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10 SURVIVAL TIPS

**MOST BUSINESS OWNERS
TAKE YEARS TO LEARN!**



10 SURVIVAL TIPS

that most Business Owners take years to learn!

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Founder and CEO of Ideas into Business

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Introduction

Hello and a very warm welcome! Did you know that 85% of all businesses fail within the 1st year, and that only 4% survive after 10 years? 96% of all businesses fail! These are terrifying statistics.

It means that if you have run a business for 7 or 8 years, you are still in the danger zone.

Every business decision carries a consequence. The more educated you are in the decision process, the more control you have over the consequence.

In today's business world, competition is tougher than ever and the business landscapes are increasingly changing. To try and learn everything yourself in this tumultuous environment is definitely a business risk and hopefully it becomes or remains a habit of your competitors.

Please read on as I have put together some Business Survival Tips that I hope will save you time, expense and hardship. My aim, consistent with the objectives of our company, is to help you accelerate your learnings, fasttrack your profits and bypass common obstacles that hold you back from achieving your goals.

Most businesses experience the same basic problems and most of these problems can be avoided with the help of some simple, practical tips. Some of the tips I share with you may not be of use right away, however if you refer to them periodically, they may be of assistance then.

All the very best in your business!

Luke Fatooros

Luke Fatooros
CEO
Ideas into Business



Survival Tip # 1 Do you understand the value of your customers?

I am amazed how badly some businesses treat their customers while others bend over backwards to please their clients.

Is it staff with a bad attitude, or staff who could not care less? It doesn't matter either way to the customer if they have a bad experience. In most instances they will never deal with that company again and will probably tell at least 10 people about their ordeal. This word of mouth marketing is definitely not what any business needs.



If a business does not have the skills to train and motivate staff to look after customers and retain them, there is little point trying to attract new customers. Besides the obvious fact of losing customers and slowly poisoning your business, what are the real implications here? Those staff members or managers who are unable to provide resolution to an unhappy customer and do little to protect the relationship most probably have no idea about what the value of that customer is to the business.

I recently received a phone call from one of the trucking companies I regularly use.

The day before they had lost some paperwork which resulted in them missing my scheduled pickup from the shippers. The next day the trucking company was back at the shippers awaiting pick up of my shipment. That's when I received the call. The lady on the phone informed me that there was a queue at the shippers and that they would charge me for this down time. I explained that they made the mistake the day before and that's why their truck was in the queue. And that's when the fun started. She informed me the problem was not her fault, they were very busy and there was nothing she could do. If I wanted my shipment, I would be charged. I asked her to please review my account

with them as I had been a client for almost one and half years and had monthly purchases of around \$1500, which over one year equates to \$18 000.

That, I explained, was my customer value to her company and there she was screaming at me, demanding I pay her an extra \$65 per hour for something that was not my fault.

If this lady was trained properly to understand the difference between the value of a transaction occurring at the moment versus the value of a client, she would have phoned me the day they lost the paperwork and arranged at their expense, for my shipment to be delivered. A professional and courteous gesture like that would have saved my account with them. Instead, her lack of understanding cost their business \$18 000.

I ask my clients this very important question: "Do you know what the value of your customers are?".

Very few are able to give me an answer. I then tell them, "If you don't know and you own the company, how will your staff or managers know?" They won't, and this can be very costly.

So what's the tip? The lady is not to blame here. The company must be responsible for this gap. If you have staff or managers dealing with customers, make sure they clearly understand the difference between the value of their customers and the cost of a sale. This could save your company thousands of dollars.

Survival Tip 2 # Design your Business to create Wealth not just Profits?

This is an astounding fact, but very true. Many people are so busy running their businesses and trying to keep their heads above water that they have give very little or no thought at all about what they plan to do with their business in the long term.

Often I ask this question to my clients, “Do you have a timeframe in mind of when you want to sell your business? And if so, are you doing the right things to ensure you will sell your business for the maximum value?”

The response is almost guaranteed. “I have not thought about that and no, I am just focussing on trying to make the business profitable and get through the month”.



The startling truth is that most small business owners and people starting out in business think ‘profits’. They focus their energy, attention and direction around trying to make the business profitable. While this is a

critical component, they should also be preparing their business from the start to create wealth from the business, not just profits. You create wealth from your business when you sell it. When you sell your business, you should receive a lump sum “cash out” if you do things correctly.

The sooner you start preparing your business for this “wealth creation” step, the greater your chances of securing a higher value will be.

There is also another very strong reason why your business should be “sell ready” at all times. Your business may suddenly take off, causing an urgent need for a cash injection to support the growth. You will all know the importance of cash flow and that it is one of the top killers of any business, regardless of how profitable or how great your turnover is.

The best and fastest way to “attract money” to your business via loan institutions or from investors is if your business is in top shape, or “sell ready”. If you suddenly find yourself in a position where your business needs an emergency “cash injection” and your business is not in a position for investors or banks to quickly assess and make a decision, you may then find yourself in a very critical position.

“Will you secure the money in time to save your business?” In these desperate circumstances, you are “patching” your business so that investors or banks can decide if they are prepared to hand over the cash. Under these conditions, you will be selling to investors at a “survival” price and not at a price your business is potentially worth.

The survival tip here is to take steps as early as possible to prepare your business to be “sell ready” and focus on creating wealth as well as profits in your business.

Survival Tip # 3 The number 1 reason why websites fail



Very few businesses exist today that do not have a website. Most of the clients I deal with have one, and those that don't are either thinking of, or are in the process of developing one.

There is a frenetic belief amongst many business owners that if they do not have a website, their businesses will fail or will not be up to date with the times. Despite this contemporary belief, there are few companies that successfully utilise their websites as business tools.

The number one reason I believe websites fail is this: Businesses take too long to respond to an enquiry. Some don't respond at all. How many times have you sent off an enquiry via a website and that was the end of the story? I bet you it is many.

What businesses need to understand is this: the internet is a “let's find out right now what the answer is” tool. There is nothing else that provides this “instantaneous download” at the touch of a button. While this “tap in and get answers in zero time” is absolutely fantastic, business owners need to be acutely aware of the expectations and psychological imprints this “instantaneity” has on potential customers browsing their websites.

These customers want answers immediately; not only information, but responses – now!

So what's the issue? Businesses fall short when they focus only on the "front end" of their websites. By "front end" I mean design, content and traffic driver techniques. The gloss and glitter of a fancy home page quickly loses its reverence if the "back end" of the website is not taken care off.

The "back end" is a customer service mechanism which handles customers input (from the "front end") such as enquiries, orders etc. It is important to remember that the internet is available 24/7. Does your website have an automated response? Most do, but what does yours say?

The clearer and more specific this communication is, the less chance you have of frustrating or disappointing your customers.

Compare the following automated response examples:

"Thank you for your enquiry, we will be in touch with you as soon as we can."

"Thank you for your enquiry. You can expect a response within 1 hour of receiving this reply. If you have submitted your enquiry outside of our working hours (Mon to Fri 8:30am – 5:30pm Sydney, Australia time), you will receive a response by 9:30am the next working day."

Your "back end" needs control loops to ensure the actions and the timeframes indicated in your automated responses are carried out.

I was recently the best man at one of my friend's weddings. Part of my duty was to arrange limousine services and accommodation for the international guests. I searched the internet and sent off several enquiries about pricing and availability. I did not receive a single response from any of the four limousine companies I enquired with. The "front end" of these websites had worked perfectly. They "attracted" me to make an enquiry, which meant a lead for potential business. Their websites failed however, because they had no "back end",

The responses for accommodation were no better than those from the limousine companies. Both the limousine service and accommodation for

the wedding were eventually booked from companies found in the yellow pages.

The internet generates billions of dollars a day in business transactions and this trend continues to increase. This is a revenue pipeline that your business should be successfully tapping into.

The survival tip here is not to build your website with just a pretty face. Spend some time and resource developing the "back end". Preserve a reputation of service excellence, by building a reliable control loop that ensures you respond timeously and professionally.

Survival Tip # 4 Beware the Tow Truck & your New Sports Car

Start up businesses and businesses in their first few years experience certain cycles that really are worth paying attention to.

Most new businesses start out fuelled by enthusiasm and excitement of the budding entrepreneurs, rather than large cash piles. This excitement and enthusiasm overflows into great customer service and provides the perception of a healthy little business customers love and tell their friends about. This period is very exciting and motivating. Cash flow is generally



tight but the natural antics of enthusiasm manage to tick the business over as it steadily begins to grow.

The business runs smoothly because you are involved in every aspect of the business; handling customer's calls, selling, pricing, administration, marketing, purchasing, deliveries, follow up calls, staff issues, complaints etc.

Since you are doing everything yourself, you can quickly cover up any mistakes, divert issues and administer any damage control to ensure your customer's perception of your business remains intact.

Your business then enters its next cycle. Cash flow still remains tight yet you continue to steadily attract more customers. You gain more operational experience and things seem to flow a little easier.

As you approach the end of this second cycle, your batteries begin to wear. You continue the amazing job of doing everything yourself and ensure there are no loose ends hanging out. Your stress levels remain consistently higher due to the increasing pressure of trying to maintain the reputation you built your company on. You begin to feel yourself being stretched as the demands of a growing business pull you in different directions.

You then enter the third cycle. Business starts to boom because of the enormous energy and effort you have poured into the previous two cycles. Cash flow starts to ease and you begin to think this little business you have put together is well and truly on its way. You have worked very hard with great financial and personal sacrifices. It's now time to reward yourself. After all, you did go into business to enjoy the better things in life. So off you go and buy a new sports car, a larger house or something else equally rewarding.

But here's where the danger comes in. It's not necessarily that you have gone and spent the money unwisely. It is the release of your iron grip that forged the outstanding reputation you built your company on. You did everything yourself and performed with distinction. Customers loved dealing with you and were ecstatic about referring friends and family. If any issues arose, you dealt with them quickly and professionally.

The problem with doing everything monogamously is that you become emotionally and physically drained. This is when essentials slip through your fingers. As you become busier and busier, attention to specifics that earned you your sterling reputation begin to ween.

Slippages such as unreturned phone calls, inconsistent service levels, incorrect deliveries and out of stocks cause customers to leave the business. You are so busy, simultaneously dealing with other

responsibilities you do not notice the cracks forming; expenses creeping up, cash flow tightening, stock purchases rising and customer's sales decreasing.

It is usually at this stage when cheques start to bounce, creditors place the business on stop purchase, staff members leave and sales start to decrease that you "suddenly" realise there is a problem.

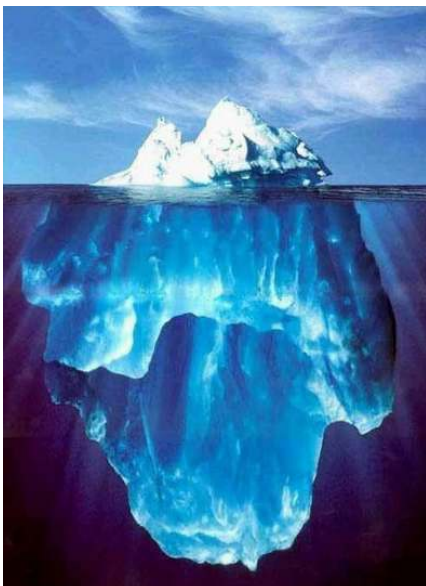
The fantastic little business you enjoyed and were so proud of takes on a new life form. A life form that fills you with stress, anxiety and very little pleasure. This transformation appears to have suddenly occurred, but in fact was a gradual cycle taking place. It is just that most people are not aware of it, and therefore do not notice it.

Pay attention to which phase your business is operating in. Look out for warning signs and don't let things "suddenly" get out of control. There is one common phrase I consistently hear when I am rescuing clients in tricky cycles of their businesses, and that is "if only I had realised this earlier".

If you are unsure or unable to recognise which cycle your business is in, get a professional opinion. Find out if you need to take any immediate action. Rather be safe than sorry. This little tip may just prevent your nice shiny sports car being pulled away by a creditor's tow truck.

Survival Tip # 5 The Hidden Icebergs of Expansion

Many of the clients I deal with are very proud of the fact they are expanding. In many circumstances this is a great thing. But expanding your business is very similar to steering a ship through a field of icebergs. If you are not careful, and are not aware of what the hidden dangers are, you could very easily run into trouble.



I have seen many businesses run into serious trouble, some of which never recover once they embark on expansion.

When my clients tell me they are expanding, I ask them the following questions:

What is this going to cost the business (\$ value)?

Where is this additional money coming from?

What systems do you have in place to manage the expansion, and the existing business while you expand?

Although your turnover will go up, how is your profitability effected?

If they are unable to answer me straight away, I tell them they are not ready to expand. Find the answers to these questions and they will tell you very clearly if your business is ready to expand or not. This way you are being responsible and watching out for hidden icebergs.

One of my clients recently setup a unique boutique selling gourmet foods. It opened and sales were great. People were queuing up every lunch time to buy his great tasting food. He was open less than one month when he called me and said "I am signing a lease for my next shop". By asking him the 4 questions above, I managed to convince him that he was about to murder his business.

So what's the problem? "If sales are great in one shop then surely if I have two shops, the business will make twice the profit?"

Well let's go through the questions.

Question 1: Opening a new shop or expanding costs money. Set up requirements such as new kitchen equipment, office furniture, stationery, uniforms and stock etc costs money. Staff recruitment, training, installations and debtors to list a few more, each have a dollar cost attached. Often I hear "I got my first one off the ground with no issues, so why should I have any problems with the second?"

Write down all the items you will need to expand your business and put a dollar value next to each. At the end, tally up all the numbers and see what dollar value comes out. You will be very surprised at the true cost of expansion.

Question 2: Once you have worked out what the true costs are, you need to figure out how you are going to fund the expansion. "The business will fund it" is a common response I hear and in most cases that ship just joined the titanic at the bottom of the ocean. That business just slammed head on into a hidden iceberg.

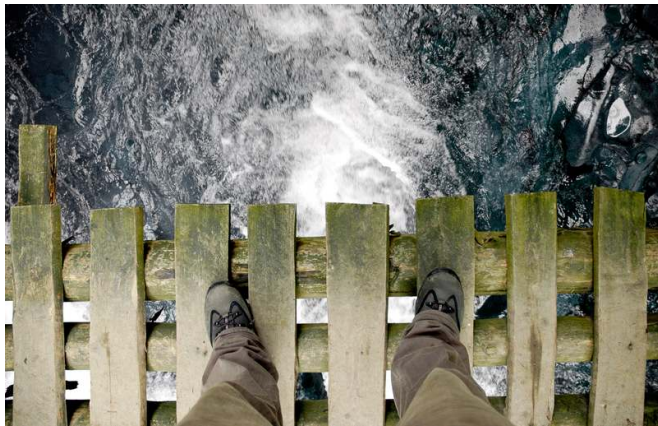
Let's assume, for example, your new shop costs \$100 000 and the funding plan is for your existing business to pay for the costs. This plan is the same as drawing \$100 000 out of the business bank account right now. Can your business afford to do that? If so, that is great. In most instances, small businesses are not lucky enough to be in that position. They need to apply for a loan or require investors to inject cash into the business to fuel the expansion.

Question 3: This is generally where most of the wheels fall off. Many small business owners run everything hands on. They are their own system. When they open another site, they find they can't manage split locations contemporaneously, and so their system of running a fantastic business in one location suddenly collapses. If this mistake is coupled with insufficient funding, the results are usually catastrophic.

Question 4: If your turnover starts to increase, it does not necessarily mean your business is performing better. When you analyse the results of how your expansion is going, it is important to monitor turnover, increased expenses and profitability. I recently dealt with a client whose turnover was skyrocketing. They were adding new product lines every other month. They employed new product managers to handle the additional ranges. They moved to larger premises to house the increased stock holding. The administration team was increased to handle the new load. Everything appeared in order. However, when we analysed the results of his expansion, we discovered he was making far less profit running this larger business than when he had less product ranges and staff to manage them. While his turnover was going through the roof, so were his expenses. His profitability was therefore being eroded.

The survival tip here is ensuring you do the correct ground work before you expand. The objective of expanding your business should be to make more profit, not increase turnover.

Survival Tip # 6 Are you ready to launch your business?



When do you stop thinking and start doing? What determines when you are ready or not to launch your business?

Ask yourself the following questions:

Have you clearly defined your business concept and offering to the market? Have you reviewed your target competition and identified their strengths and weaknesses?

Have you categorised your unique value proposition (your core strengths) against competitor weaknesses?

Are you clear on your weaknesses against barriers to market, competition or market trends?

Is your supply chain secure?

Are you able to supply if you get an order?

Are you clear who your target market is?

Have you researched your price points for your products/services?

Do you have the correct structure in place to support your launch?

Do you have enough financial resource to launch?

If your answer is yes to the above, then I believe you are ready to launch.

In one of my recent business start up workshops I spent some time with a particular client who was due to launch his business the following week and was about to spend \$25 000 on set up costs. His accountant advised him to attend the workshop to make sure he was ready to launch. He reluctantly agreed, however his decision to attend saved his business and

his \$25 000. The \$25 000 was a loan, secured against his house. He was prepared to risk his home without properly planning his business.

The following is what we discovered. He had an idea of going into property management but no real business concept that separated him from his competition. He was unaware of what his competitor prices and strengths were. There were no sales and marketing strategies lined up to launch his business so he was unsure what he would be doing in the first week. Since there were no sales targets, he did not know how much he had to sell each day to remain in business.

The biggest scare arose after analysing his setup costs and cash flow requirements. The \$25 000 he borrowed was insufficient to launch the business and continue trading. . He needed an additional \$15 000. If he launched his business without this extra funding, it would have been undercapitalised. He would have run out of money and the business would not have survived.

That would have been a very sad mistake, particularly when a family home was involved. Unfortunately, this mistake is common. Many people “starting up” jump in with little or no planning. They just “go for it” and hope everything works out. They are oblivious to the potential repercussions or dangers.

There is no absolutely perfect way to launch your business, as there are no perfect circumstances. Things are always changing or popping up. An average business launched in an average way will make a lot more money than an amazing business that never gets launched. The danger lies in not planning or preparing.

Survival Tip # 7 Solo or with a Partner?

This is a very interesting question.

I often ask my clients who have partners; why did they choose to go into business with each other, as opposed to someone else. The most common answers are that they know each other and they both wanted to own their own businesses.

I don't think the answer to this question can be answered for any individual. I think the answers lies within each individual.

My opinion on this is as follows:

Ask yourself the following questions:

What are your personal dynamics like? Are you more of a team player or do you like to manage a team? Do you like playing solo sports (squash, golf, boxing etc) or do you prefer team sports (soccer, netball etc)?

How do you interact socially with people? Are you open to discussions and other people's ideas? Are you easy going? Or do you like to give orders and do not like to be told what to do? Do you get frustrated easily with other's progress if they are not up to your expectations?

Considerations of working with a partner:

Why do you want or need a partner?

Do they compliment your skills or duplicate them?

How do you know they will perform to your expectations?

Do they have the same energy levels and ambitions as you?

Do they share the same risk levels as you?

Are they prepared to sacrifice what you are prepared to?

Do they share the same vision of where you are trying to take the business?

Are they prepared to work as hard as you?

In the short term, a partner may be a shoulder to lean on or a support barrier while you get on your feet, but be careful they do not become a thorn in your side once your confidence builds. Getting out of a partnership can be very unpleasant and distracting from your core business.

On the other hand, a partner could provide skills and resource you do not have and could be instrumental to your success.



Considerations of working alone:

Are you brave enough to start out on your own?

Are you adequately resourced financially to start on your own?

When things get tough, who do you turn to for support that understands the situation?

Do you have a support network setup to plug your missing skills?

Do you need someone to motivate and drive you, particularly when the road gets a bit bumpy?

By honestly answering these questions, you should be able to determine what is right for you. I believe the most important point is if you decide to form a partnership, do it for the right reason. Long term, this is a better way to start.

Another survival tip here is I strongly recommend you do not start a business with a friend or family member just because you know them and you think it is a good idea. Many people do this as it appears a nice and easy way to start. Do your potential partners really have the skills, resource, drive, ambition, energy levels and degree of sacrifice you have? If things do not work out, you not only lose a business relationship but a personal one as well.

Survival Tip # 8 Cash Cows and Donkeys

It is not news that one of the most expensive overheads in business is staff. In addition to salaries, every staff member has an associated running cost attached. Costs such as office equipment, administration costs, telephone calls, stationery, holiday pay, down time for training and sick leave etc.



It therefore makes sense to pay attention to how you structure your team.

Do the following exercise: list each staff member's name, their position and whether the staff member is a cash cow or a donkey.

What do I mean by this? Anyone who generates sales directly as a result of their day to day actions, I refer to as revenue generators or cash cows. Examples would be a sales representative, a business development manager, a self employed electrician, a telemarketer etc.

Any staff member whose day to day activities do not generate sales directly, I refer to as non revenue generators or donkeys. Staff such as receptionists, customer service personnel, administrators, warehouse dispatchers, bookkeepers etc are all non revenue generators. Their roles are extremely important in keeping the systems and processes of the business turning.

When reviewing or designing your staff structure, you need to ensure your split between cash cows and donkeys makes economical sense for your particular business. In most instances you would want more cash cows than donkeys because the cash cows provide the cash flow, which then enables you to pay the donkeys. This is in no way undermining the importance of the non revenue roles, but this is how cash flow in a business works. The more sales coming in, the stronger the cash flow.

I recently performed a structure analysis with one of my clients who owned an air conditioning company. His company did both sales and repairs to most brands of air conditioners. He had very few staff; there was himself, a bookkeeper, a receptionist and a repair technician. I listed all the roles he was performing, then the rest of the staff and finally indicated which were the cash cows and donkeys.

Here's what we discovered:

He was the sales representative (Cash Cow), the installer (Donkey), the product buyer (Donkey), the delivery guy (Donkey), the office manager (Donkey), the customer service liaison (Donkey) and debt collector (Donkey). He had a bookkeeper (Donkey), a receptionist (Donkey) and a repair technician (Cash Cow). His business structure had two Cash Cows and seven Donkeys.

The structure was not economical. Two Cash Cows were supporting themselves plus seven Donkeys. This was a key discovery of why his

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cash flow was so poor and why his company was making very little profit, despite him working so hard.

This is a very important tool I use when I deal with clients who are having cash flow issues. If you are having cash flow issues, take a look at your team structure. A few simple tweaks could loosen up your cash flow and shed some stress.

Survival Tip # 9 John Wayne or Mickey Mouse

When you have an appointment with your clients, do you ever stop and consider how you “show up?”



When I say “show up”, I refer to the holistic approach to which you or your staff engage with clients. The way you “show up” projects an image in the eyes of your clients. This image then creates a “client” opinion of your business and it stems from their initial encounter with you.

Since this initial stage is critically important in sealing your desired business image, it makes sense to spend some time reviewing whether you show up like “John Wayne” or “Mickey Mouse”. Show up like Mickey Mouse and your clients will brand your business as “a Mickey

Mouse operation”.

You may have heard in most instances employers conducting interviews conclude their decisions within the first three minutes of meeting the candidate applying for the job. Within the first few seconds of the candidate walking through the door, the employer has begun forming an impression of the candidate based on how they showed up.

What contributes towards people forming an opinion of you? There is obviously a broad criteria but here are 5 key factors I believe sit at the top of the list of opinion formulation:

Punctuality, Appearance, Preparation, Flexibility and Level of interest.

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These are the traits I focus on when I work with my clients on defining and developing their correct business image. The more attention you pay to these particular characteristics, the more astute you will appear.

Take a hard and honest look at how you “show up” for your meetings?”

Punctuality

Are you always on time or are you often late? Punctual people are associated with reliability. If you are running late, call ahead and inform your clients you are running late. If you are consistently running late, be aware of the association with unreliability and the impression you are formulating.

Appearance

Do you dress correctly for the occasion or do you dress in whatever YOU believe is adequate?

Whether you agree with this or not, people form an opinion of you based on your appearance and how you dress. If you want to be successful in projecting the correct image, you need to ensure your dress code and appearance reflects your desired perception.

Dressing adequately does not only entail wearing a suit and tie. A company uniform consisting of a polo shirt with a company logo and matching pants creates a very professional image.

Preparation

How much effort do you put into preparing for your meetings? The level of preparation should be directly proportional to the importance of the meeting. If you want to create a professional image and close more deals, ask yourself the following questions:

Have you researched the topics of the agenda so you can contribute and speak diligently to the topics on hand?

Have you read, made notes and brought to the meeting any documentation sent to you by your clients prior to the meeting?

There are few things more irritating than when you spend a lot of time and effort preparing documentation for a meeting and the other party

does not bother to read or remember to bring the relevant paperwork to the meeting. This truly creates a very unprofessional image and sets a very annoying tone for the meeting.

Flexibility

For me, this has to be one the strongest business traits. Dealing with people who are open minded and willing to adapt things to ensure things move forward are always a pleasure to deal with. People, who remain fixated on their view point or direction often cause deals to go sour and can make meetings or negotiations very difficult and frustrating.

Knowing when to be flexible and when to stand your ground, I believe, are the makings of a master negotiator. It is my opinion that negotiations should always be working towards amicable solutions for the parties involved.

Ask yourself:

How flexible are you in meetings or in solving problems generally?

How do you address issues that suddenly arise unexpectedly?

Before you close the door on a negotiation where things did not go exactly as you had hoped for, brainstorm with the other party on some possible alternatives. Show you are flexible and willing to work towards an outcome. You will be pleasantly surprised at how often this gesture leads to resolution.

Level of Interest

Have you ever been in a meeting where one person seems to have 2 mouths and no ears? A person of this nature is so absorbed in their own dialogue that they neglect to listen and understand your points of discussion. This one sided behaviour can lead to frustration and annoyance and therefore potentially undesirable outcomes.

If you show up displaying a high-level of interest and enthusiasm towards your clients and their businesses, you improve your chances of securing a desired outcome. The reason is very simple; people respond more positively to this manner of engagement because their perception of you is that you are sincere in your eagerness and willingness to do business.

Next time you “show up”, pay attention to these key mannerisms. I guarantee your client’s perception of your business acumen and astuteness will improve.

Survival Tip # 10 Ye Old Habits of Poison



In the olden days if you had a headache, it was thought that evil spirits were trapped in your head and needed to be released. The treatment for this was to drill a hole in your head to allow the unwanted spirits to escape.

I think we are all very grateful someone decided to look at the way things were done and improve the way we treated headaches. I think we are also very grateful that the “doctors” used their predecessor’s research as starting points for their own research and continued development of the subject matter. This progression has led us to using tablets today to cure headaches. If the doctors had decided not to try new things but remained stuck in their ways and beliefs, we would be off to the hardware store to buy a drill instead of the pharmacy to buy a tablet.

There are 2 points here.

The first is progression. Life would never have progressed if people kept doing the same things.

The second is what I refer to as “passing the baton”.

Imagine a relay race being run. The runners cover a certain distance around the track before handing the baton to the next runner who then continues the race. This process of passing the baton between runners ensures the pace of the race does not lose momentum.

The transferring of the baton between runners is analogous to the pickup and transferring of learnings and experiences between people. If someone has already covered some distance (i.e gained experience), surely it

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makes sense to pick up from that point where the work has already been done, and not try to cover the entire track yourself. If you do not have a pick up point, you have to start at the beginning of the race with the first runners.

Trying to learn on your own is usually a much slower and more consuming process.

Why is this requirement to accelerate your rate of progression so important in today's business world?

Mankind has progressed faster in the last sixty years than all the years combined since mankind has been on earth, and there is no indication that things will slow down.

What does this mean? If you run a business and are resistant to change, are reluctant to adapt and feel you are better off trying to figure things out on your own, I believe you are severely disadvantaging yourself. If the entire world is on a "faster rate of change" trend and your stance is "this is the way it's always been done", your chances of survival against the massive wave of progression are very slim.

I remember reading an article on the front page of a newspaper about an elderly couple who had owned a camera shop for over 35 years and were forced to close down. The owners, in the interview, stated that their customers who had been buying from them for many, many years no longer brought from them.

When the digital area descended upon the aging film industry, photo shops needed to adapt and embrace the new technology. Those that reacted quickest to the shift, cemented their positions at the forefront of the new era. Those that hung on to the resistance lever, trying to hold back change inevitably paid the price.

The story of the older couple above highlights another very important tip for business owners; listen to what your customers are asking for, and do not remain stuck on what YOU want to sell. I can guarantee you that the elderly couple would have given the best customer care and service around, since they had customers returning time and time again for many years. However, if customers are requesting newer products and services that are intrinsic to a major global trend and that competitors are

embracing with a vengeance, and you are not prepared to supply; great service and a smile are not going to be enough to keep your customers from going elsewhere.

The survival tip here is one's ability and willingness to adapt and embrace change, and the possible consequences if you decide to resist. If you find yourself saying "that's the way it is always done", ask yourself this question:

"Is this what I want or is this what my customers want?". If you remain hostage to your old habits, then you are almost certainly poisoning your business.

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