase overall traffic and potential conversions.

## **Onsite Search Terms**

If you have a 'search website' function on your website, it is useful to monitor which terms users are most frequently searching. This can provide valuable insight into the user friendliness of your site and your website's navigation system. This information should be included in the traffic reporting tool.

## **Abandon Rates**

If you provide users with the option to purchase something on your website (i.e., shopping cart), then you can track the point along the purchasing process where people decided to not go through with the sale.

This could be at the first step of receiving the order summary and total, or further when stating shipping options. By obtaining this information, a company can reorganize or revamp their website to make the sales process more fluid and possibly encourage more purchases.

Here are the three main questions you should be asking yourself when evaluating your website presence:

Who visits my website?

Where do visitors come from?

Which pages are viewed?

## Seven

# Immediate Sales

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If you're a business owner, you're also a salesperson.

You've had to sell the bank to get them to loan you your start-up capital. You've had to sell the best employees on why they should work for your business. You've had to convince your business partner, spouse, and friends why your business idea is a good one.

Now you must repeatedly sell your product or service to your customers.

The ability to sell effectively and efficiently is one talent every successful business owner has cultivated and continues to develop. It can be a complicated and time-consuming task—one that you will have to continually work on throughout your career to be (and stay) successful.

Fortunately, making sales is a step-by-step process that can be learned, customized, and continuously improved. There are a wide range of tools available to help and support your sales efforts.

You don't have to be the most outgoing, enthusiastic person to be successful at sales. You don't even have to be a good public

speaker. All you need is an understanding of the basic sales process and a genuine passion for what you are selling.

## **Sales 101**

As mentioned previously, making sales is a process. There are clear, step-by-step actions that can be taken which will result in a sale.

The sales process varies according to the type of business, type of customers, and type of product or service that is offered; however, the core steps are the same. Similarly, sales training varies from individual to individual, but the core skills and abilities remain the same.

Here is a basic seven-step process that you can follow or fine tune to suit your unique products and services. Remember that each step is important and builds on the step previous. It is essential to become adept at each step, instead of solely focusing on closing the sale.

### **1. Preparation**

Make sure you have prepared for your meeting, presentation, or day on the sales floor. You have complete control of this part of the sales process so it is important to do everything you can to set the stage for your success.

- Understand your product or service inside and out.

- Prepare all the necessary materials and organize them neatly.
- Keep your place of business tidy and organized. Reface product on shelves.
- Ensure you appear professional and well-groomed.
- Do some research on your potential client and brainstorm ways to find common ground.

## **2. Build a Relationship**

The first few minutes you spend with a potential customer will set the stage for the rest of your interaction. First impressions are everything. Your goal in the second step is to relax the customer and begin to develop a relationship with them. Establishing a real relationship with your customer will create trust.

- Make a great first impression: shake hands, make eye contact, and introduce yourself.
- Remain confident and professional, but also personable.
- Mirror their speech and behavior.
- Begin with general questions and small talk.
- Show interest in them and their place of business.
- Notice and comment on positives.
- Find some common ground on which to relate.

## **3. Discuss Needs + Wants**

Once you have spent a few moments getting to know your prospect, start asking open-ended questions to discover some of their needs and wants. If they have come to you on the sales floor,

ask what brought them in the store. If you are meeting them to present your product or service, ask why they are interested in, or what criteria they have in mind for that product or service.

- If you are making a sales presentation, ask for a few moments at the outset to outline the purpose of your visit, as well as how you have structured the presentation.
- Listen intently and repeat back information you are not sure you understand.
- Ask open-ended questions to get them talking. The longer they talk, the more insight they are providing you into their needs and purchase motivations.
- Ask clarifying questions about their responses.
- If you become sure the customer is going to buy your product or service, begin to ask questions specific to the offering (i.e., What size/color do you prefer?)

#### **4. Present the Solution**

Once you have a solid understanding of what they are looking for, or what issue they are looking to resolve, you can begin to present the solution: your product or service.

- Explain how your product or service will solve their problem or meet their needs. If several products apply, begin by presenting the mid-level product.
- Illustrate your points with anecdotes about other happy customers or awards the product or service has earned.
- Use hypothetical examples featuring your customer. Encourage them to picture a scenario after their purchase.

- Begin by describing the benefits of the product, then follow up with features and advantages.
- Watch your customer's behavior as you speak and ask further qualifying questions in response to body language and verbal comments.
- Give the customer an opportunity to ask you questions or provide feedback about each product or service after you have described or explained it.
- Ask closed-ended questions to gain agreement.

## **5. Overcome Objections**

As you present the product or service, take note of potential objections by asking open-ended questions and monitoring body language. Expect that objections will arise and prepare for it. Consider brainstorming a list of all potential objections and writing down your responses.

- Repeat the objection back to the customer to ensure you understand them correctly.
- Empathize with what they have said and then provide a response that overcomes the objection.
- Confirm that the answer you have provided has overcome their objection by repeating yourself.

## The Eight Most Common Objections

1. **The product or service does not seem valuable to me.**
2. **There is no reason for me to act now. I will wait.**
3. **It's safest not to make a decision right away.**
4. **There is not enough money for the purchase.**
5. **The competitor or another department offers a better product.**
6. **There are internal issues between people or departments.**
7. **The relationship with the decision maker is strained.**
8. **There is an existing contract in place with another business.**

## 6. Close

This is an important part of the sales process that should be handled delicately. Deciding when to close is a judgment call that must be made in the moment during the sale. Ideally, you have presented a solution to their problem, overcome objections, and have the customer in a place where they are ready to buy.

Here are some questions to ask before you close the sale:

- Does my prospect agree that there is value in my product or service?
- Does my prospect understand the features and benefits of the product or service?
- Are there any remaining objections that must be handled?
- What other factors could influence my prospect's decision to buy?

- Have I minimized the risk involved in the purchase and provided some level of urgency?

Once you have determined it is time to make the sale, here are some sample statements you can use to get the process rolling:

- So, should we get started?
- Shall I grab a new one from the back?
- If you just give me your credit card, I can take care of the transaction while you continue browsing.
- When would you like the product delivered?
- We can begin next month if we receive payment by the end of the week.
- Can I email you a draft contract tomorrow?

## **7. Service + Follow-up**

Once you have made the sale, your work is not over. You want to ensure that that customer will become a loyal, repeat customer and that they will refer their friends to your business.

Ask them to be in your customer database and keep in touch with regular newsletters. Follow up with a phone call or drop by to ask how they are enjoying the product or service and if they have any further questions or needs you can assist them with.

This contact opportunity will also allow you ask for a referral or a cross-sell. In the very least, it will ensure you are continuing to foster and build a relationship with the client.

## Cross-selling

Cross-selling is simply inviting your customers to spend more money in your business by purchasing additional products or services. This could include more of the same product, complementary products, or impulse items.

Regardless, cross-selling is an effective way to increase profits and create loyal clients, without spending any money to acquire the business. These clients are already purchasing from you which means they perceive value in what you have to offer, so take the information you have gained in the sales process and offer them a little bit more.

You experience cross-selling daily. From “Do you want fries with that?” to “Have you heard about our product protection program?” companies across the globe have tapped into and trained their staff on the value of the cross-sell.

Cross-selling is truly rooted in good customer service. If your client purchases a new computer printer, you’ll need to make sure they have the cords required to connect it to the computer, regular and photo paper, and color and black and white ink.

If you don’t suggest these items, they may arrive home and realize they do not have all the materials needed to use the product. They may choose to purchase those materials somewhere closer, cheaper, or more helpful.

Customer education is another form of cross-selling. What if your customer doesn't realize that you sell a variety of printer paper and stationery in addition to computer hardware like printers? Take every opportunity to educate your customer on the products and services you offer that may be of interest to them.

An effective way of implementing a cross-sell system into your business is simply by creating add-on checklists for the products or services you offer. Each item has a list of related items that your customer may need. This will encourage your staff to develop the habit of suggesting a cross-sell.

Other cross-sell strategies can be implemented:

- **At the point of sale.** This is a great place for impulse items like candy, flashlights, nail scissors, etc.
- **In a newsletter.** This is an effective strategy for customer education.
- **In your merchandising.** Place strips of impulse items near related items. For example, paper clips with paper and pens near binders.
- **Over the phone.** If someone is placing an order for delivery, offer additional items in the same shipment for convenience.
- **With new products.** Feature each new product or service that you offer prominently in your business and ask your staff to mention it to every customer.

# Sales Team

## **What Makes a Good Salesperson?**

There are a lot of salespeople out there but what qualities and skills make a great salesperson? These are the attributes you will want to find or develop in your team:

- Willingness to continuously learn and improve sales skills
- Sincerity in relating to customers and providing solutions to their objectives
- An understanding of the company's big picture
- A communication style that is direct, polite, and professional
- Honesty and respect for other team members, customers, as well as the competition.
- Ability to manage time
- Enthusiastic
- Inquisitive
- A great listener
- Ability to quickly interpret, analyze, and respond to information during the sales process
- Ability to connect and develop relationships of trust with potential clients
- Professional appearance

## **Team Building – Keeping Your Team Together**

In many businesses, sales is a department or a whole team of people who work together to generate leads and convert

customers. Effective management of your sales team is a skill every business owner should cultivate.

Teambuilding, recruitment, and training will be discussed in later sections, but take some time to consider the following aspects of managing a sales team:

### **Communication**

- Are targets and results regularly reviewed?
- Are opportunities for input regularly provided?
- Do sales staff members have a clear understanding of what is expected?
- Do all staff members know daily, weekly, and quarterly targets?

### **Performance Management**

- Are sales staff members motivated to reach targets?
- Are sales staff recognized and rewarded once those targets are reached?
- Are there opportunities for skills training and development?
- Do staff members have broad and comprehensive product or industry knowledge?
- Is there opportunity for growth within the company?
- Is performance regularly reviewed?

### **Operations**

- Do you have a solid understanding of your sales numbers (revenue, profit, margins)?

- Are your sales processes regularly reviewed?
- Do you have a variety of sales scripts prepared?
- Do you measure conversion rates?
- How are your leads generated?

### **Sales Tools**

Every salesperson should have an arsenal of tools on hand to assist them in the sales process. These tools can act as aids while a sale is taking place or help to foster continual learning and development of the salesperson's skills and approach.

The list below includes some popular sales tools. Add to this list with other resources that are specific to your business or industry.

| Tool                   | Description + Benefit  |
|------------------------|--|
| Scripts                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Used for incoming and outgoing telemarketing, cold calls, door-to-door sales, in-store sales</li> <li>› Create several different scripts throughout your business</li> <li>› Maintains consistency in your sales approach</li> <li>› Revise and renew your scripts regularly</li> </ul> |
| Presentation Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› High-quality information about your product or service</li> <li>› Forms: PowerPoint presentation, brochure, product sheets, proposal</li> <li>› Serves as an outline of your sales presentation, and keeps you on task</li> </ul>   |
| Colleagues             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› A source of help and advice, especially when you are on the same team or sell similar products</li> <li>› Also a source of support</li> </ul>   |
| Customer Databases     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› An accurate, up-to-date database of customer contact information and contact history</li> <li>› Used to stay in touch with clients</li> <li>› Can also be used for direct mail and follow-up telemarketing</li> </ul>   |
| The Internet           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› A powerful resource for sales help and advice</li> <li>› Information to help improve your sales process</li> <li>› Online sales coaching</li> <li>› Source for product knowledge</li> </ul>   |
| Ongoing Training       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Constant improvement of your sales skills</li> <li>› Constant increase in product knowledge</li> <li>› Investment in yourself and your company</li> </ul>   |

## 8 Tips for Better Sales

### **Dress for the sale**

Dress professionally, appear well put together, and maintain good hygiene. Ensure you are not only dressed professionally, but *appropriately*. Would your client feel more comfortable if you wore a suit, or jeans and blazer?

### **Speak their language**

Show you understand their industry or culture and use phrases your customer understands. This may require researching industry jargon or common phrases. Remember to avoid using words and phrases that are used in the sales process (sold, contract, telemarketing, finance, interest, etc.). Doing so will help break down the salesperson/customer barrier.

### **Ooze positivity**

Show up or answer the phone with a smile and leave your personal or business issues behind. Be enthusiastic about what you have to offer and how that offering will benefit your customer. Reflect this not only in your voice but also in your body language.

### **Deliver a strong pitch or presentation**

Be confident and convincing. Leave self-doubt at the door and walk in assuming the sale. Take time to explain complex concepts

and always connect what you're saying to your audience in a specific way. Assume the sale by assuming what you have to offer is of benefit to the customer. Don't be attached to the sale. Don't be thinking about commissions, sales quotas, bonuses, etc. Your customer will get a good whiff of "commission breath" and become less likely to buy. Your mindset should be "I have something valuable to offer this prospect, and I'm okay if they don't buy." Giving the prospect the freedom to say "no," gives them a lot more space to say "yes." Don't believe me? Ask some of the most successful sales professionals you know or use the internet to find out what the top sales pros say. The traditional "sales" approach of "you need to buy this regardless of its benefit to you" is dead and long gone.

### **Be a poster child for good manners**

Accept any amenity you're offered, listen intently, don't interrupt, don't show up late, have a strong handshake, and give everyone you are speaking to equal attention.

### **Avoid sensitive subjects**

Politics, religion, swearing, sexual innuendos, and racial comments are off-limits. So are negative comments about other customers or the competition.

### **Create a real relationship**

Icebreakers and small talk are not just to pass the time before your presentation. They are how relationships get established. Show genuine interest in everything your customer has to say. Ask questions about topics you know they are passionate about. Speak person to person, not salesperson to customer. Remember everything.

### **Know more than you need to**

Impress clients with comprehensive knowledge, not only of your product or service, but also of the people who use that product or service. Stay current on industry trends. Be seen as an expert to build trust and respect.

## Eight

# How to Double your Referrals

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What if I told you that you could put an inexpensive system in place that would effectively allow your business to grow itself?

For most business owners, a large part of their customer base is comprised of referral customers. These people found out about the company's products or services from the recommendation of a friend or colleague who had a positive experience purchasing from that company.

If your business benefits from referral customers, you will find these customers arrive ready to buy from you and tend to buy more often. They also tend to be highly loyal to your product or service.

Seem like great customers to have, don't they?

Referral customers cost less to acquire. Compared to the leads you generate from advertising, direct mail campaigns, and other marketing initiatives, referral customers come to you already qualified and already trusting in the quality of your offering and the respectability of your staff.

With a little effort and the creation of a formalized system (or strategy), you can not only continue to enjoy referral business but easily double the number of referral customers that walk through your door. All of this is possible for a minimal investment of time and resources.

## **Is Your Business a Referral Business?**

Referral-based businesses benefit from a stream of qualified customers who arrive at their doorstep ready to spend. These businesses put less focus on advertising to generate new leads and more focus on serving and communicating with their existing customers.

A referral program can generate outstanding results for nearly any business. Since most referrals do not require any effort, the addition of a strategy and a program will often double or triple the number of qualified referrals that come through a business door.

There are, however, a few types of businesses that will not benefit from a formalized referral strategy. These are businesses with low price points like fast food restaurants and drugstores. Their customer base is large already and their efforts would be best spent on increasing the average sale.

### A referral program can:

- **Save you time.** Referral strategies, once established, don't require much management or time investment.
- **Deliver more qualified customers.** Your customer arrives with an assumption of trust and a willingness to purchase.
- **Improve your reputation.** Your customer's networks likely overlap and create potential for a single customer to be referred by two people. This encourages the perception that your business is "the place to go."
- **Speed the sales process.** You will have existing common ground and a reputation with the referred customer.
- **Increase your profit.** You will spend less time and money generating leads, and more time serving customers who have their wallets open.

## The Cost of Your Customers

As we discussed in the "Repeat Business" section, you don't "get" customers—you *buy* them. The money you spend on advertising, direct mail, and other promotions ideally results in potential customers walking through your doors.

For example, if you placed an ad for \$200 and 20 people make a purchase in response to that ad, you would have paid \$10 for each customer.

Referral customers cost you next to nothing. Your existing customer does the work of selling your business to their friend or

associate and you benefit from the sale. Aside from the cost of any referral incentives or coupon production, there is no cost involved at all.

Referral customers cost less and require less time investment than any other customer. That means you can spend that time making them a loyal customer or a devoted fan.

## **Groom Your Customers**

Referral strategies can allow you to groom your customer base. As we have previously discussed, 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your customers. These are your ideal customers!

These are also the people you have established as your target market and are the people you cater your marketing and advertising efforts toward.

You also have a group of customers who make up 80% of your headaches. These are the people who complain the most and spend the least.

Use your referral strategy to get more of your *ideal* customers. Spend more time servicing your ideal customers. Do everything you can to make them happy. Spend less time on your headache customers. You can even ask your headache customers to shop elsewhere.

Then focus your referral efforts on your ideal customers. Ask them to refer business to you and reward them for doing so. Try to avoid referrals from your headache customers. Chances are you'll just get another headache.

## **Referral Sources**

Take some time to brainstorm all the people who could potentially refer business to you. Think beyond your business, to your extracurricular activities and personal life. There are endless sources of people who are ready and willing to send potential customers your way. Here are some ideas to get you started:

### **Past Relationships**

No, not romantic relationships. I'm talking about anyone you have previously had a relationship with but for one reason or another have fallen out of touch. This includes former colleagues, associates, customers, and friends.

Including them in your referral strategy can be as simple as reaching out through the phone or email and updating them on your latest business initiative or career move. Gently ask at the end of the correspondence to refer anyone who may need your product or service. They will appreciate that you have attempted to re-establish the relationship.

## **Suppliers and Vendors**

Your suppliers and vendors can be a great source for referrals because they presumably deal daily with businesses that are complementary to your own. The opportunities to connect two of their customers in a mutually beneficial relationship are endless. These businesses should be happy to help, especially if you have been a regular and loyal customer.

## **Customers**

Customers are an obvious source of referrals because they are the people who are dealing with you directly on a regular basis. Often, all you must do is ask and they will happily provide you with contact information of other interested buyers or contact those buyers themselves.

Your customers also have a high level of product knowledge when it comes to your business and are in a great position to really sell the strength of your company. The words of your customers are at least ten times more powerful than any clever headline or marketing piece you could create.

## **Employees and Associates**

Give your employees and associates a reason to have their friends and families shop at your business with a simple incentive program. These people have the most product knowledge and are in the best position to sell you to a potential customer.

This is also a way to tap into an endless network of people. Who do your employees and associates know? Who do their friends (and friends of friends) know? A referral chain that connects to your employees can be a highly powerful one.

### **Competitors**

This doesn't seem so obvious, but it *can* work. Your direct competitors are clearly not the ideal source for referrals. However, indirect competitors can refer their clients or potential clients to you if they cannot meet those clients' needs themselves. For example, if you sell high-end lighting fixtures, the low-budget lighting store down the street may be able to refer clients to you and vice versa. You may wish to offer a finder's fee or incentive to establish this arrangement.

### **Your Network**

Don't be shy about asking your friends and family members for referrals. Too many people do not provide enough information to their inner circle about what they do or what their business does. This doesn't make sense since these are the people who should be the most interested!

Take time to explain clearly what your business is all about and what your point of difference is. Then just ask them if they know anyone who may benefit from what you are offering. You could

even provide your friends and family with an incentive—a gift, a meal, or a portion of the sale.

### **Associations + Special Interest Groups**

This is another place you likely have a network of people who have limited knowledge about what you do or what your business does. The advantage here is that you have a group of people with similar beliefs and values in the same room. Use it!

### **The Media**

Unless a member of the media is a regular customer of yours, or you are in business to serve the media, this may not seem like an obvious choice either.

The opportunity here is to establish a relationship with an editor or journalist and position yourself as an expert in your field or industry. Then, next time they are writing a related story, they can ask to quote you and your opinion. When their audience reads the story, they will perceive your business as the industry leader.

## **Referral Strategies**

A referral strategy is any system you can put in place to generate new leads through existing customers. The ideal way to do this is to create a system that runs itself! Here are some ideas for simple

strategies you can begin to implement into your business immediately.

## **Just Ask**

This may seem simple and obvious, but it's true. Be open with your customers and associates and simply ask them if they can refer any of their friends or associates to you. Make it part of doing business with you and your customers will grow to expect the question. Alternately, let them know in advance you'll be asking later.

Remember that this can include potential customers, even if they don't buy from you. The reason they chose not to purchase may have nothing to do with your business; any person who has begun to or done business with you can refer to you another person.

## **Offer Incentives**

When you speak to your customers, when you ask them for something, you typically try to answer the question "What's in it for me?" before they ask it.

The same is true when you ask your customers for a referral. Incentive-based referral strategies work wonders and can easily be implemented as part of a customer loyalty program, or as part of your existing customer relations systems.

Consider offering customers who successfully refer clients to you discounts on products, free products or services, or gifts. Offer

incentives relative to the number of referrals or the success rate of each referral.

This can have a spin-off effect, as your referral customers may become motivated to continue the referral chain. They too will be interested in the incentives you have provided and tell their friends about your business.

## **Be Proactive**

The only way your referral program will work is if you put some effort into it and maintain some level of ongoing effort.

Here are some ideas:

- Put a referral card or coupon in every shopping bag that leaves your store
- Promote gift certificates during peak seasons
- Offer free information seminars to existing customers, and ask them to bring a friend
- Host a closed-door sale for your top 20 customers and their friends

## **Provide Great Customer Service**

An easy way to encourage referral business is to treat every potential customer with exemplary customer service. Since the art of customer service is lost in many communities, people are often impressed by simple added touches and conveniences. That alone will encourage them to refer your business to their network.

## **Stay in Touch**

Make sure you are staying in touch with all your potential and converted customers. Through newsletters, direct mail, or the Internet, keep your business name at the top of the minds, ahead of the competition.

Even if they have already purchased from you and may not need to purchase for some time, a newsletter or email can be a simple reminder that your business is out there. If someone in their network is looking for the product or service, it will be more likely that your customer will refer your business over the competition.

## Nine

# Create Repeat Business and Clients Who Pay, Stay, and Refer

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When it comes to marketing and generating more income, most business owners are focused outward.

They've carefully established and segmented their target market and created specific offers and messages for each market segment. They spend thousands of dollars in advertising and direct mail campaigns in hot pursuit of more leads, more customers, and more foot traffic.

While this is an effective way to build a business, it is costly and time consuming. It requires constant and consistent effort and while this approach does generate results, those results quickly disappear when the effort stops or becomes less intense.

Successful businesses that see sustained growth have a double-edged marketing strategy. They focus their efforts *outward*, on new potential customers and marketing, as well as *inward*, on existing customers and referral business.

These successful businesses have leveraged their existing efforts to generate more revenue. Simply put, their customers buy from them repeatedly.

For most businesses, this is the easiest way to increase their revenues. Simple customer loyalty strategies and outstanding customer service are often all you need to dramatically increase your sales from the customers you *already have*.

## The Cost of Your Customers

Do you know how much it costs your business to buy new customers?

Each new customer that walks through your door, except for referrals, has cost you money to acquire. You have spent money on advertising and promotions to generate leads and turn those leads into customers.

For example, if you have placed an ad in your local newspaper for \$1,000, and the ad brings in 10 customers, you have paid \$100 to acquire each customer. You would need to ensure each of those customers spent at least \$200 to cover your margin and break even.

Alternately, if you spent two hours of your time and \$10 per month on an email marketing program to send a newsletter to

your existing database of customers, and you bring in 10 customers as a result, each customer has cost you just \$1.

Generating more repeat business means focusing on the marketing strategies that aim to keep your existing customers instead of purchasing new ones, effectively reducing the cost of attracting new customers to your business.

These strategies are simple to implement and don't require much time investment — just a solid understanding of how to make customers want to come back and spend more of their money

## **Keeping Your Customers**

Marketing strategies that focus on keeping your current customer base are easy and enjoyable to implement. They allow you to build real relationships with the people you do business with, instead of dealing with a revolving door of people on the other end of your sales process.

Repeat customers create a community of people around your business that presumably share the same needs, desires, and frustrations. The information you gain from these customers (market research) can help you strengthen your understanding of your target audience and more accurately segment it.

Remember, 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your customers. Always focus on these customers. They are ideal customers that you want to recruit and hold on to.

## **Customer Service: Make them love buying from you**

Every business, even those with excellent service standards can improve the service they provide their customers. Customer service seems to be a dying concept in most businesses; more focus seems to be placed on the speed of the transaction. These days you can even go to the grocery store now and not speak to a single sales associate thanks to self-serve checkouts.

To improve your company's customer service standards, take a survey of your customers and your employees to brainstorm ways you can improve the experience of buying from your business.

Successful customer service standards (those that make your customers *buy*) are:

**Consistent.** The standards are kept up by every person in your organization. Expectations are clear and followed through. Customers know what to expect and choose your business because of those expectations.

**Convenient.** It is nearly effortless for the customer to spend money at your place of business. Convenience can take many forms: location, product selection, and value-added services like delivery. It is also consistent.

**Customer-driven.** The service the customer receives is exactly how they would like to be treated when buying your product or service. It is reflective of your target market and appropriate to their lifestyle. Customers would probably not appreciate white

linen tablecloths at a fast-food restaurant, but they would appreciate a “served-in-2-minutes-or-less” guarantee.

### **Newsletters: Keep in touch with your customers**

A regular newsletter is an easy, time-effective, and inexpensive marketing strategy to implement. Unfortunately, many small businesses think these are too time-consuming and too expensive to adopt as part of their marketing strategy.

The most popular type of newsletter distribution is email. This will cost your business as little as \$10 per month for an email marketing service subscription and can be customized to your unique branding.

Here is an easy five-step process to starting a company newsletter:

- 1. Pick your audience.** New customers? Market segment? Existing customers?
- 2. Choose what you’re going to say.** Company news? Feature product? New offer?
- 3. Determine how you’re going to say it.** Articles? Bullet points? Pictures?
- 4. Decide how it’s going to get to your audience.** Email? Mail? In-store?

**5. Track your results.** How many people opened it? Read it?  
Took action?

**Value Added Service: Give them happy surprises**

Adding value to your business is an effective way of getting your customers back. Every person I know would choose a mattress store that offered free delivery over one that did not. It's that simple.

There are many ways to add value to your business, including:

**Feature your expertise.** Use your knowledge to provide additional value to your customers. Offer a free consumer guide or report with every purchase.

**Add convenience services.** Offer a service that makes their purchase easier, or more convenient. The best example of this is free shipping or delivery.

**Package complementary services.** Packaging like items together creates an increase in perceived value. This is great for start-up kits.

**Offer new products or services.** Feature top of the line or exclusive products, available only at your business. Offer a new service or profile a new staff member with niche expertise.

Value-added services generate repeat customers in one of two ways:

**1. Impress them on their first visit.** Impress your customer with great service, a product that meets their needs, and then wow them with something extra that they weren't expecting. Get them to associate the experience of dealing with your business with happy surprises and create a perception of higher value.

**2. Entice them to come back.** The introduction of a new value-added service can be enough to convince a customer to buy from you again. Their initial purchase established trust and knowledge of your business and its processes. They will want to "be included" in anything new you have to offer, especially if there is exclusivity. It is easier to attract clients that have purchased from you than potential clients who have not.

### **Customer Loyalty Programs: Give them incentives**

Another simple way to keep in touch with existing customers and keep them coming back to you is to create a customer loyalty program.

These programs do not have to be complicated or costly and are relatively easy to maintain once they have been implemented. These programs help you gain more information on your customers and their purchasing habits.

Here are some examples of simple loyalty programs that you can implement:

**Free product or service.** Give them every 10th (or 6th) product or service free. Produce stamp cards with your logo and contact information on it.

**Reward dollars.** Give them a certain percentage of their purchase back in money that can only be spent in-store. Produce “funny money” with your logo and brand.

**Rewards points.** Give them a certain number of points for every dollar they spend. These points can be spent in-store or on special items you bring in for points only.

**Membership amenities.** Give members access to VIP amenities that are not available to other customers. Produce member cards or give out member numbers.

Remember for this strategy to work, you and your team must understand and promote it. The program itself becomes a product you sell.

## Ten

# Use Goal Setting Effectively

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We've all heard about the power of setting goals. Everyone has seen statistics that connect goal setting to success in both your business life and your personal life. I'm sure if I asked you today what your goals are, you could rattle off a few wants and hopes without thinking too long.

However, what most people do not realize is that the power of goal setting lies in *writing goals down*. Committing goals to paper and reviewing them regularly gives you a 95% higher chance of achieving your desired outcomes. Studies have shown that only three to five percent of people in the world have written goals – the same three to five percent who have achieved success in business and earned considerable wealth.

These studies have also found that by retirement, only four percent of people in the world will have enough accumulated wealth to maintain their income level and quality of life. As a business owner, it is essential that you develop a plan for your retirement, but it is equally essential that you develop a plan for your success.

This chapter focuses on the power of goal setting as part of your business success. We'll teach you to set SMART goals that are rooted in your own personal value system, and we'll give you supporting techniques to achieve your goals faster.

## What are Goals?

Goals are clear targets that are attached to a specific time frame and action plan; they focus your efforts and drive your motivation in a clear direction. Goals are different from dreams in that they outline a plan of action, while dreams are a conceptual vision of your wish or desired outcome.

Goals require work; work *on* and *for* yourself, work for your business, and work for others. You cannot achieve a goal, no matter how badly you want it, without being prepared to make a considerable effort. If you are ready to invest your time and energy, goals will help you to:

- Realize a dream or wish for your personal or business life
- Make a change in your life – add something positive, or remove something negative
- Improve your skills and performance ability
- Start or change a habit – positive or negative

## Why Set Goals?

As we've already reviewed, setting goals, and committing them to paper is the most effective way to cultivate success. The most important reason to set a goal is **to attach a clear action plan to a desired outcome.**

Goals help focus our time and energy on one (or several) key outcome at a time. Many business owners have hundreds of ideas whirring around in their heads at any one time, on top of their daily responsibilities. By writing down and focusing on a few ideas at a time, you can prioritize and concentrate your efforts, avoid being stretched too thin, and produce greater results.

Since goals attach action to outcomes, goals can help to break down big dreams into manageable (and achievable) sections. Creating a multi-goal strategy will put a road map in place to help you get to your desired outcome. If your goal is to start a pizza business and make six figures a year, there are several smaller steps to complete before you achieve that result.

Success doesn't happen by itself. It is the result of consistent and committed action by an individual who is driven to achieve something. Success means something different for everyone, so creating goals is a personal endeavor. Goals can be large and small, personal and public, financial and spiritual. It is not the size of the goal that matters; what matters is that you write the

goal down and commit to making the effort required to achieve it.

## **What happens when I achieve a goal?**

You should congratulate yourself and your team, of course! By rewarding yourself and your team after every achievement, you not only train your mind to associate hard work with reward but develop loyalty among your employees.

You should also ask yourself if your achievement can be taken to the next level, or if your goal can be stretched by building on the effort you have already made. Consistently setting new and higher targets will lay the framework for constant improvement and personal and professional growth.

## **The Power of Positive Thinking**

When was the last time you tuned into your internal stream of consciousness? What does the stream of thoughts that run through your mind sound like? Are they positive? Negative? Are they logical? Reasonable?

Positive thinking and healthy self-talk are two of the most important business tools you can ever cultivate; by programming a positive stream of subconscious thoughts into your mind, you

can bring a sense of control to your reality, and ultimately your goals. Think about someone you know who is constantly negative, someone who complains and whines and makes excuses for their unhappiness. How successful are they? How do their fears and doubts become reality in their world?

You are (or become) what you continuously believe about yourself and your environment. If you focus your mind on something in your mental world, it will nearly always manifest as reality in your physical world.

Positive thinking is a key part of setting goals. You won't achieve your goal until you believe that you can. You will achieve your goals faster when you believe in yourself and the people around you who are helping to make your goal a reality.

Successful people are rooted in a strong belief system — belief in themselves, belief in the work they are doing, and belief in the people around them. They are motivated to improve and learn, but also confident in their existing skills and knowledge. Their positive attitude and energy are clearly felt in everything they do.

Ever notice how complainers usually surround themselves with other complainers? The same is true of positive thinkers. If you cultivate an upbeat and positive attitude, you will be surrounded by people who share your values and outlook on life.

Too often, people and our society subscribe to a continuous stream of negative chatter. The more you hear it, the more you'll believe it.

How many times have you heard:

- That's impossible.
- Don't even bother.
- It's already been done.
- We tried that and it didn't work.
- You're too young.
- You're too old.
- You'll never get there.
- You'll never get that done.
- You can't do that.

Positive thinking and positive influences will provide the support you need to achieve your goals. Choose your friends and close colleagues wisely and surround yourself with positive thinkers.

Remember you have a narrative. That narrative or perspective generates your reality. Whoever controls your narrative or perspective controls your reality. Be the master of your perspective and your life.

## Creating SMART Goals

SMART goals are just that: smart. Whether you are setting goals for your personal life, your business, or with your employees, goals that have been developed with the SMART principle have a higher probability of being achieved.

### The SMART Principle

#### 1. Specific

Specific goals are clearer and easier to achieve than nonspecific goals. When writing down your goal, ask yourself the five “W” questions to narrow in on what exactly you are aiming for. Who? Where? What? When? Why?

For example, instead of a nonspecific goal like, “get in shape for the summer,” a specific goal would be, “go to the gym three times a week and eat twice as many vegetables.”

#### 2. Measurable

If you can’t measure your goal, how will you know when you’ve achieved it? Measurable goals help you clearly see where you are and where you want to be. You can see change happen as it happens.

Measurable goals can also be broken down and managed in smaller pieces. They make it easier to create an action plan or identify the steps required to achieve your goal. You can track your progress, revise your plan, and celebrate each small

achievement. For example, instead of aiming to increase revenue in this year, you can set out to increase revenue by 30% in the next 12 months and celebrate each 10% along the way.

### **3. Achievable**

Goals that are achievable have a higher chance of being realized. While it is important to think big and dream big, too often people set goals that are simply beyond their capabilities and wind up disappointed. Goals can stretch you, but they should always be feasible to maintain your motivation and commitment.

For example, if you want to complete your first triathlon but you've never run a mile in your life, you would be setting a goal that was beyond your current capabilities. If you decided instead to train for a five-mile race in six months, you would be setting an achievable goal.

### **4. Relevant**

Relevant goals are goals that have a logical place in your life or your overall business strategy. The goal moves you one step closer to achieving your dream.

For example, if your goal is to train to climb to base camp at Mount Everest within one year and you're about to launch a start-up business, you may need to question the relevance of your goal in the context of your current commitments.

## 5. Timely

It is essential for every goal to be attached to a timeframe, otherwise it is merely a dream. Check in to make sure that your timeframe is realistic—not too short or too long. This will keep you motivated and committed to your action plan and allow you track your progress.

## **Autosuggestion + Visualization**

Autosuggestion and visualization are two techniques that can assist you in achieving your goals. Some of the most well-known and successful people in the world use these techniques and it is not a coincidence that they are masters in their own fields of business and sport. A few of these people include:

- Michael Phelps (Olympic Swimmer)
- Andre Agassi (Tennis)
- Donald Trump (when he focused on Real Estate)
- Wayne Gretzky (Hockey)
- Bill Gates (Microsoft)
- Walt Disney (Entertainment)

Of course, each of these people have a high degree of talent, ambition, intelligence, and drive. However, to reach the top of their respective field, they have each used Autosuggestion and Visualization.

## **Autosuggestion**

Autosuggestion is your internal dialogue — the constant stream of thoughts and comments that flow through your mind that impact what you think about yourself and how you perceive situations.

Since you were a small child, this self-talk has been influenced by your experiences and has programmed your mind to think and react in certain ways. The good news is that you can reprogram your mind and customize your self-talk any way you like. That is the power of Autosuggestion.

To begin practicing Autosuggestion, make sure you are relaxed and open to trying the technique; an ideal time is just before bed or when you have some time to sit quietly. Then, repeat positive affirmations to yourself about the ideal outcome. Top sports and businesspeople will often practice just before a big game or meeting.

Some examples of positive self-talk or autosuggestion include:

- I will lead my team to a victory tonight!
- I will be relaxed and open to meeting new people at the party tonight!
- I will deliver a clear and impacting speech!
- I will stop worrying and tackle this problem tomorrow!
- I will stand up for my own ideas in the meeting!

- I will remember everything I have studied for the test tomorrow!

## **Visualization**

Visualization is a practice complementary to Autosuggestion. While you can repeat affirmations to yourself over and over, combining this practice with visualization is twice as powerful.

Visualization is exactly what it sounds like: repeatedly visualizing how something is going to happen in your mind's eye. Nearly everyone in sports practices this technique. It has been proven to enhance performance better than practice alone.

This technique can easily be applied to business. For example, prior to any presentation or meeting where you must speak, present or “perform.” You can also visualize yourself being incredibly productive and effective in your office. Alternately, you might visualize yourself having a discussion with your spouse calmly and rationally.

Elements to think about during visualization:

- What does the room look like?
- What do the people in the room look like?
- What is their mood? How do they receive me?
- What image do I project?
- How do I look?
- How do I behave? What is my attitude?
- What is the outcome?

## So, what do you do from here?

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Where do you go from here? What did you learn from reading this book? I'm guessing you have more questions than answers. Why? Because it's one thing reading about doing something versus actually doing it. Think of learning to ride a bike. One thing to read about it. It's an entirely different thing to actually ride it, especially learning how to balance yourself on the bike.

Are you wanting to take your business to the next level? Of course. Big question is are you willing to change things in your business, including how you interact with it, to take your company there? Better question is are you committed to change? There's a big difference between being committed versus everything else. Being committed means you accept no excuse that what you're committed to does not happen. Said in an affirmation, "I accept no excuse that this does not happen." Everything "else" (not totally committed) will accept some level of reasons or excuses why not.

So, if you're successful in your business already, (\$250k up net income is considered rich by the Federal Government) use this book to enhance and improve your operation. If you're not there yet here are four steps to take.

A) Get a handle on your finances and cash flow. Know your numbers every day.

B) Improve your profitability by reducing costs and improving margins where possible. Produce short-term profitability and cash flow.

C) Document all key business functions into easy-to-read and understand processes that are followed by all involved. Turn your business into a systems driven operation to free you up to be a visionary.

D) Develop as many marketing channels as you can one at a time. Generate more business through multiple channels to build your business.

Most importantly, commit to your ongoing learning how to improve your business operations and maximize profitability, not just revenue. Profits you can keep. Revenue has a lot of detractors before it turns into Profits. Become a sponge for new distinctions on marketing strategies, innovations in your industry, technological innovations and anything that could impact your business. You're going to have to become a different leader if you want to see different results. Otherwise, you keep doing what you've been doing, and you'll keep getting what you've been getting. And rather than reinvent the wheel venturing off into areas you're not trained in, not very good at and don't enjoy anyway, engage a professional to help you shorten the learning curve. You need a guide who's been there to show you the quickest, safest, easiest way to get where you want to go. Be willing to listen. Be willing to live in the question of what you're missing that could help you in a big way. Be committed to

becoming who you need to become to lead your business to where you say you want to go.

If you have a business and have not yet managed to start to create wealth and systems that allow you to take time off, build retirement accounts or pay for your children's college, then learn and master the steps outlined in my book. I am a huge advocate of education and mentorship. Get the right information, find someone that knows how to walk you through them and watch your quality of life take new shape.

If you'd like to schedule a free consultation with me, you can set up an appointment with me on my website located at <https://strategicbusinessadvisors.us/> I'd love to hear from you.

Best wishes to you on your journey.

# READY TO GET STARTED?

Please contact me directly  
to schedule an appointment.

**CARY PREJEAN**  
**BUSINESS STRATEGIST AND PROFIT OPTIMIZATION COACH**

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Not making enough money in your small business and feel like you are completely confusing 'being busy with being successful'? Find out how to make your small business more profitable by an experienced Business Coach. Cary Prejean is a recognized leader of a new generation in strategic sales and marketing success and leadership. In this book he outlines proven strategies for you to uncover hidden opportunities and small business profit potential through his simple and proven business building strategies.

He has an extensive business background ranging from numerous start-up companies, ongoing concerns, bank work outs and new age businesses. He currently owns and operates several diverse organizations utilizing his marketing process. Cary's unique ability to 'think outside the box' makes him a popular resource for many small to medium sized corporations. The strategies outlined in this book have helped small business owners and sales professionals with the same result - established proven sales strategies and more business profits!

Follow the advice and easy to implement strategies outlined and you too will benefit by making more money with your small business.