

# SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS



Community Development Corporation  
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A Community Futures Development Corporation



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## Cause-Related Marketing

### Can Your Business Benefit?

**O**n Wednesday, June 9th, Tim Hortons restaurants invited customers to buy a cup of coffee and help send over 9,000 disenfranchised kids on the camping adventure of a lifetime (Camp Day). It is the single largest fundraiser for the Tim Horton Children's Foundation, and takes place annually at more than 2,300 participating stores across Canada. If you set foot inside of a Tim Horton's on that day it is hard not to notice the excitement and enthusiasm generated by what is a simple philanthropic act. It literally drives people into Tim Horton's, even if that is not where they normally buy their coffee, because they want to contribute to the cause. Special "smile" cookies are also sold to customers, adding to the \$5.5 million dollars raised on Camp Day.

This is an example of successful cause-related marketing, and many big businesses have discovered the enormous mutual benefit to their companies in partnering with a charitable or community organization. It's time for small businesses to discover it too. Whether your business is in a large urban centre, or in a small community, cause-related marketing can be a great way to bring attention to your business, and to fulfill your desire to give back to your community.

Cause-related marketing is really just a partnership between a profitable business, and a non-profit organization, whereby the business agrees to donate a portion of its product sales or services for the benefit of a cause. The benefit to the non-profit is obvious in that it gains both exposure and money. The benefit to the company is increased traffic to their location, increased exposure, the ability to attract people who may not normally make purchases at that business, higher sales and an invaluable perception of goodwill in their community. You may not be a Tim Hortons, but you can participate in cause-related marketing no matter how large or small your business, or your community. Here are some things to consider.

**Remember the three C's of effective cause-related marketing: Connection, Clarity and**

## Communication.

Make sure your **connection** with the organization you're supporting is clear and makes sense. Choose to partner with a cause you're passionate about. It gives integrity to the whole process when you can genuinely and enthusiastically stand behind the cause. Consumer perception is higher when it can see why you're supporting the organization and where your passion comes from. Chapters bookstore contributes to the Love of Reading Fund, which supports literacy initiatives across the country - a perfect match.



Ensure there is a high degree of **clarity** about exactly how the organization will benefit from your contribution. The proceeds of every cup of coffee sold goes toward Camp Day. It's simple. It's clear. It's easy to get behind. People will more readily support causes when it is clear exactly how their money is helping.

Finally, make sure your **communication** about the partnership is strong and clear. Tim Hortons advertises Camp Day weeks in advance and makes sure no one gets through June 9th without knowing they had the opportunity to participate. Let people know what you're doing and give them plenty of opportunity to join you in supporting the cause.

**Be creative with how you will participate.** For Tim Hortons it's easy to set aside the proceeds of coffees sold, but if you're selling computers it's a little more complicated. If you can attach your support to a simple product that's great, but if you can't there are other ways to become involved. A company in my town gave their entire staff a day off to roll up their sleeves and work in a community garden that provided fresh vegetables to food banks and homeless shelters. Signs were posted on their doors weeks in advance to advise customers they'd be closed that day, and of what they were doing. During the preceding weeks they gave their customers an opportunity to bring non-perishable items or donations that would be forwarded to the food banks. The day of the event the staff wore bright green T-shirts and everyone who drove by the garden that day was aware that the company was helping out the community.

**Make your partnership work, and become each other's fan club.** Meet with your community partner and brainstorm creative ways to partner with them. They may have more ideas than you can actually implement! Talk about them with your customers and encourage them to talk about you to their constituents. This fosters a genuine connection and generates enthusiasm on both sides. Get your staff involved. Have them be part of the process. Rather than telling them what you've decided to do, let them know you will be partnering with organization X and you want their input as to how you, as a whole company, can be involved in the project.

**Don't lose your focus.** Cause-related marketing feels good, is philanthropic and altruistic, but its purpose is also to market and drive people to your business. Selecting a cause that means something to you is important, but remember your target market in that selection process. If you want them to support you, it will need to be important to them as well, and they need to see and feel that connection.

In the end, everyone wins and cause-related marketing is a way to accomplish some of your marketing goals. It increases success for your business, genuinely assists another organization that needs help, gives the community an opportunity to participate, and fosters goodwill all around. So, what's holding you back from taking a step toward contributing to your community through cause-related marketing?

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## Five Creativity Killers and How to Avoid Them

**Everyone wants it. Most managers think they have it. Many business owners demand it. Yet little of it actually exists in most business cultures today. Creativity has long been a highly-desired yet entirely elusive concept for most businesses, and for small business owners the challenge is even more daunting. There's a need for both creativity and productivity, yet focusing too much on one to the detriment of the other can be disastrous. Are creativity killers alive and well in your workplace? Being aware of them is half the battle. The other half is, of course, taking steps to avoid them.**

Teresa Amabile heads the Entrepreneurial Management Unit at Harvard Business School and has devoted her entire research program to the study of creativity. Eight years ago, Amabile worked on a research project with a team of PhDs, graduate students, and managers from various companies. (Summaries of her findings can be found in her work titled: Evaluation, Rewards, Competition and Constraints -- Their Effects on Creativity.) Collecting nearly 12,000 daily journal entries from 238 people working on creative projects in seven companies she simply asked participants about their work and their work environment as they experienced it that day, looking for moments when people struggled with a problem or came up with a new idea. "The diary study was designed to look at creativity in the wild." she says. "We wanted to crawl inside peoples' heads and understand the features of their work environment as well as the experiences and thought processes that lead to creative breakthroughs." Although the team is still combing through the results, this groundbreaking study is already overturning some long-held beliefs about innovation.

Here are some known creativity killers, and some creativity boosters to counteract them and breathe creative life back into your workplace.

### **CK#1 - Assume that creativity only exists in certain types of people.**

This assumption is deadly, because although some people have a natural propensity for creative thought processes, all of us possess creativity. For example, it's common to believe that the folks in your accounting department are less creative than those in your marketing department. Though it may be true that "creative types" gravitate to jobs with creative aspects, it is untrue that those in analytical-type jobs have no creativity. **Creativity Booster:** Allow everyone in your business the opportunity to be involved in the creative process. It will look different coming from different personality types, but those you assumed were not creative may surprise you if you give them the opportunity.

## CK#2 - Classify creative ideas on a scale - from brilliant to stupid.

The axiom "there's no such thing as a bad idea" is often paid homage to, but in reality most people do judge ideas as good or bad depending on their own perspective. If your work culture places value judgments, no matter how subtle, on peoples' ideas, you will find certain members of your workforce unwilling to offer up their ideas, for fear of looking stupid. Because of this you may miss out on a wealth of brilliant thought. **Creativity Booster:** Create a culture that positively reinforces everyone's thoughts and ideas. Have a zero tolerance level for anyone who puts down a co-worker's ideas. Even if you think the idea is completely off the wall, if you are open to it, you may find a nugget inside that crazy idea that is the solution to a problem, or the start of a completely different creative process.



## CK#3 - Create a culture that focuses only on productivity and results.

While these are important, deadlines, time pressures, productivity and results will suffer eventually if you have not allowed for a creative process in your workplace. People can only work so hard. In the end, there must be a reward for their work beyond the number on their paycheck. **Creativity Booster:** Set goals and benchmarks for productivity, but also allow your staff to be involved in creativity within the business. Have regular meetings where they are a part of problem-solving, visioning, and planning where their creativity can contribute to the success of your business. This brings about far greater ownership of the success of the business than deadlines and production quotas.

## CK#4 - Provide only "hard skills" training for your staff.

Professional development can be a difficult issue for small business owners, because money for training is scarce. What happens is that training is often focused on specific job-related skills (learning how to use that machine or that piece of software), but little is spent on the soft skills side (how to get along better with others, stress or conflict management, dealing with difficult people, or even personal growth). This results in imbalance. For instance, you may have a great machinist but he can't get along with anyone else in the shop. **Creativity Booster:** Provide a balance of hard and soft skill training for your employees. The hard skills are necessary for you to run your business, but the soft skills are equally important. Wouldn't you rather have a brilliant machinist who is also brilliant with people?

## CK#5 - Use money as a motivator for creativity.

Offering monetary compensation for someone to come up with the best idea rarely provides you with the best idea. It only works for those brave enough to risk having their ideas thrown into the ring, and who are also willing to have it made public that their idea wasn't the best if they lose. Less than half of your workforce will fall into this category. That means you're accessing only a small portion of the potential creativity available to you. **Creativity Booster:** Collaboration will always beat competition when it comes to creativity. Find ways to encourage and motivate creativity where people work together, valuing one another's ideas and combining thoughts, concepts and ideas into solutions.

If you want creativity to be a strong value in your business, you have to work at making it happen. The strongest, most progressive companies in the world have discovered the importance of creativity in their workplace, and work hard to provide opportunities to allow it to be in full bloom. Where can you make some changes to bring a greater degree of creativity into what you do, and move your business to the next level?

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## Increase the Effectiveness of Your Staff Training

**If you've ever attended a training session with another person, you will probably have noticed how differently each of us learn and absorb information. All of us have different learning styles, different knowledge bases, different IQ levels, and even different experiences that affect how we interpret and internalize information. Every person on your team will have a different learning experience, so how can you provide effective training for your staff that ensures your training dollars are being well spent? Regardless of how people learn, there are some training strategies you can use to increase the power of the learning experience.**

### Implement Movement

Learning takes place throughout our entire bodies, not just in our heads. Have you ever been listening to a long lecture when you start getting uncomfortable in your seat? The more uncomfortable your body gets the more difficult it becomes to stay focused on what you're trying to learn. It's been said that the mind can only retain as much as the seat can endure. Our bodies impact how we learn. When running or facilitating training sessions, make sure you allow movement and encourage the use of participants' bodies as part of the learning experience. Get them to stand up, change positions, move around the room, do a physical activity (hands-on), role-play, talk to each other, play a game - anything to get them to move. Incorporating movement into your training sessions will help people to stay more focused and to retain more information.

### Use Repetition Along with Active Learning for Greater Retention

It's proven that repetition aids learning and retention. This is as true for children practicing their times tables as it is for adults processing new information. A study on the retention of textbook materials shows that typical adults forget 46% of what they they've read after just one day. After 14 days they've forgotten 79%, and after a month they've forgotten 81%. A similar study showed that after listening to lectures, students forgot more than 90% of what they heard after just 14 days. This is because during a lecture, participants can't stop to reflect, ask questions, clarify, or interpret.

So when you're training, make sure you use lots of repetition coupled with active learning.

### **Combine Repetition and Movement**

Simply repeating the material over and over again is not as effective as having participants do something along with the repetition. Take a key learning point and ask them to repeat it out loud. Ask them to write it down. Ask them to interpret it to the person next to them. Have them draw a picture of it. Be creative in the ways you use repetition to aid their retention of important points. When I'm hired to train, I like to challenge myself to remember the names of everyone in the room by the time we start the class at 9:00 am. I introduce myself to each person as they enter the room, shake their hand and ask them their name. Then I repeat their name out loud - "Nice to meet you Sara." I go around the room, looking at each person and repeating in my mind, the names of those I've already met and continue to do this as new people arrive. You'll notice I am using physical movement and repetition in this process. Before the class begins I go around the room and say each person's name (I'm working my way up to 50, and can remember 36 names so far!).



### **Ask Questions and Get Feedback**

Involve participants by asking them to give feedback on the material that's being taught. This requires them to pause, reflect and internalize the concepts. For those who learn best by thinking out loud, it gives them the opportunity to process as they speak. For others, it forces them to think through the concepts in order to answer your questions. For all participants, it reinforces learning because they are hearing questions answered and opinions offered around the topic that's being presented. Never train by simply giving the lecture and assuming everyone has heard and correctly understood the material. The process of asking questions and getting feedback gives the opportunity to correct misunderstandings and clarify complex points.

### **Use Breaks to Your Advantage**

Remember the saying about the mind and the seat? Allowing people to have frequent breaks during the training will help them to stay more focused. During the breaks, take time to talk to participants and use repetition one-on-one to reinforce learning. "So Debbie, what did you think about the material we presented this morning?" "Hey John, I noticed you taking a lot of notes during the session. What are your thoughts about the training today?" Talking with your staff in the breaks and getting them to tell you what they've learned helps you to see if you need to go over something again to clarify. It also helps with retention if they are talking about what they're learning.

You can increase the impact of your training sessions by incorporating these ideas into your plan. Doing so will increase the value of your training as your employees retain more of what they learned and apply it to their jobs - which is after all, the whole point isn't it?

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# Six Deadly Sales Mistakes

The world of sales is an ever-changing chameleonic experience. Products change, customers' preferences and expectations change, purchasing habits change, strategies change, but at their core, people don't change all that much. They all want the same things - value for their money, honesty and integrity in the sales process, quality customer service, a company that stands behind its products and its people, and a genuine respect or regard for their needs. If you keep those things in your mind as you navigate all the other changes, you will be less likely to make mistakes that will tend to lose you sales. Consider these seven deadly mistakes and work to avoid them, and you'll see a dramatic increase in your sales success.

## 1. Thinking it's all about you

Going into a sale thinking it's all about how well you present the material or how convincing you are will never give you the success you're looking for. That kind of thinking leads to over-talking, intimidation, exaggeration, and other annoying behaviours that can turn customers off. The best sales strategy is to listen more than you speak. Hear where your customers are hurting, find their point of need, know what it is they want. Only then can you genuinely offer something that will inspire a purchase. Put sales quotas out of your mind when you're in the moment with your customer and focus in on them. If you do that, you'll have no trouble fulfilling those quotas.

## 2. Giving too much information

This happens when you don't pay attention to the first point. If you listen, you can zero in to a more precise product or service offering that will meet a precise need. If you don't listen, you may be tempted to try to tell your customer about everything you have available, assuming that in that broad spectrum there's got to be something they want. The more specific you can be in addressing their needs, the more successful you will be in selling something that can meet those needs.

## 3. Making judgments about your customers

While salespeople who are adept at reading their customers tend to have greater success, making assumptions too quickly can prevent you from gaining a sale. When hearing objections or even outright refusals from your customer, try to discern what's underneath those objections rather than make the judgment that they're a lost cause. Is it really a money issue, or is it the fear of trying something new? Is it about not wanting to buy from you, or is it about a bad experience they had with someone else? Persevere to find the real need, and you'll be closer to your sale.



#### 4. **Disregarding relationships in favour of making a sale**

It's been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. This is especially true in the sales process. You can have the best, proven, cost-effective, high quality item on the market, but if your customer doesn't feel you care about him or her, they won't care about your product. They will go to the competitor down the street whose product is more expensive and maybe not even as good, because that competitor values his relationship with the customer. Choose building relationships over making the sale every time. You may risk losing the sale in that moment, but it guarantees that someday down the road, that person will consider you when it comes to making their purchasing decision.

##### 1. **Failing to do your homework**

If you're rushing off to a sales meeting and haven't had time to do some research about your customer or prospect, you might as well reschedule the meeting. The more information you have going into the sales meeting, the more success you are likely to have. Who is your customer? What are his/her values? Where have they purchased before? What do they do for a living (or in the case of a company - what does the company do)? What are some of the purchasing trends of the consumer group that customer represents? Having this information helps you to anticipate objections, be prepared for questions, and be closer to discovering that need. Don't cheat on this one because you'll get more failing grades than successful sales.

##### 2. **Giving the reins to your customer**

If you allow your customer to lead the sales process, you lose credibility and the ability to be effective in the sale. If your customer is asking all the questions and putting you on the defensive, you'll be too busy trying to think up intelligent responses rather than getting to understand what they want. Be in control of the process and lead by asking questions (both those you've prepared in advance and those that come out of your conversation during the sales process). Listening closely to their answers will generate more questions, bringing you even closer to that core understanding you need to make the sale.

We all make mistakes, and if any of these have been part of your repertoire, don't beat yourself up. Just acknowledge it and do it differently next time. The key to becoming a great sales person is a willingness to learn and grow and change in changing times, and anyone can do that!

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# Design Elements of a Great Brochure

## (Part Two)

Last month we presented an article on three elements that make a great brochure and touched briefly on the subject of design. This month we're going to expand on that issue a little more. To recap, in the August issue we addressed the general look and feel of your brochure. We talked about target markets and making sure that the design elements you choose are appropriate for that market. We suggested keeping an eye out for designs and brochure formats that appeal to you and to start an 'ideas' file. This month's article will focus more on the design "do's" and "don'ts" of creating an effective brochure. Keeping in mind that anything in the world of design is subjective, and that personal preferences will always factor in to what you like and don't like, these are some general principles that you should pay attention to.

### Start with a Sketch

Whatever format your brochure is going to take - tri-fold, half-fold, postcard - create a mock-up on plain paper and sketch out the elements you want to have. Where will the text go? Where will you locate pictures or other graphics? This will help you to visualize a good flow for both information and artwork. Once you've created a rough sketch you can move into creating a design that matches it.

### It's a Brochure, Not a Book

The biggest brochure mistake is trying to cram too much information onto each page. Remember the purpose of your brochure is to get people to take action - visit your store, pick up the phone, go to your website. Don't be afraid to leave something to the imagination - leave them wanting more information rather than feeling they know everything about you. If you can't bear to pare down your text and think every word is critical, hire a good copywriter who will be ruthless and help you to come up with strong, relevant and most importantly, precise content.

### Use White Space Liberally

Another common mistake is not to make effective use of white space. White space doesn't literally mean "white", it just means unused space. When people look at your brochure they should see plenty of space around the blocks of text and images. One really effective brochure I saw recently had a small black and white image of a child's pair of running shoes in the centre of the cover on a black background, with a line of text at the bottom that read "Run with Us". They were advertising a program to collect used running shoes to send to underprivileged children overseas. The use of white space (in this case it was black) gave the reader the illusion of space and thus created an emotional response. Your brochure should also create an emotional response, which is difficult if it is too busy. Generally people do not respond well to cluttered promotional material. The sample on

the right uses white space very effectively. A quarter page image with headlines give the cover lots of breathing room, and inside you see just enough text, surrounded by space and a well-placed relevant image.



### **Be Conservative with Fonts**

The standard rule of thumb for a brochure is not to use more than two different fonts - one for headings and attention grabbers, and one for the body text. Occasionally, with a really well-laid-out design you can get away with three if you are using quotes or callout boxes, but two should be the norm. Too many different fonts creates the feeling of clutter for the reader, and it becomes too distracting for them to hear your message. Choose fonts that complement each other. Don't choose a thick, blocky font for headings and then a fancy, light, handwriting font for the text. They can be different, but they should be complementary.

### **Choose Relevant, Timeless Images**

Be aware that if you're going to put images of people in your brochure, they will eventually look dated, especially if you don't intend to redo it for a long time. Pictures of objects are less likely to become dated. Make sure images are relevant to your text and that people can easily make the connection. If you are going with a more casual brochure that uses clipart instead of photos, make sure the clipart is of high enough quality that it doesn't get pixilated when you place it into the brochure. Clipart can be a great complement to your text, but avoid images that are too corny or cliché.

### **Keep it Simple**

The most effective brochures are the most simple. State your content clearly and concisely. Use relevant images and combine them with your text in a way that gives space. Use headings to answer questions or make important statements, add a call to action, and then leave it alone! Simplicity will win over complexity every time.

In the end you may decide to outsource the creation of your brochure, but if you understand these principles you'll be way ahead of the game even when working with a designer.

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