

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

REPORT

Provided for members of the
Greater Maryville
Chamber of Commerce

Strategies and Trends for the Successful Business

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IDEAwatch

Tips for Growing Your Business

■ **Has a prospect ever flipped out over your fee?** You can prepare prospects to have a reasonable expectation of your fee, even when it varies according to the project. 1) Provide round numbers or a price range on your website. 2) When your prices are higher than average, post testimonials from clients saying why it was worth paying more. Also, make sure everything from your bio and portfolio to your wording and graphic design support the image of a top-of-the-line professional who receives premium fees. 3) If you sell a product or service that most customers don't shop for very often, educate them on the quality, effort, guarantee or rare ingredients that come with what you deliver, prior to stating the fee.

Source: www.yudkin.com

■ **Make your best clients feel like royalty.** Each year, treat your top five clients to lunch on the anniversary of your first day of doing business together. It's a great way to say thanks and an opportunity to discuss new business possibilities.

Source: www.ithinkbigger.com

■ **Increase employee satisfaction by focusing on career development.** A recent survey by Right Management revealed that the number one priority of workers looking toward their next job is greater opportunity for advancement, indicated by 27% of participants. This was followed by better management team (21%), more flexible work environment (21%), better compensation (17%) and less work pressure (14%). Even if you can't offer regular promotions, you can demonstrate a commitment to career development by varying people's tasks and responsibilities, shuffling work teams and doing cross-team training.

Source: www.theworkbuzz.com

STRATEGY

Worst Mistake to Make When Overloaded

by Ann Latham

WHEN THERE IS too much to do, things fall through the cracks, delays become epidemic and stress spirals out of control. If others are involved, discord brews and respect erodes. The result is rarely pretty.

But it doesn't have to be that way. When there is too much to do, there are only six possibilities. The good news is that five of them are effective. The bad news is that most people choose the sixth.

Here are the five effective ways of dealing with overload: 1) Accomplish more. 2) Delegate/outsource. 3) Cut corners. 4) Postpone. 5) Abandon.

What is No. 6? The sixth choice, the only ineffective option, is not consciously selecting one of the five. Every one of the five is a valid option that can be managed for good results. But too often, people choose the sixth choice by not deciding. And by not making the tough decision, they are leaving this decision to chance. The easy will triumph over the difficult, the tactical over the strategic and the urgent over the important.

What will help me accomplish more?

One of the most common questions clients ask me involves personal productivity. How do you know if someone could accomplish more? The answer is simple. They can.

But they won't automatically accomplish more just because you pile more on or ramp up the pressure. Nor will you accomplish more under those conditions.

Whether you are trying to accomplish more or you want your employees to accomplish more, here are some tips:

1. Be clear about your objectives. Where are you leaping to solutions without finding root cause? When are you talking without an end point in mind? Are you getting results or just staying busy?

2. Provide/get feedback. We often need external input to see the opportunities for improvement. How am I doing? Is

there a faster method? Where am I wasting time?

3. Take a time out. Reflect on your own process, picture yourself doing your work and track your own time.

4. Change your approach to tasks that slow you down. Where are the decisions you are slow to make, the times when you hesitate, when you overthink

Too much to do? There are five ways to deal with it effectively. Unfortunately, most people pick the sixth.

the situation, the activities that always look like mountains? Find out what is really slowing you down. Break big objectives into concrete, bite-size next steps.

5. Reconsider the things you enjoy doing. Where does that enjoyment lead to perfection, unnecessary enhancements and puttering?

6. Find the tasks that should be easier. Where are you reinventing the wheel where a recipe, template or standard procedure could make the task a snap?

7. Check your focus. Are you distracting yourself or letting others distract you unnecessarily?

8. Don't overplan. Planning is an important tool, but it's not an outcome. When perfect plans become the objective themselves, they cross the line into fiction, give the illusion of control, suck up vast amounts of time and provide little actual value. Plan the familiar just enough to manage the interdependencies and plan the unfamiliar with the focus on learning and removing barriers as soon as possible.

What should I delegate or outsource?

Individuals and organizations of all types are often slow to delegate or outsource. In many cases, it's a case of being penny-wise and pound-foolish. In other cases, it is simply the result of not taking the time to think through the possibilities, implications and trustworthy alterna-

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■ **Should your business bother to create a Facebook page?** To help you decide, marketing expert Mark Schaefer suggests you ask if your business fits with this statement: “Come waste some time with me.” After all, the overwhelming reason people go to Facebook is to waste time. So, do you have a business that people want to waste their time with? If you are Disney, the answer is probably yes. If you sell ball bearings, probably not. Other good Facebook fits include companies that provide humorous, entertaining, interactive, newsworthy, interesting and/or educational content; beloved brands that have passionate “fans” outside of social media like BMW, sports teams or the neighborhood pizza joint; and brands that allow you some exclusive access, deal, discount, contest or benefit from being on Facebook.

Source: www.businessesgrow.com

■ **What’s the best frequency for email marketing?** Data from the “2011 Merchant Guide to Maximizing Sales” indicates that 39% of consumers would like to receive emails weekly from companies with whom they have opted in. This is more than double the proportion indicating the second-most preferred option, twice a month, and triple that of the third-most preferred choice, two to six times a week.

Source: www.marketingcharts.com

■ **Cold calling is still a necessity for some companies**, but that doesn’t mean it needs to be approached with dread. For example, Soltec Electronics in Florida has what they call the Cold Call Power Hour. Twice a week the sales team meets in the sales room manned with phones and call lists. No email access, no incoming calls to disrupt the process; only a determined attitude and an hour of getting into the cold-calling groove. Salespeople learn by hearing one another’s approach, and seeing top salespeople get rejected helps the less experienced reps see it happens to everyone. They keep a chart in the conference room to show their new accounts and create a friendly competition. But what if you only have one sales rep — or you’re the only rep? Find peers who are faced with the same aversion to telephone prospecting and create a Power Hour of your own.

Source: www.inc.com

The iGeneration: empowered and influential

The generation coming in behind the Millennials is nearing adulthood. Meet the iGeneration, also called Generation Z — a young but mighty group of consumers under the age of 18. They are intelligent and empowered consumers with tech knowledge and marketing savvy unlike any other generation.

Their personal disposable income, aka allowance, is higher than generations before, ranging from \$10 to \$39 a week, according to Fuse Marketing. However, the bigger point for marketers is this group’s influence. By the time they reach college, they have accumulated 300 or more friends on Facebook and they hold significant sway with their parents.

“There’s a real resurgence of connectivity between kids and parents. We see more influence, more discussions

on spending and more discussions about purchases, including big investments like cars,” said Ara Finlayson, Fuse’s director of agency insights.

Teens and tweens are highly connected with new technology and that’s how marketers can best reach them. It’s probably no surprise that one of the best ways is through social media. But it’s not just about putting up a Facebook page and garnering “likes.” The iGeneration understands marketing and advertising. While they’re generally OK with marketing messages, they prefer their friends’ stamps of approval. Around 78% of teens trust recommendations from their peers, according to Fuse, and 77% rely on their friends to tell them about new products and brands vs. 59% who look to TV advertising.

Source: *Advertising Age*, Oct. 17, 2011

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tives. To get you started, identify activities that: 1) Drain energy — things that simply aren’t a good fit for the current resource; 2) Are peripheral to your main focus and capabilities; 3) Are performed infrequently, and therefore, probably inefficiently and ineffectively; 4) Mastering will not increase your value to your customers; 5) Are preventing you from doing the things that only you can do or that you must do well.

Isn’t cutting corners bad?

“Cutting corners” has a reputation it doesn’t deserve. Shoddy need not be the result. “Good enough” really might be good enough. “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing well” is simply not good business thinking. Cutting corners is about making conscious decisions about how much time something deserves and how well it must be done.

Obviously, you must meet customer expectations. But, don’t gold-plate your products. In many, many cases, 80% is good enough. That extra 20% is usually visible only to you.

How do I decide what to postpone?

The perennial winners in the fight over time are usually the urgent, the customers and the squeaky wheels. But urgent does not mean important, customers are not all created equal and squeaky wheels do not have to be fixed.

Here is where priorities are critical. And if you have too many priorities, you simply don’t have priorities. What accom-

plishments would have the most positive impact on your future? If you can complete only three things, what must those be? Which customers are most important? What is urgent but not important?

What should I abandon?

Again, priorities are critical, but here are the two most important questions to consider: What are you doing that provides little return on investment now and/or in the future? What are you doing that contributes least to outcomes for which customers are willing to pay?

The former may send you back to your strategic drawing board. The latter may be as simple as: Are you reading and responding to emails that should just be deleted? Are you filing or saving things for later that you will never get to? Are you getting those unimportant ducks in a row before starting important tasks?

Choosing among the five effective methods for managing overload is not always easy, but that is what management is all about. Not making the decision, not choosing one of the five effective options, is both risky and stressful.

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■ **Less can be more when it comes to incentives.** Money is the most expensive way to motivate employees and numerous studies show that big bonuses are less effective than smaller, unexpected gestures, because gifts create a relationship while bonuses are purely transactional. Consider how pleased you are when a friend brings a bottle of wine to your house for dinner and how different you'd feel if he offered to pay you for the home-cooked meal. In the office, small gestures create a similar friendly feeling. Sending an unexpected gift or, say, a \$65 check to employees when they've accomplished something notable will result in them feeling far more connected to the company than the relatively small financial investment would otherwise have implied.

Source: blogs.hbr.org

■ **Network your way to more business** by following the advice of best-selling business author Harvey Mackay: "Diversify! If everyone in your network looks the same as you, it isn't a network; it's an anthill." Expand your reach by creating a network that includes people of different ages, races, religions, education and income levels. Source: *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty* by Harvey Mackay

■ **Need to raise capital to get your next business idea off the ground?** New fundraising sites are cropping up all of the time. For example, Chubby-Brain.com matches you with the appropriate sources of funding — from grant providers to venture-capitalist firms to well-known angel investors. Or use its free database of investors to narrow down which ones might be interested in your idea. RaiseCapital.com allows people with business ideas to post text, photos and videos about their projects to attract money for a one-time \$99 fee. Investors receive a daily update of newly registered businesses. OnGreen.com focuses on business ideas and patents that are a part of the green economy and tries to bring inventors, entrepreneurs and investors together. Source: www.pcworld.com

Using mimicry to increase retail sales

Can teaching retail salespeople to mimic customers increase sales? Based on recent experiments conducted by researchers at the Université de Bretagne-Sud in France, people buy more from you when you act like them.

An experiment was carried out in a retail setting where four sales clerks were instructed to mimic, or not, some of the verbal expressions and nonverbal behavior of the customers. On their way out, these customers were asked to evaluate the sales clerks and the store.

By mimicking customer behavior, 78.8% of the customers in the experiments ended up buying the product. Without mimicking customer behavior,

buyers only made a purchase 61.8% of the time. Along with increased likelihood of buying, mimicked customers were more complimentary of the salesperson and the business.

This concept is backed by a similar study performed on Duke University undergrads. In that study, the decision maker was more than twice as likely to buy when mimicking was employed.

Seasoned salespeople may already be familiar with mirroring and matching client behaviors. These studies confirm the effectiveness of this approach and suggest that all salespeople should be taught these techniques.

Source: blog.insideview.com, Nov. 18, 2011

Resetting a 'bad morning' boosts productivity

When an employee arrives at work in a bad mood, will those negative feelings affect his or her productivity for the rest of the day? For many, the answer is yes, which is why you should consider helping employees start the day on a positive note.

Researchers Nancy Rothbard and Steffanie Wilk discovered that workers who were happy at the start of the day generally stayed that way as the day progressed. Those who came to work miserable, on the other hand, experienced a more than 10% decline in their produc-

tivity as they had to take more breaks to get through the day.

You can help reset a bad mood by granting an upset employee a little extra time for a pleasant break, e.g., a walk, music listening, going for coffee, etc.

Boost overall morale with management practices such as emailing an uplifting thought to your staff first thing each morning, providing cookies or fresh fruit and offering genuine smiles (which studies show are contagious).

Source: *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 24, 2011

Another blow to brainstorming sessions

If you've ever left a brainstorming session feeling like the best ideas were never uncovered, you were probably right. Previous studies have concluded that getting a group of people to think individually about solutions, and then combining their ideas, can be more productive than getting them to think as a group in a brainstorming session. The reasoning is that some people are afraid of introducing radical ideas in front of a group; or the group is either too small or too big to be effective.

Yet another reason could be "cognitive fixation, where being exposed to another's idea makes it more salient in your mind and blocks ideas of other types," according to a new study by Nicholas Kohn and Steven Smith, two students at universities in Texas.

In one experiment, researchers manipulated the number of ideas participants saw in their chat windows, with some getting a few cues and others getting more. Their hypothesis was right: When exposed to many cues, the participants offered up ideas that were less creative and diverse.

However, the overall number of ideas was not significantly affected, meaning candidates went more deeply into those fewer categories that they did consider — suggesting fixation. Of course, fixation is not always bad and brainstorming could be effective if the goal is to explore a few categories in-depth. Also, in a separate experiment Kohn and Smith determined that they could end that fixation with a break and a 5-minute unrelated task.

Source: Sipaonline.com, Nov. 9, 2011