

Better Business Focus

Essential reading for managers and entrepreneurs

May 2007

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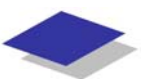
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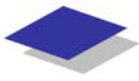


Ever Increasing Circles By Stephen Hewett– Page 1

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.





Ever Increasing Circles

By Stephen Hewett

The powerful strategy of Customer Centricity is an Open Sesame to unlock the secret of winning maximum success for an organisation, argues STEPHEN HEWETT. He explains why you should 'CC' this message to everyone at your organisation.

Did you know that in most organisations, between 50 and 70 percent of internal effort expended doesn't, in fact, add any value to what the organisation is achieving for its customers?

These research findings seem - and are - alarming. But when you consider what people say about the calibre of customer service they receive from many organisations, perhaps the findings are not especially surprising. The question is, what can be done to improve the situation?

Very likely nobody knows for certain the secret of creating a successful business. Businesspeople who have achieved success enjoy writing autobiographies in which they tell the stories of their business life. They usually imply they saw everything coming and that basically their success story was pre-ordained, apart perhaps from an occasional brief hiccup here and there.

Can we ever really learn very much of practical usefulness from business celebrities' autobiographies? Probably not, because these books don't usually acknowledge the point that every successful business has to some extent been fortunate in that it was

doing whatever it was doing at just the right time. The secret of business success is a secret, and having the 20/20 vision of hindsight is a completely different thing from knowing it.

Fortunately, though, there are some extremely useful underlying strategies floating about that can take you far along the Yellow Brick Road to your own personal pot of business gold. Some of these strategies are more faddy than others. Some are too faddy for their own good. But the best ones offer you powerful new ways of getting real clarity on the ideas, approaches and tactics that can lead to success beyond even your most optimistic expectations.

One of the most useful, interesting, empowering and transforming strategies in the business world today is Customer Centricity.

What's great about Customer Centricity is that it's unpretentious, unfaddy, unjargonistic and generally un all the things that can be so annoying about managementspeak and 'flavour of the month' management concepts. Customer Centricity brings you back to basics. It brings you back into intimate contact with the reasons why you decided to set up a business - or work in a particular industry - in the first place. Indeed, one of the insights so often liberated by the new types of thinking inspired by Customer Centricity is that it's too easy, in the hubbub of corporate and professional life, to forget those reasons.

All For One And One For All...

This forgetfulness can apply to anyone at an organisation. Senior executives, and even Board members, are far from being immune to it.

Yet Customer Centricity, properly deployed, is much more than a

mere antidote to this forgetfulness. At its best, Customer Centricity can transform an organisation into being everything the organisation can be, but which it can so easily fail to be.

The role of Customer Centricity in business today is still evolving. All the same, we do need a working definition, and an informal definition might be the process of ensuring that every individual and department within an organisation is taking every step feasible to add value to what the organisation does for its customers.

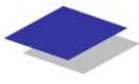
It's useful to work towards a more formal definition, which includes details of the actual processes whereby Customer Centricity can be achieved. But this is more useful if we first set Customer Centricity in context as a business strategy today.

The essential mindset behind Customer Centricity isn't new. Visit the open market at Marrakech in Morocco - or any other busy marketplace in the world, for that matter - and you'll see the concept of Customer Centricity at work, at least at the most successful stalls. It has, in effect, been around since the very dawn of business.

Our modern economy is more sophisticated than the market at Marrakech, though the need for making customers feel special is no less paramount. Our modern business economy likes to relate new strategic concepts to old ones, and so Customer Centricity is increasingly regarded as both a descendant and replacement for Customer Relationship Management (CRM), which many regard as a failed concept.

Out Of The Box

Whether or not you yourself agree that CRM was a failure, it's difficult, really, to be convinced that the CRM approach of regarding quality customer service



as something you can instil in an organisation merely by installing a (very expensive) piece of software is really going to work unless you are very lucky, or were being highly customer centric already. The problem with CRM systems is that they tend to paper over an organisation's deficiencies in the area of customer service.

This causes a double problem: there is less return on the large investment in the CRM system than might otherwise have been the case, and the underlying problems go unresolved. If Customer Centricity is regarded today as the strategy for re-orientating one's entire organisation around the need to look after customers better, and if CRM itself has fallen by the wayside, it really only has itself to blame.

Another idea that has fallen by the wayside in the light of the disappointing results of many CRM implementations is the notion that you can solve a strategic challenge on the scale of keeping customers really happy merely by the implementation of some software. That idea dies hard, but only because it is an attractive and appealing idea to organisations that, at heart, don't really want to change.

Customer Centricity, however, does not come packaged in a box. It isn't something you can just pay someone to install and then go back to going about your business pretty well as you did before. Instead, Customer Centricity is an entire strategy for running your organisation so that you focus every aspect of what you do around the needs of your customers. As we define Customer Centricity formally at my firm, the business and IT consultancy Charteris plc, it is the alignment of organisational structure, processes and technology to deliver products and services to internal and external customers in the most agile way.

Note that, in this definition, the technology angle is just one part of the story. And perhaps the most important point to make about Customer Centricity is that to

become customer centric an organisation really does need to look hard at crucial factors such as its culture, processes and ways of doing things before it brings in new technology that is designed to facilitate Customer Centricity. Becoming customer centric is not just an item on the agenda of a Board meeting, it is the agenda. It's also, in case you might have forgotten, why you're in business in the first place.

Successful organisations, whether in the private or public sector, all have one thing in common. They have all found a way, or ways, of consistently winning from customers a level of loyalty and willingness to buy again that in effect amounts to a reliable mandate from customers who are attracted to what the business has to offer.

The business, of course, will want those customers to keep being attracted by what is on offer, and for the number of customers who are attracted to increase. Essentially, Customer Centricity is a way of disciplining - in the most positive sense - the entire organisation to ensure that it is as good at looking after its customers and winning and maintaining new customer mandates and new levels of loyalty from customers as it possibly can be.

So what does it really mean in practice? How do you actually 'do' Customer Centricity at your organisation? We can gain an important insight into these two vital questions by observing that, in practice, many organisations have Customer Centricity by the bucket load when they start up, but actually lose it over time.

Eroding Away?

Why do they lose it? Generally, because they lose focus, lose stamina, get complacent and get lazy. When organisations first start trading they usually (and certainly should) have the very clearest idea what they are in business to do, who does what, and why. Every person involved in a start-up will most likely know how they add value to the finished product or service and whom they need to work with internally to make sure

the best service or product is delivered to their new customers. They will know this because looking after the customer is so completely why they set up the business in the first place.

Then again, if the new business succeeds, it will grow. To start with, as it grows, the founders and the new staff may be able to keep alive the flame that embodies the spirit of why they are in business. But sooner or later, somewhere along the line, the flame will diminish or even go out completely, as the clarity of why you are in business fades. Once that clarity starts to fade, Customer Centricity fades with it. Why does this happen? There are many reasons; indeed every organisation that suffers this problem will probably have to some extent a unique set of reasons why it happens.

To speak generally, one has to say that as organisations grow in size a curious effect almost invariably occurs.

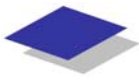
Staff members start to look inward, worry about their own internal departmental issues and become more and more remote from the actual agenda of the customer. Staff, begin to create internal processes and agendas that have little - or may indeed have nothing at all - to do with adding value to the external customer. It's common for whole new business areas and departments to be created to deal with and manage these internal issues.

Yes, of course an organisation that is getting bigger, maybe very big, needs internal departments if it is going to function properly. An organisation consisting of half a dozen people doesn't need a Human Resources department or an IT department. An organisation with (say) more than 75 people certainly will need these departments. And so the departments are created.

Feel-Good Factor

People don't just work for money. People work for job satisfaction, too. Generally speaking, people prefer to do a good day's work than a bad day's work. People like

The secret of business success is a secret, and having the 20/20 vision of hindsight is a completely different thing from knowing it.



taking some action that directly or indirectly involves them looking after customers because it makes them feel that they're doing a good job.

The trouble is, too many large organisations forget this, and don't give their staff the opportunities or encouragement to look after customers properly. This problem applies particularly to staff working in internal departments that don't have a direct interface to customers, though it often applies to customer-facing departments, too. And because people in those internal departments perceive that the organisation doesn't empower them to take steps to understand their role in looking after customers, they start to drift and lose focus at a motivational level.

This often goes hand-in-hand with (and is in fact frequently caused by) a peculiar form of amnesia that makes organisations forget that every internal department should be an essential element in a 'chain' of organisational resources aligned to allow the organisation to do its very best for its customers.

The best way, indeed the only way, really, to ensure that you deliver what the external customer really wants is to make sure that each step in your customer chain adds value to whatever is eventually delivered to the paying customer.

In practice, within a large organisation it is almost inevitable that most of its departments will not be customer-facing. And here the very size of a large organisation can conspire against it being successful. The organisation needs to be certain, at all times, of what every individual person and every department is doing that adds value to the paying customer by providing top-quality products and services to customers directly or by doing things that directly facilitate the provision to customers.

After all, if any one individual or department is not involved in the chain, it needs to be asked what exactly they are doing in the organisation at all.

Again, I want to emphasise: people want to feel they are making a contribution to the organisation that employs them. We live in an age when the work ethic has for most people become not only a cultural imperative but also an important element in their self-esteem and self-respect.

Linking Up

Does anybody really want to go home after a day's work thinking 'I successfully managed to do as little as possible for our customers today'? Surely not. Yet organisations too often don't take enough advantage of people's inherent work ethic. How often have you heard people in the sales force complain, for example, that it's too hard to change a particular administration process to meet a customer request? And how many times have you heard customers actively complain that an organisation's new way of doing things seems deliberately contrived to drive them away?

The remedy is to achieve agility in how the organisation is run and how every element in the chain links together. Make sure everyone knows who their own key internal and external customers are, and what products and services each of them needs (and are prepared to pay for, in the case of external customers). Take steps to assess whether your customer chain is delivering products and services most effectively at the lowest cost.

Be ready to start making your organisation customer centric from first principles - possibly taking advice on how best to do this - and be adamant that you won't paper over the cracks in those parts of your organisation that aren't agile and flexible enough to demonstrate very clearly the role they play in the chain. Above all, be honest. Prepare yourself for long-term incremental change. Build a group of stakeholders from all levels who understand the concept of Customer Centricity, what it requires and who can preach it to others.

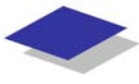
Ultimately you will need to drive the Customer Centricity concept and principles throughout all aspects of the business including strategic vision, people, process, organisational structure, information and technology. Yes, change is hard, but you can grow Customer Centricity within your organisation on a department by department basis: you don't need to do it all at once. And when you are ready to implement the technology, you'll find there is plenty of great technology out there - systems for Workflow management, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), databases management, Business Intelligence tools and so on - that will enable you to create your new-look organisation without delay.

Remember that deep down in your organisation the chain that will delight your customers - and your shareholders - very possibly already exists, obscured by internally focused organisation design, poor process, inappropriately deployed technology and lack of vision. Liberate it, and enjoy the brightest tomorrow you can imagine.

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About the Author:

Stephen Hewett is a principal consultant and leader of the Charteris Customer Centricity practice. Stephen's primary professional specialisation specialises in the practical application Customer Centricity and a 'back-to-basics' approach for organisations wanting to realign either part or all of their business. His work with commercial clients and with Central and Local Government has given him experience in a wide variety of industry sectors. Stephen is a member of the Institute of Directors and has sat as an external member of British Trade International's (part of the DTI) CRM and e-business board. In addition he spent 13 years in John Lewis latterly in charge of their CRM and new multi-channel operations.



Five Reasons Why You Need A Business Plan!

By Alan Gleeson

When I am asked to explain why business planning is so important, my first inclination is to quote Lewis Carroll. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Alice comes to a fork in the road and asks:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where--" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

For me this scene encapsulates perfectly the problems of not having an over-arching goal and plan for your business. Without a plan, a business is essentially rudderless, and day-to-day activities are likely to be haphazard and reactive, in stark contrast to those businesses implementing a well thought out business plan.

The following represents a list of my top five reasons a firm needs a business plan.

1. To Map The Future

A business plan is not just required to secure funding at the start-up phase, but is a vital aid to help you manage your business more effectively. By committing your thoughts to paper, you can understand your business better and also chart specific courses of action that need to be taken to improve your business. A plan can detail alternative future scenarios and set specific objectives and

goals along with the resources required to achieve these goals.

By understanding your business and the market a little better and planning how best to operate within this environment, you will be well placed to ensure your long-term success.

2. To Support Growth And Secure Funding

Most businesses face investment decisions during the course of their lifetime. Often, these opportunities cannot be funded by free cash flows alone, and the business must seek external funding. However, despite the fact that the market for funding is highly competitive, all prospective lenders will require access to the company's recent Income Statements/Profit and Loss Statements, along with an up-to-date business plan. In essence the former helps investors understand the past, whereas the business plan helps give them a window on the future.

When seeking investment in your business, it is important to clearly describe the opportunity, as investors will want to know:

- Why they would be better off investing in your business, rather than leaving money in a bank account or investing in another business?
- What is the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) for the business arising from the opportunity?
- Why will people part with their cash to buy from your business?

A well-written business plan can help you convey these points to prospective investors, helping them feel confident in you and in the thoroughness with which you have considered future scenarios. The most crucial component for

them will be clear evidence of the company's future ability to generate sufficient cash flows to meet debt obligations, while enabling the business to operate effectively.

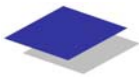
3. To Develop And Communicate A Course Of Action

A business plan helps a company assess future opportunities and commit to a particular course of action. By committing the plan to paper, all other options are effectively marginalized and the company is aligned to focus on key activities. The plan can assign milestones to specific individuals and ultimately help management to monitor progress. Once written, a plan can be disseminated quickly and will also prompt further questions and feedback by the readers helping to ensure a more collaborative plan is produced.

4. To Help Manage Cash Flow

Careful management of cash flow is a fundamental requirement for all businesses. The reason is quite simple--many businesses fail, not because they are unprofitable, but because they ultimately become insolvent (i.e., are unable to pay their debts as they fall due). While the break-even point--where total revenue equals total costs--is a highly important figure for start-ups, once a business is up and running profitably, it becomes less important.

Cash flow management then becomes more vital when businesses pursue investment opportunities where there are significant cash out flows, in advance of the cash flows coming in. These opportunities need to be assessed against any seasonal variations in the business and the timing of the flows. If you are a 'cash-only' business, you can bank the income immediately; however, if you sell on credit, you receive



the cash in the future and hence may need to pay some of your own expenses before that income hits your account. This will put a further strain on the company's solvency and hence a well structured business plan will help you manage funding requirements in advance.

5. To Support A Strategic Exit

Finally, at some point, the owners of the firm will decide it is time to exit. Considering the likely exit strategy in advance can help inform and direct present day decisions. The aim is to liquidate the investment, so the owner/current investors have the option of cashing out when they want.

Common exit strategies include;

- Initial Public Offering of shares (IPO's)
- Acquisition by competitors
- Mergers
- Family succession
- Management buy-outs

Investment decisions can be taken in the present with one eye on the future via a well-thought-out business plan. For example, if the most attractive exit route appeared to be selling to a competitor, present day management and investment decisions could focus on activities that would increase the company's attractiveness to that competitor.

Given that valuing firms is notoriously difficult and subjective, a well-written plan will clearly highlight the opportunity for the incoming investors, the value of it and increase the likelihood of a successful exit by the current owner.

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About the Author:

Alan Gleeson is the Managing Director of Palo Alto Software, Ltd., creators of Business Plan Pro® 2007. He holds an MBA from Oxford University and is a graduate of University College, Cork, Ireland. If you would like further information on business planning visit www.bplans.co.uk and www.paloalto.co.uk

Bestsellers

1 The Secret

By Rhonda Byrne, Simon & Schuster Ltd
Price: £7.80

2 Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-free Productivity

By David Allen, Piatkus Books
Price: £7.25

3 Life in the UK: A Journey to Citizenship 2007: A Journey to Citizenship

By Home Office
Price: £9.99

4 Five Minds for the Future

By Howard Gardner
Price: £14.24

5 Anyone Can Do It: The Autobiography

By Duncan Bannatyne, Orion
Price: £9.49



Book of the Month

Six Of The Best

Lessons in Life and Leadership with an introduction by the Chartered Management Institute

By Sir Digby Jones, Sir Michael Richard and Sir John Tusa
Price: £5.99

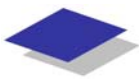
Do you want to be the best manager you can be? Then how about learning from the Real experts? This new book gathers together interviews with some of the best recognised and most acute business minds of the 21st century, including Sir Digby Jones, Dianne Thompson of Camelot, Lord Karan Bilimoria of Cobra Beers and Andy Green of BT.

Based on six key management skills: Leading People, Managing Change, Meeting Customer Needs, Managing Information and Knowledge, Managing Activities and Resources, Managing Yourself, each section of this book will give the benefit of the life experiences and knowledge of the industry leaders who are living proof of how it's done. Written in a clear, concise style, this book will contribute to your lifelong learning as a manager as well as being a highly entertaining read.

Buy online from the Better Business Focus bookshop for just £5.99, or call: (01730) 233 870 and quote BBF Bookshop.



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



How To Choose The Right Coach And Approach For Your Needs

By Karen Skehel

You may have read that the coaching process can make a major difference to the performance of both teams and individuals. You may have heard extra-ordinary claims about the effectiveness of coaching. Perhaps you believe that some of them sound too good to be true. Maybe you believe only the lucky few get real benefits from coaching. If you do, I can understand your feeling sceptic. If I told you that many clients approach coaching from that place, and in my experience, they are often the ones who do best, you may be surprised.

None the less, if you would like some reassurance, or equally important some hard statistics to convince your boss that coaching is not some crazy idea, there are numerous independent studies which show that coaching is hugely cost effective.*

There is masses of anecdotal evidence too, extolling the virtues of coaching. Barbara Cassani, former chief executive of the Go budget airline, has been quoted as describing her coach as her “secret weapon”. Stephen Routledge, former managing director of

HSBC investment bank, has said his “role as leader has forever changed for the better”. Jeremy Lang, former chief executive of Chilprufe, the underwear manufacturer, said: “I am working 50% more on my business and 50% less in my business. Our profits are 50% ahead of last year. I seem to have 50% more time for me and my family. I am 100% happier.”

The results are impressing British boards so much that they are not just paying the bills but increasingly insisting that all executives enrol. Companies that have embraced the coaching culture include Unilever, BP, National Grid, Northern Foods, Reuters and KPMG.

Coaching is not just for privileged executives in blue-chip organisations. Its growth means it is now available to all organisations – both large and small, and at various budgets.

Whilst coaching does have a track record of success, in order for you to get the best results for your organisation, it is important to be clear about your specific reasons for wanting your team to be coached. If you are responsible for sales or for business development, chances are you will want coaching to help your team improve their performance.

Most people choose coaching initially prompted by a need. Usually there are challenges of one kind or another in their business and results are not on track. Some clients come to coaching when business is going well, and they would like results to be even better. Whilst this is a less common time to choose coaching, it is often a time when results can be spectacular!

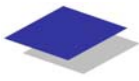
Whatever the reason for coming to coaching, I always ask my clients what would be the very best

outcome for their business over the next (usually) 6 months. Together we would then define a goal that is hugely inspiring for them. I am a passionate believer in the power of a self-selected inspirational goal (as opposed to an imposed target) to both motivate and generate results. So much so that, I would consider coaching without an inspiring goal, is like playing a round of golf without any holes.

Defining an inspiring goal is an area where a coach can really make a difference. For example, one of my own clients, a Managing Director of one of the UK’s top Marketing Services Agencies, wanted to realise its potential, become more successful and be busy. This led to a goal which was very inspiring for him: “My business buzzes to the tune of £50K per month profit”.

It is not unusual for clients to want their team to be coached, but not themselves. In order to get the results that you want in your business, the most important person to receive coaching is likely to be you, at least initially. By receiving coaching yourself, not only will you get new insights into the strengths and areas of development for your business, but you will also uncover new ways of delivering the results you want and more effective ways of capitalising on your existing successful processes. It is likely that your leadership skills will be enhanced, along with your ability to motivate and chances are, you will notice improvements in your working relationships (even if they were good to begin with). As a by-product, it is likely that you will also pick up coaching skills that you can continue to use at work.

Making coaching available to your team members too, will multiply the results that your business gets. Ensuring that the team members



are happy with their individual coach and are keen to receive coaching is important. I have seen clients who are initially hesitant about coaching become converts, so it is useful if they are encouraged to experiment with a few sessions initially.

When it comes to allocating coaches to the individual team members, there are a couple of ways of going about this. One way is for the coaching company to meet the individual team members and allocate a coach according to each individual's needs/personality. Alternatively, each team member selects from a short list of approved coaches by viewing their profiles and experiencing a "try it out" session. I am keen on the latter method as the team member is fully consulted and can choose the coach that they feel most drawn to.

You may wish to have the same coach working with team members and yourself. The advantages being that the coach will become fully conversant with the operation of your team and the organisation. Some organisations feel more comfortable with having different coaches.

A coaches' ability to facilitate results is effected by the individual client they are working with. Some clients see coaching as a privilege, are committed to getting results and open. Others are quite the opposite. In situations where coaching is recommended to address serious performance issues and the recipient is resistant to coaching, skilful coaching can often change the recipients attitude to coaching and go on to deliver powerful results.

There are many different approaches to coaching. Some coaches are mostly directive and their coaching takes an "advice giving" perspective. Often the coaches that offer this approach come from consulting backgrounds. Other coaches start each session with "what is on your mind today?" or "where can coaching be of most value to you today?" What follows is usually an exploratory session, and focuses on ways of resolving

issues. A coaching programme which is made up of this approach, can run for as many or as few sessions as the client desires or budget permits. It is particularly useful for the client who likes to use their coach as a sounding board primarily.

My personal favourite approach is one that is structured and focused around achievement of specific goals – both work and personal. The goals are usually measurable and it is easy to see when they have been achieved.

Once the goals are in place, the next step is to work with each client to create the strategies or a game plan for each goal. The agreed strategies enable the coach and client to get into alignment and provide clarity on which actions need to be done first.

The next step in this structured approach is to review what is currently happening in the client's business to gain new insights and learnings. Following the creation of a powerful vision; blocks are identified in a separate process. Examples might be related to their business e.g. low morale, poor customer service, interdepartmental relationships, staff inexperience. Alternatively they might be around what is going on within themselves e.g. lack of self belief, an unexpressed desire for a different role or seeking to have their personal needs met at work.

Once the issues are identified, the client is coached to come up with possible options to addressing the issues – with input provided also by the coach. These are then actioned and reviewed with adjustments made where necessary.

A 360 process carries out at the start of the coaching process provides valuable material for coaching and is used in many different approaches.

The coaching approach that is right for you, and the coach that is right for you are likely to be linked. Initial meetings will help you get clarity on your needs as

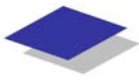
well as introduce you to a number of possible coaches.

Your short list may include coaches whose backgrounds are in the sales or marketing industries as they will immediately have an understanding of your issues. Alternatively you may prefer to widen your choice to any coach who has a proven track record of success. A large collection of testimonials from named clients in your field is a good indication that the coach on your short list is skilled. Conversations with past clients can reassure you further. You may prefer to look at listings from the International Coaching Federation, Association of Coaching or from 247 coaching.com. Bear in mind that membership of these organisations is not necessarily a reflection of coaching skills and ability.

When you make your selections, bear in mind that there are many good performance coaches who have the skills to facilitate good results. They will focus 100% on the needs of your business. There are a few holistic executive coaches, like myself, who believe that addressing the personal needs of the client is crucial to delivering outstanding results in business. I have often noticed clients who place more focus on their personal needs during coaching, get outstanding results in their businesses. Whilst pure business coaching will deliver success, it is holistic coaching that delivers the powerful combination of success **and** happiness. Not only that, but coaching that has a personal focus element to it is even more

Whilst pure business coaching will deliver success, it is holistic coaching that delivers the powerful combination of success and happiness.





appealing to the recipient. I have so far discussed the various options for coaching team members individually. Team coaching in a group is another option you may wish to consider. This can be useful in situations where it is essential for the team to collaborate effectively and when sharing of learnings are useful. The downside is that it may not be appropriate to deal with team members' individual blocks or personal needs.

Whichever approach that you choose, it is vital to the effectiveness of the coaching that it is confidential. The only real way of knowing whether coaching is for you, and which is the right approach for you is to try it out. Many coaches will suggest a "try it out" session to enable you to "test the water". Through this experience you will have the opportunity to both experience the coaching process and meet the coach. When you look at your proposed coaches credentials alongside the experience you have just had, you'll know which is the right route for you.

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**Results from a number of these studies have been collated at www.wow-coaching.co.uk.

About the Author:

Karen Skehel works with business developers and creative thinkers as a holistic executive coach. She has coached on ITV and writes for Natural Health magazine as "The Life Coach" answering readers' professional and personal dilemmas. Karen can be contacted at www.wow-coaching.co.uk or via karen@wow-coaching.co.uk or you can call her on 020 8748 1342 Free report: "7 proven strategies for success and happiness at work and in life" is available from www.wow-coaching.co.uk



You Can Get Your Audience Cheering For More

By Graham Jones

So, you've been asked to make a presentation and you are facing a combination of eagerness and fear. You want to do it, but you're worried that something might go wrong.

Welcome to the club! All presenters have these feelings, even the best. All you can think of is that mass of people all staring at you, waiting for you to fail or hoping you'll be quick so they can go to get a coffee. But it is not like that. Here are two important things to remember about your audience:

1. They are not waiting for you to fail - they are far to worried about themselves to think about you.
2. They want you to succeed - after all they have come to listen to you.

Just think back to when you were in an audience at a presentation. Did you spend your time looking for mistakes, worrying about how the presenter might cope? Unlikely. You only do this when the presentation is absolutely dire. Even for average presentations you listen and try to work out how you can use the information you are being given. Your audience is on your side. So don't get hung up on how they might react to you. The chances are very high that they'll love you - besides most of them haven't got the guts to do what you are doing and standing up in front of them.

Change Your Thinking

Simple changes in the way you think about presentations can dramatically alter your approach. Remembering the audience is on your side is one important change that helps boost your ability. Another alteration in thinking relates to content:

Your audience is only likely to remember two things you say so don't try and cram your presentation with content. Stick to one or two main points and don't try to fit in everything you know. This has a tremendous impact on the way you think about your presentation. Suddenly it is not 'the be all and end all' but has become you talking to some people about a couple of things. Easy eh?

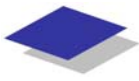
Just Hold A Conversation

Now that you know you only need to cover a couple of points with people who are on your side, you can treat your presentation as though it were a conversation. All you are doing is having a chat with people. Even 'life or death' presentations are rarely as important as we believe. When you need to impress to get that money or be awarded that contract, treating your presentation as a 'chat' will always be more likely to gain results. The reason? You've become human in the eyes of your audience and not some 'automaton professional presenter'!

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About the Author:

Graham is a regular after dinner speaker and speaks at business conferences. He also acts as a chairman and facilitator for many company meetings and seminars. In addition, he is well known as a seminar and workshop leader, having run his own training consultancy, The Presentation Business, since 1984.



Lighting The Fuse—Part 4

By Stephen Lewis - Brammer

Welcome back to the series focusing on what it takes to be successful. By now, if you have been following us through parts 1 to 3 you will already have taken action on the first 12 traits of successful people and should already be seeing signs of improvement in yourself. The key is, as ever, to keep taking action on those 12 whilst implementing actions also regarding the following 4 traits below.

13) SELF BELIEF

Successful people have without doubt, a tremendous level of self belief. No matter how large the task, whether it has been done before or not, they feel that they can do it. Whilst everyone else is wondering what may happen if it goes wrong they focus on a successful outcome secure they can deal with whatever obstacles they may encounter. In some cases this is due to their upbringing, in other cases in spite of it. The good news is we can all develop a strong sense of self-belief as we have all achieved something in our past. All we need to do is to recognise the successes we have had and understand that we were the ones who produced that positive result. We need to recognise that we had the ability within ourselves to overcome obstacles then – no matter how easy the task may have appeared and we need to recognise

that if we did it then, we can do it again.

Similarly it is important that you recognise and celebrate your successes when they happen. Don't fall into the trap of saying that it was a good result simply because the odds were in your favour, that you were lucky. We all make our own luck, by doing the right things at the right time ... it is never an accident! Take 15 minutes to write a list of your achievements and successes in your life, both business and personal (minimum 6 points – the more the better). Keep it with you and review it on a daily basis, preferably when you first awaken as it will reinforce your ability to achieve in your subconscious mind and so create a strong self belief.

14) POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

The ability to see the positive side even when things are going wrong is a critical element in being successful. No matter how you look at it, seeing the positive side of everything is critical, after all that is where success is. One big obstacle stands against us though, our society and as a result of it, our upbringing. We are told 'No' far more often than we are ever told 'Yes' and as a result the majority of the population dwell on the cautious side. Successful people are constantly thinking 'Yes' whatever the challenge ahead, whatever the situation they find themselves in. They see the plusses and focus on these, as we all can. After all, how you feel about things and how you approach them is a choice and one we all can make.

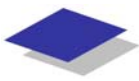
Where you find yourself thinking negative thoughts (or expressing them verbally) write them down. Then, think of a positive version of them and write it down (or voice it). Repeat it out aloud to yourself a dozen or so times (and say it believably!) and do the same

thing every time you think it. Eventually, you will find the negative thoughts disappear and the new positive ones become the new you.

15) SACRIFICE

Every successful person I have studied has made sacrifices, every one. For many of us the idea of success, of wealth, of being the best at our chosen profession brings with it romantic images of having everything we want to have and yet being able to do everything we already do (and even more of it). The truth is more often to the contrary with success being achieved as a result of sacrifice. To be the best in your field often means sacrificing your leisure time, some of your social life and/or even family time. Being the very best may mean sacrificing all of them and work being the be-all-and-end-all of your life. The question for all of us is really what is your priority? If family time or your social life are it, then your levels of success will reflect that, if it is being the very best is it then typically your family time and social life will suffer as a result. The more you want to succeed the more you will typically need to give up.

Think carefully about what you are striving to achieve, really think about it. This is not a 10 minute exercise, it may take you hours, days or even weeks. Make your choices carefully and weigh up what you are prepared to concede in order to succeed. Then be happy with your choices and work at being as successful as you can and want to be. Be aware of how your time is being spent, of the results you are achieving and what you are sacrificing to make it happen. Should they be outside of your expectations in a detrimental manner then reassess your choices, your activities and make any necessary amendments.



16) OPEN TO OPPORTUNITIES

Previously I have written about using innovation and creativity which in themselves can create opportunities for us. Sometimes though, you do not even have to be innovative or creative to succeed where others fall by the wayside. It is a question of being alert, of looking beyond what you typically see. When Clive Woodward was developing his elite English rugby squad for the 2003 world cup finals he brought in a vision coach to work with the team. The vision coach helped them understand that whilst it was important to see where the players were on the pitch it was equally important to see where they weren't. By putting the ball and a player into the spaces they were capable of moving upfield and scoring more tries! I have worked with companies and salespeople who only see where things are and by getting them to look at what is not there (a gap analysis exercise), and then getting them to talk to their customers about those things, often they create increases in sales with that customer in excess of 20 percent! And yet, the majority of us do not do it.

Successful people have without doubt, a tremendous level of self belief. No matter how large the task, whether it has never been done before or not, they feel that they can do it.

Look at how you currently operate. What do you currently do with your clients and what could you do? Then take action in these areas. In some cases it will simply be a case of discussing things you already have at your disposal; in others it may mean developing something different. Remember "We don't do that" is rarely the end of a conversation, it is often the beginning. Following it with a "What would happen if we did?" may lead to all sorts of opportunities to be more successful.

Work on these 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. I wish you every continued success!

(Note: If you have been applying these traits over the last 3 editions, let us know what benefits and results you have seen to date by email to: steve@sales-elite.com

– please note the change in email address from previous articles!)

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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.

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It's not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled or how the doer of deeds might have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred with the sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause and who, at best knows the triumph of high achievement and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Theodore Roosevelt

Business Insight... Breaking The Rules

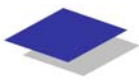
My most influential business advice came from my grandfather, Sir Archibald McIndoe, although, because sadly he died when I was four years old, it was not so much business advice but business influence – which I suppose comes to more or less the same thing.

As consultant plastic surgeon to the RAF he was asked in 1939 to set up a centre dedicated to the surgical treatment of burnt pilots and aircrew. Their burns were often catastrophic and many of the men endured sixty operations and more. He knew how important the mind is to rehabilitation and he realised that though the men's bodies may be temporarily broken their youthful spirits, if properly directed, could be a powerful recovery agent. He also knew that hospital procedures could not apply and, against the full force of accepted opinion, hospital management committees and the Air ministry, he changed them. Out went the drab hospital overalls and he allowed their RAF uniforms with battle honours. Officers and men slept in the same wards, which were designated by degree of burns not rank - something unheard of in military hospitals. A piano was wheeled in in the evenings for singing lessons along with a pint of beer. The nurses were asked to be tolerant of the inevitable ribaldry which might ensue - all part of the recovery process!

Leonard Mosley wrote in his biography: "Archie McIndoe's achievement is not to be measured by his brilliance as a surgeon, but in the unique quality he possessed of mending lives as well as bodies, of smashing fears and prejudices, of sweeping away bureaucratic cant, of quickening events when they were moving too slowly, and of inspiring enthusiasm wherever he went."

Yes, well.... Not much to live up to then!

Nicholas Walters, has been a public relations consultant for over 20 years and is currently chief executive of Manning Selvage & Lee.



Got A Second? - Barely! Grabbing A Website Visitor's Attention

By Angela Nielsen

The blink of an eye! That's how long it takes a visitor to assess the overall look of your website. Research has recently shown that a site visitor will decide whether or not they like your website in 1/20th of a second. That's less than the time it takes to blink! And in less than 10 seconds they decide to stay at your website or leave!

The report, published in the latest issue of *Behaviour and Information Technology* journal, claims that "if the first impression is negative, you'll probably drive people off. It really is just a physiological response," Gitte Lindgaard told Reuters. What the report does not conclude, is what actually makes a successful, aesthetically pleasing website, but only how much time it would take for a visitor to make that decision.

In the 6 years we have been developing websites, we have had the ability to test many different styles and looks of websites. We have also studied successful sites, to find out what the secret really is. What we found out is astonishing. Ready?

There is no secret! That's right, there is no single, right way to build a website. There are however many "wrong" ways to avoid.

The real secret of a good website, is to eliminate anything that drives your visitors away. And how does

one do this you ask? By understanding your target market. That's the real trick in designing a website that is successful, and more importantly a home page that will retain your visitors.

Too many times new website owners think they need every bell and whistle available. They tend to pack their home page with too many components that are simply "eye-candy" and have no real value to the viewer. Others strip their site down and all you see is miles and miles of content, and no appealing graphics to get excited about.

What is needed is a site with the right balance of graphics and content. By "right", we mean whatever is most pleasing to your target audience. If you are trying to attract elementary school children, then having a bunch of flashy images, bright colours, and huge fonts would more than likely pull them in. However, if you are attracting Fortune 500 companies those strategies would be a sure turn off.

I like to think of a website as a house. Take your house for example. You probably have a nicely coloured front door, and possibly a wreath or other decoration (even just a fancy door knocker) hanging on that door. Chances are you have some sort of welcome mat that you spent time picking out just to give your visitor's a welcoming place to wipe their feet. You keep the area around your front door clean and tidy. Your front door is welcoming and warm, making your visitors feel like they want to come in, that they want to see more.

In the same way, your home page is the front door to your website. This is the page that you should spend the most time constructing, because if visitors don't move

beyond it then the other pages won't matter! You want this page to be eye-catching (but not overwhelming), easy to navigate (but not boring), and have the right amount of content to grab the attention of your visitor.

Let's start with the visual appeal of your home page.

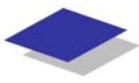
First and foremost you should have a professionally designed logo. Your company name displayed in plain Arial text just won't cut it for most of your visitors. A nicely designed logo is the first part of establishing credibility with your visitor, and as such should be shown prominently at the top of your website.

Along with a memorable logo, your website should incorporate colours that your audience will respond to. For an explanation on selecting colours, please see our "Colour Theory" article at http://www.onelily.com/article/color_theory.htm.

Graphic images are also important to help the viewer relate to your website. Professional photographs can easily accomplish this and still be affordable. There are numerous stock photography houses that provide high resolution images for very affordable prices, or you can hire your own photographer for custom work.

When using images of people, keep it down to earth. Research indicates that while viewers like to see attractive people in their own age group, they should not necessarily be identifiable as models. It's more important that the images portray someone relatable that looks like them or "real" in their eyes rather than made up.

Your home page should be



organised so that visitors quickly understand what they can accomplish. The typical website has a logo on top (in a banner sometimes called a masthead), along with navigation either horizontally across top or vertically along the left hand side. Yes, this may seem old and boring, but it's what visitors have come to expect and rely on. When that gets changed too much they don't feel comfortable and tend to back away.

Navigation is the key to the flow of your website. Your navigation should have links that can be easily identified. Home, About Us, Our Products, Our Services, Contact Us – yes those are names we've seen a hundred times and we think we'd like to fluff that up – but don't forget that is what your visitor is looking for. Remember, newspapers are written on an 8th grade level in order for the majority of it's readers to be able to read and understand, and that same principal should apply to your navigation and entire website.

Make sure that your navigation flow makes sense for your viewer, ordering your pages with the most important pages listed first followed by the lesser important or least likely to be viewed pages. This helps assure you get your audience to the meat of your website quickly. To avoid confusion, consistency is key, so whatever navigation you use on your home page should be carried on throughout the remainder of your website.

Last but not least, is content. Content has to be rich and exciting enough to draw your visitor in, and short enough to grab their attention! Research suggests that the average reader can read approximately forty words in ten seconds.

The paragraph above is exactly 40 words. If you only have 10 seconds to pull your viewer in, that's roughly the amount of content they can take in during that amount of time.

People tend to scan websites rather than read them entirely, so adjust

to this fact. Use eye-catching headlines, bolding, bullet points, anything to break up the monotony of a plain paragraph and draw attention to the stuff that is most relevant for them to see. Plenty of white space helps to pull the reader's eye along through the content of the page. Faced with a large block of text, our eyes tend to skip past it.

In short, you really have no choice but to make your website's homepage an attention-grabber. Let your visitor know right away they are in the right place, that you have THE answer to their problem, that your company is credible, and that your site is easy to navigate.

Once they find the basic components that are expected they will be drawn in to more of your content and navigate deeper into your website. That's the foundation for a solid call to action so your website achieves it's goal. Remember, you only have a second!

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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.

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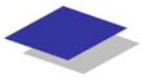
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Don't worry if you don't know what Chinese Wall means, here's an explanation:

Chinese Wall - an internal 'wall' between two departments of a bank or other financial institution which is meant to ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise. For instance, a bank might have a corporate finance department which advises on takeovers and mergers, and a fund management division which invests client money in shares. If the fund managers were to hear in the canteen about an impending deal, that would be insider dealing. Chinese walls, 'enforced by a bank's compliance department, are meant to ensure that the corporate financiers don't talk to the fund managers about their work.

Source: Bizezia's Glossary of Key Financial Terms and Business Ratios available through Bizezia's Online Business Library the UK's leading online library with over 700 publications.



A Cultured Approach To Performance Enhancement

By Barry Urquhart

Three words.

That's all it takes for a trade union official to have a business owner or manager feel a shiver up his or her back and to develop sweat on the brow.

It's not the words, but rather the implied messages, standards and suggestions of losses of productivity, revenue and profits that are inherent in the phrase "Work to Rules".

It begs the question of why management would agree to rules that lead to suboptimal performance standards.

Beyond the bounds of a workplace agreement and Arbitration Commission negotiations and applied work conditions, the nuances of the phrase have a compelling message and lesson for all, as well as a point of reflection on all corporate cultures.

Most employees, work groups and industries develop informal work practices which are usually universally applied and are generally more effective and efficient than those specified in "the rules". This is typically not a flagrant violation of the established practices and policies, but rather an acceptance of the capacity to, and the need for, "a better way". In essence it is reflective of the true underlying corporate culture and a recognition by the people for the need to be better.

The issue is far more complex than implied by Tom Peters and Bob Waterman Jnr in their top selling book "In Search of Excellence", with references to underwritten ground rules and statements like "that's how we do things around here". The reality is the need for a fine balance between the formal and informal work rules and cultures.

Most workers and work groups are well grounded in practical decision making, as a means to achieve optimal outcomes. Perceptive business owners and leaders are understanding, tolerant and promoters of these circumstances. Each in itself is superficial in nature.

In stark contrast to the elevated performance standards which delight clients, customers, business owners, managers, staff members and indeed all stakeholders, are the incidences of indifference, neglect and variable performance measures which are the product of "working to rules".

Perhaps the more articulate and concise manifestation of a corporate culture is the standard and nature of customer service that is provided.

Endeavours and public declarations by companies, many of the big banks in particular, about the need for and the goal of improving customer service, in the main, fail to deliver the stated promises. Associated activities in the restructuring of the business contribute little to realisation of the goal of enhanced service.

Changes in strategy and structure are tactical and in most instances well intentioned. However, when the corporate culture remains constant, nothing of importance and significance happens in the intermediate and longer term.

An extensive and intensive study of a broad cross section of private

and public sector entities, embracing the full spectrum of small, medium and large corporations by Marketing Focus concluded that more than 70% of corporate executives were unable to specify the seven foundation points of an integrated corporate culture and less than 40% were able to nominate their own unique set of six fundamental dimensions of the culture.

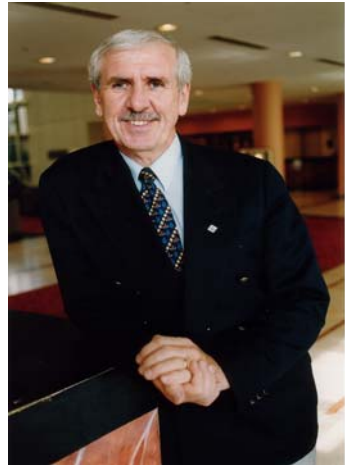
Little wonder then that written (and often framed) statements of corporate philosophies, missions and customer service pledges are not fulfilled nor indeed, able to be recalled without reference to the wall mounted framed statements. Compounding the reality is that many such statements are motherhood in nature, overly ambitious and largely unattainable.

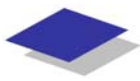
Creative applications of ideologies, beliefs, language, myths, rituals and symbols, with positive, ongoing and integrated reinforcements ensure universal commitment to and adherence of the stated ideals.

Likewise, a definite, valued corporate culture is the initial prerequisite to retain good people, who in turn attract desirable recruits, keen to work with a great employer. Little can be done by individual entities about the macro market structure issues of skills and staff shortages. However, gain and advantages can be enjoyed by those organisations which refine, enhance and redefine their own corporate cultures as the initial steps in improving customer service, as well as recruiting and retaining the right people.

THE STRUCTURE FOR CULTURES

Managers, executives and team members who are provided a framework for reviewing, updating and enhancing the prevailing corporate culture typically warm to the challenge





and welcome the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations of culture change, with their own unique perceptions.

Too often the gaps between the prevailing unwritten culture (informal) and the preferred documented culture are substantial. In many instances a restatement and redefinition of the original corporate culture and the related values is all that is required to achieve and sustain measurable improvements in performance standards, revenue generation, profit margins and client satisfaction. It is all a matter of achieving balance between the formal and informal.

For those embarking in the formulation, documentation and implementation of a new corporate culture, the probable time horizon for the inculcation of those values is not less than 3 years. In the current dynamic marketplace, that is a full lifecycle for many entities. Thus, upon attainment of the set, desired outcomes and the process will need to begin again. That underscores the need for the entity and the corporate culture to be change-ready.

KEY STEPS

- Identify, isolate and analyse the 7 foundation pillars of the integrated corporate culture.
- Review, refine and confirm the 6 dimensions of the culture which must be communicated to the internal and external customers.
- Assess and document the current prevailing, unwritten corporate culture and related values.
- Determine and document the gaps, if any, between the formal and informal corporate culture and the written corporate philosophy, vision, mission and culture statements.
- Secure input from all key stakeholders on the manifestations of the 7 pillars and 6

dimensions of the optimal corporate culture.

- Inculcate those values among internal customers and promote such, together with the advantages and benefits to all existing and prospective eternal customers.
- Progressively and periodically monitor, measure and, where appropriate, refine the develop those corporate culture attributes.

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About the Author:

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

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Objectives And Implementation

By Michael Cardell

You've set out your marketing and sales strategy. This section is about making things happen.

Overall objectives

Set some long range goals for a three to five year period.

These need not to be just plucked out of the air, but specific, measurable objectives with timescales for achievement.

There are two types of objectives:

- Results goals
- Action goals

Results goals are statements about what you want to achieve.

Action goals are what you need to do - by when to make the results goals happen. If the actions don't lead to results you need to refine and repeat to achieve your results goals.

The objectives need to cover:

- Revenues / sales
- Profits
- Market share
- Innovation
- Impact on the community

A business plan will be hard to implement unless it is simple, specific, realistic and complete. Even if it is all these things, a good plan will need someone to follow up and check on it. The plan depends on the human elements around it, particularly the process of commitment and involvement, and the tracking and follow-up that comes afterward.

Implementation details are what make things happen. Your brilliant strategies and beautifully formatted planning documents are just theory unless you assign responsibilities, with dates and budgets, follow up with those responsible, and track results. Business plans are really about getting results and improving your company.

To Your Success in Business

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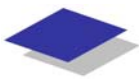
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A leading business coach and growth strategist, Michael Cardell has been a strategic business planner for FTSE 100 companies such as Whitbread and Vodafone, Group FD of HLG plc and advised more than 90 different businesses across 18 different business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

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Perhaps the more articulate and concise manifestation of a corporate culture is the standard and nature of customer service that is provided.



Diplomatic Niceties

By Grant Leboff

Anyone involved with selling will find themselves having to negotiate with potential customers. Yet it is one area in which salespeople are not expert. GRANT LEBOFF explains.

We live in a world where the customer is king. Buyers continually want to try and get as much as they can for as little money as possible. With business becoming ever more competitive many salespeople find themselves on the receiving end of some pretty tough negotiating. How we deal with these negotiations can be crucial to our long term success. For example, giving away just 5% less a year in discounts will have quite an impact on many salespeople's commissions and the company's bottom line. So how do we ensure success when we are confronted by a customer driving a hard bargain?

Negotiating Too Early
Many salespeople actually lose the negotiation before they start. This is because they let the customer start negotiating before they have shown that they are ready to buy. Think about it. If the customer isn't really sure they want the product or service then they are negotiating with nothing to lose. In this scenario they will drive an impossibly hard bargain or not buy anyway. Once they have decided they want your product or service, a fair negotiation can take place. For at that moment, the customer does not hold all the cards. Think about how excited you are when you have decided you want something. Remember how a customer can procrastinate over a buying decision for months. However, once they have decided to go ahead they always want it yesterday.

If the customer is ready to buy, and negotiation is required, it is important that the negotiation takes place with the ultimate Decision Maker. Negotiating with a junior colleague can present all kinds of problems. People who don't have the authority to reach an agreement; won't. Salespeople will often find themselves having to give a lot more away in order to fit within the junior member of staff's parameters. It is also far too easy for the junior member of staff to come back to the salesperson explaining that the higher authority won't allow x or y to happen. This 'deferring to a higher authority' is a classic negotiation technique. It is, therefore, better to deal with that authority in person. They will always be able to give away and spend more. Therefore, it is much more likely that the salesperson will achieve better terms for a deal.

Understanding Priorities

Every salesperson knows the importance of questioning during the sales process. However, questioning during the negotiation is equally important. We must ensure that we fully understand the customer's priorities and what is important to them. The more we understand our customer the better we will do. Many salespeople find it difficult not to immediately give in to the demands customers make, especially when there appears to be a sale on the table. However, this is a big mistake. If you accept a customer's terms too easily you will devalue your product or service and they will want even more.

By understanding your customer's priorities you become a much more effective negotiator. For example, when buying a TV there may be several factors the customer takes into consideration. These may be colour, look, brand, size, functionality and the extras it has built in.

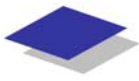
Once you know your customer's priorities you can trade with these aspects of the deal carefully. Giving away concessions that the customer doesn't care about won't have any affect. You will just end up giving away more and more. Conversely you can be very reluctant to give the customer a concession that they feel is important. By trading with the customer's priorities reluctantly you will make the customer feel they are getting a good deal; which is often all negotiation is about. If the customer thinks they have reached your bottom line they are likely to be satisfied because they feel they have the best deal available.

Holding Your Price

The importance of understanding a customer's priorities is especially true when negotiating on price. Once you are negotiating on price it is important not to "price crumble". Instead you must build value in order to justify the price you are charging. The product justifies the price; not the other way round.

For example, think about buying a car. There may be several things that would be important other than price. For example; reliability, fuel economy, how environmentally friendly it is, the amount of extras that come as standard and safety. The answers to all of these questions would affect how you felt about the price. By ensuring you add value through the sale, you make it harder for the customer to ask for a big discount. You will find you either don't have to give anything away at all or if you do it will be significantly less than it could have been. However, it is much easier to build value into the deal when you understand what is important to the customer

Even so, customers will often tell you they can get it cheaper elsewhere. They compare apples and apples when they should be comparing apples and oranges.



Ultimately, you must be confident when you negotiate and ensure, like all the other sales techniques, it is a skill with which you are comfortable. Being prepared and competent in this area is likely to significantly improve your sales figures.

Building value means showing customers that they will get what they pay for. Don't let them compare you with a cheaper competitor as the same when you are not. Point out the differences and where you add value. It could be in service, delivery, quality, choice or many other factors that make a difference.

You have to believe in your price and not worry too much when you are challenged. Professional Buyers are taught to challenge price at least twice during a negotiation so don't be surprised when it happens. It is often easy to start believing that you are too expensive or that you need to discount in order to make the sale. Psychologically this is because you will regularly be challenged on price and it is easy to start believing what you hear all the time. If people were consistently telling you that you were cheap, you would be tempted, over time, to put up your prices. Unfortunately, this rarely happens but being consistently told that you are expensive has the adverse affect.

A useful academic exercise, to give you confidence in the price you charge, is to double your price and brainstorm with colleagues all the justifications for the new price. When you go back to reality and start selling for the original price again you will have a new confidence in the price you charge.

You can limit the scope for negotiation by looking at the prices you charge. Never charge in round numbers as you are asking for them to be negotiated. If you tell someone the price is £400 it is very easy for them to offer £200 and settle on £300. However, if you charge £387 people have less of a reference point with which to start a negotiation. A more exact price implies a very real reason for such a specific figure. It, therefore, appears less negotiable.

It is also worth understanding the other weapons in your armoury with which you can negotiate, other than price. For example, a salesperson may tell a customer, "I can't do anything on price but I

can include a spare battery with your radio". The customer feels they have a deal and it might be significantly cheaper for you to give something extra with the purchase rather than discount.

Similarly, rather than discount immediately, have an alternative package you can offer. If a customer wants to pay less, offer them a slightly lesser package or service for the money. Again, this limits the scope of the negotiation and means if you do give anything away it will often be significantly less than it potentially could have been.

Talking Tough

Ultimately, you must know your bottom line in any negotiation and be resilient. There must be a point beyond which you will not drop. Your products or service are priced to make profits which provide security for you and everyone in your company. There is no point doing any job or selling any product if you are not making a sensible profit. It devalues what you do and makes it harder to hold the price on other occasions.

Ultimately, you must be confident when you negotiate and ensure, like all the other sales techniques, it is a skill with which you are comfortable. Being prepared and competent in this area is likely to significantly improve your sales figures. It won't mean you do more deals; but it may mean you seal better deals. Success in so many aspects of our lives is determined by how well we negotiate and this is no truer than in the world of sales.

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Another 6 Ways To Promote Your Business

1. To Be (Proprietary Terms) Or Not To Be

Items that are identified with the provider are always particularly effective. Offering a product as your own house brand is always impressive- whether it is silver polish or boot polish.

2. Bottle Your Salad Dressing- Or Anything Else

Take the aspect of your business that makes it unique among all of your competitors and find a way to 'Package' it.

3. Free Phones

Send customers a second example of the product they purchased when they provide their impressions of it over a free phone.

4. The Double Postcard

Postcards start conversations and generate positive word of mouth comments between sender and the recipient- for example, a postcard split in two with two separate pictures on it.

5. If Not Matchbooks, Then Try Blank Paper Books

Instead of a matchbook as a traditional reminder of a restaurant, hotel or special event, offer look-a-like 'Books' containing blank pieces of paper for notes.

6. A Middle Eastern Christmas Card

Nearly everyone seems to send seasonal cards at Christmas time, but how many stand out enough to evoke a comment?

Extracted from Bizezia's 101 Ways to Promote Your Business – visit www.bizezia.com for more information.

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