



Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.

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Enhancing Performance Through Electronic Communications

If you played the “telephone game” when you were a child, you probably recall the hilarity when one friend repeated another friend’s story – incorrectly – until you got to the end of the line and the story was completely jumbled.

While children may be playing the telephone game in 2003, they’re more than likely online playing with instant messaging – a similar experience, but one that is much, much more sophisticated and falls into the electronic communications arena.

Worldwide, it is estimated that there are more than 605 million online users as of fall 2002, with 182 million in the United States and Canada. With these numbers continuing to grow each year, who would have predicted the revolution that took place over the last several years with respect to the way we can instantly communicate across the globe?

Performance is measured in a number of ways within today’s business environment. Certainly, specific tools like employee reviews are one way to relate performance to productivity, while tracking bottom-line revenue producers is another way. Going on the theory that communications is king and email is standard in today’s business marketplace, companies that adopt and use a standardized approach to enhancing performance through electronic communications are the ones who will excel.

Why? Although email is a tool, it often is not thought of as a productivity enhancer, but rather, a means to ask a question and receive an answer – or at the very basic, a way to communicate. Two, statistics prove that any time a business standardizes its processes, it undoubtedly becomes more efficient because the business now has a way to measure its processes and evaluate effectiveness. Just take a look at how productivity increases once a company ensures all of its computers are running on the same operating systems and same platforms.

Here are a few ways you can use electronic communications to achieve a spike in productivity.

Manage Email Messaging

It’s easy to set your browser or contact management program to receive email every 10 minutes, but is that really efficient? You can liken an email message to a ringing phone or even a knock on the door ... this is an interruption that can be annoying and frustrating at the same time.

A better idea would be to build in controls on how often you will read your email. As humans, we are programmed to respond when someone calls our name, so when you receive an email, the first task you think you want to do is answer the message. Instead, arrange your day so you only read email two or perhaps three times daily. Although this might seem preposterous at first, actually carving out that time will make you more productive to get the rest of your work done. Providing email time limitations or parameters also sends a message to your team – that they should focus on something else besides email (hopefully, making the company more money).

If you find it unrealistic to set what you might think are rigid controls, then do what’s best for you and your own productivity. In addition, you might be waiting for an all-important email with a signed contract or something else that is time sensitive. In these cases, by all means, check your email more often.

Study Your Software – Submit Comments

Although we all use standard software suites to do work, how much do you know about your word processing, contact management and other programs? Would it help to know just a bit more to become truly productive?

Enhancing Performance Through Electronic Communications (cont.)

Of course, something like this can't be learned overnight; you could read books, manuals, take online courses or even attend public seminars. But who has the time?

One solution is to pool your company resources by asking your staff to submit one to two time-saving comments a week, then compile those comments into a weekly email to the entire staff. Sure, you're going to get some repetitious advice, but you're also likely to get handy tips on how to handle seemingly routine tasks – all for a few minutes of each person's time.

In compiling comments, be sure to include everyone's advice, even if something might seem too basic or even too complicated. Be sure you don't want to leave anyone out that wants to contribute because you never know how many people may be struggling with the same challenges.

The person responsible for compiling these gems of wisdom also might think about using a spreadsheet approach or some other way to segment ideas into topics by function or action. For example, all word processing tasks can be housed on its own spreadsheet or file, while tasks on how to mail merge might be found in another file. Ask the staff for ideas on how to categorize comments – again, you'll get their buy-in and probably get a volunteer to raise his or her hand to do the work!

Monitor Email While Absent

Nothing's worse than being on vacation or out of the office traveling (without access to email) only to come back with hundreds of email messages – many more than anyone could possibly handle in one work day. Instead of coming back to this debacle, assign someone in your office to check your email while you're out. Although some might look at this as an invasion of privacy, think about how much more productive you will be knowing you won't come back to an email message that should be handled three days ago. Ever notice how when you take off for two weeks of vacation, you have much less work to do than if you took a long weekend with just two days of vacation? The same principle applies.

Think Productive!

These are just three ways to increase productivity through electronic communications. Think about other ways you can help the cause and begin managing communications before it manages you. Contact us for other ways we can enhance your company's performance. Our goal is to make your company better.



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The Business Plan That Always Works

By Michael E. Gerber

Yes, believe it or not, there is such a plan.

A business plan that always works.

And believe it or not, you're going to learn how to create such a plan, your plan, in the next few moments.

Now for those of you who believe deep down in the recesses of your cynically-disposed hearts that there can't possibly be anything that always works—especially a plan—the following is going to be a bit of a stretch for you. But hang in with me here. *The Business Plan That Always Works* is so devilishly simple and straightforward, you'll wonder why you didn't see it before.

You see, that's the beauty of it, this Business Plan That Always Works. It's so very simple. And that's probably the primary reason it always works. The Business Plan That Always Works is so simple that anyone who understands it can do it...which is to say, that if you can't do a plan easily, there's no point in planning. Despite what you've learned over the years, planning is only hard when it's done the wrong way. And to do a plan easily requires that you approach the whole subject of planning in a completely different way than you're accustomed to. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

The Business Plan That Always Works is built upon one Fundamental Principle that all the plans that never work fail to understand.

(When I say "all the plans that never work," I'm referring to the kind of planning you're accustomed to doing—if you do any planning at all—the kind of planning that doesn't work, has never worked, will never work, the kind of planning every single professional you know who's trying to plan is attempting to do even as we speak despite the little-discussed-and-depressing fact that not one of their best laid plans will ever make one difference in their lives at all other than to unnecessarily frustrate, infuriate and intimidate them, while keeping them busy—uselessly and unproductively—for hours upon end!) You know the kind of plans I'm talking about here. The kind of plans that create gobs of guilt because you don't keep them? The kind of plans that create enormous bouts of self-loathing because you never fulfill them? The kind of plans you make with great effort and tedium, only to find yourself later on doing something completely different than you had planned to do and wondering how you got there from where you began?

But let's get back to that one Fundamental Principle I'm talking about that differentiates The Business Plan That Always Works from every other plan that doesn't.

I call this Fundamental Principle, the Heart-Centered Principle of Planning.

(Now, bear with me here. I know this could begin to test your hidebound impatience. You're an entrepreneur after all. World-wise and world-weary. You've seen everything, done everything, been beaten up by everything. You know with every close-to-cynical breath you breathe that language used capriciously can be a dangerous thing. After all, don't you do that for a living: use language to produce results? Well, of course you do. Don't we all? And it can get us all into serious trouble. But despite that, bear with me anyway. This path I'm leading us down is a path no one has ever taken you down before. And it's not capricious. It's deadly earnest. And because of that it can get a little sticky in moments. It can test your patience in moments. It can put me into question in your mind in moments. Despite all that, and despite your natural reservations, let's proceed a few steps further and I believe you'll truly begin to relish this thing we're going to do together, this thing I call The Business Plan That Always Works.)

The Heart-Centered Plan is so distinctly different from its opposite, The Head-Centered Plan, that it's important to define the distinctions carefully.

The Business Plan That Always Works (cont.)

There are Seven Essential Rules of Heart-Centered Planning, of creating The Business Plan That Always Works for you.

These seven rules are:

RULE ONE

The first rule says that Heart-Centered Planning begins and ends with a feeling, while Head-Centered Planning begins and ends with a thought. To understand this rule, it is critical that you know the difference between a thought and a feeling. Most people don't. (Don't laugh, they really don't.) Most people often confuse their thoughts with their feelings and their feelings with their thoughts. How do you know the difference between a thought and a feeling? A feeling resides inside your body; a thought resides inside your head. Let me say that again so that it sinks in. A feeling resides inside your body, while a thought resides inside your head. Most of what you're doing right now as you read this article is a thought which is going to turn into a feeling, rather than a feeling which is going to turn into a thought. Heart-Centered Planning starts with a feeling, turns into a thought, and ends with a feeling. Head-Centered Planning begins with a thought, turns into a feeling, and ends with a thought. The rule here is that any plan that ends up in your head is a thought, and, because of that, won't work. The Business Plan That Always Works is dominated by your feelings, not by your thoughts. And because of that, it is propelled forward because you want it to work, as the expression says, with all your heart. The point I'm making here is that despite everything you've been taught to the contrary, cerebral motivation has no momentum of its own. Thoughts die cold and lonely. A plan which describes the future, with no heart, is a plan destined to fail. The Business Plan That Always Works therefore, is a plan which begins and ends in your heart...which means it's a living plan, not a dead one. Which means that it possesses an enormous amount of energy, which people describe as passion. And we all know what passion can do when it's poured into a personal cause. That's what The Business Plan That Always Works is, after all, a personal cause filled with passion.

RULE TWO

Because Heart-Centered Planning begins and ends in your heart, rule number two says that The Business Plan That Always Works must be your plan and no one else's. It must begin with you and end with you. It must be your plan. Any plan created by someone else on your behalf will absolutely never work because it simply isn't your plan. And no matter how hard you try to implement someone else's plan, no matter how hard you work at it, even if you succeed at fulfilling its objectives, you will ultimately feel like you failed. Winning with someone else's plan is always "felt" as losing. In short, The Business Plan That Always Works is always the product of the person who is following the plan, original to him or her, personal to the max, born in the heart, and because of that, very, very private. Rule Number Two says, "Don't go outside of yourself for your plan because you can't find it there."

RULE THREE

The way to know what your heart wants is stop thinking about it. To discover your plan, stop thinking about it. Pursue something else. Spend a day, two days, a week, it doesn't matter how long, only that it accomplishes this objective, that you spend free time doing something you truly love to do, that you don't ordinarily do because you can't afford the time or the money to do it. Skiing. Boating. Fishing. Dreaming. Hiking. Running. It doesn't matter what it is; for every one of us it's different, but it does matter that you know what it is. The truth is we, all of us, spend very little time truly loving what we do or doing what we love. We spend most of our time instead wishing that what we are doing could be more fulfilling. The reason for this is that we are mostly disconnected from our hearts, and spend the preponderance of our time instead actively pursuing thoughts about what we would be doing if we were happy, than experiencing what it means to be joyful in our hearts in the moment. So, to create The Business Plan That Always Works calls for us to experience, as fully as possible, the end product of an exciting plan which is the experience of joy which your plan must create for you in order for it to work for you. And to experience that joy requires that we spend more time before we create our plan, tasting the emotional fruits of it.

RULE FOUR

Most people think of a business plan as a series of benchmarks, or objectives. There is that kind of plan, but that's not what I'm talking about here. A series of benchmarks or objectives delineate actions to be taken in a progressively completed process, but they fail to provide the inner motivation essential for a plan to become a realization. While the steps must be identified before anything can be done purposively, the essence of The Business Plan That Always Works is always able to be summarized in a brief, declarative statement which always begins with "I Want...", and always ends with an experience of having moved forward from where you are...and can be demonstrated by your new ability to do something you love to do more often than you're able to do it now. For example, "I want to be able to spend eight days white water rafting in Montana on the..., etc., etc." Note that the objective here is not something to have, but something to experience. To feel yourself experiencing something you love before you actually experience it is tantamount to experiencing it. Experiencing the experience is core to the successful realization of The Business Plan That Always Works because it distracts you from your head where thoughts reside and puts you squarely in your body where feelings reside. Put another way, the experience at the beginning of the plan, tied to the experience at the end of the plan creates an emotional bridge for you to cross. Without that emotional bridge, most of us find ourselves sweating around among the stones, boulders and mud beneath the bridge, completely oblivious to the fact that the bridge even exists!

The Business Plan That Always Works (cont.)

RULE FIVE

Having created an emotionally exciting picture of what you want, it is critical that you create a series of Frames of Reference within which you achieve it over a specific amount of time. A Frame of Reference is like a landing reached on your way up a mountain. It enables you to taste the climb, while resting with a look back and a look forward. Anyone who has ever done this (and we all have to some degree or another) knows the personal inner joy that comes from resting on the way forward, while getting a clear sense of where we've come from and a new picture of where we're going. As a boy, I used to go to Yosemite with my parents, and we would climb for a few hours at a time up the long, sloping trail of one mountain or another, where we would stop from time to time and sit on granite boulders by the side of the trail, look out over the valley, taste the cool fresh air, and listen to the waterfalls off in the distance. There has been very little I've experienced in my life that is permeated by such sweetness as those experiences...those climbs and stops. Those moments of looking back and looking forward. Those sweet, lazy moments in which our plan was in the process of being realized while being realized, all at the very same moment. The Business Plan That Always Works must allow for those precious, sweet moments, those continuous Frames of Reference, because without them there is just the incessant climbing, the reaching for the top, the obsession that comes from an impatient thought, the drive to reach a conclusion. Most plans are like that. They drive us, but they don't renew us. They compel us, but they don't reward us. Such plans may move us forward, but every part of our body ends up resisting the movement even while obeying its dictate. This is the planning of "you should," and "you'd better," rather than the planning which comes from an inner desire, a taste of freedom, a wish for renewal.

RULE SIX

Rule number six says that the plans we create reflect the life we live rather than the life we want to live. This may seem like the opposite of everything I've been saying up to now, but in fact it is not. The truth is that one cannot plan to be someone one isn't. One cannot create a plan one is unable to implement. One cannot imagine becoming someone one isn't. One cannot love what one cannot experience loving. And so rule number six states that in order to create The Business Plan That Always Works, we must be passionately interested in who we really are and what it is that really moves us. To do this then, we must every day ask ourselves this question, "Who am I?—and then answer it! The fascinating thing about creating The Business Plan That Always Works is that it calls for us to go inside more deeply than outside as we would imagine. This planning has to do more with who we are than who we are going to become. The fact is that anyone who has done this work, that is, pursued their inner reality with a passion, has discovered that in the process of becoming more who we truly are, we discover what we want. And in that discovery, our plan becomes self-evident. "Oh, so that's what I want," this experience says. Or, put another way, "Oh, so that's who I really am." Rule number six says that we must do this thing over and over and over again until it's a permanent fixture in our lives. Only then will the Business Plan That Always Works become self-evident.

RULE SEVEN

Rule number seven says that until we are able to do rules number one through six with ease, anything we do which closely resembles them is better than anything which doesn't. In short, rule number seven is a mantra which says, "Follow your heart, or your head will destroy you." The most productive business planning is not thinking about ends; it's about experiencing means. It's not about the objective; it's about the process. It's not about getting things; it's about becoming more human. It's not about winning or losing; it's about sitting on the edge of the mountain on the way up, neither going forward nor going backward, to savor the intensely sweet joy of the moment. It's not about pushing yourself, but about experiencing yourself. And, as a business owner, this is as true for your clients as it is for you. Which is to say that if you are unable to understand this truth I'm sharing with you, you will be equally unable to differentiate yourself in the heart of your clients from all those other pushing, striving, dying-to-get-there competitors all around you. And isn't that what The Business Plan That Always Works for an entrepreneur is essentially all about? To put you into a truer, more meaningful relationship with your clients? And to do that, can you see that you must first be in a true relationship with yourself? The Business Plan That Always Works will put you there every single time. Who could ask for anything else?

Michael Gerber is chairman and founder of E-Myth Worldwide. He reminds you that the opportunity is to go to work ON your life not IN it, and in the process to experience the sweet, radiant, extraordinary joy of the fully-lived moment. His Web site is www.emyth.com.



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Identity Theft – Not What You Expect

Not too long ago, I traded in my carefree, apartment-living lifestyle for a mortgage in the burbs. Just as the United States Post Office recommends, my husband and I filled out our change of address cards and promptly put them in the mail two weeks before our move. After all, we had almost 30 days between residences to ensure all the mail flowed in the right direction. With all the free credit card offers we receive on almost a daily basis, we wanted to be sure all our mail safely reached our new home.

So, after doing everything by the book, imagine our surprise when our account was drained by thousands of dollars. We didn't realize it until we received our first bank statement – no signs of forced entry were about to alert us otherwise. Shortly thereafter, we learned that the bank's automated system, which we were told updates our new address for our checks, sent 400 checks to our old address. Apparently, the new occupants were having a field day with our checks.

That was more than a year and a half ago and they are still writing on the account. The irony of this story is we meticulously shred documents, we cancel credit cards on a schedule, we've even written about identity theft. How could this happen to us?

As they say, it's the little things that count. Simple items like double checking with the check printing company to ensure they have the correct address. And other things like not including personal information, such as driver's license numbers or social security numbers, on checks. Since then, the culprits have obtained fake IDs in both our names – luckily we didn't have our real numbers imprinted on the checks! The police officer assigned to our case told us that, most likely, once these individuals blow through our checks, they will start counterfeiting check stock with our information. Great.

Meanwhile, we continue to send affidavits of fraud to every check security company that notifies us of yet another one of these gems. The attorneys for these companies tell us we may be doing this for years.

Don't be a victim of identity theft – this is a billion dollar industry for criminals and it robs you of much more than productivity and performance on the job. Follow these 10 guidelines to keep an eye on what belongs to you.

1. **Guard your name and identification like they are gold.** Everyone from estranged spouses to roommates can use your good credit and identity by having just a few pieces of relevant information, such as a driver's license number, social security number or credit card accounts. They use tactics such as stealing wallets, digging through your trash and stealing your mail to obtain access to your information. These shrewd criminals commonly change your address to a post office box so they can intercept mail.
2. **Know where your information is and manage it.** Identity thieves can gain access to your vital credit information legally at the local courthouse if you are recently divorced and your filings contained credit card or social security numbers or other personal information. Take care to keep your information out of easy-access areas.
3. **Guard company data.** Many credit card offenders steal identities by securing a position within a company where he or she has access to employee databases. One recent case proved that identify theft was as simple as saving a company's employee roster, including social security numbers, to a disk and walking away. Put security systems in place to guard employee identities in your company. Fine-tuned internal controls can greatly reduce the chance of this happening.
4. **Put up your guard.** Use your work phone number or cell phone number on your checks instead of your home phone. If you have a post office box, use that instead of your home address, if you do not have a post office box, use your work address, if permitted. Never imprint your social security or driver's license number on your checks – you can add it if it is necessary, but know that in many retail situations, it is your right to deny this information.

Identity Theft – Not What You Expect (cont.)

5. **Plan for the worst.** Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine; include both sides of each license, credit card, etc. This provides a record of what is in your wallet in the case of theft or loss. You will have all account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place.
6. **Leave home without it.** Unless you are going for your first day of employment or need to get a duplicate birth certificate, the chances of actually needing your social security card are slim to none. Better to leave this at home in a safe place until you really need it. This is one card you don't want to fall in the wrong hands.
7. **Fax anyone?** The health industry is making it easier to steal a social security number. Often, the primary card holder's social security number is the member number. While it doesn't make sense to forgo carrying your card, you can fax your new doctor ahead of time and carry a photocopy of your card with the number blacked out – just in case of emergency. The real card can stay at home with your social security card.
8. **Check in often.** The best strategy is a proactive one. Many options are available to check your credit report often to ensure there isn't any fraudulent activity on your account. One gentleman found that thieves opened more than 40 accounts before he found out about it.
9. **Just say no.** If you have great credit, chances are you get a LOT of those preapproved credit card offers in the mail. To stop these from filling your mailbox, simply contact the company and ask that they not contact you through the mail. Many companies contact current clients through email or phone calls. You always have a choice, so feel free to say, "no!"
10. **It happened...now what?** File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where it was stolen, this proves to credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an investigation (if there ever is one). Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and Social Security number. The numbers are: Equifax: 1-800-525-6285 Experian (formerly TRW): 1-888-397-3742 Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289 Social Security Administration (fraud line): 1-800-269-0271.

While we hope you never have to endure the agony of having your identity stolen. This is a growing crime against our currency-shy country. To learn more about how to protect your good name, visit www.consumer.gov/idtheft. This site offers forms and step-by-step instructions on how to handle identity theft.



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The R-word

by Michael E. Duffy

There's a recession going on, at least where I sit, and my primary concern these days is drumming up new business. I figure I'm not alone, and so I really ought to apply my expertise (technology) to the problem of staying alive in tough times.

General Comment: Accelerate!

If your business is fortunate enough to have entered the recession (I can use the R-word now, it's official) with a strong balance sheet, a lean workforce, and solid sales, now is the best time to accelerate away from your competition. Right now, it's dramatically cheaper to make improvements to your business: the cost of capital is lower, suppliers are more willing to make price concessions, and qualified people are looking for work. And your competition is less able to match your investment in the future.

Getting your customers to pay faster

Every smart businessman knows exactly how long it takes his customers to pay their bills. And when times are tight, companies "manage their payables," delaying payments as long as possible.

If you are a QuickBooks user, you can e-mail invoices directly from QuickBooks, and get paid online, either by credit card or direct transfer (see QuickBooks Online Billing at www.quickbooks.com). And in keeping with my last column, this service also allows customers instant access to their invoice and payment history on-line, which may cut down on the number of calls your bookkeeper needs to handle.

New Products and Services

Unfortunately, I don't know what business you're in, making it hard to write down specifics. But, think about a product or service for which your current customers would gladly pay, a "point of pain," if you will. What are the obstacles to delivering that product or service? Clever application of technology may allow you to satisfy your client's previously-impractical needs. Remember, technology doesn't have to be the product. Think it can't be done? A small brainstorming group consisting of you, your sales people, a trusted client or two, and a technology expert may show otherwise.

As long as I'm talking about the needs of your current customers, I strongly encourage technology, specifically email, as a way to stay in touch. Do you have an email contact for each CEO or owner with whom you do business? You should! Existing customers are the best source of business, and a monthly email newsletter with truly useful information (case studies, application notes, new products, incentives – but please, skip the sales hype) is an easy, cost-effective way to stay on their minds.

I would suggest, as a modest goal for this year, investing in the ability to notify each of your customers of important news simply by sending an email. Why? Because communicating with your customers is the lifeblood of your business, and presently, it's an expensive proposition (unless you have only a handful of customers).

Are there still some Luddites on your client list who don't have email? It's easy enough to add an email-to-fax "gateway" which causes email to be automatically translated and sent to a customer's fax machine. This removes the aggravation of two separate delivery methods.

New Customers

We'd all like a machine that we could plug into our phone, which would cause the phone to ring with orders from new customers (preferably with a dial on the front, to adjust the rate!).

The R-word (cont.)

I don't have such a machine, but I do know that potential customers need to be able to find you (and what you have to offer them). More and more, people research business decisions via the Internet. Are you visible? And if you are, are you more visible (and informative) than your competitors? Ask yourself these questions:

- If someone knows my company name, can they find us on-line (even if it's just to get our telephone number)?
- If someone wanted our product/service, but didn't know our name, what would they be looking for?
- If there's an on-line directory for our industry, are we listed in it?

Try it for yourself. Are you happy with the results?

The Internet can also be a way to identify potential customers. Try searching for your product on-line (e.g. "high-density polyethylene wrap"). You'll see two kinds of results: people who sell that product (who may have client lists for you to review), and people who are using that product (potential customers). Don't forget to search for problems ("keeping drinks hot") as well as solutions ("Styrofoam™ cups") – your customers think in terms of their problem, not your solution.

Do your customers fall into a well-defined category? You may be able to reach them by advertising in targeted on-line media ("ezines"). Surveying your customers about their on-line reading habits will help you make this choice. The costs are low enough that it's a worthwhile experiment.

Think Like The Big Guys

Right now, the big guys are focused on supply-chain management. In other words, they are trying to reduce costs at every step in the chain from raw materials to the product in a customer's hands. The best-known example is Dell Computer, which builds computers to order on a grand scale. They know exactly what parts need to be ordered, and when (reducing inventory costs). Parts orders are placed automatically with their suppliers as finished-goods orders are placed (reducing purchasing costs). Dell receives payment when they ship (via credit-card, typically), and pay their suppliers on terms, which has a dramatic positive effect on their cash-flow.

Do you have to monitor inventory levels and place calls to suppliers manually? This takes time, and (when done incorrectly) ties up your cash. Technology is available to help deal with this problem, and better still, your supplier may already have it. For example, medical and dental supply houses provide physicians and dentists with automated management of their supplies.

Don't forget this important fact: chances are, someone has already encountered the problem you're facing, and, if technology offers a good solution to that problem, built the technology you need. The Internet makes it easier to search out people who've already solved your problem.

Reduce costs

Reducing cost is on everyone's mind. Take a business magazine faced with the challenge of turning out their annual Top Companies listing. As you might imagine, it's a time-consuming exercise in data-gathering. Rather than apply brute force, this magazine made it possible for companies to update their information via an on-line form. Moreover, this magazine can target each company or professional with an email containing a link to the secure form, pre-filled with their data. So most people simply receive an email, click on the link, and are done. The net result is more accurate and information from more companies, and less cost to produce than any previous list.

The key ingredients here? A time-consuming repetitive process, a database of information, an add-on to the database which can send individualized e-mails, and a little bit of Web programming expertise to handle the form. The idea for you? Look at your business activities to identify repetitive activities – they are the best candidates for cost reduction via technology. And note again the use of e-mail to contact a large group efficiently.

No Free Lunch

None of the above ideas is without cost, and when business is slow, it's hard to think about investing in technology. But prudent choices now will really pay off as business recovers in the coming months. Contact your performance measurement specialist to see how you can improve your company's processes to improve profitability.

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Are Your Salespeople Hunters or Farmers? The Secret of Hunters

I recently read a quote from the great salesman Sid Friedman who stated, "The harder I worked, the luckier I got." I have never met a top producer, a hunter, who didn't have this statement as part of their sales DNA, while the farmers sit around, hoping to take orders and wonder how the hunters get so lucky. One word – prospecting!

Where have all the sales gone? Is the preeminent question that reigns in the corporate sales world as well as with the professional rainmaker. Remember a time when the phone would ring off the hook? Times where good, everyone was making money and in full swing of the longest running economic expansion in US history where even the average salesperson looked like a star. Poof! The world's turned upside down with the collapse of the dotcom's and the spiraling fall from grace of Enron, Tyco and others.

Ok, so what does an economic collapse have to do with sales? I began surveying corporate sales chiefs, business owners and management committees of professional service firms in the quest to understand what their biggest challenge in hitting their revenue goals for 2003 are. Most answered that their people had forgotten how to sell, or more to the point, they had forgotten how to prospect. In short, they were no longer hunters of new business; they were farmers. Networking had become a social event where salespeople and professionals hung-out to congratulate themselves on landing the big account. Salespeople now commiserate at networking events, desperately clinging to the ill-fated paradigm of waiting for the customer to call.

The economic expansion of the last decade allowed many hunters to rest on their laurels. These old hunters became complacent and bad habits took over where good habits once dominated. These new habits made farmers of the modern day salesperson. Now, they wait for the phone to ring and when they don't hit their numbers they use the economy as an excuse. I've heard it all from, budgets are tight to non-existent and the customers don't have any money to buy our products. What's funny is that these are internal sales objections from the sales people we're paying to sell for us. Guess what? Many of them haven't figured out a way to overcome their own objections. Isn't that what sales professionals do, overcome objections to discover the real needs of the prospect? They need to be a bit more introspective to discover the buying motives that will transform them from farmer to the all-capable hunter who understands that they must perform or starve.

I understand that it's tough out there and that mentally salespeople are expecting revenue shortfalls. This goes back to goal setting 101, keep your mind on what you want to appear. Let's face it, the salesperson of 2003 is a farmer, not a hunter, and he or she only knows one way to farm. I realize this comment will stir some emotions, but it's true. I've talk to hundreds of sales people who have rolled up their tent and blamed management for not doing the things necessary to help them in the tough times. However, there are a few shining stars out there. I recently spoke to a sales person who grew his territory 1200 percent last year in a highly competitive industry segment, where the rest of the industry was down and others who have been able to win new business like him. What's his secret? The rollout of a new product? Extended product financing with a discounted interest rate? Giving the product away – FREE? NO! The secret is not really a secret at all, they haven't bought into the thought of doom and gloom, his team is comprised of hunters who've figured out a way to do well through successful prospecting.

I happened to walk into the office of an international company in a highly competitive industry to visit one of these top performers and noticed his associates sitting around and talking, I'm escorted back to Phil's [not his real name] office, and there he sat wrapping up a call. The first thing you notice when you walk in is the absence of pictures on the walls, he looks up and says, "yea it's kinda empty in here, I keep it that way to remind me that I am here to work. I do not want an office that's too comfortable." Once again, he reminds me, "I'm here to work." I smiled.



Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.

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Are Your Salespeople Hunters or Farmers? The Secret of Hunters (cont.)

We had a great talk, one that I often hear from a two-percenter, a hunter. I asked him about the call he just made and he told me that he was in the process of calling 300 executives that worked for PROSPECT Corp. I asked, how long will that take you? "I've planned about four or five days, he smiled and continues saying that he really wants to land this account. I smiled too, you see Phil is a national accounts manager, he is not some rookie dialing for dollars, he has the fire in his belly to sell, a hunter who realizes that if he doesn't hunt, he will starve. Phil is a dream for every sales manager on the planet, selling \$750,000 in new business in 2002 when everyone else had mentally taken the year off.

Remember, the phone won't ring today or tomorrow. There is no one to blame but yourself if you fail to meet quota. Today to be successful in sales, you must dig down inside and rebuild the hunter mentality, the instinct for survival. Clients will not come to you, you as a sales professional, must make the effort of dialing the phone or knocking on doors. In the challenge economy it's about the numbers.

I remember having dinner with the great Tom Hopkins (internationally known speaker, sales trainer and author) a number of years ago, I had just been awarded "Salesperson of the Year" and I was feeling pretty invincible. During dinner, Tom wrote something on a piece of paper and handed it to me, saying that the secret of all top performers is written on the paper. It simply read, GOYA. I glanced back at Tom with a puzzled look, and asked what did it mean? He smiled and said "Get Off You're A..." No matter how effective all of the other sales models are, all the marketing your company does, none will help you hit your revenue goals if you don't apply the GOYA model. By the way, I still have the note!

Keep the end in mind, and know your outcome. If you stay focused on outcomes, you will begin to understand what it will take to create the win. It could mean going out and learning a new skill or it could simply mean applying the GOYA model with a positive attitude. The decision is yours and only you have the secret to unlock your success in 2003!

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