

SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS



November 2008

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Leading in Chaotic Times

It's hard to read the headlines today without being rocked by what's going on in the economy. The stock market has tumbled to historic lows, while home foreclosures and unemployment levels have reached historic highs. With the financial markets in turmoil, virtually every business around the world is experiencing the impact. Although some businesses (like those that sell home safes) are thriving, most businesses are reeling from the global impact of the financial meltdown. The pace at which this is all happening is stunning. It seems every hour there is some news that will change the way we do business, forever. We are reminded of the words of W. Edwards Deming, "It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory." In the midst of all this chaos, one thing seems crystal clear. The way we did business in the past won't work in the future. If we keep on doing what we've always done, we'll always get what we've always had . . . and that's not working now. Those organizations that can successfully manage change will be the only survivors. Follow these guidelines to help your employees navigate through these turbulent times and ultimately position your organization for success.

1. Tell it like it is. We are fond of saying, "Employees may like reading a mystery, but they don't like working in one." Don't ever underestimate your employees' depth of awareness regarding what's going on in your organization. They read newspapers, listen to the news, talk to your customers or clients, and more importantly, talk to one another. Despite what leaders may think, employees typically have a fairly accurate picture of reality. When employees raise concerns, answer their questions honestly, to the best of your ability. In many cases, you won't have a complete answer for them. Tell them what you can, even if you have to preface your comments with, "Based on what I know today, which could change tomorrow, . . ." During these uncertain times, you will maintain your credibility if you address employee concerns honestly and to the best of your ability, based on what is currently known.

2. Over-communicate. Chances are, during these turbulent times and the resulting impact on your business, normal communication channels in the company won't be working as well as usual.

Employees will be hungrier than ever for information. Give them an opportunity to provide input. Ask questions to get their opinions and reactions to the changes. Maintain your visibility and make it clear that you are accessible. Immediately clear up any rumors and misinformation. And if you don't have any new information, let them know that too. During chaotic times, employees rarely complain that they get too much information.

3. *Involve employees.* There is generally a lag between the time management discusses organizational changes and the time they are implemented. Although managers like to believe they are the only ones who know about the upcoming changes, employees usually get wind of them through informal communication. Unfortunately, that informal communication often tends to be negative. The sooner you get employees involved in the change process, the better off everyone will be. A formal communication channel is much more effective than a negative, informal one.

4. *Know the climate.* Leaders who successfully steer their team through difficult times in an uncertain world understand the emotional impact of organizational change. To ensure success, these leaders talk to their team members. Asking questions like, "How are you feeling about these changes?" and "What do you need from me to be successful?" keeps the leader in touch with reality, from the employees' perspective. It is only when you accurately understand employees' feelings about the change that you know what issues you need to address. It is difficult to effectively sell employees on change without understanding their needs, concerns and fears.

5. *Ask, don't tell.* Employees who do not deal well with change are generally the same ones who cannot be "told" anything. There's an old saying, "You can tell tough employees, but you can't tell them much." For this reason, it's a good idea to ask employees questions rather than tell them why the changes are taking place. One organization, in an attempt to improve both profitability and customer service, decided to move from having a specific individual responsible for satisfying a specific customer to having a team of individuals responsible for satisfying many customers. This altered the way the organization had done business for thirty years. Management tried many times to tell employees why the change was needed, but the employees remained adamantly opposed. As a last resort, Management switched strategies and asked the following question: "If we keep going without any change, is our organization going to flourish in the next ten years?" Ninety-five percent of employees stated that not changing would lead to the company's demise. With this feedback, Management proceeded to involve all the employees in designing the specific change strategy to be implemented.

6. *Involve both negative and positive informal leaders.* Every organization has informal leaders - some positive and some negative. Positive informal leaders have a reputation for supporting management. Most managers and supervisors get these positive leaders involved in implementing changes, but avoid involving the negative leaders. This is a mistake, since leaders who are not involved lack commitment to the change, and may even try to sabotage it. It's better to get the negative leaders involved in the change early in the process, find out what their objections and concerns are, and then use this knowledge to design your change strategy. If you can meet the concerns of the organization's informal leaders, they



will help sell the change to the rest of the employees.

7. *Don't cover all the bases yourself.* Too often, supervisors try to police all activities. It's better to concentrate on effective delegation during the early stages of the change process. Delegation helps you manage and maintain your workload and gives your employees a sense of involvement, which positions them to share in the responsibility for change. Delegation expands skill sets and gives you more time to focus your efforts on leadership, not day to day routine.

8. *Raise expectations.* With all the media coverage of layoffs, buyouts, mergers, retirement packages, etc., employees understand that employment is not the given it was even five years ago. Most employees expect to do more work during these challenging times. While it may be more practical to expect less in terms of performance, this is actually the time to raise the performance level. Employees are likely to be changing their work habits to accommodate the changes anyway. Take the opportunity to push employees to try harder and work smarter. Require performance improvements that make the process challenging, but keep goals realistic to eliminate frustration.

9. *Ask employees for their commitment.* It's important to personally ask for each employee's commitment to the success of the change effort. It is equally important to tell employees that you want to hear about any problems. If a negative employee does not tell you about problems, you can be sure he or she will be telling other employees about them! Your employees' commitment will be vital to see change through to completion. Abandoning it halfway through destroys your credibility.

10. *Stay positive.* Your attitude will be a major factor in determining the attitude exhibited by your employees. Maintain a positive vision of both your team's and organization's success. Try to remain upbeat, positive and enthusiastic, but also empathetic and supportive. Foster motivation in others. Compensate your employees for their extra effort. Write a little note of encouragement on their paychecks. Leave a nice message on their voice mail. Take them aside and tell them what a great job they are doing. Listen to their suggestions. Finally, encourage them to view organizational change as a personal challenge!

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25 Habits of Successful Sales People

Every once in a while it's good to remind ourselves of some of the simple truths of selling. We all know that good habits lead to success. Here's a simple 25-point habit-checklist. Post it somewhere you'll see it often to remind yourself of the things that are important for sales success.

1. They demonstrate the highest level of integrity
2. They sell themselves first and communicate the message that it is sound business to trust them
3. They ask the right questions
4. They find the customer's key requirements (needs)

5. They know all the objections beforehand
6. They sell to people who want to buy
7. They tell everyone they meet about their company and what they sell
8. They are always looking for new markets
9. They treat every sales situation as if they are a consultant
10. They have total commitment and belief in what they sell
11. They know their buyer and his/her market
12. They ask for referrals
13. They show enthusiasm
14. They listen more than they talk
15. They tell the truth (it's easier to remember)
16. They believe in themselves
17. They spend more time selling than on anything else because they understand they are entrepreneurs.
18. They empathize with their buyers
19. They support their visit the next day
20. They give speeches to business and civic groups
21. They understand the importance of attitude
22. They take responsibility for presentations that go haywire and assess what went wrong
23. They always ask for the order
24. They keep notes on each customer
25. They keep their sense of humor



Simple but true. Develop these habits, or teach them to your sales staff and watch your sales results change overnight.

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All Customers Are Not Created Equal

Let's face it - we're all different, and no sales strategy will work exactly the same on every customer. Although there are dozens of sales principles, and thousands of strategies to master your sales skills, increase your closes, make more money, etc., there's one simple strategy that's often overlooked when trying to make a sale. Dr. Tony Alessandra, marketing strategist, behavioural scientist and a leading authority on building business relationships for life, suggests that there are four basic behavioural styles, and that these styles more than almost any other factor determine how people react to a sales approach. If you're an astute people-reader, you'll notice it doesn't take long to figure out what type of behavioural style you're dealing with and when you do, switching your approach to one that mirrors that style will give you an edge in making the sale.

The Thinker

This person is task-oriented, focused on "getting it right." He or she pays attention to detail and thinks systematically. They have a need to be correct, and communication requires detailed information, facts, statistics, and research. If you're trying to sell to a Thinker, you'll need to know your stuff - in detail! Use proven facts to persuade, and proceed step by step in a methodical manner. If you appear disorganized, inconsistent, or are overly emotional or pushy and don't have your facts straight, you can forget about making a sale to a Thinker. You can usually identify a Thinker by noticing the following details:

- Formal tailored dress
- Utilitarian décor in the office (just the necessities)
- Asks a lot of questions and wants to see things in print
- Highly organized work space
- Desk is often positioned as a barrier between them and others

The Director

This person is also task-oriented but focuses on "getting it done". The Director is direct, blunt, and needs to be in control. They are the people on the leading edge of getting anything accomplished in business. If you're selling to a Director, make sure you get to the point quickly - tell them the bottom line. Approach them in a business-like and direct manner, understand what their goals and objectives are, and be clear and direct on how your product or service will benefit them. Also, give them the bottom line first, and they'll let you know if they need you to fill in any details. Take no more time than what you promised – if you said you wanted ten minutes of their time, you'd better be done in ten minutes! If you're long-winded, unprepared, unprofessional, or wishy-washy, the Director won't give you the time of day. You can usually identify a Director by noticing the following details:

- Formal business-like dress
- Office décor that boasts achievements (certificates, degrees, trophies, awards)
- Appears to be hurried and/or too busy for you
- Organized chaos in workspace (i.e. it may look like a bomb went off in their office but they know exactly where everything is)
- Desk is often positioned as a barrier between them and others



The Socializer

This person is highly people-oriented. Many sales people find themselves in this category. The Socializer needs to be appreciated and values warmth, creativity, energy, synergy and loves being with people. Socializers are highly verbal and enjoy chatting with virtually anyone, anytime, even if they're sales people! Approach Socializers with enthusiasm and flexibility. Let them tell you their stories. Use creativity in your demonstrations and maintain high energy. Verbalize your appreciation for their situation. If a Socializer gets a whiff of rigid thinking, feels taken-advantage-of, or if you offer them too many details without letting them participate in the conversation, they will shut down. You can usually identify a Socializer by noticing the following details:

- Flamboyant, colourful dress

- Happy, funny, motivational posters and slogans adorning the office
- Highly chatty and talkative
- Extremely disorganized (can't find things, work space is a mess)
- Desk is usually against a wall rather than forming a barrier

The Relater

Also highly people-oriented, the Relater's primary goal is to get along with everyone. The Relater is the least likely person to close the door on a sale, but will also take the longest to make a decision. They desire to be helpful, caring and agreeable, but are indecisive, procrastinators, and sometimes make illogical decisions based on their desire not to offend others. When dealing with a Relator, be casual but sincere. Speak slowly and honestly. Allow them to express their doubts and to talk about their objections, and above all be considerate, polite, and value their feelings. If a Relator senses insincerity, or that you're ignoring how they feel, you will lose the sale. In the same way if you try forcing a Relator to make a decision, or become too intense with them, you will lose your credibility and their trust. You can usually identify a Relater by noticing the following details:

- Casual dress
- Pictures of people, pets, decorating the office
- Great listeners and genuinely want to get to know you
- Disorganized but not chaotic
- Desk is usually against a wall rather than forming a barrier

Knowing and understanding these behavioural styles should not be viewed as a way to manipulate people into buying what you're selling, nor should it be a way to insincerely present your product or service. Knowing and understanding these styles will assist you in building relationships, which is what Dr. Alessandra's strategy is all about. I'm sure you probably recognized yourself in one of those styles. Realize that all of us need to process information differently. With that in mind, use this as a guide to understanding people and building relationships, and you'll see your sales increase.

If you're interested in reading more about this, email bricom@shaw.ca to purchase a book titled "I'm a Circle, You're a Square – The Art of Understanding Others and Improving Communication".

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Doing the Right Thing for Your Business in Tough Times

Business philosopher and motivational speaker, Charlie Cook says, "If you've cracked a newspaper or tuned into the news of late, it's all doom and gloom about the economy. And, it's causing many business owners to do just the opposite of what they should be doing right now." Cook goes on to say, "I hope you're not one of those who are cutting back on marketing or new product introductions. This is exactly the WRONG THING to do." Now is the time to take action to grow your business. You may have seen a great New York Times story last week. In an interview with Warren Buffet, one of the most successful investors in history, he admitted to buying up shares and companies and depressed real estate like crazy. That's how he's played the game for decades. He didn't get to be one of the wealthiest men in the world by shrinking his investments in tighter times.

There is a science to how and why people continue to prosper and succeed, even in tighter economic times. In a down economy, many, most people get spooked and put off MAJOR purchases, like the second home or recreational property or the big RV or new boat. But, that doesn't mean they stop spending money all together.

In down economic times there are two strategies you can use to temporarily change the way you do business until things settle down and get back to normal.

1. Less marketing, more selling.

Sound strange? It's not. Use less of your dollars on marketing that reaches faceless masses and spend more time and energy doing direct selling. It's easier for people to ignore your advertisement than to say no to someone standing in front of them. Besides, we all know that selling is a numbers game.



Knock on enough doors and you'll eventually make the sale. In difficult times, you have an opportunity to exercise your best relationship-selling muscles. When you're talking to your customers face-to-face, you can sympathize with their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. After all, despite what you do for a living, you're also a consumer who faces the same issues as your customers. Remember, people may be spending more cautiously, but they're still spending. If they trust you, they're more likely to purchase from you. You may even enjoy the change of pace as you head out to hit the streets and come eye-to-eye with potential customers.

2. Know what marketing is working.

A familiar refrain from the small business owner is "I know only 20% of my marketing dollars are really working. Trouble is, I don't know which 20%!" When you're trying to be smarter about your spending, make sure you're spending where it will do the most good. If possible, spend 4-6 weeks taking particular note of how customers are coming to you. Ask everyone who comes through your door how they heard about you

and keep a journal to track the responses. If you can clearly see that one particular area is bringing in customers, focus your dollars on that area. This exercise will not only help you to have a better focus with your marketing dollars now, it will help you to make informed decisions later when things get back to normal.

These small decisions can help you to navigate through difficult times. Maintain confidence that things will bounce back and move forward with running your business as usual.

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Leaving a Legacy

Principles to Live By

Every once in a while you come across a brilliant mind – someone who has achieved such significant success in their life that it makes them worth listening to. Author, business guru and motivational speaker and coach, Jim Rohn is someone like that. He has created a legacy through his business accomplishments and outstanding success both in business, and in life. Jim has penned nine principles to live by in order to leave a legacy in this world. They are worth reading and considering, and they apply to every area of life! Whether you're thinking about running your business or how you live your personal life, take a moment to reflect on whether you're on the right track – a track that will lead you to the success you want and the kind of legacy you'd like to leave. Here are Jim's principles.

1. ***Life is best lived in service to others.*** This doesn't mean that we do not strive for the best for ourselves. It does mean that in all things we serve other people, including our family, co-workers and friends.
2. ***Consider others' interests as important as your own.*** Much of the world suffers simply because people consider only their own interests. People are looking out for number one, but the way to leave a legacy is to also look out for others.
3. ***Love your neighbor even if you don't like him.*** Jesus, and many other great spiritual teachers throughout history, told us to love others. But he never tells us to like them. Liking people has to do with emotions. Loving people has to do with actions. And what you will find is that when you love them and do good by them, you will more often than not begin to like them.
4. ***Maintain integrity at all costs.*** There are very few things you take to the grave with you. The number one thing is your reputation and good name. When people remember you, you want them to think, "She was the most honest person I knew. What integrity." There are always going to be temptations to cut corners and break your integrity. Do not do it. Do what is right all of the time, no matter what the cost.
5. ***You must risk in order to gain.*** In just about every area of life you must risk in order to gain the reward. In love, you must risk rejection in order to ask that person out for the first time. In investing you must place your capital at risk in the market in order to receive the prize of a growing bank account. When we risk, we gain. And when we gain, we have more to leave for others.
6. ***You reap what you sow.*** In fact, you always reap more than you sow--you plant a seed and reap a bushel. What you give you get. What you put into the ground, then grows out of the ground. If you give love you will receive love. If you give time, you will gain time. It is one of the truest laws of the universe. Decide what you want out of life and then begin to sow it.
7. ***Hard work is never a waste.*** No one will say, "It is too bad he was such a good, hard worker." But if you aren't they will surely say, "It's too bad he was so lazy - he could have been so much more!" Hard work will leave a grand legacy. Give it your all on your trip around the earth. You will do a lot of good and leave a terrific legacy.
8. ***Don't give up when you fail.*** Imagine what legacies would have never existed if someone



had given up. How many thriving businesses would have been shut down if they quit at their first failure? Everyone fails. It is a fact of life. But those who succeed are those who do not give up when they fail. They keep going and build a successful life - and a legacy.

9. ***Don't ever stop in your pursuit of a legacy.*** Many people have accomplished tremendous things later on in life. There is never a time to stop in your pursuit of a legacy. Sometimes older people will say, "I am 65. I'll never change." That won't build a great life! No, there is always time to do more and achieve more, to help more and serve more, to teach more and to learn more. Keep going and growing that legacy!

These are core principles to live by if you want to become the kind of person who leaves a lasting legacy.

To read more by Jim Rohn, Business Analyst, Motivational Speaker and Author, visit his website at www.jimrohn.com

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