

80 Easy Ways To Supercharge Your Business Growth

Curated by
Carol Roth and Catherine Morgan



The best tips and strategies to take your small business to the next level
from successful entrepreneurs and small business support organizations





Foreword

From embracing the cloud and mobile technologies to leveraging the power of social media to attending face-to-face networking events, small business owners have many tactics at their disposal to grow their businesses.

However, sometimes - even with all of the available resources and tools - it's tough to know where to get started. So Microsoft, who has an unwavering dedication to helping small businesses, asked us to reach out to the best and brightest organizations that serve small businesses - as well as top experts and small business owners across the country - to come up with the best tips and strategies that small businesses can easily initiate and use to earn a high return on their investment.

It can be daunting to have to develop a plan from scratch. Starting a new business is tough! And what if you already have a business and want to take it to the next level? Sometimes, you just don't know what you don't know.

Understanding and evaluating what other successful people have done to achieve results can be helpful. Using these insights in your roadmap can spark creativity and productivity. Also, knowing what didn't work for others and avoiding those pitfalls can help, too.

Saving you time and effort, and supporting you in achieving your business goals, is why we reached out to business support organizations like SCORE, NAWBO, local chambers, associations, small business influencer communities, and entrepreneurs.

We asked them what their best tip would be to help an owner supercharge their business. The responses were as diverse as the participants in this project. They covered networking and customer service strategies, marketing, branding, social media, operations, technology - and several topics you may never have considered.

We are thrilled to be partnering with Microsoft on this project, because not only did they spearhead this eBook, but they also provide ongoing resources to help entrepreneurs, like you, grow their businesses. Please check out their free training and event support services for the small business community. Maybe an organization or association that you belong to would like to take advantage of their offerings to better support its members?

We hope that you get as much value from this eBook as we have. Here's to your future success!

Carol Roth

*Creator of the **Future File™** legacy planning system, national media personality (including CNBC contributor and judge for America's Greatest Makers on TBS), "recovering" investment banker/billion-dollar dealmaker, advisor, investor and author of the New York Times bestselling book, *The Entrepreneur Equation*.*

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Catherine Morgan

Business consultant to consultants, career transition expert, and speaker

*Founder of **Point A to Point B Transitions Inc.***

*Editor-in-Chief of Carol Roth's blog, **Business Unplugged™***

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Introduction

At Microsoft, we know that small businesses are the backbone of every community, creating jobs and economic stability for millions. Often these businesses, whether long-standing or just starting off, rely heavily on local community organizations to connect them with the resources needed to thrive. It can be a challenge, however, for these organizations to find compelling and current technology-focused content to share with their members.

That’s why we created the Microsoft Office Small Business Academy, designed by experts for small business owners as a source of ideas, inspiration, and education on the best way to run a business. Each month, we sit down with experts and analysts who offer to discuss the topics that matter most to business owners like yourself, and leave you with accessible, real-world advice, ready to be put to use immediately. As a resource for entrepreneurs, creative professionals, techies, and leaders, Office Small Business Academy connects business owners with experts and ideas that promote effective and efficient growth.

We are excited to offer, along with Carol Roth, Catherine Morgan, and all of the other dedicated contributors, this free e-guide to help you and your company tackle some of the inevitable challenges every growing business faces on the path to success. For more information, additional resources, and to register for the webcast, visit office.com/smallbusinessacademy.



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Chapter 1

Managing Your Business

01

Process and People Drive Profits

"The fastest way to accelerate the growth of your business is to make sure that you don't lose customers out the back door as fast as you get new ones in the front door. What this means is that you have to ensure that you are providing the highest level of quality in your products and/or services that matches the value your clients expect; having consistency and reliability that meets your customers' expectations... every time.

Everyone should be sharing ideas and insights that can lead to improvement and innovation.

Focus on process and people and it will drive profits and growth. To do this you need to ensure that you create an environment where your employees feel a part of the success. Make sure that you have a method in place for reporting and resolving customer complaints and other operational issues, including waste, inefficiency, and quality problems. Everyone should be sharing ideas and insights that can lead to improvement and innovation. Lastly, make sure you are documenting the know-how of performing key operational processes so that you always provide the consistency your customers' demand."

Doug Nohe

SCORE Chicago

www.scorechicago.org

Twitter: @dougnoh

@SCOREChicago

02

It Takes A Team

"For me, the number one component of a successful business is the team. It is absolutely crucial to focus on the people over everything because at the end of the day what you think your business is going to be and what it ends up actually being is going to change a lot over time.

It is the people that make sure that you go from transition to transition smoothly by identifying problems, seeing roadblocks and figuring out solutions. The best people are going to stand with you and get you through that process faster. It is critical to hire 'A' players and build a team that is excited to be along for the ride.

To both effectively scale a business and solve a problem within an industry, you need to foster a team of thoughtful, creative and motivated individuals to help make your vision a reality and create brilliant solutions for your customers. That is what really makes a great company and creates a sustainable competitive advantage."

Jeff Ellman

UrbanBound

www.urbanbound.com

Twitter: @UrbanBound

03

Know Your Values

"My advice is to never settle when it comes to values. Know what you do and who you do it for, and do so with unabashed enthusiasm. We are building a strategic communications and stakeholder engagement firm founded on the belief that authentic engagement reaches people where and how they are most comfortable, is transparent and inclusive, and defies a typical consulting/business model.'

The only way this works is by building a core team that, like me, believes that relationships matter more than anything else we do, and when we default to a place of 'yes, let's make it happen,' we can serve our clients as true partners with a shared mission.

We are not afraid to invest heavily in pro bono work for good causes that matter, or to invest equally in the professional AND personal development of our team members. It's a model that reemphasizes loyalty and good old fashioned hard work, and proves that doing good and doing well are not mutually exclusive."

Michael Akin

LINK Strategic Partners

www.linksp.com

Twitter: @DCMichaelA

04

Delegate For Growth

"My dad and I started this business in 1994. We implement accounting and customer relationship management systems. For years the business worked this way: he did the sales and I did the service. We earned a living. Just a living.

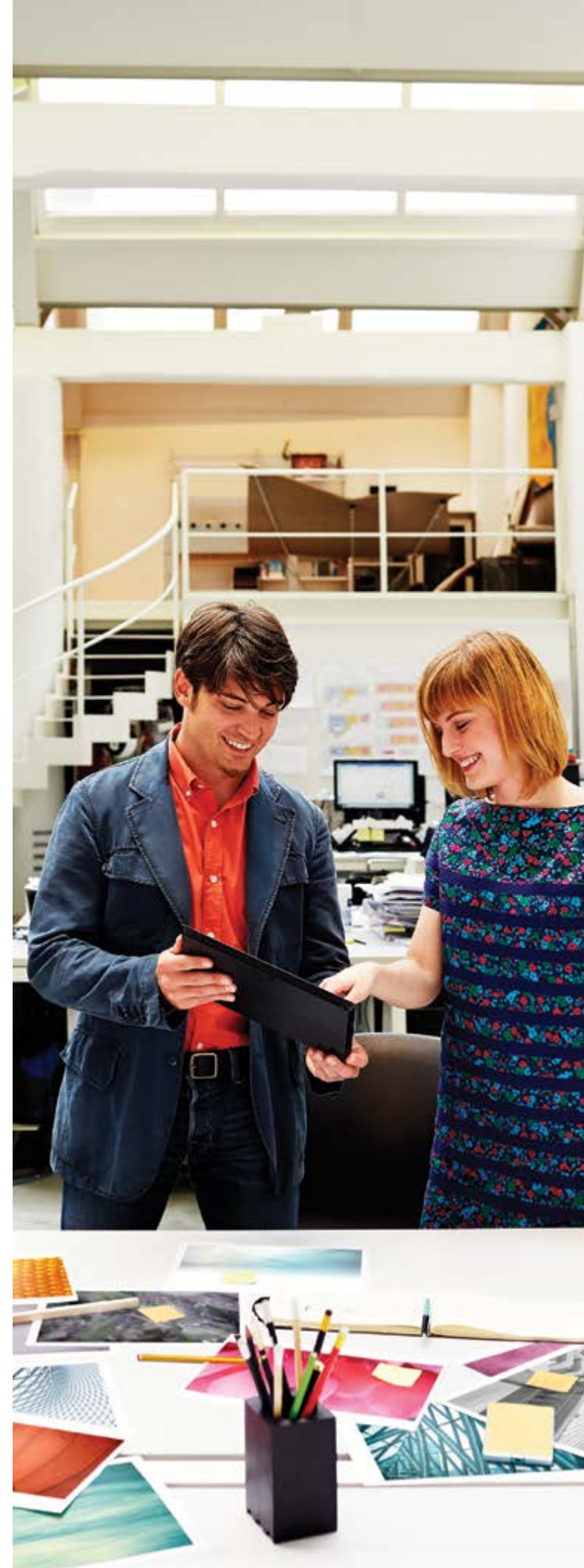
My father passed away in 2005. I moved into his role. And I started hiring people to do the service work that I did. And two things happened: the work was better because they were smarter than me. And I was able to grow my business by focusing on sales and then delegating projects to the people who were better and smarter than me. My mindset changed from 'how will I be able to do that' to 'who will be doing that for me.' It was only when that happened that my business became profitable.

Today we have 10 full timers and a dozen contractors performing services for about 600 active SMB clients. To grow, you must delegate."

Gene Marks

The Marks Group PC

www.marksgroup.net



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Invest For Success

"When starting my business, I didn't realize how much I needed to invest in marketing and administration. A new business should allocate at least 25% of their time and money to these items.

I can't tell you how many times I've seen business owners long for greater revenues with little or no marketing program in place. According to The Alternative Board's January 2015 survey, marketing is the #1 item entrepreneurs wish they spent more money on in the beginning stages of their businesses.

As for the administrative side of things, don't avoid the little but important tasks – like hiring and firing the right people, taking care of bookkeeping, and doing regular maintenance – which can lead to bigger costs and lost opportunities in the future."

Valerie Koenig

The Alternative Board

www.thealternativeboard.com

Twitter: @TAB_Boards

Marketing is the #1 item entrepreneurs wish they spent more money on in the beginning stages of their businesses

06

Engagement Drive Profitability

"With only 3 in 10 employees being actively engaged and only 50% reporting being happy at work, here's advice to develop energized, high-impact employees. After 20 years assisting employees on improving performance, I've found the best method to help employees get excited about their work is to focus on their strengths. A strengths-based approach in organizations improves work satisfaction and meaning—top reasons employees stay with a company.

Caring about your employees' strengths and interests is free. Shining a light on their desired strengths is powerful. When managers help identify employees' strengths and provide opportunities to apply their key strengths in their daily work, this one simple shift in approach could easily double the number of engaged employees and increase performance in your workplace. Engaged employees give 57% more effort and are 87% less likely to leave."

Sunny Klein Lurie, PhD

Advanced Performance, Inc.

www.aperformanceinc.com

07

Take Care of You AND Your Business

"Never neglect your 'must-haves' in your business life. My #1 must have is COFFEE! Just kidding, but not really. Aside from coffee, I need a strong network and the support of my family, which I've been lucky to have. I also need help with the parts of my business that I'm either not as good at as others or not as passionate about.

Make sure to surround yourself with people who complement your skill set. I also depend on exercise, meeting new clients and colleagues for coffee, creating artwork, hanging out at events, and spending time with my family.

Neglecting the things that make you happy will reduce your morale, motivation and focus over time. When I feel off-balance, I always re-focus with 'me' time before client work."

Julie M. Holloway

JMH ART + DESIGN

www.jmhcre8ive.com

www.tewyou.com

Twitter: @tewyou



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Good Vibrations

"All I want is a team that's consistently productive, positive and profitable." Sound familiar? So how do you make it happen? How do you supercharge your business when your team has no time, energy or interest in adopting new protocols?

Research has shown the solution is to expose your team to a specific combination of melodic tones and vibrational sounds once a day for 3 minutes. Sound too good to be true? The results of a recent study revealed significant increases in productivity and profitability, with more than 74% of the team reporting increased well-being, reduced stress and significantly improved teamwork.

So my advice is to have your team listen to musical tones and vibrational sounds every day that have the intention of building the positive, productive and profitable business that you want."they give us discounts. They also pay us to keep the co-op going."

Lorna E. DiMeo, M.S.W.

Success On Purpose, Inc.
www.lornadimeo.com



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Collaborate

"Supercharging your small business? One word: Collaborate. View your competitors as your partners. Reach out to them and work together to get access to larger markets. Reach out to them and work together to do projects you could not do alone.

The reality is the market is tight - those initial days of the web catapulting new and small businesses to great heights is over. To succeed you need to be a big fish or part of a large school of fish - so find those other small fish and collaborate."

Haleh Rabizadeh Resnick

Little Patient Big Doctor
www.littlepatientbigdoctor.com
Twitter: @littlepatient

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You Can Fire a Customer

"It's okay to fire a customer. Not very often, and never casually or in frustration or anger. But sometimes there are individuals and companies that a startup simply can't afford to do business with.

There's a range of possible reasons—from illegal activities or unethical behavior, to a pattern of disrespectful treatment, to demands of price over value, or monthly headaches with accounts receivables.

Repair the relationship if you can; if not, work with your employees to figure out a respectful way to disengage from customers who aren't a fit so that your team can focus on serving the customers who are."

Tom Walker

CEO & President, Rev1 Ventures
www.rev1ventures.com
Twitter: @Rev1Ventures



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Better Safe Than Sorry

"Every business is subject to employee theft. The FBI calls employee theft one of the fastest growing crimes in America. Employee theft can take many forms, including simply stealing office supplies to manipulating transactions, writing bogus office checks, to actual theft of cash. The long-term cost to a small business can add up to incredible amounts of money.

The best way to avoid your business becoming a victim is to background check every employee and to implement secure practices. Some things you can do include having two people sign all checks, installing security measures like cameras, implementing internal checks and balances, knowing your profit margin, and being aware! This sounds scary and expensive but can save you money, time and aggravation in the long run. Remember, even small office supply costs add up if you are replacing items constantly."

Timothy A. Dimoff

SACS Consulting & Investigative Services, Inc.

www.sacsconsulting.com

Twitter: @TimothyDimoff



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Get Discounts by Joining a Co-Op

"My entire family has been running food businesses my whole life. We had a restaurant, 2 lunch trucks, a bread and pastry distribution business. The hardest part is that whatever we were paying to vendors, we knew our larger competitors were paying a lot less, because they could offer so much more business to the vendor. It made sense, because all the vendor had to do was close a deal with one person at the bigger company, and they had a major customer. Selling to us though was more difficult, and we didn't do as much business, so they charged us more.

We solved it by starting our own online co-op for services. We made it completely free, and signed up every small business we knew. We negotiate a discount, and we send a text to the group with a link to the discount. If they like it or want to know more, they use it. We have over 2,000 restaurants now as a part of the network and it's growing fast. Vendors see our group as a way to sell to a lot of small businesses, so they give us discounts. They also pay us to keep the co-op going."

Yasin Abbak

Paired Media

www.pairedmedia.com

Twitter: @YouFoundYasin

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Become the Best

"Taking your business to the next level doesn't mean doing the same thing you've been doing in greater quantity or at lower cost. It means finding out what your customers need most, then becoming the best at providing it. Yes, that means you may have to change what you do and how you do it—but that's the foundation you need to put in place in order to grow by an order of magnitude.

Job #1 is to create added value for your customers. The best way to do it is to provide them an experience—one that they will notice, remember, and share. The added value you offer will win the organic revenue growth you seek; the experience will be your accelerant as it drives more referrals."

Mike Wittenstein

Storyminers

www.mikewittenstein.com

Twitter: @mikewittenstein



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Weigh the Pros and Cons

“It took me several years after starting my business to feel comfortable enough to say no to new assignments and turn down clients. In the beginning stages of growing a business, most entrepreneurs are afraid the pipeline of new customers or clients will dry up, so they take on every project they can get.

Unfortunately, this strategy may lead to a lot of work that’s simply not worth your time or effort. Remember it’s more important to worry about profits, not revenues. Some projects take so much of your time or energy, that you not only don’t really make any money, you waste precious time you could be using on more lucrative projects or finding better-paying clients.

Before jumping into any business relationship, it’s important to weigh the pros and cons.”

Rieva Lesonsky

GrowBiz Media/SmallBizDaily.com

www.smallbizdaily.com

Twitter: @Rieva

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Effort Makes the Difference

“Often times small business owners think they’re putting in the effort it takes to succeed – but they’re not. So my TIP is be sure to put LOTS of effort towards the growth of your business.

Beyond effort, it’s also important to be smart. You don’t want to have useless effort. Finally, surround yourself with smart people – a board of advisors or mentors. These experienced professionals can help guide you and help you avoid major pitfalls.”

Julie M. Holloway

JMH ART + DESIGN

www.jmhcre8ive.com

www.tewyou.com

Twitter: @tewyou

Chapter 2

Accelerating Your Growth

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Get Past Setbacks

"If you are going to grow a small business, one of the most important things you will need is the ability to handle the word 'No.' Setbacks happen to the best of us, but the difference between the ones that make it and the ones that don't are the ones that know how to handle the setbacks and the answer 'No.'"

A great way to help yourself handle the stress of setbacks is to look for how this stress/setback is helping you to be better at what you do and be a stronger person.

Write down 50+ answers.

Does it help you to focus more? Refine your pitch or skills? Does it help you to see if you are really committed to your goal?

Doing this will help you to see the setback as just feedback, and an opportunity to grow and be better at what you do in your small business."

Leo Willcocks

DeStress to Success

www.leowillcocks.com

Twitter: @leowillcocks

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Outsource!

"Outsource any and everything except your greatest strength. As the CEO, if your wheelhouse is negotiating sponsorship deals, do that, and hire others to create your blog post pictures and format your Kindle book covers.

I used to create blog images myself, spending over 10 minutes on one picture. Talk about an inefficient use of a teen philanthropist's time! Instead, I outsourced that task, and can now focus solely on empowering youth.

Saving time and playing to your strengths: imagine what you could achieve if you put that into play."

Michael Guberti

Teenager Entrepreneur

www.teenagerentrepreneur.com

Twitter: @MichaelGuberti

@TeenagerTrep



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Sell to the Federal Government

"Selling to the Federal Government can be a good market for small businesses as 23 cents of every dollar is earmarked for small business.

But the Federal Government's procurement process can be overwhelming for a newcomer. It is a very fair process, but one that carries with it many rules, regulations, and acronyms.

A good place to start is to register for SBA and SCORE workshops on doing business with the Federal Government. In addition, the SBA's website (sba.gov) offers a tutorial on 'Understanding the Federal Marketplace.'"

Karen Williams

Washington, DC SCORE Chapter

www.washingtondc.score.org

Twitter: @SCOREDC

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Be Socially Conscious

"I recommend developing a community-oriented strategy that helps build your brand while also supporting nonprofit organizations that you and your team care about. More and more, customers prefer to do business with companies that are socially conscious and this win-win approach can help companies stand out amongst the crowd.

We have a unique approach that combines nonprofit features on our social media channels, an annual charity event we hold as well as partnerships to provide our services to nonprofits in exchange for branding opportunities at non-profit events.

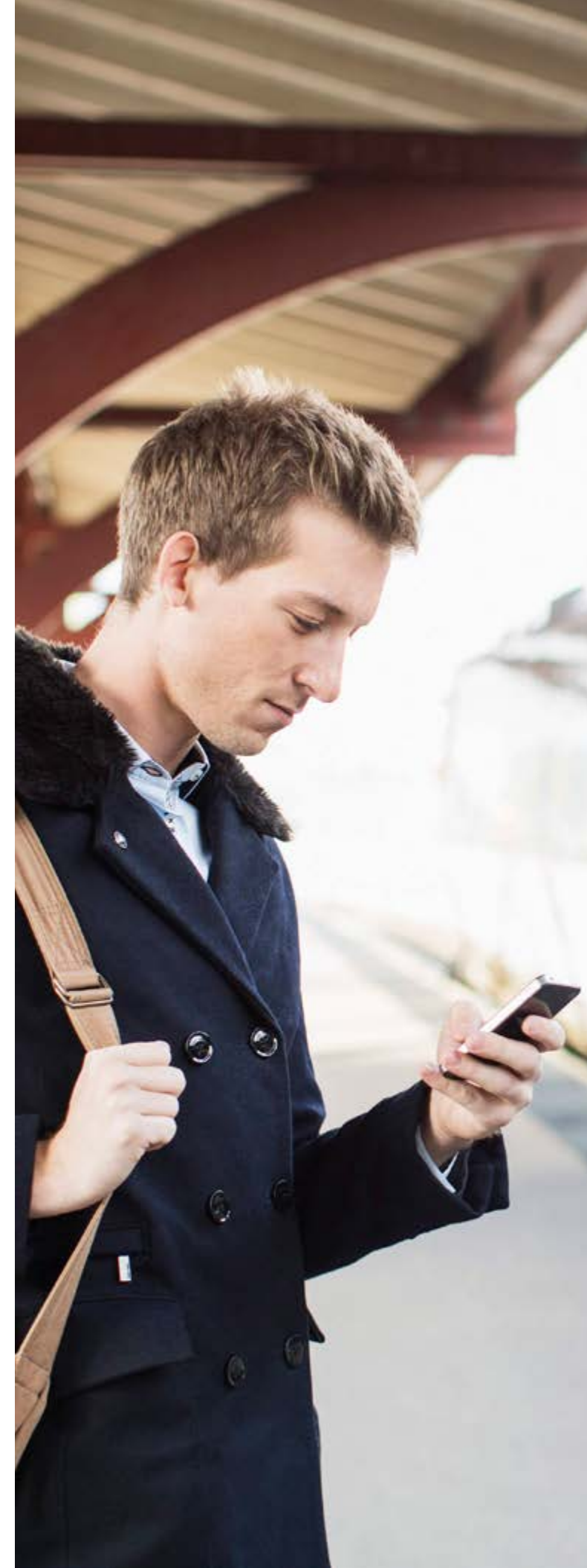
This win-win strategy has helped us grow both nonprofit and for-profit clients, receive recognition in the community and improve employee satisfaction."

Nevin Bansal

Outreach Promotional Solutions

www.outreachpromos.com

Twitter: @nevinbansal



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Beware the "Time Robbers"

"If you want to take your business to the next level, using social media, networking, content marketing and the latest tech tools are all fantastic ways to help get you there. However, there is one major group that stands in the way of you achieving your goals—TIME ROBBERS.

Time robbers are the bandits that steal your most precious commodity. They are the 30-minute personal phone calls in the middle of the day. They have you scrolling through Facebook catching up with friends from high school when you should be engaging with existing customers.

Time robbers have you talking to colleagues and friends at networking sessions when you should be interacting with prospects and potential partners. Time is the only currency that matters in business. If you want to take your business to the next level, figure out ways to generate more time during the day to increase workforce productivity."

Brian Moran

Brian Moran & Associates

www.smallbusinessedge.com

Twitter: @BrianMoran



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Build a Power Team

"Every entrepreneur needs three levels of rock-solid support: foundational, friend and mentor.

Foundational support includes interns, assistants and even home support staff that take on tasks you don't have time to do OR are not your area of expertise, so that you can focus on revenue generating activities.

Friends are great cheerleaders, people who help you enjoy life outside of your business, but caution, friends may NOT be the best at giving business advice.

Mentors are individuals that have been there before. They know the path and they can 'see around the corners.' They know what to avoid and what to do so that you can reach success faster. Even though I consult with businesses all over the country and throughout the world, I still seek out mentors to help me always grow and improve. Ensuring you have this Power Team in place is critical to your business survival both economically and mentally!"

Michelle McCullough

Startup Princess

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@speakmichelle

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Take the Road Less Travelled

"Screw tactics. Do you desire to supercharge your business growth? If you answered 'HELL YES' then keep reading. In my experience, every time I hit the ceiling and the growth of my business slows, it has little to nothing to do with what is happening outside of me and everything to do with what is happening inside.

I have spent endless hours trying to do more, be more and grasp for the next shiny object that will catapult my business success. THIS IS NOT THE ANSWER. Taking the road less travelled and looking at what my inner critic is saying, checking my negative mindset at the door and busting through limiting self-beliefs.....BINGO!

If you desire to build the business of your dreams, then take the road less travelled with me."

Michelle McGlade

MM International, Inc.

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Twitter: @mcglademichelle

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Customer Experience Counts

“You have to stand out from your competitors in the same geography, across the globe, and online. The only way to do this is to step up the customer experience (‘CX’). Look at your business from the eyes of a customer and honestly take each step (‘buyer’s journey’) that your customer would take.

What is their expectation when they take that step vs. what experience do they actually receive from your business? Is it a good experience?

You want your customers to walk away with a memorable experience. Start with what areas have the most impact to your business. Are you looking to acquire new customers? Retain existing customers? Reduce churn? This will help you prioritize where to start, but be sure not to neglect all of the other areas your customer encounters.”

Ali Din

dinCloud

www.dincloud.com

Twitter: @dinCloud

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Be Helpful

“As an entrepreneur, it is very easy to fall in love with your own business and products. Making an emotional connection to the customer is more important than the simple promotion of the products or services themselves.

Posting a helpful tip, an entertaining image or story, or something engaging that makes them think – something they feel worthy to share with others – will create a stronger bond and convert a potential customer into an evangelist for your brand.”

Paul Shrater

Minimus LLC

www.minimus.biz

Twitter: @minimbusbiz



Chapter 3

Connecting with Your People

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Learn From Others

"A favorite saying of mine is, 'A smart person will make a mistake, learn from it and never make it again. A wise person learns from all the smart people and never makes the mistakes to begin with.'

The best thing I have ever done is join the Entrepreneurs' Organization and surround myself with other entrepreneurs who are willing to be transparent and vulnerable about the challenges they have dealt with in their lives.

The collective wisdom and shared experiences of these people over the past 15 years has made this smart man wiser personally and professionally."

Charles Bender

Biz IT Pros

Entrepreneurs' Organization,

President-Seattle Chapter

www.bizitpros.com

Twitter: @crbender

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Diversity Brings Opportunity

"Bring all of yourself to your business—your diversities are some of your best assets. Why? Because, as the saying goes, 'If you're not at the table, you're on the menu.' Every year America's corporations, state governments, and all federal agencies spend tens of billions of dollars in procurement contracts for everything from office supplies to jet engine parts. Asserting your diversity—especially if you are a minority—can bring tremendous opportunities to your business.

To help give an equal, level playing field to the minorities that have redefined and innovated America's small businesses, those companies and government agencies have instituted supplier diversity programs. For example: if you're an LGBT business owner and not certified by the NGLCC, you're leaving money on the table to help your business grow, which allows you to give back to your community as a role model, job creator, and valued success story of an American minority achieving the American Dream."

Justin Nelson, President & Co-Founder

National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)

www.nglcc.org

Twitter: @NGLCC



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Connect Authentically

"One of the greatest assets a small business has is the ability to connect with other people in a personal, genuine and authentic way. Nothing builds a business more quickly than trusted and solid relationships with customers, vendors, the community and other businesses.

This is what leads to building a brand of quality, a reputation of trust and loyal following, not to mention a huge competitive edge!

Most small businesses are spending most of their time and money on social media these days – which is great and necessary – but nothing beats actually meeting and getting to know other people and learning how you can help them with your product or service. Put YOURSELF out there!"

Roxanne Kaufman Elliott

ProLaureate Ltd.

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Twitter: @ProLaureate

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Don't Be a Card Shark

"Don't be a card shark. A simple and effective way to take your small business to the next level is to use your business card as a strategic tool when networking:

Don't give your card to people at the beginning of a conversation. Wait until you have a reason to want their card or to want them to have yours.

After a short focused chat, decide if you think the other person is someone you could help ... or ... who could help you. If so, then ask them for their card. This should prompt them to ask for yours.

If they don't, it doesn't necessarily mean they're not interested in you. It just means they haven't asked you for your card... yet. Then, ask "May I give you my card?" instead of "Would you like my card?"

This simple little strategy can help differentiate you from all those amateur Card Sharks networking at the same event."

Phil Stella

Effective Training & Communication, Inc.

www.communicate-confidently.com



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Get Involved

"Uninvolved employees can be one of the biggest hurdles in taking your small business to the next level. One of the best ways to involve employees in order to reach your goals is by holding structured, as well as structural 'Brainstorming Sessions.' In order to make Brainstorming work in your organization, I would suggest to you the following 3 tips:

- 1: Educate. To make Brainstorming really work in any organization, organizations will have to be willing to invest time and resources in order to educate their people in the ways Brainstorming works and can be used, as well as make employees familiar with the different techniques that are available during the different steps of brainstorming sessions.
- 2: Truly Involve Employees. True employee involvement should be at the top of the agenda of each organization. You cannot expect true commitment without true involvement. Once employees start to see the importance of true involvement, the return on your investment will be worth it.
- 3: Structured and Structural. Also it should be used in a structured and structural way to get you the innovative ideas you are looking for. Only then you can start creating an environment where creative thinking will be the norm, rather than the exception."

Arthur Kaptein

Ultimate Brainstorming

www.UltimateBrainstorming.com

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Engage the Old Fashioned Way

"I used to play drums in and manage a rock band. We discovered one major thing about booking gigs: instead of trying to create you own scene, go where one ALREADY exists and make yourself valuable.

We played the World's Largest Music Festival (Summerfest in Milwaukee, Wisconsin) this way. We asked the people in charge of booking, 'How do we play here? How can we help you feel good about booking us?'

Finding people who already need what you offer is easier than it has ever been. Your potential customers share their problems all over the Web, whether it's on social media, in forums, or in groups. Find the people experiencing those problems, become part of that discussion, and offer your solutions."

Spencer X Smith

Spencer X Smith Consulting

www.spencerXsmith.com

Twitter: @spencerXsays

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Don't Hide—Get Outside

"I think networking and learning how to get out there in front of your 'perfect peeps' or your target audience is key to growing a small business. You can't hide behind a desk or a computer all the time and expect to build quality relationships for your business.

If no one knows who the heck you are, no one is going buy your products or services. Networking groups are fine, but are not really beneficial unless they are targeting your particular audience. Trade shows are the best for me and my business. Getting in front of those decision makers and having a conversation about what I do is critical. It builds a relationship that an email or cold call can never do.

You also never know who will refer you in the future, so talk to everyone, even if you think they may not be a great fit for you. Small business is all about building relationships, and the more you build, the more avenues you have to grow your business."

Jennifer Krosche

Blue Frog Communications

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Networking Takes Work

“There is a reason that the word networking ends with the word ‘work.’ Too often, we witness our Chamber members not making good use of the time and the audience that we bring together each month for a chamber event.

Yes, some chamber events may seem social. But they’re not. Chambers of Commerce are in business for business. When you attend an event at the Chamber, you should be prepared to make contacts.

If we are delivering you an audience of 125 people, you need to ‘work’ the room. Set a goal for yourself before you walk in the room. Know in advance how many business cards you want to hand out. Introduce yourself to someone that you have never met before. Be prepared to tell someone just enough to get she/he interested, but don’t monopolize his/her time. If they are networking correctly, they also have people to meet. Exchange business cards and before the evening is over, make some notes on the card about the conversation you had with that person.

Finally, and before the week is over, follow up with that person. Personally, I prefer handwritten notes. People like to do business with people they know.”

Laura Weis

Champaign County Chamber of Commerce

www.champaigncounty.org

Twitter: @ccountychamber



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Connect with Connectors

“We were launching a new business and decided to bring in some outside capital. We reached out to an influential individual in our network and showed him what we were doing. We didn’t ask him to invest; we just shared the opportunity. He connected us with sixteen potential investors and we soon had the money we needed.

Seek out connectors like this as you build your network. Meet with them regularly to share what you’re up to, but also to find out what they’re doing. Take a genuine interest in them and help them when you can, without worrying about what’s in it for you.

If you do this, they’ll be there when you need them, willing to share their network freely, to help you reach your goals.”

George Krueger and Mary-Lynn Foster

BIGG Success

www.BiggSuccess.com

Twitter: @BiggSuccess

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Use a Process for Networking

"Running a small business is hard work. Every day new challenges to overcome, decisions to be made, and business generated and delivered with excellence. By joining a social network with other business owners, you gain competitive advantage.

All at once, overcoming challenges becomes easier, decisions become more informed, and generating business becomes much easier.

Here are our top three tips for networking success:

1. Start with the people you already know.
2. Next, add those you'd like to meet or work with. When you make a connection with someone new take it offline - invite them to meet for coffee and make the first meeting just about getting to know each other.
3. Regularly (monthly at least) share something interesting with your network to stay top-of-mind. You can share a business insight, an upcoming event you are hosting, or something about a product or service you offer most people are not aware of."

Eric Groves, CEO

Alignable, Inc

www.Alignable.com

Twitter: @alignable

@e_groves

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Great Returns from Great Events

"Every year, our company, MPACT Financial, has designed a 'Women's Event' for our female clients, professionals and potential clients. It is meant to be fun, educational and highly promotes making new connections. The first year it was at a hair salon (small business). We provided appetizers and wine, and the hairdressers did professional styles on each of the ladies' hair. Fun and educational...check.

There were great connections that came from it as well. The ladies that were clients of our firm interacted and shared positive experiences working with us. One of the guests was looking for a new dentist and we introduced her to a female dentist at the event. The salon gained new clients. The ladies ended up buying professional styling tools and products from the salon and left learning new and easy ways to freshen their look. We called the local media and they sent someone out and featured it on the evening news. It was a great return on investment and did not cost a lot of money. It was fun, practical and highly memorable and a win-win for everyone.

A marketing philosophy that we live by is 'It's not about how they feel when they walk in. It's all about how they feel when they walk out.' Everyone walked out fabulous."

Crystal Arredondo

Partner at MPACT Financial Group—National Chair for NAWBO

National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO)

www.nawbo.org

Twitter: @NAWBONational



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Great Networkers Don't Pitch

"Ditch the 30 second 'pitch.' Networking is key to business growth, as long as it is done well. Great networkers don't pitch, don't hand out their business card to everyone, and barely talk about their business.

They do ask a lot of questions in an attempt to get to know other people and build a toolbox of resources. And they offer an introduction instead of a pitch or commercial.

I like to introduce myself as if I was talking to my 16-year-old daughter. I use simple English that clearly shows the value I bring to whom, as well as what their results are.

Simple. No pitch. Priceless!"

Diane Helbig

Seize This Day

www.seizethisday.co

Twitter: @dhelbig

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Value of Fast Follow-Ups

"I've implemented many processes to drive growth over the past 14 years, but the one that has made the greatest impact on my business concerns networking follow-up. I enjoy networking and do quite a bit of it. I also know the importance of following up afterwards with my new contacts, so I was very good at sending that first follow-up email or making that first follow-up call.

But we all get busy and my new connection would fall off my radar screen if they didn't respond to my first attempt. So I've implemented a system where my assistant actually does the follow-ups for me, using our contact management system (ACT). We both have access to the contact info and notes, so if I do receive a call back or an email reply, I can see what my assistant has sent them and respond accordingly.

This simple technique has greatly improved the ROI on my networking time and my time management overall!"

Elene Cafasso

Enerpace, Inc. Executive Coaching

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Twitter: @Enerpace_Elene

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Make a Good Impression

"People still like to do business with people they know and trust. Even though social media has changed the landscape of how connections are made, many of those connections are not personal or close in nature. There is still something to be said for genuine, face-to-face communication and relationship building. Showing interest and making a good first impression are still very important toward making a potential customer into a new customer.

David Earhart

The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce

www.gsccl.org

Twitter: @GrowSangamon



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Always Be You

"If you want to be perceived a certain way, make sure your behavior and actions consistently align with that perception you've created in your own mind. That's how my friend, Maggie, landed her dream job!

A woman overheard my friend, Maggie, who was telling another parent at a children's birthday party what she did for a living. The woman came over and said, 'You would be perfect for the job we posted.' The woman told Maggie that she had been watching her at the various children's birthday parties they'd attended together, and she said she admired her parenting skills and the way she conducted herself.

Now having overheard what she actually did for a living (institutional research), she knew Maggie would be the ideal job candidate. This was true 'social networking' at its finest, as Maggie's behavior outside of work aligned with how she wanted to be perceived."

Laura Morales

Energize Your Outlook

www.energizeyouroutlook.com

Twitter: @CoachOch



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Take Online Offline

"Are you using social media to promote your business? Then remember that the goal is to take it offline.

Recently, I watched a YouTube video that went viral. The star was so hilarious that I felt compelled to tweet at him about how much I enjoyed it. He not only tweeted back a thank you, but mentioned that he'd love to check out my *Breaking Down Your Business* podcast.

We moved to direct messaging where I invited him to be a guest! Lo and behold, we wound up emailing one another and he is now a featured guest on the show. We used a medium to be social and kicked things off in the real world after our chance online encounter. You should, too."

Jill Salzman

The Founding Moms

www.foundingmoms.com

Twitter: @FoundingMom

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Perfect Your Pitch

"When crafting an elevator speech to use in networking or engaging in grass roots marketing and other community activities, you will have to describe who you are and what your company does in a few sentences.

An elevator speech or pitch is in response to 'What do you do?' and can be used as an introduction to a conversation to make an impact on the person you are speaking to, so they actually want to 'hear more' about you and your business – your product or service.

An elevator pitch is concise and meaningful. Simply state your name, your business name, where you are based (city, state, community), the 'why' of your business (what inspires you and your business) and how you differentiate yourself from the competition – all in 20 seconds! Business contacts are everywhere, be prepared by crafting and practicing your elevator pitch so it becomes a natural flow, showcasing your passion and enthusiasm for your company."

Andrea Kastner

Simply Consulting Group

www.simplyconsultinggroup.com

Twitter: @afkastner



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Get the Word Out

"As we are a chamber of commerce, we recommend in-person networking opportunities in order that other local business leaders can have face time with you. Attend events, join a business referral group or contribute to a chamber industry network in order that you get to know other business leaders, and they get to know you!

Also, as a business owner or professional, using online platforms is a terrific way to showcase your expertise or gain new customers for your business. Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are essential, however other platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram can be great as well. If you are a thought leader in your industry start a blog to get your ideas noticed.

Finally, create a marketing plan (possibly with a professional marketing or PR person) that makes sense for your business, that is within your budget and helps you connect to your target market.

Laura Bucko, VP of Communications

Manhattan Chamber of Commerce

www.manhattancc.org

Twitter: @ManhattanCofC

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Pretend You're a Golden Retriever

"Through networking, you can create referral partners with people in complementary professions. For example, since I help people get book deals with publishers, my referral partners are often publicists because we can refer business to each other in a symbiotic relationship.

The problem that often happens at networking events, though, is that people tend to sit with the people from their own company, or with others who they already know, because they are afraid to reach out to new people. The advice I've given hundreds of people that has helped them to overcome their networking jitters is: 'Pretend you're a Golden Retriever, and think of each person you meet as your new best friend who wants to play with you.'"

Randy Peyser

Author One Stop, Inc.

www.authoronestop.com

Twitter: @randypeyser

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Be Neighborly

"Make it a priority to meet, and take interest in other local small business owners, even if they are not in your industry or would never become a customer of yours. These friendships will be sources of support and encouragement, and provide valuable insight into the way other business owners handle the same issues you may be facing.

Walk the block, drop in, and introduce yourself as a fellow business owner. Offer to meet for coffee just to get to know each other (and not 'Can I pick your brain?'). Some people will respond, some won't, but the ones who do may end up becoming friends and advisors for life!"

Nicole Vasquez

The Shift Chicago

www.theshiftchicago.com

Twitter: @TheShiftChi

@NicoleRVasquez



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A Professional AND Business Owner

"Law firms, as professional service firms, will find that their marketing efforts are best expended in the channel marketing they can do through networking and membership in their specific industry organizations. People do business with people they know like and trust. Gaining that status can only be accomplished in a face-to-face environment.

Networking requires that you remember that you are not only a professional but also a business owner. You know your business and profession the best and thus are in the perfect position to build a 'know, like, trust' relationship. Create and practice your elevator speech. Put on your listening hat and take the time to learn about and get to know those with whom you would like to do business."

Mark Dobosz

National Creditors Bar Association (NARCA)

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Twitter: @consultingmark

@narca



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Networking Needs a Plan and Budget

"It's essential to have a networking plan. Allowing networking efforts to just happen can mean missed opportunities, wasted time and drained personal energy for owners. This is especially true for introverted entrepreneurs, for whom networking can already feel like a chore. Planning networking efforts, even when we take into account the necessary flexibility for unpredictable business life, not only helps with time management, but also creates a structure that allows for benchmarking and review.

Start by deciding how much time is available, away from the business, to network and build relationships. Use social media and other online resources to investigate people, events and organizations in order to spend valuable time in the best places. Go to networking events with goals in mind: number of people to meet, number of one-on-one meetings to schedule, number of hours to spend building brand image. Have a budget, not only for time but for money. Know every month how many cups of coffee, salad lunches and entry fees the budget will allow; don't go over this amount."

Karen Southall Watts

Karen Southall Watts

www.karensouthallwatts.com

Twitter: @askkaren

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Treat People as People–Not Prospects

“When you’re at an in-person networking event, start a great conversations with, ‘Hi, I’m Michael, your tie is awesome’ or ‘I love your’...(compliment something appropriate), or ‘Are you as nervous as I am, what do you do to calm your nerves?’ Try to make people feel at ease...and things will flow from there.

Online introductions work the same way, send your LinkedIn invite (yes, this is a great place to network), with, ‘Hi, I’m Michael and the specific reason I wanted to connect with you was...’ or ‘I loved your post about...can we connect on LinkedIn? I’d love to see more of your stuff.’

People are people and if you treat them LIKE PEOPLE (not prospects), it’s amazing the doors that will open.”

Michael Bremmer

Telecomquotes.com

www.Alignable.com

www.Telecomquotes.com

Twitter: @telecomquotes

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Engage the Old Fashioned Way

“In this day of social media, it is important to still engage and network with potential clients in person, the old fashioned way. I have learned that it is essential to be involved with a variety of types of organizations. This might include professional organizations, chambers, small business organizations, social service agencies, sororities/fraternities, college alumni groups, demographic based organizations such as women, generational, religious affiliation or minority based organizations, just to name a few. This will provide you with the opportunity to be exposed to a diverse group of potential clients.

As humans, it is often our natural tendency to spend time with people like ourselves. However, it limits the possibility of meeting new potential clients. It’s nice to go places and see people we know, but only engaging with people we know does not expand our client base. Be intentional about meeting and connecting with diverse groups and people to assist with the expansion of your network. Additionally, make sure you are inclusive of new people and welcome them when they join those organizations you have historically belonged to. Taking the time to stretch pays off for our businesses in the end.”

Tameka L. Taylor, Ph.D., CDE

Compass Consulting Services, LLC

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Twitter: @CompassServices



Chapter 4

Leveraging Your Technology

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Embrace Mobility

“There’s no better way to supercharge growth and enable mobility than through the cloud. SMBs can use the cloud to create fully functional teams without investing in a brick-and-mortar location. Data can be shared from home or on the road, which increases productivity and allows you to build your business from anywhere.

The scalability of the cloud also means there’s a low cost of entry and an immediate ability to level the playing field with larger corporations.

When you embrace mobility, it enables you to hire the best and most affordable remote talent in areas outside of the typical 50-mile radius.

This doesn’t just make operations easier, it has a major impact on revenue and job creation.”

Cindy Bates, VP of SMB (Small-to-Midsized Business)

Microsoft

blogs.business.microsoft.com

Twitter: @Cindy_Bates

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Make a Digital Dent

"Make sure you ask the right question. In my case, the question is: How does my company make a digital dent in the universe? Getting online attention (usually) requires not only one single act of greatness, but rather thousands of attempts at greatness spread across many online platforms – LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram and Pinterest – over a protracted period of time. That's how you capture attention, develop a following, garner new customers, and take your business to the next level.

Succeeding in the digital world requires hard work, discipline, organizational skills, something remarkable to talk about, and a long-term view. There are no short cuts."

Laurel J. Delaney, President

GlobeTrade.com

www.globetrade.com

Twitter: @LaurelDelaney



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Find the Right Apps That Work for You

"Getting the balance right between business success and a lifestyle that is productive and fulfilling can be hard to achieve; don't we all know it! And that is why the business and personal coaching industry is booming.

However, using technology, there are of ways we can help streamline our business and our daily lives in general. There are lots of apps, which are very helpful in streamlining time and increasing productivity. We are all different, of course and so it is about finding the right apps and tools that fit in with our personal style.

It can take a good deal of searching and 'road-testing' but when you do begin to find the right apps that work for you it is well worth it. I know from experience. My advice is: begin to look for those apps. Ask business contacts and friends which apps they use and then go road test them."

Matt Cox

Purcus

www.purcus.com

Twitter: @purcuslife

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Good Design for Small Investment

"In the first 10 years of running our organization, we must have spent \$100,000 on designing marketing materials, reports, brochures, signage and custom website design and imaging.

I would love to have that money back, now that I know about using CANVA, amazingly simple graphic design software. I (or my interns) can produce the same look I needed a design professional to produce.

Amy Millman

Springboard 2000 Enterprises Inc.

www.sb.co

Twitter: @SpringboardEnt



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Use a Digital Task Manager

"Time is both your greatest ally, if managed well, and biggest foe if wasted. We all need a system that traps everything needing action and puts it in a logical order. A good digital task manager, together with a strategy for using it, is a good solution. While having vision is one thing, handling the details that bring it to fruition is another.

In particular, identify the tasks that will repeat every year or every month. Hoping someone remembers to handle those routine tasks at the right time is a recipe for failure. A good digital task manager hands those repeating tasks back to you when you need to see them. You stay focused on handling the details that would otherwise fall through the cracks."

Dr. Frank Buck

Frank Buck Consulting, Inc.

www.FrankBuck.org

Twitter: @DrFrankBuck



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Leverage Cloud to Scale

"Cloud platforms now allow even the smallest businesses to have enterprise level scalability, security and risk reduction. With a platform like Office 365, the price per user provides great value. The functionality and features you gain with Outlook email, file sharing with SharePoint and file storage with One Drive, make it unnecessary to buy your own email/file server.

Likewise, avoid the temptation to invest in your own network equipment. Instead, contract with a managed IT provider for these components, which they own and maintain—all at a flat monthly rate with no need for upfront capital investments by you."

Fred Franks

FIT Technologies

www.fittechnologies.com

Twitter: @fittech

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Use Technology as a Multiplier

"To grow a small business, you need to compete with larger, more established companies. Technology and online tools are the great equalizers that save you time and increase productivity without having to adopt a 'fake it to make it' philosophy. They enable you to legitimately leverage your workforce and cast a longer shadow in the marketplace than your size would have allowed in the past.

As a relatively small, early-stage company, we employ technology's multiplier effect to build our brand awareness and sales funnel—amplifying the capability of a few great sales reps to perform at a level equivalent to two or three times their size—for little or no money."

Mark Godley

HG Data

www.hgdata.com

Twitter: @mgodley21



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Increase Digital Equity

"I believe every small business can be a global business. This looks simple but it is not. This requires each small business prioritize their business to focus on digital transformation. Digital transformation helps increase Digital Equity.

Why Digital Equity? Digital Equity allows small businesses and startups to be prepared to consistently attract customers online, reduce manual efforts via tech automations and protect their customers from cyberattacks.

Did you know, over 67% of small businesses cannot transact online and over 90% of small business websites are not mobile ready? What does this mean? Small businesses cannot be discovered online, cannot attract customers, and they are not prepared to stay competitive.

In collaborating and working with many small businesses and startups, what we have learned is that digital equity is integral to the growth of our company. Currently, we invest lot of time and energy helping other companies increase their digital equity, which, in turn, helps them become a digital-ready business."

Chaitra Vedullapalli

Meylah

www.Meylah.com

Twitter: @meylah

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Website Optimization Pays Off

“Visibility and standing out in search results is as important as it has ever been with the competition increasing every day. It is extremely essential to ensure that the business website is optimized for the web and works smoothly on both desktop and mobile. We were a little late to realize the same and lost out on a lot of potential customers on mobile.

It was a whole lot of rework and extra hours spent on our website that brought us back in the game. Ever since then, we have continued to focus on mobile search (at least the same, if not more than desktop). I would suggest investing your time, efforts and money into the that from day one.

It is a small investment with great returns as the mobile market is very crucial, and its importance and potential will only increase in the foreseeable future.”

Srajan Mishra

TSI International

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Twitter: @iSrajanM



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Develop a Cloud Strategy

“Develop a Cloud Strategy: It’s no longer a question for small business to go to the cloud or not – it’s happening regardless. Your financial software provider is rapidly moving to the cloud, and there will not be sufficient support for installed software applications in the future. Businesses that are proactive during this migration will recognize a heap of new benefits. Business pain points and security concerns can now be solved with new, innovative, cost-effective cloud-based applications that work elegantly together.

However, in order to take advantage of these new applications, you need to develop a cloud strategy for your business. Where do you even start with all the noise in the marketplace from hundreds of viable solutions? Finally, there is a map available since Accountex developed the ‘Accounting Technology Ecosystem’ to help small business navigate the cloud accounting technology landscape.

We also have created a detailed description of each bucket in the ecosystem to help identify the category of service each solution provides. There are 25 categories in the Ecosystem for a business to consider as they map out their digital infrastructure and look for possible holes that can create unnecessary inefficiencies. Take advantage of the innovation that has recently become available because of cloud accounting, and improve your business processes with a defined cloud strategy.”

RD Whitney

Diversified Communications

(The Accountex Conference)

www.AccountexUSA.com

Twitter: @rdwhitney

Chapter 5

Marketing and Selling Your Products / Services

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Free Is Over

"As you seek to build your brand and leads via social media, remember that fear is the true source of perfectionism, and perfectionism is your biggest barrier to greatness. It causes delays in growth, missed opportunities, and hesitations that prevent you from showcasing your authentic personal brand.

People love REAL. Be you and showcase your expertise as well as your falters, and people will embrace and connect with you even more for it.

Then, pay for more brand exposure. Sorry, the days of raging success on social media for free are over, but you don't need to break the bank. Learn how basic ads work on the platform you're currently most successful on. Incorporate some targeted ad dollars into your monthly budget, and see your personal brand and leads grow.

I have a client who put a \$1 boost behind each Facebook Page post and page engagement rose by 20%! You never know the viral power of the few people you are failing to reach in purely organic (non-paid) mode."

Sue Koch

Soaring Solutions, LLC

www.soaringsolutions.net

Twitter: @Sue_Koch

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Take a Quantum Leap and Speak

"Take a quantum leap and speak whenever you get a chance. Each speaking opportunity in front of your target audience not only builds confidence in your own presentation abilities, but also perfects your message. Practice makes perfect!"

I was on a work vacation in Puerto Rico last month and got introduced to an author, who I ended up meeting with to talk about her brand. In our conversation, we talked about my wanting to speak at a University in Puerto Rico, and within a week I had two speaking gigs at the University of Puerto Rico and the Catholic University of Mayaguez. Not only did I get an opportunity to speak with business students about 'How to Market Yourself,' I also got interviewed for TV while I was there.

Take chances and don't be afraid to do something different every day to build your brand! Speak up to Move up!"

Robin Samora

RobinSamora.com

RobinSamora.com

Twitter: @GallagherPOC

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No, It's Not Dead

"There are a lot of journalists sharing articles with sensationalized headlines. For example 'SEO is dead' or 'Email marketing is dead.'

For any small business owner, these types of articles are damaging and could potentially lead you in the wrong direction.

For example, is SEO dead? No, it's just evolved. What about email marketing? Some studies have shown it to have a 4500% ROI in comparison to social media, so definitely not. The ultimate truth to growing a business is that it requires a diverse strategy that makes use of all channels such as SEO, email marketing and social media.

Every business is different so it's about finding out what works and doing more of it. But being careful not to become over-reliant on a single channel. When Facebook changed its news feed algorithm for the first time, some businesses lost 50-90% of their traffic overnight.

Adam Connell

Bloggng Wizard

www.bloggngwizard.com

Twitter: @adamjayc



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Leverage Your Existing Customer List

"Don't undersell your most valuable asset-your existing customer list. Map out a progression of buying opportunities to fully satisfy and monetize your repeat customers. Don't commit the cardinal sin of selling them and forgetting them (it costs 6-7 times more to acquire a new customer than retain an existing one).

Make sure you have a combination of lower-priced offers, mixed in with bundles at different price points, special holiday or event-based offers, and higher-end experiences (that allow your customers to get a premium experience). And if you can't provide them yourself, joint venture those products or services from other like-minded companies and you can both reap the benefits."

Mike McRitchie

Critical Path Action

www.mikemcritchie.com

Twitter: @MikeMcRitchie

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Importance of Personal Brand

"Determine who you are today and the vision you wish to attain in order to craft a clear and concise personal brand. This becomes the basis for creating your branding program and developing a sound reputation. It may also be seen as your competitive edge.

Commit to ongoing education both self-taught and hiring a mentor. This is the quickest way to grow both personally and professionally. As you add new venues, be certain they each work synergistically to ensure steady development of your long-term vision. More clients will seek you out due to a favorably recognized personal brand."

Elinor Stutz

Smooth Sale

www.smoothsale.net

Twitter: @smoothsale



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Interruptive Selling Kills Credibility

"Whatever your business is, the single biggest thing you are selling is your credibility. Especially if you are a small business with competition. Which means that you need to look *first* at how your sales or marketing efforts affect your credibility, *then* how it will affect your short-term sales.

If you use interruptive selling techniques that make you look hungry for business, or focus more on overcoming objections than on listening to the customer, or would never discuss alternatives to your solution under pain of death, you lose credibility points.

When you are a trusted resource for willing and enthusiastic customers, you gain credibility points. In the end, the person with the most credibility points always wins."

Rich Gallagher, LMFT

Point of Contact Group

www.pointofcontactgroup.com

Twitter: @GallagherPOC

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Your Market Is NOT Everyone!

"In order to grow your business, you need to understand your Brand, Message, Market and Value. Your Brand is who you are as a company, what you stand for and what your value is in the marketplace that makes you unique.

Your Market is NOT everyone! It is the people who relate to your Brand and understand the value that it brings to THEM. Message is the piece that brings it all together. It is being able to craft the right value statement, utilizing the mediums where your market is and engages with, so that they connect with your Brand and see how it can add Value to their lives.

Take the time to critically understand your Brand, Message, Market and Value at the beginning of your journey and evaluate it often. Make sure your Message continues to resonate with the audiences who engage with you and speak to them through the mediums that they find valuable.

Effective communication is the key to success. . . and that works for internal clients as well!"

Ben Baker

Your Brand Marketing

www.yourbrandmarketing.com

Twitter: @Yourbrandmrktng



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Power of Speaking to Boost Brand

"Going into my second year in business, I had built myself a strong network, but was exhausting myself attending networking meetings and events each week trying to keep my sales funnel full. During one of those events, I engaged in a conversation that turned into an invitation to do an educational presentation for a group of business owners. The presentation was very well received and opened the door to half a dozen other invitations to speak.

Standing in front of those audiences quickly positioned me as 'the expert' in my field. I was contacted for quotes when media reporters were seeking expert opinions. I was asked to teach classes and to sit on expert panels. In a very short period of time, my business revenue had doubled and I joined a speaking organization to refine my presentation skills. Public speaking has become a passion because of the power it had to boost my brand, visibility and create opportunities that increased sales. Networking will always be an effective way to build relationships, but if you want your business to grow quickly, spend more time building authority."

Bobbi Baehne

Think Big Go Local Inc.

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Twitter: @ThinkBigGoLocal

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Three C's of Mesmerizing Sales

"Discover what your customer's 'pain points' are so when in front of him/her, you can establish yourself as an expert or trusted advisor. This can be done by incorporating the '3 C's' (Confidence, Challenge, Conviction) of Mesmerizing Sales.

Confidence separates the best from the rest. Make sure you're not being held back by self-limiting beliefs. The more you believe in yourself and your product/service, the stronger your delivery will be.

Challenge the status quo and make people aware of potential problems or opportunities they were not previously aware of. This will take you from commodity status to trusted advisor!

Conviction means taking a STAND for your customer. Be bold in the fact that your insights/products/services will save/make the customer money. The more self-assured, educated, and customer-focused you are, the faster your business will grow!"

Tim Shurr, MA

Shurr ! Success, Inc.

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Twitter: @timshurr



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People Buy When Ready

"Small business owners make a big wrong assumption. They believe when they build a fantastic product people will come and buy it. This is simply not true. We actually can't sell anything to anyone. The key is to be there when people have a pain and they are ready to buy.

This is done through content marketing, staying in touch with prospects and customers on at least a weekly basis. This is done not by telling them about a new feature of your product or service (or a discount), but by giving them an expert tip that shows your company as a thought leader in solving their problems."

Barry Moltz

Shafran Moltz Group

www.barrymoltz.com

Twitter: @barrymoltz

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The Handout They'll Keep

"If you're doing the same marketing as everybody else, then you're not going to stand out from the crowd.

Are you printing a handout for a tradeshow that everybody is just going to throw in the trash? Try using a little rubber cement to put a dollar bill on the handout. People will keep that handout, and they'll spend time reading about the company that would do such an outlandish thing.

Plus, it'll make people smile and it'll start conversations, which is exactly what you want."

Brandon Bruce

Cirrus Insight.

www.cirrusinsight.com

Twitter: @cirrusinsight

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Your Personality and Your Message

"I highly recommend small business owners (current or aspiring) know themselves and incorporate their authentic personality into their marketing and promotions. You can't be an effective promoter if you are using language that doesn't 'fit' you. If your personality is more quiet and reserved, using marketing messages that are boisterous and 'loud' will ring false as soon as you open your mouth.

Conversely, if you have a very energetic personality, a soothing and low-key design or color scheme for your website and promotional materials will also ring false after your prospective customers or business partners meet you.

Make sure that your personality and your message are congruent—because sending a false message can create a hurdle that will be impossible to clear."

Dianne M. Daniels

The DivaStyle Coach

www.thedivastylecoach.com

Twitter: @DivaStyleCoach



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Don't Just Buy Books, Write Them!

"Don't just buy books, write them! Writing a high-quality book could be just the key you need to unlock your success. And it's not because it feels great or that you'll sell truckloads of books.

The writing process clarifies your message and identifies your target audience and market. Sharing your story reconnects you to why you're doing what you're doing, while attracting the right clients to you.

With proper handling, a successful book grows your mailing list, attracts more opportunities, expands your network, establishes your expertise, and opens doors for you. It's a powerful stimulant to your business passion and your profits."

Tara R. Alemany

Emerald Lake Books

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Podcasts Are Powerful

"Be a guest on top podcasts in your industry where you can find your dream customers. This is part of an Inbound Marketing Strategy and very effective, inexpensive and scalable.

Effective because you are being featured as a show guest on the shows where your prospects and ideal customers are listening to the podcast, wholehearted and fully involved while listening. You are really speaking directly to your dream customers as a podcast guest. They want to hear what you have to say, so you can see how your listeners can turn into your loyal customers.

It is **inexpensive** and almost free because the host of the podcast show is the one who is doing almost everything. All you have to do is show up for the interview.

Scalable because you can continue to look for other related podcasts where you can be featured as a guest."

Shawn Chhabra

Winning the Game of Life Podcast

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A Pretty Website Isn't Enough

"A pretty website is, well pretty. When someone finds you online and there is no clear message and call to action, they will quickly jump off and go somewhere else. I was recently working with a new startup who was in the loose leaf tea business. They were very proud of their website. When I went to see it, I saw beautiful photos of cups of tea and loose leaf tea, but I didn't know what she wanted me to do on the website. If I was having this problem, what about everyone else?

A call to action is imperative, and will provide your potential customers with direction about what to do. A simple call to action for her could be, 'Sign up for our newsletter and receive 10% off your first order of tea.' Give your customers direction – you'll love the response."

Judy L. Santos

Business Builder Program

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Postcards Trump Business Cards

"Small business growth in local and regional areas is predicated on how well you network within and without your industry. A small business owner should plan at least several hours per week to meet and greet new people at networking events.

When networking with others, rather than hand out the proverbial business card, which just about everyone does, set yourself apart by providing something unique to you and your company. Some efforts that have proved successful for me are 5X7 postcards instead of business cards, or two business cards to a person instead of one, so they can keep one and share one.

And the most important thing to always do after networking is follow up and connect with those contacts within 72 hours or less. Don't be forgotten easily, become remembered always first for what you do."

Myles Miller

LeadUP

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Don't Forget the Fundamentals

"Simplify what you do and how you think. Success in business truly comes from getting the fundamentals right.

I tell my clients to think about marketing in a simple way: getting the right message to the right people at the right time. Now, you need to figure out who the right people are, which means your best, most profitable customers.

You need to know what the right message is to resonate with those people. And, you need to know the right time and place to reach them with this message. Start with one precise way of doing this, and then start another marketing initiative only after finding one to be successful, predictable and systematic."

David J. Bradley, MBA

Primal Digital Marketing

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Write Articles for Publicity

"The first and most simple way in which you can make the most out of publicity in terms of making money is by writing articles pertaining to your areas of expertise, or the industry of your business.

There are many newspapers and magazines in your area that need stories on different topics. You can offer them your expertise, and you in turn, get to publicize your business in your writing.

The same thing goes for online writing, there are many websites that publish articles where again you can share your expertise and simply inculcate the name of your business and have it publicized."

Jill Lublin

JillLublin.com

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Get Found with YouTube Videos and Podcasts

"You have to be on social media if you own a business. Without doing a lot, people responded to my YouTube channel and that helped me narrow down where to put my efforts in social media.

It was a natural progression to add podcasting. When I do an episode I shoot in video and then turn into an audio format to reach two different audiences.

Podcasting is an affordable way to promote your business and not only helps with branding but also marketing products. The start-up costs are pretty inexpensive and if you give great content, people will find you.

Finding your niche is really important; even in a crowded field you can stand out. Concentrate your efforts where you will be rewarded."

Jeuli Coraccio

Reawaken Your Brilliance

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Have Multiple Revenue Streams

"If you have a long sales cycle, immediately develop something else to sell with a shorter cycle. It will add revenue streams and de-risk your business, especially during times of economic downturn.

For example, if you are a consultant or service provider who sells services to large corporations, and it typically takes 6 months or more to close a sale, try developing a smaller package of templated services suitable for smaller companies with a smaller price tag. You don't need to spend as much time on the templated services, but the smaller price tag will keep cash flowing and add to your revenue."

Anita Campbell

Small Business Trends

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Give Powerful Presentations

"If you are going to make an impact at a network meeting, make your '60 Second Presentation'...Your Audible Business Card.

Use the 4 P's of Perfect Presentation:

1. **Preparation:** Write the speech out...
2. **Practice:** Until it is word perfect...
3. **Posture:** Dress and stand professionally...
4. **Present:** A culmination of the three P's delivered with impact...

Use the 5 Elements of Speaking to be Perfect:

1. **Fire:** Bring your speech alive with fire in your delivery...
2. **Earth:** Is your support. Your support is your audience...
3. **Metal:** Is your boundaries of speaking. Be respectful of the audience...
4. **Water:** Is the speed, direction and flow of your speech...
5. **Wood:** Is the reason for your speech and the fuel for the next one.

Use the 4 P's of Perfect Presentation and The 5 Elements of Speaking to make your next 60 Second Presentation your Audible Business Card."

Ernie Boxall

Balance Health and Fitness

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More Marketing P's

"Most academics will tell you that there are 4 P's in marketing. They are Price, Promotion, Placement and Product. However, I submit that there are 3 more: Packaging, Positioning, and People.

At first glance, it may seem as if these requirements are only applicable where tangible products are being sold, but these same areas also should be addressed where the "product" being offered is a service.

So as you build your business, remember that focusing on your customer (People) while ensuring you are putting out the right messaging about your product or service (Positioning) should correlate with how your product or service looks when they are ready to buy (Packaging).

Paying attention to these areas as well as the 'original' P's of marketing will help you create a message and product that should lead to success with your customers."

Florence Hardy

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