

# Better Business Focus

Essential reading for managers and entrepreneurs

March 2007

**1 Super Management**

*By Barry Urquhart*

**3 E-mail Etiquette—More Than Just Manners**

*By Angela Nielsen*

**5 Six Powerful Prospecting Tips**

*By John Boe*

**6 Six Ways To Promote Your Business**

*By Martin Pollins*

**7 The Market, Marketing, And Your Sales Strategy**

*By Michael Cardell*

**8 Lighting The Fuse—Part 2**

*By Stephen-Lewis Brammer*

**10 Driving Performance In Sales Teams**

*By David Coorey*

**12 Not So Wrinkly!**

*By Hugh Alford*

**13 Customer Service—Miriam's Journey**

*By John Stanley*

**15 2007 – The Year Of Big Change**

**15 Why Electoral Roll Opt-Outs Could Be Bad News For Consumers**



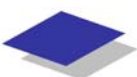
## Super Management

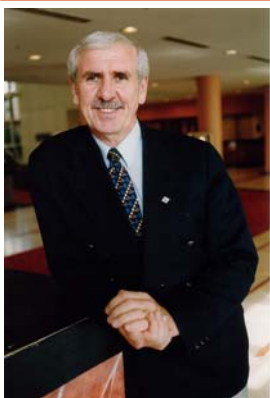
By Barry Urquhart

– Page 1

Better Business Focus aims to be the essential key for business owners and managers. It achieves that aim by focusing on the way in which successful businesses in the UK and elsewhere compete and manage their organisations.

It focuses on how people are recruited, coached and developed; on how marketing and selling is undertaken in professional markets as well as in markets with intense competition; on how technology and the Internet is reshaping the face of domestic and home business; and on how people are being equipped with new skills and techniques. In short, it's a focus on a better way to do business.





# Super Management

By Barry Urquhart

## Something is amiss!

Many of the ideals and promises of the three common mantras for businesses and business people are, in general, not being fulfilled or delivered.

And those mantras are:

- **Corporate Governance**
- **Corporate Social Responsibility**
- **The Triple Bottom Line**

Widespread anecdotal evidence suggests that there are more lies, half truths and spurious promises in the marketplace than ever before. Even the ambitious contentions of the “four-on-the-floor” entrepreneurs of the 1980’s seem humble by comparison.

There are clear correlations between this seemingly disappointing parlous state and the practices of outsourcing, downsizing and re-engineering. The ranks of businesses, small, medium and large, from the public and private sectors have been thinned. In some instances an objective diagnosis would conclude that “corporate anorexia” is omnipotent. Experience, confidence and a measure of both consistency and continuity have been lost. Many, but not all, of the perpetrators are inexperienced middle managers who lack confidence and a full appreciation of the nature and worth of positive corporate cultures. Little wonder there are repeated expressions of

concern at all levels in the supply chain about a lack of loyalty, trust and integrity. The value in the shake of a hand and verbal agreements has been discounted, along with many prices.

Fortunately, there is a basis for a resolution to this disturbing scenario. It comes in two parts.

## Superman Management

What we need are superman managers.

The hero status of the comic book, television and movie icon in the guise of the retiring, bespectacled Clark Kent and his alter ego “Superman” was founded on three pillars. With minor refinement, they could and should be applied to the new genre of business leaders, being:

- TRUTH
- JUSTICE
- THE BUSINESS WAY

Imagine, if you will, an absence of mass media headlines reflecting on the fine-line differences between bribery and facilitation fees. There would be no need to sort the wheat from the chaff. And the declaration of “fresh food” would be definitive. That would be refreshing! No more 9 month old fruit which had been subjected to gaseous and chemical preservatives, with an absence of point of purchase disclosures to that reality. Interestingly, there is an inverse relationship to the aging of unpackaged fruit and nutrition. At a certain point in time (read: aging) nutrition disappears. The bulk remains. It gives a whole new perspective to the statement;

“An apple a day ...”

In similar vein, cartels do no-one a favour. They represent a small, select group of business owners and executives who are living a

big lie. And if you do lie with dogs, you catch fleas. The message is simple. Don’t over-promise or under-promise. Just deliver the inherent true value at all times and in all circumstances.

Harold Geneen, the former President of the multinational corporation I.T.T. had a phrase for it, “The Doctrine of No Surprises!”

Consumers and clients would value that. So too would manufacturers, distributors and resellers.

The second part of the solution lies with ...

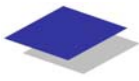
## A Few Good Men

Some Hollywood movies and superstars project a compelling message and image. So it was in the movie “A Few Good Men”, which starred Tom Cruise, Demi Moore and Jack Nicholson. In the screenplay, the character of Jack Nicholson, a military General, was being subjected to cross-examination during court marshal proceedings on the now notorious Guantanamo Bay. The prosecuting legal counsel implored the General to tell the truth.

Jack Nicholson, in his imitable style declared: “... the truth. You can’t handle the truth”.

It was a damning statement.

In business, manufacturers, distributors, associates, staff members, clients, customers and the public at large and all stakeholders are entitled to be given the truth. Half truths, “white lies” and “no comment” utterances are not good enough. That suggests that, no receptionist should ever ask a caller to hold on the telephone and then return to state that the manager is not in, unless that is a fact. The façade of lies is usually clearly transparent.



As a consequence the receptionist, the manager and the business lose many virtues.

Once the truth is known, the resolution of issues becomes relatively straightforward. Admittedly, in some instances hurtful, but straightforward none-the-less.

At a national conference last year, the Master of Ceremonies “softened up” the large audience in my introduction by stating that “... Barry Urquhart tells it as it is ...” It was somewhat an apology. I was both surprised and shocked, thinking to myself “Doesn’t everybody ... tell the truth?”

I quickly addressed the sentiment by expressing the belief that all conference keynote speakers do or should “tell it as it is”.

I readily accept that some people don’t want to hear or confront the truth. That is something with which they must contend.

I have no interest in being personally compromised.

Perhaps there are grounds for me and others to develop their skills in better communicating and delivering the truthful message. Doubtless, there are times that some people will and do feel affronted rather than confronted with the full truth.

However, the foundations of a sustainable and mutually rewarding relationship centre on the pillars of truth, justice and the business way.

### Staff Workshops On Truth

Interesting insights are gained from the conduct of internal staff development workshops on the subject. The nature, frequency and scope of “half lies, lies and spurious promises among internal and external customers shock many senior executives. The true character of the prevailing corporate culture is revealed and often has little in common with the proud Culture and Core Value Statements which are displayed throughout premises.

Staff members from all ranks, departments and divisions are usually familiar with, encounter and have to operate in the atmosphere which lacks the innate character of “Superman Management”.

This is sensitivity training at the coal face and employed at its best.

Gratifyingly, remedial action is typically readily available, accessible and possible for immediate implementation.

The most immediate consequences of such workshops include noticeable improvements in morale, trust in management and bonding between clients and service providers. Confidence and self confidence soars.

And so it is that increasingly business people are rationalising and narrowing their supply chains in pursuit of, and wishing to reward “a few good men” (not a gender specific endeavour). They should do so in any open, positive and truthful manner. A key component of the selection procedure should be recognition of those with whom you would like to deal, whom one can trust and who embrace the ideas of “Supermen Management”.

© Copyright 2007 Barry Urquhart

### About the Author:

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director of Marketing Focus, Perth is an internationally renowned conference keynote speaker, business analyst and author.

He regularly facilitates management workshops and strategic planning workshops, with particular emphasis on change, difference, customer satisfaction and non-price competitive advantage.

### Co-ordinates:

Tel: +0061 8 9257 1777  
Mobile: +006141 983 5555  
E-mail: [urquhart@marketingfocus.net.au](mailto:urquhart@marketingfocus.net.au)  
Web: [www.marketingfocus.net.au](http://www.marketingfocus.net.au)

## Business Insight... Avoiding Panic; Security; And Keeping Up Morale

One of my first clients was Christopher Bland (later Sir Christopher, chair of BBC, BT et al). We worked together in many areas both political and commercial. He is probably the most effective manager I have ever met.

I would go into his office. At the time he was head of a US management consultancy, with so many projects on the go I could only see woods, forests and more forests. “Where do we go from here? It’s overwhelming”, I’d say.

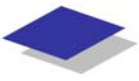
“Never look at the totality”, he’d reply. “Your brain short-circuits and the analysis suffers. Line up the problems, take one, any one and list every possible solution, however crazy. Work through them, make a decision then get onto the next. Never look at the whole list in one go”. It became one of my rules of management.

When I later started at BM I came under the wing of Claude Simmon, our chairman. He was one of the wisest of the early founders of PR in the UK. “When you are doing any governmental work never, ever, put names into contact reports or programmes. Just say: “Discussions took place with relevant Members of Parliament.” If only a few current operators took the same approach.

Still at BM, Bob Leaf was my immediate boss and international president. After weeks of work on a new business pitch I might have to sink into his office. “We lost it”. Bob never, ever cursed or asked all the reasons why we lost, a sort of implied criticism. He would say: “Pity, how’s tomorrow’s pitch going?” That’s how to keep up morale. Ride over the bumps and accelerate forward up the road.

*Dr Reginald Watts, started in the City as an economic researcher, joined Gwynne Hart (which later became part of Grayling) and was headhunted into Burson-Marsteller where he was CEO for 15 years.*

**No receptionist should ever ask a caller to hold on the telephone and then return to state that the manager is not in, unless that is a fact. The façade of lies is usually clearly transparent.**



# E-mail Etiquette – More Than Just Manners

By Angela Nielsen

**We all understand the importance of good "people skills" when it comes to our interpersonal communication - it helps us get the results we need. Our email communication determines the opinion others have of us - knowledgeable or ignorant, pleasant or rude, professional or immature. Angela Nielsen takes a look.**

When it comes to netiquette (Network Etiquette), it's not as easy to control how others perceive us, and yet it's even more important. Why? Because what you write and how you use email can affect whether your email gets delivered, read, or responded to - and what that response is! In addition, there are numerous "technology traps" that are easy to fall into. Have you ever seen someone accidentally send an angry or sensitive response to a huge group of people by using the "Reply All" key?

And before you say to yourself "I already know" and stop reading this article, realise that every single one of us could benefit from a few simple reminders on the proper use of email, not just from a personal view but also from a business standpoint. If you're doing business on the internet - and using email to communicate with your customers - then this article is a must read for you! You may already know many of these

tips, but even the most experienced user will find a few rules you were not aware of or have fallen into the habit of breaking.

## **Think, Write, And Think Again**

Email is a static, one-way channel - unlike live communication, there's no way to get immediate feedback (from facial expressions or voice responses) to know if we are being effective or even understood. So think twice before hitting the send key. Is there ANY chance that the recipient might misinterpret what you want them to understand? Do your thoughts come across as abrupt or angry? Could this email accidentally affect your reputation? The hastily written word may lack feelings and the true emotion you intended. You might be smiling as you type, but your note could come across as sarcastic or mean-spirited. Remember - there's a person on the other end, not just a computer.

## **Use A Meaningful Subject Line**

This is the first thing your reader will see, so use the space to help them understand the contents of the email even before they open it. Using the same rule from above, type in a subject that relates to the message you're sending, rather than leaving the subject blank. Without a subject line your note will probably be seen as another piece of junk mail - not everyone will recognise who you are just from your email address. Many internet service providers (ISP's) filter out suspicious looking email and a blank subject is a big red flag. Also, try to avoid generic words like "Hi" or "Check This Out" to avoid having the recipients spam or virus software delete your message!

## **The Beginning And The End**

Always use a salutation, even if it's short. Start your message with "Hi", or "Hello", or "Dear", whatever works best for the intended recipient, and whatever reflects your personality. Think about this: when you call someone on the telephone, don't you say "Hello" before telling them what you want? Email messages should be no different. At a minimum, address the email to the person.

## **Don't Forget The End Of Your Message Too!**

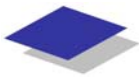
Always sign your messages with your name, and say "Thank You", or "Sincerely", or something else appropriate. You can even set up a signature in your email program that will automatically display your information at the bottom of every email message you send. For directions, use your email programs help file and do a search for signature. Protect your recipient's identity - use "To:", "CC:" and "BC:" properly.

## **Give Memory A Helping Hand**

When replying to emails, include a copy of the prior notes you've traded with the person on the topic, don't just send a new one. I may receive 50 emails a day that need a reply and it's not always possible to remember every single 'conversation' with every single person. Please don't make your reader go looking through their 'sent items' folder or email 'recycle bin' to refresh their memory!

## **Use The 'Read Receipt' Sparingly**

In some cases, it's crucial for both parties to know that a message was received. However, in normal day-to-day activities you should not request a read receipt for every single message you send. It's annoying to the recipient to have



to click that pop up box every time they get your email. And it is an invasion of privacy. Don't forget - just because they have received it doesn't mean they have necessarily read it, so receiving a read receipt doesn't actually prove anything other than that the message was received. And for day-to-day communications, is that really necessary?

### Proof, Spell-Check, And Use Proper Formatting

Poor writing skills are a direct reflection on you! And the reader never forgets the person who writes an undecipherable message. Spell checking will prevent most misspelled words, but you should always proof your email in case you've written the incorrect word (that was spelled correctly). For example, month and moth, where and were, all look correct to a spell-check program. Use proper capitalisation, punctuation and formatting. Break your paragraphs when the subject changes, or if they become too long.

Don't use excessive formatting (too much bold, too many exclamation points and question marks, etc.) Too much of anything will make your message harder to read. You want to make your message easily readable, as well as understandable. Proof read it to ensure it make sense, and never assume the reader knows what you mean, always spell it out for them. The time it takes to proof and spell check is minimal compared to the lasting impression you will make if you don't take the time.

### Take The Time To Send A Reply

Even when someone emails you something that doesn't need a direct response, follow up with them in a timely manner just to let them know you received their message. It's amazing how often people will ask for advice, and not even reply with a short "Thank you" when they receive their answer. A simple message telling the sender is sufficient. And this lets them know you did receive it, that it didn't just get stuck in cyberspace somewhere.

If they didn't request it, don't send it! No matter what you think may be acceptable, you cannot email someone about your product/service without their permission. Unless they request that you send them an email, or you have previously done business with them, then it is illegal to send them an email, period. Any recipient can easily forward your email to their ISP and report you for sending unsolicited email messages (SPAM). Also, if sending large attachments (more than 2Mb) phone first to see if it is acceptable.

### Compress, Compress, Compress!

If you are sending an email with several large attachments, it is often better to send them in a few separate emails, so that you don't send a document that is too large to even open. Or, you can try compressing your messages into a zipped file. It doesn't reduce the size of images or pictures very much, but it works great for text, spreadsheet and program files. This is very easy to do, and will make your file size much smaller, and make the recipient much happier.

Check out [www.winzip.com](http://www.winzip.com) (for those on pc).

### Hoaxes As Helpful Hints

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Do not forward everything that gets sent to you. We've all seen them - the chain-letter emails that promise if you forward to x number of people you'll get paid, or you'll win something, or you will be lucky forever. It's all a hoax, a scam, and the only result is huge numbers of email transmissions that slow down servers all across the country. If you receive one of these emails from a friend, reply to them (in a very nice way) and explain to them why this isn't true, or ask them to stop forwarding them to you.

### Virus Or Virus Advice?

Many viruses are spread by email masquerading as warnings about - a virus! If someone forwards you a virus warning, which usually

contains instructions for removing a virus from your computer... check google.com for that virus BEFORE doing anything. Chances are, it's also a hoax, and if you do remove that "bad file" from your computer, you're actually removing a necessary component crucial to your system!

© Copyright 2007 Angela Nielsen and One Lily Inc

### About the Author

Angela Nielsen is President of One Lily Inc., an award-winning web development company located in southern California. She is also author of Online In 10 Steps: Guidelines For Creating A Winning Website, a free ebook written in layman's terms to help you manage the creation of your website.

### Co-ordinates

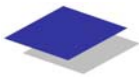
One Lily Inc  
Web: <http://www.onelily.com>  
E-mail: [angela@onelily.com](mailto:angela@onelily.com)

**I feel I'm able to serve my customer by knowing what she or he wants.**

One of the ways I'm able to do this is through my website, and e-mail: people give me great ideas, tell me what they want, what they don't want. It's really instrumental, and helps me stay in touch with people.

**Kathy Ireland**

**Remember - there's a person on the other end, not just a computer.**



# Six Powerful Prospecting Tips

By John Boe



**Why is it that some sales reps consistently earn a six-figure annual income while other reps, putting in the same hours, selling the same products and trained by the same sales manager struggle each month financially to make ends meet?**

**The answer to this question is painfully simple; the six-figure sales reps spend more time on the phone and never forget to ask for referrals!**

Top producers don't need to be told to ask for referrals or follow up on hot leads, because they understand that prospecting is a necessity and not just an activity. The good news is that prospecting for new business, like any other skill, can be trained and developed into a habit.

## **Six Powerful Prospecting Tips To Build Your Business**

### **Tip One: Don't Forget To Ask For Referrals**

When it comes to asking for referrals, timing is everything. Research indicates that the most effective time to ask for referrals is right after you've made the sale or provided a valuable service for your customer. Asking for

referrals prior to closing the sale is a big mistake and may even jeopardise the sale itself. Once the sale has been completed, your customer will be on an "emotional high" and far more receptive to the idea of providing you referrals.

### **Tip Two: Train And Reward Your Advocates**

An advocate is a person who's willing to go out of his or her way to recommend you to a friend or associate. Most customers are initially reluctant to provide referrals without some basic training and motivation.

Once you're given a prospect, it's a good idea to take the time to role-play with your advocate to demonstrate how to approach and talk to their referral. A brief role-playing exercise will build your advocate's confidence and keep them from overeducating their referrals. During your role-play session, be sure to prepare your advocate to expect some initial resistance. This training will pay big dividends by making your advocate more effective and less likely to become discouraged when faced with rejection.

Always take the time to thank your advocates and give them feedback on the status of their referrals. I recommend that you call them and then follow up by sending a thank you card and or gift.

### **Tip Three: Strike While The Iron Is HOT**

Prospects, like food in your refrigerator, are perishable and therefore need to be contacted quickly. Each day you let slip by without making initial contact with your referral dramatically reduces the probability of you making the sale. Develop the habit of contacting your referrals within two-business days or sooner.

Have a system to keep track of your referrals so they don't end up falling through the cracks. It's critical to have a computerised client contact management system to record your remarks and track future contacts and appointments. Relying on your memory alone is a very poor business decision that will cost you dearly.

### **Tip Four: Schedule A Minimum Of Two-Hours A Day For Phone Calling**

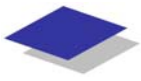
Make your phone calls in the morning while you and your referrals are both fresh and alert. Treat your prospecting time with the same respect you would give to any other important appointment. This is not the time to check your e-mails, play solitaire on the computer, make personal phone calls or chat with your associates.

Avoid the temptation to try and sell your product or service over the phone. Your objective for every phone call is to create interest, gather information and make an appointment. If your prospect asks you a question, get in the habit of going for an appointment rather than giving a quick response.

Don't shoot from the hip use a script. It's important to use a phone script when you contact your prospect so you don't leave out any key information. It's a good idea to role-play your script over the phone with your sales manager until he or she feels you sound confident and professional.

### **Tip Five: Qualify Your Prospect At Maximum Range**

Unfortunately, not every prospect will be interested or qualified financially to purchase your products or services. Successful sales reps don't waste time chasing



after low-probability prospects and know when it's time to cut their losses and move on.

**Tip Six: Don't Take Rejection Personally**

Selling, like baseball, is a numbers game pure and simple. Rejection is to be anticipated as a natural aspect of the qualification process, so don't take it personally. Learn from rejection by using it as a valuable feedback mechanism. Salespeople who take rejection personally lack perseverance and seldom make the sale.

For the majority of salespeople, prospecting for new business is without a doubt the most challenging and stressful aspect of the selling process. Selling is a contact sport and daily prospecting for new business is the key to every salesperson's long-term financial success. By integrating these six powerful prospecting tips into your daily business routine, you'll be able to keep your appointment calendar packed!

© Copyright 2007 John Boe

**About the Author:**

John Boe presents a variety of sales training and motivational programs for meetings and conventions. John brings over twenty years of experience as an award-winning sales trainer

**Co-ordinates:**

John Boe International  
P.O. Box 3286  
Monterey, CA USA  
Tel: (001) 831 375 3668

Web: [www.johnboe.com](http://www.johnboe.com)  
E-mail: [john@johnboe.com](mailto:john@johnboe.com)

Meet John Boe:  
[www.johnboe.com/meetjohn.html](http://www.johnboe.com/meetjohn.html)

Seminars & Keynotes:  
[www.johnboe.com/seminars.html](http://www.johnboe.com/seminars.html)



# 6 Ways to Promote Your Business

By Martin Pollins, founder of Bizezia

**1. Award a Surprise Rebate**

After completing a job, return a small sum of money to your customer to share "savings."

**2. Send a Present**

Pick an obscure point on the annual calendar - such as the Anniversary of the Queen's Accession to the Throne - as the day to send a gift or card.

**3. Package Pairing**

Pairings are products presented in twos - one item in the pairing is for the customer to use, and the other is to be "given" away.

**4. A Pairing for Grocery Companies and Pharmacies**

Put two example of any new item you want customers to try - a jar of mustard, a natural cereal or the like - into an identifiable plastic bag or other packaging with two copies of a flyer that describes how the item can best be enjoyed and suggesting that the second item be given to a relative, friend or colleague.

**5. A Pairing For Publishers**

Put a paper wrapper around two copies of a book, tape, journal, CD-Rom or other published work. On the piece of paper inform the customer that they have been given a second copy of the book to give to their family or friends.

**6. Provide a Related Service**

Find a natural linkage between your business and the service or product you can offer to generate the conversations you need - for example, The Insurance Company also provides a service to check your fire extinguishers.

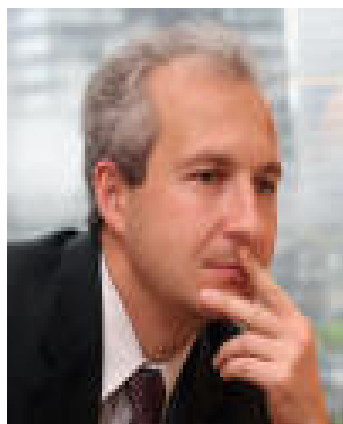
Extracted from Bizezia's 101 Ways to Promote Your Business – visit [www.bizezia.com](http://www.bizezia.com) for more information.

© Copyright 2007, Bizezia Limited

## Don't worry if you don't know what Return on Capital Employed (ROCE) means, here's an explanation:

**Return on Capital Employed (ROCE)** - operating or trading profit (profit before interest and taxation) expressed as a percentage of capital employed. This is the pre-tax return on capital employed. A more rigorous measure is the 'after tax' ROCE - the profit before interest after tax expressed as a percentage of capital employed. ROCE is the most important measure of profitability. The ROCE measures the return earned by a business from its trading activities. This return is then compared with the return required by the shareholders and lenders financing the business. The return required by investors and lenders is called the cost of capital. For a business to create value the ROCE should exceed the cost of capital.

**Source:** Bizezia's Glossary of Key Financial Terms and Business Ratios. © Copyright 2007, Bizezia Limited



# The Market, Marketing, And Your Sales Strategy

By Michael Cardell

Your headings should include:

- Market Research
- Overall Market
- Market Segment
- Suppliers
- Environmental factors
- Economic factors
- Technological factors
- Government / regulation
- Social factors
- Seasonal factors
- Random factors

## Market Research

Describe any market research that has been done. Document your sources for credibility

## Overall Market

Description should include:

- Locations
- Sales / Profits within the market
- Growth rate / trends

Is your market in "early momentum" - the market growth phase where market revenues have recently taken off?

Who are the key competitors?

Project total market sales and your share.

## Market Segment

Description of the segment should include:

- Locations
- Sales / Profits within the market
- Growth rate / trends

Is your target market segment

- Tightly defined over a population sharing common characteristics?
- Large enough to support significant profits?
- Served by communications channels to reach that market - i.e., trade or special interest publications, response mailing lists?

## Who Are The Key Players?

What is the competitive framework - current and future competitors? (Including substitute products)

Give a description of your customers / clients - who / where / how many?

Is there wide appeal for your product or service? Are there enough potential customers in the target market that you can earn significant profits, for a long time?

What are the trends in the customer base?

Project the total segment sales and your share.

If relevant comment on any of the following:

- Suppliers
- Environmental factors
- Economic factors
- Technological factors
- Government / regulation
- Social factors
- Seasonal factors
- Random factors

## Marketing And Sales Strategy

Sections should include:

- Market segmentation / target markets
- Promotion and advertising strategy
- Distribution strategy
- Sales strategy
- Pricing strategy, including guarantees
- Strategic alliances
- Service strategy
- Sales forecast

## Market Segmentation/Target Markets

We've talked about your target market / segments - what is your rationale for that targeting that market / that segment?

## Distribution And Sales Strategies

Does your business have the ability to sell your product? Particularly in businesses where the founders have technical backgrounds, "Who is going to sell your product or service?" What about outside distributors?

Between this and previous sections the business plan needs to answer these questions:

- Who are your potential customers?
- How many are there?
- What exactly are you selling?
- Why will your potential customers buy what you are selling?
- Why will your potential customers buy from you?
- How much will your potential customers buy from you?
- How often?
- How much will they be prepared to pay?
- How will your potential customers find you?

To Your Success in Business

© Copyright 2007 Michael Cardell

## About the Author:

A leading business coach and growth strategist, Michael Cardell has been a strategic business planner for FTSE 100 companies such as Whitbread and Vodafone, Group FD of HLG plc and advised more than 90 different businesses across 18 different business sectors.

## Co-ordinates:

Address: Optimum Business Strategies Limited  
PO Box 873, Bromley  
BR1 9DX, UK

Web:  
[www.OptimumBusinessStrategies.com/bbf.htm](http://www.OptimumBusinessStrategies.com/bbf.htm)

# Lighting The Fuse- Part 2

By Stephen-Lewis Brammer

**Having studied a wide range of successful people intensively for the last 10 years I have recognised that they all have certain traits in common, and that more importantly, by using these traits, anyone can be more successful at whatever they want to be. We continue on from the last edition of Better Business Focus with details of an additional 4 traits in order that you may act upon them and become more successful. As per the last edition you must take action upon all of these items, no matter how small.**

## 5) Resilience

Successful people are resilient. They know there will be set backs, that things will not always go to plan and have an ability to bounce back and move forward irrespectively. They have an ability to deal with rejection and handle a “No”, almost as if it were a “Yes”, using each set back to fuel their determination to succeed. Successful people know that the lessons learnt when things do not go to plan often identify the changes needed, previously oblivious to them. They also understand that when faced with a particularly difficult challenge, the

words, “I can’t do this” mark the beginning of a journey, not a final destination. How resilient are you? Can you think of a time when you pushed on, in the face of extreme adversity and won through? Can you recall the last time when you gave up, only to discover later that you were closer to achieving than you thought? Commit to go the distance, to roll with the punches and develop the thick skin to protect your confidence, especially when the challenge you face is difficult. Often exhausting the known possibilities is the key to discovering our unknown potential; we just have to make it there.

## 6) Evaluation

Successful people know that evaluation is the key to further advancement. It can tell them, through use of monitored and measured results whether they are on the right track, whether and where they need to change. They can identify constantly if something is working or not, and therefore decide to do more of it, or do something differently without losing time or opportunity. They know where they are against plan and if the deviation is positive or a cause for concern. Successful people also evaluate possibilities, to ensure that when they do act it is always based on sound logical reasoning and not just whim, which whilst it may be flavour of the moment may not have any real impact whatsoever. How often do you evaluate what you do, the results your action produces and your effectiveness? Simply doing this can lead to much more sound judgements being made, a better and more efficient decision making process and speed up the path to success.

## 7) Decision Making

Successful people make decisions no matter how tough they may be. It is said that this process is less

prevalent in human beings today than ever before with so many things being automated. The advent of computer programs in particular have led to many of us not doing this often enough and when we do so, finding it so uncomfortable and unpleasant that we gladly assign responsibility to colleagues, management, our partners / spouses, etc... Identify the decisions you regularly make and their importance. Identify furthermore the decisions that are made for you by other people. Can you make them? Can you do so better than the current decision maker? Whatever your answer, understand why you think that way and do something about it. Put yourself in control more often, even if it takes you out of your comfort zone as this is where real development and learning takes place. Take time to reach the correct decision, one that meets with your values and beliefs and when you do so, have the conviction to see it done.

## 8) Persistence

Successful people persist where mere mortals give up. In the previous edition we looked at determination, the drive to see it done and persistence is key to this happening. We need to be able to keep going when it gets tough in order that we conquer adversity, overcome challenges and arrive at our destination. Reaffirming our goals and visualising them (in detail as described in the last edition) will motivate us to keep going, ready and prepared to succeed when the opportunity presents itself. It is said that many a good idea has fallen by the wayside simply because the opportunity was not present and the timing was wrong. Persistence means that we never give up and keep knocking until the opportunity finally does present itself.

The famous story of Thomas Edison inventing the light bulb illustrates this wonderfully. Having worked for considerable time on the carbon element, Edison's colleague asked him why he would not give up, having experimented unsuccessfully 999 times. Edison merely replied that he had not failed 999 times, he had simply eliminated 999 incorrect ways of doing it, and so was strengthened in his resolve to find the correct way, after all, he was now 999 steps closer to it! Remember that if it was easy, everybody would be doing it. Remember also that successful people more often than not, take years to achieve what they work for. And persistence is what got them to their final destination. Ask yourself when you last persisted with something you believed in. Conversely, identify when recently you have given up on something you believed in and allowed things to fall by way-side that, should you have stayed with them would now be achieved, then commit to do things differently from now on. It may help to write down what will be the pro's of seeing it through compared to the con's of walking away and as per your goals, make these as descriptive as you can to ensure you persist, persist, persist.

Work on these 4 traits between now and the next edition of Better Business Focus and we will continue next time with 4 more additional traits guaranteed to make you more successful.

© Copyright 2007 Stephen Lewis-Brammer

#### About the Author:

Stephen Lewis-Brammer is Managing Director of Professional Sales Development Ltd and author of The Salesperson's Guide to Success. His selling career has been mainly in engineering sales, commencing with a role as internal salesperson for the UK distribution centre of one of Europe's largest mechanical fixings manufacturers, Agrati.

#### Co-ordinates:

Web:  
[www.thisissalestraining.com](http://www.thisissalestraining.com)  
 Tel: +44 (1782) 283283

## Bestsellers

### 1 Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-free Productivity

By David Allen, Piatkus Books  
 Price: £7.03

### 2 Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything

By Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner, Penguin Books Limited  
 Price: £5.39

### 3 Introducing NLP Neuro-Linguistic Programming

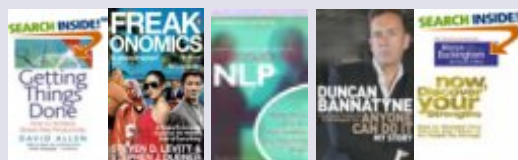
By Joseph O'Connor, HarperCollins  
 Price: £7.25

### 4 Anyone Can Do It: The Autobiography

By Duncan Bannatyne, Orion  
 Price: £12.53

### 5 Now, Discover Your Strengths: How to Develop Your Talents and Those of the People You Manage

By Marcus Buckingham, Pocket Books, New Ed edition  
 Price: £5.84



## Book of the Month

### Top Performer

By Stephen C. Lundin & Carr Hagerman  
 Price: £7.49

Stephen Lundin has helped thousands of people to transform their businesses through the phenomenal bestselling FISH! series. Now, the pioneering author has developed a new formula for success that demonstrates how the energy, passion and dynamism that street performers bring to their art can be harnessed by managers to enliven businesses and to inject a massive boost to sales.

In this engaging parable, Jim, a disciplined but uninspired sales manager encounters a street performer and is struck by his ability to engage his audience and how good he makes the people around him feel. The two join forces and the result is a book that is packed with innovative techniques to produce dramatic improvements in natural energy and sales performance. 'Top Performer' is packed full of simple but life-changing lessons.

Buy online in the BBF bookshop for just £7.49, or call: (01730) 233 870 and quote BBF Bookshop.



Source: <http://www.global-investor.com/bbf>

# Driving Performance In Sales Teams

By David Coorey

**Susan usually looked forward to January. It was a time for congratulations on exceeding budget by a good margin. The year before last her team just missed budget. She didn't have time to look at why and put it down to one of those things, a bad year. This time the budget's been missed by a long way.**

This has given Susan two headaches. Firstly, trying to analyse why sales performance wasn't up to scratch. Then figuring out how she is going to bridge the bigger than planned gap between last years sales and this years expectation.

Where does she start? What brought those sales in? How much a factor was product superiority? Customer loyalty? Price? Her sales team? She did grow, but was it faster than the market or slower?

Whether sales have reached expectations or not, sales team performance can often be a present issue or one waiting in the wings. It can come under many guises:

## Poor Sales

You have a clear deviation from budget. This is the easiest symptom to recognise. The numbers don't lie.

## Poor Growth

You've hit budget but are not capturing market opportunities. Slowly but surely you'll lose ground to your competitors as they grow faster and enter new areas

before you do. This is harder to recognise as it relies on good market intelligence systems to be able to accurately assess market sector potential. Many companies have grown their way to failure by not assessing the market potential properly and setting too low expectations compared to their competitors.

## Poor Cohesiveness And Cooperation Within The Team

Individuals may be performing well but opportunities are not being captured due to "Silo" mentality.

## Poor Team Ethic

(us versus them). Manifesting in a lack of cooperation with other departments (e.g. technical services) this can create real difficulties both for general company morale and wasted time due to infighting.

## Not Aligned With The Company Objectives And Culture

If anyone in the company has objectives that don't contribute to the overall corporate objectives then they are wasting their own time and their companies. The Culture of the company is an important "compass" that should steer staff decisions and their dealings with customers.

## The Current Structure Is Not Aligned With Customer Buyer Behaviour

Either the way the customers buy or the natural segments customers are in have changed, resulting in lack of effective coverage from your sales resource.

## The Causes No Market Intelligence System

Assessing the market versus your

offering and how you communicate with it is fundamental to long term success. Good market intelligence will also help in facing ambiguous threats<sup>(2)</sup> and inform decisions on the right structure going forward to effectively reach your customers.

## Missing Or Ambiguous Measurement Criteria

Sales people are almost universally motivated by achievement. Individual targets (sales, profitability, call rates) that the sales person can be held accountable for (and praised for hitting) are vital to be able to measure and motivate.

## No Useful Reflective Data

Often salespeople get sales figures, but either they are not in a format that they can easily utilise or if a specialised tool is used they lack the confidence to interrogate it. The result is that the salesperson doesn't know how they are tracking and therefore cannot change their approach to correct bad trends.

## No Call Reporting

The invisible sales team can't be measured. Sales Revenue, despite being a sales teams primary output, is actually a crude measure of their activity. If your team are not doing their job it can take six months or more to have an effect on customer buying behaviour and another six months to correct the problem. The time afforded to you however, to correct sliding sales is usually measured in weeks not months.

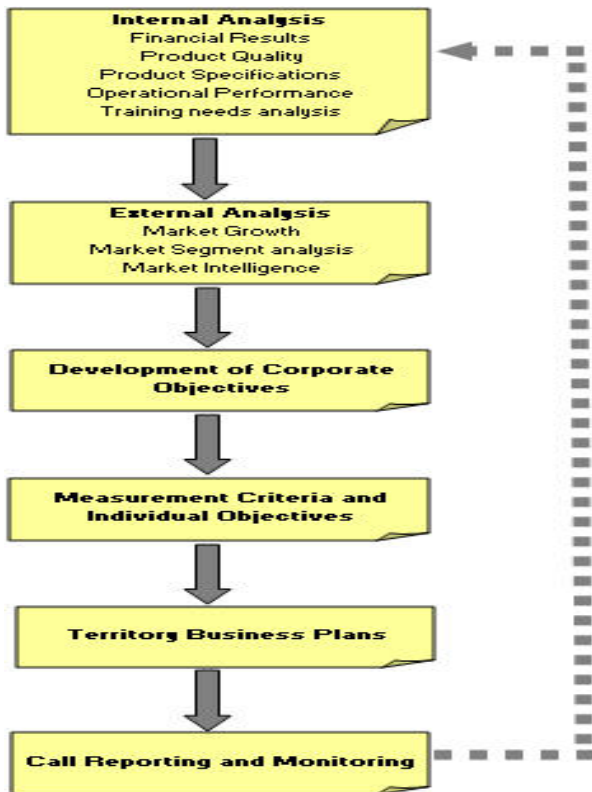
## Absence Of Territory Business Planning

After targets have been given out can each salesperson demonstrate where the business will come from at a customer level? More importantly how they will get it and when?

### Little Appreciation Or Knowledge Of The Company Objectives And Values

Studies have shown that employees who can state clearly what contribution they make to the overall company goals are more engaged with the company. Engaged employees – those who feel positive about their jobs – perform better for their employers.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is vital to address these issues quickly. Good salespeople will be frustrated with the lack of direction and success and the bad sales people will be enjoying the environment for the same reason. The manner and process in which changes are undertaken, however, is critical to the success of the team. Process driven performance change should address the factors in a logical order.



### Where Do I Start?

The first port of call in medicine, is a thorough examination of the patient. Only then can a proper diagnosis be made. The wrong diagnosis can lead to wasted time in treatment that will not cure the illness. The same is true here. A

thorough and dispassionate internal and external analysis as per diagram 1, will tell you where the problem is.

Before any change is executed, the first port of call should be Management. Do the key managers have the skills, time and tools to manage the team effectively? If structural change is required will they be able to execute it or is help needed?

Personnel feel most fulfilled when they can identify where their objectives contributed to the companies overall success. In order to make this judgement, salespeople must understand the corporate objectives for the year. If they are not defined, define them. Then set out on a relentless campaign to communicate them. Once this is done, keep communicating them and reminding the team how they are doing against them.

Clear and early measurement criteria need to be given to the sales people, along with clear data showing their performance against targets. It is imperative that easy to use models are utilised showing trended data by customer and product type numerically and graphically. This will allow the individuals to quickly track both good and bad trends in their territory.

The basis of the successful salesperson is Territory business planning. Too often training time is devoted to that part of a salesperson's day that is spent directly in front of the customer in a sales situation. Although this is important, face to face selling time (i.e. when they are actually in dialog with a decision maker) as a proportion of a salespersons day can be as little as 10%. The rest of the time can be spent travelling, seeing non decision makers that have an influence over the decision, chasing orders, overcoming blocks, servicing existing customers etc. It also does not matter how persuasive they are in a face to face call, if they have no overall direction the sales process is often delayed or not realised. Any salesperson should be able to tell his or her manager how their target divides down into

what opportunities will be realised in order to hit their target. This is important both for the salesperson to understand how targets will be delivered and for their manager to be satisfied that there is a plan in place. The tools can be a simple excel model or a more sophisticated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution. The important thing here is that the need for planning is reinforced and that the team is given the tool and training in order for collective review performance during the year. The business plans then naturally become the focus for the review at the end of journey accompaniments or office reviews.

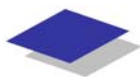
A method for the team to be able to record simply and consistently who they have seen and what products were detailed is essential. Simple tools can give good graphical data that can be shared with the whole team during sales reviews. This can have immense power. It can become a focus for cause and effect where a change in call behaviour can be seen down the line in increased sales. The team can also become self policing as both group and individual data can be seen by all. Far from creating divisions, it can help the team to bond by stimulating discussion and self responsibility.

It is often difficult to come to the realisation that the storm is coming or is overhead. The key messages have systems in place that allow you to act quickly on good evidence, fostering visibility and openness as the key to change in behaviour and getting outside help if expertise or implementation help is needed. The worst thing you can do is delay.

Now Susan, about last years' sales....

Do's

- Set up a market intelligence system to harvest and analyse market data
- Communicate Corporate Objectives early and often
- Encourage openness in the team



- Reflect and make decisions on reported data as a team
- Simple tools are often the best
- Consult on structural changes
- Regularly review Territory Business plans
- Get help if needed.

**Don'ts**

- Assume dropping sales are an "external" problem
- Make structural changes without evidence
- Overload the team with paperwork
- Hide data
- Treat Business planning as an event - it's a continuous process.

1. Mike Emmott People Management magazine CIPD 23 November 2006 p 38
2. Roberto et al "Facing Ambiguous Threats" Harvard Business Review Nov 2006.

© Copyright 2007 37point5 Limited

**About the Author:**

David Coorey B.SC Dip.M FCIM FInstSMM has worked in a variety of Senior Management and Director Positions across Complex and diverse International Businesses. He has received numerous awards including Global Best Profitability Improvement Market and the Frost and Sullivan European Customer Services Award. He is Principal of the Sales and Marketing Consultancy 37point5 Limited.

**Co-ordinates:**

37point5 Limited  
E-mail: [David.Coorey@37point5.co.uk](mailto:David.Coorey@37point5.co.uk)  
Web: [www.37point5.co.uk](http://www.37point5.co.uk)

**Necessity is the mother of taking chances.**  
*Mark Twain*



# Not So Wrinkly!

By Hugh Alford

**Until recently words like 'dynamic', 'energetic', and 'gravitas' have frequently appeared in sales recruitment ads. Under the new Age Discrimination Act which came into force on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2006, they are no longer permitted, as using these terms would be seen as overt discrimination.**

A leading recruitment company has added 'ambitious' and 'experience' to their list of banned words from advertisements. Sales recruitment is undoubtedly where the biggest challenge of the Age Discrimination Act lies and could well draw out an already arduous process. Having been forced to review our recruitment procedures we should see this as an opportunity to ensure that we not only fill a position within the terms of the new law, but we improve our selection process for identifying the very best potential salespeople for our organisations.

When hiring salespeople, management tend to concentrate on the outward impressions and experience that the applicant has in their market or in sales generally. Recent CIPD research reported that almost a quarter of employers say that age does have an effect on their recruitment decision-making process. The Age Discrimination Act should make us focus on what we really need for a sales position, how we clearly and legally state these requirements and assess candidates objectively.

Evidence of the candidate's relevant achievements will still feature heavily in the selection process and is reasonably straightforward to request and evaluate. But to find salespeople who will help us increase profitable sales, it's worth reminding ourselves of the traits a salesperson should have to perform well in our organisations.

Here are a few of the most valuable characteristics that research suggests make successful salespeople:

- *A strong sense of self-worth*- High confidence and self-esteem. Probably one of the most important characteristics for sales as these people thrive on success and are able to bounce back from failure and rejection
- *Thinking outside the box and risk taking*- These people are always looking for ways to find a new angle and approach to differentiate themselves in changing selling environments and will take risks they believe will help them to succeed
- *Conceptual selling*- Virtually all sales today need the ability to sell an idea, the intangibles as well as the tangibles.

Guess what? Along with empathy, a sense of urgency and of course competitiveness, all these characteristics co-incidentally, do not depend on age and experience: Good searching!

© Copyright 2007 TACK International

**About the Author:**

Hugh Alford is Senior Training Consultant, TACK International. Hugh is the author of numerous research studies on sales. He specialises in training in field sales, desk based selling skills and customer relationship management.

**For Further Information:**

For more information telephone +44 (0)1494 766 633, or visit [www.tack.co.uk](http://www.tack.co.uk) or e-mail [info@tack.co.uk](mailto:info@tack.co.uk)



# Customer Service – Miriam's Journey

By John Stanley

**Late in 2006 I was working in Bloemfontein in South Africa with a client. This was my first time to the city. That evening I had to find a restaurant for a meal and I wandered down the main street wondering which one to select. The Famous Butchers Grill caught my eye. I had never heard of the name before, but with a name like that I thought it should be a memorable experience. It is part of a small chain that started I believe in Capetown ([www.butchersgrill.com](http://www.butchersgrill.com))**

I was met at the entrance by Miriam, a 25 year old from Lesotho who had worked for the business for the last two months. After the customary greeting she asked if this was my first visit to the restaurant, to which I told her it was my first visit to the town as well as the venue. Instead of taking me to a table she said "Let me show you around". She started by taking me to the butcher and introduced me to the person and asked what I knew about cuts of meat. I decided to play along and mentioned that I was not familiar with most meat cuts. She then explained the various cuts of meat and what cuts she believed I should select. I was then asked

what wine I preferred and was ushered to the wine cellar where she took me to the expensive wines and asked what was my favourite wine? I mentioned I normally drank Shiraz and she then escorted me to the Shiraz section where I select a wine. She then picked up another vineyards bottle and said that this was her favourite and recommended I select that bottle. At this point I was finally ushered to my table where she poured the wine. Once I had tasted the wine she said "I was right wasn't I, this is a good wine", to which I had to agree.

She then recommended a meal and the level of service continued with the dessert. After one meal Miriam, had got to know my preferences and become my food hero in Bloemfontein.

The week before I visited my local hardware retailer in Australia as we needed to paint our spare bedroom because a guest was coming. Since I was travelling overseas in two days I had one weekend to complete the job. We need a painting sheet to cover the floor. We walked in and asked for a cover sheet and the sales assistant replied "We have sold out of the cheap ones" and then walked away.

These two events in customer service occurred within a few days of each other, one in a first world environment and one from someone who had just come from a third world environment. Customer service is about building a relationship with the customer and Miriam won hands down.

Miriam understands that the consumer is looking for an expert who can provide information, ideas and solutions. The person that does that develops a relationship with the customer and they become advocates, not of the company, but of the salesperson. It

is worth analysing the skills Miriam has learnt in her short time in retailing.

- Greet the customer using your name. This gives the customer the opportunity to provide their name. They may not provide it, but Miriam had opened up the opportunity. I gave my name and she used that as a reference point and used it in the conversation that proceeded.
- Find out as much information as you can from that person before you jump to conclusions. Miriam greeted me and asked if this was the first time I had been to the establishment. She was aware that she needed to take me on a journey, but needed to establish the ground rules to enable her to decide on the road map that lay ahead for both of us. Rather than take the traditional route of taking me to a table, she took the non traditional route as she was aware that this would be more memorable for her client. I was her customer and she was not going to let me go. When we met the butcher she stayed with me, rather than leaving me with the butcher.
- The customer forms a relationship with a person, not with a company and Miriam was fully aware that she needed to stay with me to build a rapport and to build on the bonding. She realised that she needed to be the consultant and to provide the information I needed to make my decision. In the wine cellar she was correct in taking me to the expensive wines and then allowing me to decide on the price point I was comfortable with. Once this had been decided she then selected a product within the range that she promoted as her favourite

to establish the fact that she was the expert in this scenario.

- She provided add on value for the customer. When it came to selling she offered the dessert, she was fully aware that her role was to be a seller. If I purchased what I came in for and nothing else, then she would have failed as a sales person. She sold the dessert with confidence and reassurance.

Compare the above with the hardware salesperson who believed everyone bought on price. Not only was he rude, but he made assumptions. He believed everyone though like he did and was only interested in price. Price is a motivator in certain situations, but those situations vary from situation to situation and from client to client. You have to get to know the customer before you can make any decisions.

#### And In Your Business

How do the above scenarios relate to your business? Firstly, does all your team realise that the customer is on a journey and that they are part of that journey? If they can exceed the consumers mind set when the consumer walks into the store then they will become remember able. The consumer does not want a relationship with the store; they want a relationship with the individual they first meet when they visit the store.

Secondly, the consumer would like the salesperson to stay with them on the journey, not hand them from person to person. If you can build a relationship with the person then you develop your own cliental. Nordstrom in the USA has used this approach to customer service for a number of years and many would argue that they provide the best customer service in the USA.

Thirdly, the worst thing you can do is bring price into the equation to soon. If the customer asks for the price then you have a role to discuss it, but if the customer is in a solutions and ideas mind set, then price is not where you start as a consultant in the selling game. Fourthly, do you know your products and have an opinion on

your products. In another restaurant last week I asked the waiter which dessert they recommended, the response was that they could not answer the question as they did not eat in the restaurant. At least they were honest and as a result I stayed with the coffee. Do make sure that your team has their favourites as this gives the customer confidence in the advice and the person.

The key to success is on going training. Recruit people with personality, train them to provide them with confidence and then empower them to make decisions. As a result these guys should become your top ambassadors and sales team members.

Finally if you are in Bloemfontein in South Africa do drop into The Famous Butchers grill and say hello to Miriam for me.

© Copyright 2007, John Stanley

#### About the Author:

John Stanley is a conference speaker and retail consultant with over 20 years experience in 15 countries. He regularly contributes to retail magazines around the world and has co-authored several successful marketing and retail books including the bestseller Just About Everything a Retail Manager Needs to Know. John Stanley Associates produce an e-newsletter specific to retailing; this includes innovative ideas and advice to help you grow your profits.

#### Co-ordinates:

John Stanley Associates  
142 Hummerston Road  
Kalamunda  
WA 6076,  
AUSTRALIA  
Tel: +0061 8 9293 4533  
Fax: +0061 8 9293 4561  
E-mail: [info@johnstanley.cc](mailto:info@johnstanley.cc)  
Web: [www.johnstanley.cc](http://www.johnstanley.cc)

#### Important Notice

© Copyright 2003-2007, Bizezia Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This publication is published on our behalf by Bizezia Limited. It is protected by copyright law and reproduction in whole or in part without the publisher's written permission is strictly prohibited.

The publisher may be contacted at [info@bizezia.com](mailto:info@bizezia.com). Articles and information contained herein are published without responsibility by us, the publisher or any contributing author for any loss howsoever occurring as a consequence of any action which you take, or action which you choose not to take, as a result of this publication or any view expressed herein. Whilst it is believed that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publication, it is not a substitute for obtaining specific professional advice and no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to its accuracy or completeness. The information is relevant within the United Kingdom. These disclaimers and exclusions are governed by and construed in accordance with English Law.

Publication issued on  
1 March 2007

Ref: Vol. 15

**The key to success is on going training. Recruit people with personality, train them to provide them with confidence and the empower them to make decisions.**

**Make your product easier to buy than your competition, or you will find your customers buying from them, not you.**

**Mark Cuban**

# 2007 – The Year Of Big Change

**Today's world of business is constantly evolving. People increasingly rely on tools that provide greater connectivity to corporate resources, the Internet, and each other.**

It's a busy time for Microsoft – last November saw the Business Launch of three new product lines, with a consumer release on the way. (Go to [www.microsoft.com/business/launch2007/default.aspx](http://www.microsoft.com/business/launch2007/default.aspx)).

There are new versions of Exchange 2007, Vista (the replacement operating system for Windows XP) and Office 2007. This is the first time Microsoft has launched a new operating system together with a new version of Office, since 1995, and unsurprisingly there are big changes:

- Vista is the much trumpeted follow-on to Windows XP, as expected it looks gorgeous, if you have the right graphics card. It'll run well on high-specification hardware, but you'll need 2GB of RAM, a fast processor and fast hard disks to really make it work as advertised. Details are available at: [www.microsoft.com/windowsvista](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista)
- Office 2007 is the upgrade to Microsoft Office, there are big changes here too. A new user interface, the "Ribbon", is probably the most obvious change. Microsoft claims this will make the features of Office more accessible. Details are available at <http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/products/default.aspx>
- Exchange 2007 is arguably the most ground-breaking release, with many new features to consolidate communications in a company. However changing or upgrading email communications and messaging server software is not something many end-user do, so it'll be up to IT departments to drive to uptake of this. Details are available at: [www.microsoft.com/exchange](http://www.microsoft.com/exchange)

The bottom line on all of this is change, big, bewildering and worrying change. There are four versions of Vista, and seven versions of Office 2007 so simply selecting the right product is going to be a challenge.

Training will be the key to smooth adoption of these new technologies. Burningsuit Limited has been busy preparing their "Step Up to Office 2007" courses that'll help end-users migrate over to the new versions with the minimum of fuss and bother. Of course, many companies will wait some time before changing, and - interestingly a few may well decide that OpenOffice. It's free and may offer a better solution to their needs. Details available at: [www.openoffice.org/](http://www.openoffice.org/)

To contact Burningsuit, to book Training, or discuss any aspect of your Training or IT Consultancy requirement, you can call them on 01403 786740 or e-mail them at: [info@burningsuit.co.uk](mailto:info@burningsuit.co.uk)

**Source:** Burningsuit Limited

## Why Electoral Roll Opt-Outs Could Be Bad News For Consumers

**Everyone has a legal requirement to register on the Electoral Roll. It not only secures your right to vote, but it is also used for the prevention and detection of crime, to appoint people for jury service, and by credit reference agencies such as Equifax to enable lenders to verify your identity when applying for credit and loans.**

There is also a second version of the Electoral Roll called the Edited Register. Any individual, company or organisation can buy this register and use it for any purpose – from identity checking to marketing. You can choose not to appear on this Register – and growing numbers of people are opting out. In fact opt-out rates increased by 4.57% last year, with a total of 36.71% of people deciding they did not wish to appear on the 2006 Edited Register\*.

Equifax believes that most people opt-out because they feel it will reduce the amount of unwanted mail they receive. However, it's more likely to reduce your chances of shopping online.

Due to the increase in identity fraud, security is paramount – so lots more companies are using the Edited Register to confirm an individual's identity, even if they are not applying for credit. If your name doesn't appear on the Edited Register, you might find buying goods on the internet or over the telephone more difficult.

If you've opted-out of the Edited Register you can opt back in next time you are required to register on the Electoral Roll. If you're unsure if you have opted-out or not, contact your local council.

Finally, if you opted-out in an effort to reduce the unwanted mail you receive, the best way to do this is by registering with the Mailing Preference Service. It's easy to register online at [www.mpsonline.org.uk](http://www.mpsonline.org.uk) or call 0845 703 4599.

\* data capture by Equifax of local council's Electoral Roll December 2006

**Source:** Equifax Plc