

What is the Number One Thing a
Small Business Owner Can Do to Be
More Successful in 2010?

2010. Its a new year, a new decade even. As we begin to leave behind a tumultuous time for business and look forward to what's next I thought it would be a good idea to collect the thoughts of a wide range of business people concerning what they think will help make businesses successful in the near future.

I asked every expert the same question.

What is the number one thing a small business owner can do to be more successful in 2010?

As expected, I got a wide range of answers. Businesses are complex things, after all. But a few trends stood out. And every answer holds a seed of potential for your business.

Throughout the rest of this report, I will share with you the many answers that I received to that one important question.

I have split the report into sections. Each section speaks to a different area of focus that you should be taking. The biggest area by far is in Marketing, which should be no surprise.

I suggest that you read through each answer, as it may hold an insight that will help you in particular. Read and learn from the wisdom of your peers. But most importantly, take action on a few great ideas this year. You can achieve greater success this year. Remember, success comes one step at a time.

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Customers

~Empathize with Your Customer~

The number one thing a business can do to be more successful in 2010 is to develop empathy for the customer. In other words, put yourself in your customer's shoes. People have a lot of choices these days on where to buy products and services, and they choose a vendor based on the total experience not just lowest price. As business people, our job is to deliver a better overall experience than our competitors.

How do we learn what they are looking for, what they consider a 'good' experience? We ASK them. We ask them beforehand, where possible, what they would consider to be a successful experience using our product or service. We ask them afterwards how we performed, did the experience live up to their expectations? If they say 'no', then we make changes. If they say 'yes', we ask for referrals.

Phil Morley

Chief PR Guy

www.newsreleasepro.com

~See Through Customer's Eyes~

Get some customer feedback. If you're already asking for feedback, then ask something different. You're too close to your website, to your brochure, to your products and services. You can't see the little things that are wrong or missing but are causing problems. Get the feedback and do something about it. Your customers will thank you with more business.

Andy Hayes - Travel Online Partners (TOP)

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~Work Together to Meet Customer Needs~

Sharpen the "line of sight" to customer needs.

Here's an example. I chair an organization that bought enterprise software recently. Implementation has been a mess. We now have an IT staffer whose primary function is designing work-a-rounds. The software company sent a new customer rep to calm us down. And what we've discovered is the developers, the trainers and the trouble-shooters all have different views of how to resolve our issues, the responsibility to resolve them, and the standards of performance. So when the customer rep asks, "what's the problem?" we don't tell him about software glitches; we tell him about the failure of his company to get aligned to meet our needs.

Ken Miller

~Listen and Appreciate~

Small businesses that hope to grow and increase revenue in 2010 needs to be out there listening to their customers/clients. Whether it's actively engaged on Twitter - or participating in discussions on LinkedIn - or providing information on Feedback, their future success depends on their ability to respond to praise, as well as complaints. Companies are surrounded by advocates and ambassadors and it's up to them to listen to what's being said on blogs, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. Testimonials used to be touted via quotes on a static website; now advocates proclaim their praise to thousands. These advocates can propel companies ahead, and small businesses need to acknowledge their influence. The right comment on the right blog or via Twitter can have a bigger impact on the bottom-line than an uninteresting quote in some regional newspaper left on a doorstep.

Susan E. Jacobsen

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~Engage with Customers Using Video~

In tough times when budgets are tight and spending is limited, businesses need to re-commit themselves to engaging with current customers. For 2010, no other effort is more important or effective. While expanding a customer base is always a priority, holding your current customers is a far cheaper and efficient way to maintain a steadily improving revenue stream. Furthermore, no other medium is more suited in building and engaging with your market community than on-line video. According to Comscore, a media tracking organization, last year there were more than 14.3 billion business-based video views. This year's number is expected to eclipse that figure significantly. For 2010, discerning customers will not just want to see video on your site but they'll *expect* them.

Business leaders need to seriously consider adding video presentation to their on-line marketing and communication mix.

David Burckhard
Owner, PicturePoint On-line

~Give Your Customers Real Attention~

Pay attention to your customers and ask them how you're doing. What do they need from you? And, then respond.

George R. Moskoff, CMC, LGC

theapgconsulting.com

highperforg.com

~Give Customers the Red Carpet Treatment~

All too often we get caught up in our personal lives and habits, and completely forget who's truly responsible for our receipt of a paycheck... the Customer!! Encourage employees to focus on customer contact. Customers require undivided attention and focus. The Red Carpet treatment for a client may mean the difference between your company making the sale and maintaining the existing business relationship, or someone else taking the business from you.

Dale Little

Business Strategist

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~What Do Your Customers Really Want?~

The best thing small business owners can do is find out what their customers really want. This may mean forming focus groups, sending out surveys, or doing on-site observations.

Dr. Marlene Caroselli

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~Contact Customers Just Because~

Every day, contact four customers or prospects. Pick up the phone. Drop them a note. Send a fax or an e-mail. If you stick with this program, at the end of the year, you will have made 1,000 bonus contacts. And you'd better believe it will produce business.

What do you say? If you contact a customer, how about a simple thank you for the business note? If the customer is always prompt with payment, let them know you appreciate that. If you have a new item or service, let them know about it. If you come across a clipping of interest, send it with a post-it note attached letting them know you thought of them when you saw it.

Your bonus contacts needn't be formal communications. They don't have to be long. But every one lets the recipient know that you were thinking about him or her, and took the time to let them know.

John Schulte

President, National Mail Order Association (NMOA)

<http://www.nmoa.org>

~Stay Tight with Current Customers~

The best advice I can give is to stay close to your current customers. This is formally called retention marketing and it is often overlooked in favor of the pursuit of new customers. However, current customers pay all the bills. This is akin to dancing with the girl who invited you to the party. So keeping current customers is Job #1; Job #2 is up-selling and cross-selling them and Job #3 is obtaining referrals from them. By the way, as part of this process, it is essential to formally measure customer satisfaction. Repeat sales is *not* the same as satisfaction. Customers may be deeply unhappy and actively seeking alternatives. The only way to determine satisfaction is to assess it directly via research.

Gerry Linda

President, Gerald Linda & Associates

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~Give Value, Start to Finish~

Add value to what you are selling. You can do this by taking a genuine interest in your customers and helping them out as best as you can. I offer free cups of coffee over the free initial consultation for my writing/editing services and if I cannot help them, I make sure to refer them on to the other 90+ editors, writers, and web designers that I know. My point here is that from start to finish when my customers/clients deal with me, I want them to know that I want them to get the best solution possible for what they need. If I am not the best writer or editor for the job they have in mind, then I need to find that person for them. Even if you don't make a sale, the clients/customers become your fans and then they and refer more people to you. Word of mouth marketing means you need to be someone worth talking about. Aim to be the person people cannot discuss without smiling by adding intangible and tangible value to your service/product.

Marisa Wikramanayake

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~Understand Your Customers~

It sounds elementary, but my startup wouldn't be in business if my competition truly listened to its users. There are so many flaws in the online dating market, flaws that we confirmed by interviewing hundreds of daters. Don't "think" you know what your customers want, go out and ASK them. Thanks to our customers and future customers, we've now found a way to democratize online dating and create a site that reduces or eliminates their pain points.

Ross Felix

Founder, Dating Revolution, Inc.

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~Listen and Adapt to Your Customers~

Listen to your clients. If they complain that they don't like something about your product or service, try to find ways to change to meet their needs. If they don't like your customer service or they think you are not listening or being responsive enough, try to put new systems in place to address the issues. If they don't understand your documentation or your contracts, make them clearer and easier to understand. One of the biggest mistakes that small businesses make is NOT LISTENING. If you don't provide good customer service, over time you will fail. And if you don't provide a good product or service, over time you will fail. Just look at the statistics of how many businesses fail every year. Don't be so stuck on "we've always done it this way" that you create your own demise. One of the things my employees love about what we do is we're "always willing to try new things to improve." It keeps us fresh, vibrant and on top of our game.

Katharine Coles

Mad Marketeer

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~Be a Part of Conversations~

The number one thing small businesses can do in 2010 to be successful is to listen to current and prospective customers and the communities around them. Listening to them is only part of being successful though. If you only listen and don't react or adapt, listening does you no good. By utilizing tools like Twitter search you have access to millions of conversations, conversations that may be about your business. Conversations that may help shape how you conduct business and the future of your business. Especially in today's dynamic and struggling economy small businesses need to stay current and adapt quickly or face being pushed out by "smarter" businesses.

Iman Jalali

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~Find Out Why Customers Choose You~

Contact your best customers (top 20%) and ask them what their reasons are for doing business with you. By Calling, Asking, Listening and Implementing (CALI) the key reasons for your success across your business with each and every person with whom you come into contact, you will be providing the best of who you are and what you do to each and every customer and prospective customer. This is far and away the most important step you can take, every day, to consistently grow your business.

Chris DeVany

Author of 90 DAYS TO A HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAM

Book Website: <http://www.mhprofessional.com/product.php?isbn=0071629408>

Pinnacle Performance Improvement Worldwide www.ppiw.com

~Think About Customer Experience~

The number one thing a small business can do is to take an expansive view of their business mandate and customer's experience. A company that illustrates this beautifully is Virgin Air, who was the first to think about customer service outside the airplane and so, began offering rides to the airport and showers on landing. I'm sure a consideration of the totality of my experience is why there are now shampoos and hairdryers at my gym and a TV and magazines at my Meineke service station. What are some examples of what small businesses can do? Well, brick and mortar shops might consider improving the lighting in the parking lot near their store, or the cleanliness of the street outside it; online businesses could look at instituting a standard service level agreement email to every note they receive saying 'by when' the customer can expect to hear from a human being, etc.

Frances Cole Jones

Author, "The Wow Factor: The 33 Things You Must (and Must Not) Do to Guarantee Your Edge in Today's Business World.

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~Include a Personal Follow Up~

Follow up with clients and customers right away and make sure they are happy with the service they received. This also includes thanking them for their business. If it is possible, a HANDWRITTEN note can be a clincher. I think that most people forget to say thank you, and certainly almost no one sends physical mail anymore, so a handwritten note makes an impression. As a publicist, I always thank reporters and magazine editors for mentioning my clients. Be nice; it will go a long way towards garnering repeat business!!

Lizzy Shaw

Lizzy Shaw Public Relations

www.LizzyShawPR.com

~Sell More to Your Ideal Customer~

In a word - target. Identify the ideal customer to make sure your product/service is the right one. Then look for additional products/services to sell to that customer. The idea is to sell 5 to the one customer as compared to selling one product/service to five customers.

Selling more to the ideal customer makes it hard for that customer to leave you for another supplier.

Tom Shay

www.Profitsplus.org

~Collaborate with Your Customers~

The one thing that a business can do to be more successful in 2010 is to collaborate with the customer and provide product / services that exactly match his requirement and also if possible understand / foresee his future requirements and suggest appropriately.

Manikandan

Marketing Manager, Dolcera

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Employees

~Find Star Performers and Use Them~

Seek out those "Rudolphins" among your employees. In other words, find those bright, highly engaged, creative thinkers that populate approximately ten percent of every organization. For the most part, their talents go untapped because they're forced to sit quietly in their cubicle, covering their shiny noses, so to speak. Pay attention to their ideas and give them opportunities to brainstorm and even lead at times. Also, take the time to connect with your employees so you'll be able to spot those with the shining ideas and find ways to draw out those innovative ideas by providing encouragement. Your employees are your most sustainable competitive advantage, and many are just chomping at the bit to make a significant impact to the bottom line. So when you see those red noses shining bright, why not give them the chance to guide your company's proverbial sleigh.

Cyndi Laurin *and* Craig Morningstar
Authors, The Rudolph Factor
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~Hire Out~

Small business owners can be more successful and save money by working with freelancers and consultants.

James Little

Fusion PR Group

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~Cross-Train Your Employees~

Flexible staffing is a must. If you can cross-train your staff to perform multiple duties, you can alleviate costly overtime and retain employees. While many companies are reducing hours or laying off employees due to reduced workload, we are cross-training employees which helps to create a full work week for some while giving others the ability to take time away from work for illness related incidents while avoiding overtime to those who are filling in. The other reason we have found cross-training to work well is that business is booking at the last minute and it is critical to pull help from multiple sources and make scheduling adjustments on the fly. Only flexibility of staff can accomplish this.

Randy Morris

Food & Beverage Director, Middlebury Inn

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~Get Assistance for Everyday Tasks~

The #1 thing you can do in 2010 is to hire a virtual assistant and not do all the work yourself. This allows you to not only focus on what you do best, but also allows you to get out there more in front of your clients. Virtual assistants can handle all your social media and social marketing, publicity, administrative tasks, etc. Focus on the areas that make you the most money, and let someone else handle everything else. Plus, they can help your business be consistent with blogging, tweeting, being on Facebook, etc.

Diana Ennen

Virtual Word Publishing

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~Educate Your Employees~

Invest in educating your people - webinars, classes, books, guest speakers - this is the time to learn what is NEW and how that will impact your industry and your company.

Kathi Elster

Co-author, "Working for You Isn't Working for Me", and the best selling business book "Working with You Is Killing Me"

K Squared Enterprises

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~Engage Your Employees~

The number one thing that you can do to help ensure a successful small business in the next 12 months is to take care of your people. These are the employees who have survived with you and helped your business stay afloat in the last 18 months. Most business owners and managers have been so focused on keeping the business going, and keeping revenue flowing, that they have forgotten to take the basic steps necessary to keep loyal employees motivated and engaged. Right now would be a great time for leaders and small business owners to begin to reengage their workforce with conversations about professional needs to improve engagement in the work and future personal development. The same people who helped sustain your business will be the people who grow your business as the economy improves. Businesses that focus on their people will be best for prepared for success in the future.

Alan Vengel

Author, 20 MINUTES TO A TOP PERFORMER

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Leadership

~Seek out Advisors~

Create, re-invigorate, or expand your Advisory Board and Board of Directors. Then listen to them and ACT upon what they are telling you! Seek out the BEST of the BEST for your advisors, regardless of where in the world they are - the internet and Skype are at your disposal. Small businesses often suffer from isolation and small business think paradigm - perceived - limitations. A sure path to eventual (or sooner) failure. Reach out to successful advisors for continuous, energized mentoring - and go!

Geoffrey P. Lamdin

Special Projects Consultant, Left Field Solutions, LLC

~Execute or Die~

Business owners waste too much time with *half hearted efforts* to improve the success of their business. More specifically, in areas of marketing, business owners consistently fail to properly execute or fully implement their plan. Poor execution undermines your brand. Do that long enough and your business will die.

Drew Dinkelacker

President of Teakwood Marketing

Author, Hot Marketing Tips and The Marketing Accelerator™

~Help Everyone to See the Bigger Picture~

Get employees to think about the overall success of the business. Let me explain. Usually one person in the business is worried about profitability, the owner. Business owners' need to get everyone in the company, from maintenance to management, to not only think about the bottom-line of the company, like an owner, but teach them to them look for cost-savings and profits-producing ideas in their own job responsibilities that will directly affect the bottom line. When everyone is bought-in and working toward the same goal, things are naturally going to run better.

Larry Myler

CEO, More or Less, Inc.

Author, Indispensable By Monday

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~Take Responsibility~

Know that you are in control of your company. Understand that you have the power to pave the way. Be in touch with your purpose. Then decide which path you'd like to choose, keeping in mind the problems facing humanity at this time. Raise your awareness. Remain ethical, and consider everyone involved before making any final decisions.

Brooke Kelley

Restore the Republic

<http://www.RestoreTheRepublic.com/vlog>,

<http://www.Twitter.com/theUrbanHippe>

~Take Stock and Take Responsibility, Then Take Action~

I would say "Forget your ego for five minutes." Do not search for excuses, search for solutions. After comforting yourself with the usual "It is the economy, it was bad year for everybody and we are killed by taxes", take a fresh positive look and see what you can do. There is money everywhere, even in a bad year. Get a fresh look: can you revamp the location, wash the windows, offer a fresh look at low price, rework the cash flow, offer that little thing that customers really appreciate, motivate employees, advance locally instead of being ineffective nationally. Most importantly, sell something that people will like. Even if you got experience, go back to the basics, one thing at a time, and see what you can improve.

Mrs Claude Lambert
May Scott Trade Press
On Pets and Men

Marketing

~Learn to Market on the Internet~

I think people want things fast. So if you have a product that can be sold on the internet, physical or an information product, learning internet marketing is the most important thing to do to be successful in 2010.

Eileen Roth

www.everythinginitsplace.net

<http://Twitter.com/eileenroth>

~Find Out What is Being Said by Customers Online~

The number one thing a small business can do in 2010 is to set up online alerts for their business name, product names and themselves. Alerts are a powerful tool and will help small businesses determine where they are being mentioned online and what is being said about them by their customers. Even if a business is not on the web, which 47% of small businesses do not have a web site (Source: [Growsmartbusiness.com](http://www.growsmartbusiness.com)), their customers write online reviews for their services and products. In turn, prospective customers search online for these types of services and products and read these reviews. By setting up alerts using tools like Google Alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>), small business owners learn what is being said about them online, can thank customers for their reviews or address any concerns customers might share online. Additionally, the alert settings allow for email delivery as an online mention occurs or at regular intervals. Alerts provide small businesses a huge opportunity as more consumers use of search engines and the Internet to find services and products.

Shashi Bellamkonda @shashib
Social Media Swami, Network Soutions
<http://www.networksolutions.com>
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~Get Ready to Catch the Wave~

The new economy and the new consumer are coming. About the June/July time frame the consumer will start to feel great confidence again in the economy. They will have the "post-recession" mentality. This means they will start to spend money again. The spending will be smarter than before. Very "value" based. People will look for what gives them the greatest value...not what is just the least expensive.

To the small business owner this means a couple of things. First, start to position yourself now for the new economy. Don't wait to market yourself. You must start your marketing now. You must position yourself in the mind of your prospects so they are comfortable with you, confident in you, so they will spend their money with you, not your competitor. It is like surfing. If you start too late you will get consumed by the wave. If you start too early you will never catch the wave. If you start at the right time you will be able to ride the wave into the shore. We must be ready and "paddling" now to catch the wave of the new economy. Secondly, network. Remember the formula: $V+C=P$ (Visibility + Credibility = Profitability). The more people see you the more you stay on their mind. The message you give....what you say, how you act, how professional you are builds credibility. Once someone feels credibility in you (confidence), they will be willing to hire you and refer you. Stay in their mind and build credibility and you will achieve profitability.

Frank De Raffe Jr.

Host - Entrepreneurial Excellence Radio Show

Author - Successful Business Networking, Masters of Networking and Frank's 200 Ways to Increase Profits Now

www.EERadioShow.com , www.ProActiveLC.com

~Understand the Changing Marketing Platforms~

Take a HARD look at your overall marketing strategy. You need to acknowledge that the way information is consumed has changed drastically . You also need to determine the appropriate new media technologies, ie. Facebook, Twitter, etc. and build those platforms based on your target markets

You will need to realize that you no longer own your brand and determine how you will incorporate new/social media LISTENING strategy in your marketing mix.

Christine G Taylor

V/P Social Media Marketing

www.jtmar.com

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~Create a Promotional Video~

Successful businesses are using online video to promote their products and services. This trend will only increase in 2010. Just remember that there are too many commercials on the web, so to stand out you need to create videos that are informative and educational, that help consumers understand your product or service. Website tours are a great way to help your first time online visitors. Online consumers don't have patience for self indulgent commercials, so make your videos useful and to the point!

Laura Beken

HandBookLive, Inc

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~Have a Plan~

Have an honest-to-god marketing plan. Many businesses don't clearly map out a 12-month marketing and communications strategy. Rather, they try to "wing it." A cohesive marketing campaign that combines PR, promotion and advertising is critical to keeping your business front and center with both prospects and existing customers.

Ann Subervi

Utopia Communications.

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~Watch Your Words~

Write more effectively. Oh, I know, that's so unexciting, and technology and gadgets are so hot! But if we don't communicate well while using those valuable tools, our message is garbled and we waste time, lose business, and tarnish our brand. Writing is one of the most accessible—and overlooked—tools for getting a job, keeping a job, and earning a promotion or two. It's free and easy. Just follow these five tips to jumpstart your business writing—and results: 1. Write first drafts fast. (Just get it down!) 2. Write TO your readers, not AT them. (They'll stick with you.) 3. Break it up. (Add white space, bullets, numbers.) 4. Cut, catch, correct gaffes and goofs. (Look sharp!) 5. Sleep on it. (Typos—and new ideas—jump off the page.)

Lynda McDaniel

Director, Association for Creative Business Writing

Author, Words at Work

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~Tap Into the Power of Social Media~

Incorporate social media into your daily program. Not only is social media one of the fastest, most targeted ways to reach your niche, but it is free. It costs \$0 to have accounts on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc...but the ROI of using these sites has proven to be more positive than traditional television ads and other forms of expensive marketing.

Catherine Warren

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~Update Your Marketing~

Review the marketing plan and marketing materials to see if they are up to date and the best they can be.

Robert Medak

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~Reputation Management~

Build, Sustain and Protect your Reputation..... the most important asset ever.

Deon Binneman

Speaker, Seminar Leader & Management Consultant in Reputation Management

<http://deonbinneman.wordpress.com>

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~Stay in the Game~

Small businesses need to focus on promotions and marketing in 2010, either online or in the traditional media. I saw too many small businesses fail in 2009 because they cut their PR and marketing budgets and as a result of that they have been struggling more than necessary. There are so many options to run a marketing campaign today, it doesn't have to cost tens of thousands of dollars, anyone can set up profiles on social media, use Twitter and really start listening and participating in the conversation that's happening online.

Vladia Jurcova-Spencer
STYLEE PR & Marketing
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~Differentiate in Your Industry~

More than ever business owners need to assess their industry and see how they stand in it. With the economy in shambles and the noise level increased by the media, business owners need to ensure their positive message is getting out and how their business is different from the competition is widely understood.

Benjamin Lewis
President, Perception, Inc.
www.perceptiononline.com

~Tell Your Story~

The #1 thing a business can do is to better tell their story. This goes back to the first steps in any marketing strategy but so many companies miss it. It's great to blast out messages to Twitter, Facebook, newspapers and anything else but without that compelling sticky story that attention will be short lived. Businesses need to craft their story to better connect with their audience. Don't make a broad story but be honest and straight forward. Connect with your niche in a way that no other competitor does by making that story around your company captivating. In the end that story and community connection is what will spread the word of your business.

Jared O'Toole

Co-Founder, <http://under30ceo.com>

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~Leverage Money Already Spent~

Identify where you already spent money that has not been fully leveraged or exploited. If you have brochures collecting dust, consider a direct mail campaign starting with current customers and thanking them for their business and asking what else you can do to be of service. If you paid a PR firm to get you some ink, how was it leveraged? If you are paying for chamber or association memberships, then fully engage, be visible and ask very specifically what else they can do to provide value to your business. It's amazing what they'll provide, but only if asked.

Diana Deibler

www.DeiblerandCompany.com

~Gain Top of Mind Awareness~

In 2010, business people who believe the economy is poised to turn around should take advantage of their competitors' lack of a marketing presence. That is, smaller companies can now “jump in front” of larger companies that have recently cut back on advertising, public relations, and other marketing tactics. By timing their outreach to the public, those smaller companies can make themselves “top of mind” among consumers who can't remember which companies fell victim to the recession and which ones are still in business.

Steve Caulk

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~Blog Regularly~

Write on your blog EVERY DAY. Search engines love relevant content updated frequently. It may just be a paragraph or two. Make it good information and watch your site jump up on search engines for your search terms.

Katie Evans

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~Get a Web Site~

Build an effective online presence. In particular, you need to have a well designed and informative website.

In today's world, having a small business without a website is like having a small business without a phone –it just doesn't make sense! But, according to Nielson, less than half of small businesses have a website.

Vinny Lingham

CEO, Yola

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www.yola.com)

~Stay in Touch with the Times~

Keeping up with the times and more preferably ahead of the curve is critical for businesspeople - social media is where it's at. Most emphatically Twitter & Facebook are the two sites most heavily utilized. My results this year, and it was a slow start due to my ignorance of social media, have been astounding. Instead of a local business, I'm getting known worldwide. Results in a few short months: Contributing to several books by known authors; asked to join communities by sales leaders as a contributing member; and my business has a nice feature on an Australian motivational site. The best thing anyone can do is to get help forming a meaningful presence on the internet!

Elinor Stutz,
CEO, Smooth Sale, LLC

Author, *Nice Girls DO Get The Sale: Relationship Building That Gets Results*

www.smoothsale.net

~Stay in Touch with Regular Drip Marketing~

Automating your drip marketing follow-up is the one thing you can do in 2010 to be more successful. That's because you have already invested "hard costs" to build a company/prospect database. By leveraging this asset with a consistent stay-in-touch drip marketing program, your contacts will remember them when it's time to buy with no extra effort on your part. Every company "intends to" follow up. But there's never time. Automating the process with drip marketing automation software allows you to delegate the "not now" sales opportunities to timed follow up and use your human relationship building skills to work on urgent sales opportunities that will make you money now. You can add 10%-20% more revenue to your top line just by plugging up the holes in your follow-up processes.

Lori Feldman, aka "The Database Diva"

www.TheDatabaseDiva.com

<http://www.twitter.com/lorifeldman>

~Spend Marketing Money Online~

“If I were going to recommend one thing for a small business owner to be sure to do in 2010 it would be to get their marketing budget online. More than 80% of consumers are searching online every day for local services like plumbers, or electricians, or even the best spas and it is imperative that the businesses providing those services be found online where the consumer is looking.”

Court Cunningham
CEO, Yodle
Twitter: @justyodle
www.yodle.com

~Become a Content Creator~

Think like a media source and publisher. YOU are your own media source and can talk directly online to your customers, clients and of course potential customers and clients as well. With the plunging costs of video, audio, creating an interactive website, plus the overwhelming amount of information out there, those that create and understand content are going to rock the business world in 2010.

David Siteman Garland

The Rise To The Top

www.therisetothetop.com

Twitter: @therisetothetop

~Engage the Power of the Press Release~

Become adept at PR and have a compelling, well-written press release on why YOU came up with THIS business, product or service. A small business always needs to be selling its story. My press release has appeared on dozens of sites. I can send it out to anyone I want to for free. It's far cheaper than conventional advertising. Also always be reaching out to journalists who might be interested in your story.

Eugenia Francis

TeaCHildMath

www.TeaCHildMath.com

~Marketing Calendar~

Put together a marketing calendar and stick to it religiously. What goes on the calendar? Things like a newsletter, blog, articles, social media posts, direct marketing, advertising, etc. No matter how good you are at what you do, if no one knows why you are the best and why they should like you, trust you, and want to do business with you, you will look just like everyone else in your market. Make sure you include some personality in all of your marketing so your audience knows there is a real person behind the business name. Bottom line: stand out from the crowd.

Michael Beek

Charles Consulting Group

www.charlesconsultinggroup.com

Twitter: @mikebeek

~Get on YouTube~

Make online videos to advertise products/services and place the videos on Youtube and your website.

Olympia LePoint

OL CONSULTING --Making Sure Things Add Up

www.OlympiaLePoint.com

~Get and Stay Online~

BE ONLINE AND STAY ONLINE! Social networking is key. Getting your business out there through blogs and sites like Facebook, LinkedIn is absolutely crucial for success. Especially if your target market are the 18-30 year olds.

Cameo Person

Indulge Mobile Spa

www.indulgemobilespa.com

Twitter name is: @indulgmobilespa

~List Locally~

With more and more people looking into the Web and discarding printed yellow pages. It is crucial that the small businesses get found when a user searches in Google, Yahoo or Bing. All these three search engines have options to list businesses in their local directories. Small businesses can give details such as their opening hours, type of business, what is special about them, any discounts they offer etc. When a user searches for these businesses these listings show up and help bring additional new customers to their business.

Ganesh Ranganathan

Integra Global Solutions

www.IntegraGlobalSolutions.com

~Reach Out to Your Community~

Because money is so tight and business owners have less money to spend on advertising, you should focus on outreach to your local community. There are many ways for businesses to keep their names out there without spending a ton of money on TV or print ads. Rather than making a financial investment in advertising, make a time investment in community outreach.

Tim Herrera

Author, 30 Things You Should Know About Media Relations

www.timherrera.com

~Use the Media~

Get some buzz! You can spend hours and hours writing articles, blogs and websites, but until people know you exist, you're truly fighting an uphill battle. It's worth it to spend some time each week either approaching media yourself or having someone dedicated to doing it for you. If you can get a bite, you'll find yourself on a shorter trip to successfully finding new business, prospects and credibility.

Karen Moehr

Moehr and Associates

<http://www.moehr-associates.com>

~Take Conferences Online~

Replace physical, in-person events (like trade shows and conferences) with virtual events. The cost savings can be as much as 90%—and many attendees now actually prefer to avoid travel hassles and meet and communicate online. An added benefit—even a small business can have a large online presence, and thus compete more effectively with larger competitors.

Tricia Heinrich
Senior Director, Strategic Communications
Twitter: @on24
www.on24.com

~Be More Social~

Add or increase your social networking efforts. This means if you're not on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or a niche social network, do it NOW! Don't pass go. Do not collect \$200. Just do it. Your ability through viral marketing will increase your brand recognition exponentially. If Obama got elected to office using viral marketing, imagine what this could do for your business.

Terry Starr

Co-Founder

MyWorkButterfly

www.MyWorkButterfly.com

Twitter: @ButterflyMoms and @CelebrityMoms

~Be Socially Conscious~

Find a way to incorporate your business endeavors with your social and charitable endeavors. The key to any successful business strategy is to find a way to differentiate yourself from the competition. A great way to achieve this goal is to pursue socially responsible practices in your business. Going green is not only good for the environment, but also a great marketing tool to build a positive company image. Do more than just donate money, make your business the donation. Hosting a charitable endeavor in which you volunteer your products or services to those who could otherwise not afford them is great for the community, and provides invaluable brand identity for your business. Social awareness has been one of the hot topics in 2009. Be sure your business is on top of the trend for the new year.

Laura Vatalaro, LV Graphics Studio

www.lvgraphicsstudio.com

Twitter: @lvgraphics

NETWORKING

~Get More Personal~

I would have to say networking. In the past all one had to do was place a yellow pages ad and be done with it. Today more and more consumer buying is through the more personal arena of networking and social media; businesses who want to be more successful in the new coming year should be focusing more on networking (online/offline... and being consistent as well) to help grow their business.

Nic Soto

<http://www.prdepotchicago.com>

@mamapr

~New Opportunities Through Networking~

I would say they should be networking, and a lot of it. Business owners may think that networking means that you have to spend a lot of time looking for new opportunities. In fact, this is just the opposite: through networking you will be more aware of new opportunities. If you are not networking, you can end up spending more time and money on activities that could have been done more efficiently with your resources.

When possible, choose networking channels where people who may require your services communicate. Become highly visible in organizations related to your niche.

Vincent Paciariello
D M Public Relations
www.dm-pr.com

~Who Do You Know?~

Join your local Chamber of Commerce. Most Chamber websites are rich with information including: a job board, government information resources, business information resources, scholarships, demographics, and other business information. With industry trends consistently changing, it is coming down to who you know to get ahead in the business world. Networking is a great way to meet new people, share and gain industry knowledge and build those lasting relationships that lead to business partnerships. There are several great associations, chambers and groups to choose from, and there is no reason to simply pick just one. In short, get involved. Get involved not only for the growth of your business, but for the growth of yourself as well.

Meghan Stinton

Marketing and Communications Manager, Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce

www.cwcc.org

Twitter: [@cowomenschamber](https://twitter.com/cowomenschamber)

ORGANIZATION

~Transition Your Business~

Commit to making the transition from an entrepreneurship to a professionally managed firm.

Why? In most cases, a company that has made the transition runs more smoothly and is more profitable than a business that has not. It involves identifying big business techniques, practices, and "rules of thumb" as benchmarks, then adapting them for use in your small business.

What does it entail? Specifically, it means establishing, documenting (or tweaking) formalized procedures in the following areas of your company: Finance; Human Resources; Operations; Purchasing/Material Control; Sales; Marketing & Customer Service; Research

& Development; Engineering; Information Technology (computerization); and Public Relations.

To some business owners, the creation of documents such as job descriptions, mission statements, operations handbooks, and policy and procedure manuals may seem like a waste of production time. But astute owners view these as evidence of a well-managed and well-run company. They have a value that should increase the ease of running your business, which will eventually lead to increased profitability.

Eric R. Voth

Business Transaction Consultant

Author, HOW TO SELL YOUR PRIVATELY OWNED COMPANY

<http://howtosellyourcompany.wordpress.com/>

~Get the Right People~

Get the right people into the right jobs. Your most important asset is not your people; your most important asset is *the right people in the right jobs doing the right things*. A leader needs to make sure s/he understands what is needed in each position (education, training, experience, behavioral style) and then seeks to find the right person. One of the major elements that leaders frequently miss is behavioral style. Probably 90% of the mismatches are caused by misfit of behavior (e.g., leader wanted a proactive person, but hired a reactive person instead). Unless the business is a “one-man show,” there is no decision more important or more long lasting than hiring the right people.

Nancy Clark

~Work Together~

Stop siloing. The strongest, most healthy brands have a vision that unifies the efforts of product development, marketing, product management, merchandising, sales and every department from top to bottom. The minute we disconnect from each other and stake our territories internally, we create a disconnect for the customer. A unifying vision creates more relevant products, offers better service, allows for more believable messaging and ultimately makes more sense to our markets.

Bob Knorpp

Host, The BeanCast Marketing Podcast

<http://beancast.us>

~Organize Through Systems~

Spend some time getting organized by creating systems so that they are not losing papers, losing ideas, losing money and losing opportunities. For instance, I've met a lot of people who have great ideas but they forget to write them down, and when they do, they do it on a scrap of paper...which gets lost or misplaced. A 'system' for capturing these ideas can be as simple as a spiral scribbler or keeping track of them using a PDA. Home based businesses are often in the unique position of trying to find space in their homes to set up an office. If a room can not be designated as the 'office' they are using areas of a family room, dining room, kitchen, etc. This can work well to if they take the time to create systems so it works for them, and they are able to keep work papers separate from household/family papers. Again, creating a system saves the day!

Shirley Oickle

Space to Thrive Organizing Transformations

<http://spaceto thrive.com/>

~Create and Follow Systems~

As a small business owner I have learned that you have to wear many hats to be successful. The most important aspect for any business is to have systems in place for every aspect of the business and then follow those systems. Too many times owners are so busy running around unfocused because they don't have a proper method for doing things such as customer service, ordering, finances, marketing etc. A proper system will help give you clarity and will allow the owner to track success.

Mike Van Den Abbeel

Mosaic Hair Studio

www.mosaichairstudio.com

Twitter: @mosaichair

PLANNING & TRACKING

~Define the Look of Success~

Get clear on winning! Define what it looks like when you achieve what you want to achieve. And get as detailed as you can. Don't just think financial metrics. Expand your thinking to paint a richly detailed picture including tools, systems, products, culture, skills, customers, competitors, etc. The more detailed and specific you can be, the more likely you are to get there especially if you engage others in running the race with you!

Holly G. Green

www.TheHumanFactor.biz

www.MoreThanMinute.com

Author, More Than a Minute

<http://twitter.com/HollyGGreen>

~Research and Prepare~

Fulfill an Industry Niche - It is difficult to be a successful entrepreneur when you are entering a highly competitive marketplace.

Over-Plan and Budget Entry into the Market - Researching your industry, your customer and your competition is one of the most important parts of attracting new customers and running a prosperous company.

Don't Underestimate Costs of Running a Business - Make sure you have enough capital to overcome the pitfalls of an unstable economy, changing taxes and swinging consumer loyalty.

Daniel Touizer

CEO, [Cinergy Health](#)

~Goal Based Mission Statement~

Create a goal-based Mission Statement for 2010, as prescribed in Napoleon Hill's Think and Grow Rich.

Jim Rohrbach

SuccessSkills.com

~Think About Success Strategies~

One of the best things a small company can do to be more successful is to plan. Sit down and think about the goals you have for your business, write them down, and map them out. Write the steps to reach them. If you have a hard time with this, pretend your own business is a client of yours - what would you advise them to do to be more successful this next year?

Pay more attention to existing customers? Reach out through new marketing channels?
Offer additional services extending current offerings? Get more media attention? Analyze
the financials to see where most of the profit is coming from and concentrate there?

Christine Harmel

Twitter: @christineharmel

CleanTech PR Agency

www.CleanTechPRAgency.com

~Plan Ahead~

Planning ahead saves time, money and resources. Planning ahead includes setting specific quarterly goals and mapping all of your marketing and budgeting efforts, for example, around those goals. Chances are you'll realize cost-saving opportunities in the process.

Implementing systems or SOPs for frequent occurrences is essential. At year-end, there's no pressure to get things organized (esp. accounting records) or complete administrative tasks. Having a process in place means you'll only have to spend time signing off before heading off for vacation.

Isha Edwards

EPiC Measures, LLC

www.epicmeasures.com

~Nothing Beats Good Planning~

Plan. Plan for cash flows. Plan for marketing. Plan for growing revenue, while planning for the efficient use of resources. Plan for finding the right people. Plan, so you have something to measure against. Then plan to exceed your plan!

Fran Coet
Founder, Coet & Coet

~Keep an Eye on the Essentials~

To economy-proof your business, the bottom line is the business essentials: using them to monitor your progress, and updating them at least yearly. The essentials are things like: vision statement, mission statement, goals, strategies, action plans (and to do list), pricing sheet, ideal client profile, elevator speech, SWOT, value proposition, etc. You'll catch so many things if you use these tools to keep you focused and accountable.

Maria Marsala

Elevating Your Business

www.ElevatingYourBusiness.com

www.Twitter.com/mariamarsala

~Plan For Success~

It is more important than ever to have a solid plan for moving your business forward. As the economy recovers, there will be more opportunities than ever before for the businesses that survived. Surviving required us to become laser focused on providing the best products and services possible. While there may be less competition in our market, the surviving competition is also laser focused. So it is critical that we maintain our excellence with concentrated planning and execution.

Laura Buckley

STORServer, Inc.

www.storserver.com

Twitter: @lauragbuckley

~Write Out Where You Want to Be~

Forget 2009 - it's over. If you can learn something from it - fine. But don't base 2010 on what's gone before because that was "normal" - research proves that "normal" is crazy. Decide where you'd like to be this time next year. Imagine what it would be like to be there and handwrite it down as if you've got there already - that's how the subconscious mind is excited into real action - rather than more reaction. Handwriting impresses the subconscious mind - if you write it in the present tense, as if you're already there. That's how the greats are great - you want to be great, don't you?

Willie Horton

www.gurdy.net

twitter.com/gurdy_net

~Focused Effort~

I believe the number one thing every company can do in 2010 to be successful is focus. Too many employees and companies are off plan, stuck in email, wasting time in meetings, and chasing after big shiny objects instead of getting hyper focused. It's about getting the critical few things done, not the important many. It's not rocket science. Focused effort will beat everything else, hands down, every time. Prove me wrong ;)

Cameron Herold

Twitter @cameronherold

www.BackPocketCOO.com

~Focus on Your Best~

Think about yourself and your business and what is distinctive about you and/or your product. What can you do better, faster, or in a more innovative way than anyone else? Focus on that for 2010 and avoid getting distracted and pulled by other people's issues or demands. Those long- and short term goals you developed in 2009? Refer to those goals on a regular basis and assess if you are moving closer to your goals or if you have to shift something whether it's strategy, products, delegating too little, or delegating the wrong things. Be in control of yourself and your business rather than reacting or overreacting to every single demand on you.

Jan Yager, Ph.D.

Author, *Work Less, Do More; When Friendship Hurts; The Power of Work Relationships*

www.drjanyager.com

www.twitter.com/drjanyager

STRENGTH

~Know Why Your Different~

Know and fully embrace what makes your business stand out from other businesses who offer similar services or products. In other words, embodying the definition of your competitive advantage. The next step is to create a plan to increase visibility by continuously spreading the word about your competitive advantage.

Meredith Liepelt

Creative Client Attraction™ Strategist & President

<http://www.RichLifeMarketing.com>

twitter.com/meredithliepelt

~Stay Innovative~

Maintain your innovation. In any market condition innovation will always be a driving force to attaining success. The best innovation is that in which you add convenience to someone's life whether it's a product or service and never forget that the innovation has to be priced competitively and that is for sure a winning formula.

Mariagrazia LaFauci
Co-Founder, Be Satori
www.ecozip-bags.com

~Stay Nimble~

Successful businesses like HP, Microsoft and AT&T chose to innovate during down economies. During their early periods of growth they took advantage of the inherent inefficiencies of the then, larger competitors.

Large businesses -with their large overhead and numerous layers of approval- suffer the symptoms of recessions the most. In 2010, small businesses have the opportunity to take advantage of an available, inexpensive and willing labor force. They will also have room to negotiate with manufacturers and service providers. Most importantly, small businesses will have the ideal storm of a country in need of a new product or service to rally around and build hope for the future. And that hope for the future has always been, innovation.

Jason Howell

Jason Howell Company

<http://www.JasonHowell.com>

Twitter: JasonHowell2

~Be Your Best~

In a nutshell, if you want to thrive and more than that grow in 2010, you need to INNOVATE. Find what you can do different or better. I'm a huge believer in finding a niche and not trying to be all things to all people.

Craig Wolfe
President, CelebriDucks
www.CelebriDucks.com

~Be Ready~

Understand your core competencies to leverage opportunities as they arise. A company who understand its core competencies will be in a better position to respond to needs of the marketplace as they will come about quickly. Senior management must be open to looking at the business from different angles and truly identifying core competencies and under leveraged assets and resources, which may require the need to redeploy cash, resources and investment dollars. The marketplace will be ripe with opportunities as the recovery begins and companies who are confident in their strengths and what they can bring to the marketplace, as it continues to fluctuate, will be well-positioned for growth.

Kevin Lombardo
General Capital Partners
www.generalcapitalpartners.com/

~Hone Your Specialty~

The number one thing a business can do to have more success in 2010, is to really hone in on what it is that makes them unique and create a full experience for their customers that capitalizes on that. It might be their product, their service levels, even their unique culture! What ever it is, people are looking to do business with the “rock star” not the “me too’s”. So get really clear and clearly rock it!

Ann Farrell

CPCC, PCC, Quantum Endeavors, Inc.

www.quantumendeavors.com, www.yourcorporatesuccess.com

Twitter: @AnnFarrell

REVENUE

~Get a Handle On Your Business~

There are several things a business can do to help mitigate its risk for 2010. I'll mention a few that are crucial. You must make certain that you are aware of your reality both from a financial perspective as well as an industry perspective. I have found that businesses that are accustomed to doing well have challenges seeing this. I would also suggest keeping costs low without sacrificing service and end product. It means being more efficient with what we have. This also leads to building cash reserves in an unpredictable and tightened credit market. Last and not least, encourage and motivate your employees. Make them feel as part of your company as possible so they understand that the end result is not just about the company but also a reflection of them; we are in this together!

Jose Sena
President, Blue Clover

~Save Money By Saying No~

This is very simple. In 2009 we had our clients adopt a simple question with each expenditure of money over and above those survival expenses; i.e. Is it a want or a need? Wants can be deferred and needs are necessary for survival. We then took the talk on the road to clients, employees, and some professional law associations. When you are running a business what part of 'for profit' don't you understand. Taking an extreme hard line on every expense and applying a want or need thought process simply reduces expenditures without sacrificing quality.

Cheryl J. Leone

Catalyst Group, Inc.

www.catalystgroupinc.com

www.lawfirmcoach.com

~Pay Attention to Return on Investment~

Every business needs to get really savvy about its return on investment - both in what it actually spends in cash, and in the resources and time put into various activities. Too many things are done with no real idea of what they generate - in this economic climate, business owners need to get specific about what really helps the bottom line in the most efficient and cost-effective way.

Philippa Gamse CMC

www.WebsitesThatWin.com

Twitter: @pgamse

~Save by Reducing Waste~

Reduce Waste. Waste touches every aspect of a business, from the scrap paper that fills waste bins to the gallons of water escaping from a leaky faucet that hasn't been repaired to the fuel used for avoidable business travel. Virtually every conservation program starts with efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle—a process that involves raw materials, consumables, products, by-products, and just about every form of waste. The key to this is to understand that the most basic way to reduce waste is to minimize—as opposed to eliminate—the use of resources. As a result, whatever the industry, real impact and savings can be achieved through simple, inexpensive waste reduction and recycling efforts. For small businesses, the benefits of these practices go beyond conservation. While it may be difficult to measure waste, one thing is clear: The success of waste reduction programs can often be measured in an improved bottom line, a stronger brand, a greater number of satisfied customers and a lasting contribution to the health of the planet.

Jennifer Kaplan

Author, *Greening Your Small Business*

<http://tinyurl.com/GreeningYourSmallBusiness>

twitter.com/greenhance

~Find New Channels~

Find at least three new channels to gain new customers. Cold calling a few new prospects a day, every day, can yield results. Attending one new networking event per month can open up new customers as well. Reach out to businesses with complementary products to see if there's something you can work on together: ie, if you sell peanut butter, call the bread guy. Social media outlets such as Twitter or Facebook can yield new customers. Scan media outlets for stories in your field, then contact the reporter to introduce your self.

Exploring new channels can help you find new customers.

Douglas Naegele
Chief Evangelist, Infield Communications
www.GoInfield.com

~Step Up Sales~

The number one thing any business, regardless of their industry, can do is step up their sales (business development) activities. Marketing is the act of communicating to a target audience. Sales (business development) is the act of identifying a person or company that wants the solutions you provide. While both go hand-in-hand, foot soldiers out in the field can never be replaced by marketing tools of any kind. Today's electronic environment does not make up for the power of personal interactions face-to-face. If anything, it only elevates the value of face-to-face interactions simply because it better manages the emotional power of purchase process.

Ester Horowitz

Certified Management Counselor

Certified Identity Theft Risk Mgmt Specialist

~ Cut Operating Costs~

These days, any company that isn't looking for ways to cut costs is looking for trouble. Although the recession has made every small business owner aware of the importance of saving money, it is surprising how often companies can overlook simple ways of overcoming their financial challenges. It's easier than you think to cut costs! Whether it's the kitchen supplies in your company canteen or the toner cartridges inside your laser printers, there is an effective cost solution for nearly every expense out there. In 2009, businesses spent 60 percent of their office supply budget on imaging supplies. To reduce this cost, use compatible toner cartridges, which can help you save up to 50 percent on the cost of printing every year. The print quality is the same, and you will help to keep 1.9 billion pounds of waste out of landfills every year. Other simple measures? Use Google mail, which only costs \$50 per year and includes customer service. Negotiate with your vendors by presenting them with a deal that works best for your budget. They need your business just as much as you need theirs. Purchase a real set of silverware for your kitchen, rather than constantly buying disposable. It's a small change with a long term benefit to your budget and the environment. The bottom line? It's smart to think ahead and save.

Chuck Mache
CEO of American TonerServ
www.americantonerserv.com

~Understand Your Costs~

Get real on the cost of what you don't know – particularly on 6 to 12 month cash projections and realistic budget and revenue projections. It is one thing to motivate others or think positive, it is another to fool yourself, particularly when the cost of what you don't know can be your business.

Gary Patterson

FiscalDoctor, Inc.

www.FiscalDoctor.com

Twitter: @ERMadvocate

~Reduce Inventory and Expenses~

Although, it has been more difficult for smaller privately held businesses to maintain their ability to borrow for new inventory, some small businesses have not been selling products at previous rates and have seen an increase in inventory days. Those small businesses can react appropriately to downturn conditions now by decreasing inventories, debt, and other overhead expenses in order to maintain their cash reserves so that they are in a position to expand and grow when their sales growth returns with the improving economy.

Drew White

CFO, Sageworks, Inc.

www.sageworksinc.com

~Reduce Cost~

The number one thing that a company can do to be more successful is reduce cost. And it's easy. Most companies think the answer is to increase sales. WRONG! A company would have to increase sales by about \$10 to have the same impact on profitability as reducing cost by \$1.

Fergus Keane

RateLinx

www.ratelinx.com

~Embrace Green Economy~

The number 1 thing business can do to be more successful: power the green economic revolution. While climate deniers portray green as bad for the economy, our mission demonstrates a clear link between economic progress and environmental protection. Since we launched our green mission, our cupcake shop has saved over \$75,000 from efficiency and conservation. Not too mention happier employees and customers.

Massimo LoBuglio

Little Cupcake Bakeshop

www.littlecupcakebakeshop.com

~Tap Your Knowledge~

In 2010 and beyond, small business owners need to stop overlooking the easy, additional revenue stream that's available to them by learning to think beyond their core businesses. Most of them simply don't realize that their hard-won expertise may have tremendous value all on its own as something that others would value learning. For example, a restaurant owner has their own successful eating establishment, but they also know about how to start a restaurant, restaurant operations and restaurant marketing which others (in non-competing areas) would like to learn, and would pay to master. Any small business owner can easily monetize their knowledge beyond their core business through original content infopreneuring – the creation of original content information products and services, and watch their bottom line grow!

Melanie Jordan

Author, What You Know Is Worth More Than You Know™

<http://www.WhatYouKnowIsWorthMoreBook.com>

[Twitter.com/melaniejor](https://twitter.com/melaniejor)

~Focus on Sales~

Sometimes, business people forget about this but beyond a doubt the most important thing that business owners should be doing is to focus the majority of their time on getting new sales. If your not constantly thinking, am I doing something for the business that will bring in sales in some shape or form then you should think seriously about continuing to do it. Working on sales has to be ingrained in a company culture from day one and even your employees should be constantly promoting and selling your services. In our case, the teachers help to get us new students through word of mouth which has probably accounted for half our students. 2010 will be another tough year (like ever other year) but with a focus on sales and nothing else, when it comes to the paying the bills you will have enough.

Marc Anderson

Manager, TalktoCanada.com

~Make the Best of Every Situation~

Convert recession-driven activity into growth. My sales and management training company was badly bruised by the severe economic downturn. As a result, we were forced to take a look at our near-term business plan and initiate new and innovative activity to generate additional sources of revenue. In the process, we (among other things): Forged a profit-sharing partnership with a merchant sales company to recruit, train and manage an independent sales force; Wrote a book (which is due to be published in 2010!); and
Created a website to sell online sales and management assessments.

In the past several months, we've experienced a considerable return of our traditional sales and management training work, but we need to find a way to sustain and build upon the gains we made with the recession-driven activities. Our creativity during the down time might turn out to be the very best thing that's ever happened to my company, but only if we can leverage what we did.

Sean O'Neil, President and CEO, One to One Leadership

www.one2oneleadership.com , www.one2onepeople.com)

Author, *It's the People, Stupid!: The Street Smart Guide to Managing Your Team*

~Sell to the Government~

Do business with the world's largest customer - the U.S. Government.

Ed Benjamin, Col, USAF (Retired)

Twitter: @ColBenjamin

<http://www.outskirtspress.com/cashinontheobamaspendingplan>

Author, *Cash in on the Obama \$3 Trillion Spending Plan!*

<http://benservicescorp.com>

~Build Up Reserves~

Businesses should build up reasonable cash reserves to get them through a short downturn.
Lines of credit are only helpful if there are enough reserves to make the payments.

Rebecca Schreiber
Solid Ground Financial Planning
www.solidgroundfp.com

~Follow the Trends~

Penetrate industries that are projected to grow in the next five years including health care, education, technology, infrastructure and environment. Businesses must position themselves to take advantage of the trends in the demographics of the nation such as an aging population, increase in diverse populations and migration to southern states. Additionally, businesses must determine how changes in public opinion such as acceptance of alternate lifestyles, focus on health care, favor towards domestic good and services, desire to be philanthropic and the management of Generation Y will impact their business model.

Crystal L Kendrick, President

The Voice of Your Customer

www.thevoiceofyourcustomer.com

Twitter: @VOYC

~Keep the Funnel Full~

Prospect, prospect, prospect! To be more successful in 2010 remember its about activity. Goal setting is important but without understanding what you need to do every day, every week every month specifically it will not matter. You must consistently be prospecting for now potential business and you need activities to follow to do it!

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~Match Customer Value and Profitability~

Get back to basics and develop a win/win perspective about running your business. Too many businesses develop a dichotomy between being customer focused and profitability focused. These should not be competing goals. Making sure both the customer and the business benefits from business interactions is the only basis for a truly successful business model. More business owners could benefit by putting conscious thought into planning their strategies with this perspective in mind.

Ask these two simple questions before moving forward with the implementation of any plan:

1. Does this provide more value to my customers?
2. Will this be profitable?

While this may seem like a silly exercise, true business success will only be achieved if there is an affirmative answer to both of these questions.

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