

Better Business Focus

May 2021

Expert inspiration for a Better Business



Better Business Focus is the essential key for business owners and managers. It achieves that by focusing on the way in which successful businesses compete and manage their organisations. It focuses on how people are recruited, coached and developed; on how marketing and selling is undertaken in professional markets as well as in markets with intense competition; on how technology and the Internet is reshaping the face of domestic and home business; and on how people are being equipped with new skills and techniques. In short, it offers expert inspiration for a better business.

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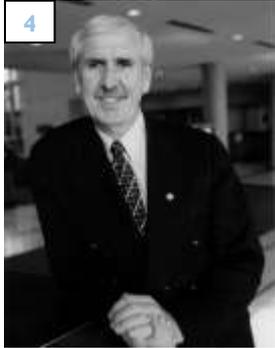
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Urko Wood

How to make the competition irrelevant

Most leaders agree that obtaining competitive information is essential for developing an effective strategy. Gaining competitive intelligence is often viewed as similar to gaining military intelligence.

The big difference is that in capitalism we are fighting to earn the business of customers. In war, there are no customers, and we are fighting to destroy the enemy. Perhaps this explains why many companies are overly focused on the competition rather than understanding customers' needs. Big mistake.

Companies don't earn their customers' business by beating the competition; they beat the competition by earning the customers' business, and that is done by delivering unique value to customers. This is why conducting a solid customer analysis is much more important than a competitive analysis.

Companies that focus on beating the competition often find themselves outflanked because, in reality, the customer is in control of the game, not the competition. Taking an inventory of your competitors' features and capabilities is unlikely to inform you about where the demand lies. What leaders really need is a way to reveal their target customers' unmet needs in an actionable format, so they know where to focus and what to do to create unique value in a repeatable manner.

The jobs-to-be-done (JTBD) innovation does this by revealing customers' unmet needs in virtually any target market with precision and confidence. See *Rethinking Innovation: How the Jobs-to-be-Done Approach*

Delivers Dramatically Better Results). One of the breakthroughs of JTBD is how it conceptualises customer "needs" as *"the functional, emotional, and social jobs customers want to get done and the criteria they use to measure success."* If your purpose is innovation, this is all you need. It gives you a holistic view of what customers want to accomplish, feel, and experience.

You may remember that Dr. Stephen R. Covey taught us that the second habit of highly effective people is to *"keep the end in mind."* This is true for highly effective innovators as well except, in this case, we want to discover and then keep in mind the target customers' jobs and criteria (their ends in mind). For example

- CFOs don't want to buy accounting services; they want to get their financial and accounting-related jobs done, such as:
 - Close the books Determine the profitability of a store/product/service
 - Plan for succession
 - And dozens of other financial and accounting-related jobs

You can see even from this short list that this approach reveals opportunities for new value creation and revenue generation well beyond the hypercompetitive tax and assurance work. This is a great strategy for any company that wants to generate new revenue streams.

Once a comprehensive set of the target customers' jobs and criteria have been obtained, they are put into an online survey and deployed to a representative sample. Target customers are asked to rate each job and criterion for how important it is to get the job/criterion done and how satisfied they are getting it done given their current solution resource. Those jobs and criteria that are important and unsatisfied

are opportunities for innovation and growth. The more important and less satisfied a job/criterion (need) is, the bigger the opportunity for innovation and growth it presents.

This approach enables companies to identify and rank the biggest opportunities in their markets with statistical validity. Having this information before going into ideation ensures that the team knows where to focus and what to do to create new value. Could that change the game for you? It has for hundreds of the Fortune 1000 and FTSE companies.

Not only does this process deliver 2-5 times higher new product success rates but it also improves the effectiveness of all other downstream processes like pipeline review, Design Thinking, Lean Startup, messaging and positioning, competitive analysis, and sales. This is how leading companies are using the jobs-to-be-done approach to consistently make offerings customers want. You can do it, too.

Reveal needs. Create value. Drive growth.

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About the Author:

Urko Wood founded *Reveal Growth Consultants* in 2012 to help companies turn innovation and growth into a repeatable business process. He has created a free PDF explaining how over 400 of the Fortune 1000 have done so called [Rethinking Innovation: How the Jobs-to-Be-Done Approach Delivers Dramatically Better Results](#).

Co-ordinates:

E-Mail: uw@revealgrowth.com

Website: www.revealgrowth.com

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/urkowood



Barry Urquhart

This is Serious. Smile. Laugh.

Laughter, fun and levity appear to have been lost to many business settings and processes. A primary cause is the pandemic. Compounding the circumstances is the transactional nature of sales and contracts at present. So too is the impersonal character of online commerce. Algorithms and AI (artificial Intelligence) don't appear to have any sense of humour.

It is so serious it brings tears to the eyes of some, and heightened concerns about the presence of administrators and liquidators. Enough to be *watery at the knees*.

Laughter, fun and levity are interesting dimensions of confidence. Those who are sufficiently philosophical and confident to accept reality, usually have scope to laugh at themselves and the irrationality of so many aspects of life.

In the past it was usual to initiate contact to share some time, information and ideas. That should remain. Complementing such agenda is the suggestion, and offer, to share a few laughs.

Even lost sales and contacts can bring a smile to one's face. A sense of *having missed a bullet* is increasingly evident in the prevailing volatile marketplace. Some relationships are simply too hard, difficult, unfulfilling and unprofitable.

Escaping to the beach, the movies, a favourite bar or restaurant, and to have people who have a sense of humour, makes sense.

An interesting aside to the consequences of COVID-19, WFH (working from home), lockdowns and social distancing, is that globally and throughout Australia, individuals have on average, put on weight.

A stable diet of endorphins – bought on by a healthy appetite of laughter and fun – can, and does, take a load off your mind, and waistline.



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Pets, dogs in particular, bring delight and a smile to my life. Their unconditional love is therapeutic. Not answering back or disagreeing is, well, very agreeable. Even the need for extended and repeated walks is *fit for purpose*.

Throughout the pandemic, we at Marketing Focus have been blessed by the ability to operate from the office. The “hard-borders” of Western Australia do have advantages.

Our two non-unionised ambassadors, black Labradors, Tendaji and Jackson, bring infectious smiles to visiting clients and are great conversation-starters.

They readily work overtime to inject smiles and laughter into the serious subject of business.

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About the Author:

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director, Marketing Focus, Perth, is an inspiring speaker, author of Australia's top two selling books on customer service and an international consultant on dynamic innovation and creativity.

Barry is author of six books, including the two largest selling publications on service excellence in Australasia. He is a regular commentator of consumer issues on ABC radio, is featured on a series of interview topics on “Today Tonight” and contributes articles to 47 magazines throughout the world.

He is one of Australia's most active keynote speakers and is an internationally recognised authority on quality customer service, consumer behaviour and creative visual merchandising. Marketing Focus is a Perth based market research and strategic planning practice. The firm and Barry consult to multinational, national and local entities in the private sector and the public sector. He is a former lecturer in Marketing and Management at the Curtin University of Technology and has degrees in marketing, political science and sociology.

Co-ordinates

Mail: 26 Central Road, Kalamunda, Western Australia 6076

Tel - Office: 006 1089 257 1777

Tel - Mobile: 006 1041 983 5555

E-mail: Urquhart@marketingfocus.net.au

Website: www.marketingfocus.net.au

Dr Lynda Shaw

Managing anxiety coming out of lockdown



During the pandemic we have all coped in different ways; some of us have adjusted more easily whilst others have had to deal with pain and hardship, or with feelings of burnout or isolation. Whilst people who have had to shield may understandably need time to adjust to coming out of lockdown, many of us may be feeling anxiety for a variety of reasons. Now as we are slowly opening up the world again it is important to ensure that we are best equipped for what may still be a series of uncertainties and ups and downs. Here are some tips from Dr Shaw that may help:

- 1) **Stay flexible** – Whilst we have many reasons to be optimistic, the future is still uncertain. Accept that change is inevitable and be open minded. If things don't go to plan straight away, take a deep breath and try to keep your options open.
- 2) **Take your time** – Before getting up each day perhaps listen to the birds or practise gratitude for a few minutes and make happiness and health a daily choice. Going forwards in the weeks ahead, try to avoid rushing big decisions, prioritise what needs to be acted upon first, take your time to get it right, avoid comparing yourself with others.
- 3) **Positive thinking** - Facing challenges head on and realistically whilst thinking positively helps to move forwards and build resilience. Research shows that those who face adversity with a positive mindset deal with stress and problems better and have a better health outcome long term. Avoid the traps of negative thinking and swap in more positive language. Re-examine negative situations from a different angle and try to find a workable solution.
- 4) **But don't chase happiness** – Sometimes when we have been yearning for something and then get it, we don't find the fulfilment we really hoped we would have, which creates real disappointment, and we turn to something else to want. Spend a little time appreciating what you have and make sure your goals and values are aligned with your life.
- 5) **Ensure you live a healthy lifestyle** - including regular physical exercise, a good sleeping pattern, low stress and a healthy diet. Focus on things you can control.
- 6) **Be safely social and inclusive** - Follow the rules but remain sociable where possible, even if that means keeping events virtual. Through brain imaging, scientists have found that when people experience social exclusion and social distress some areas of the brain are similarly activated as if they were experiencing physical pain.
- 7) **Work out your new priorities** – The pandemic has made many reevaluate their priorities, leading people to ask themselves what truly makes them happy. Are you happy at work and in your relationship? Are you happy in your own skin? Set some goals for yourself which you feel will make you happier and revisit them once a month to track your progress. They could be anything from exercising, to getting in touch with old friends to getting a promotion.
- 8) **Be careful of burnout** - Identify the signs early. Signs of burnout include fatigue, irritability, sleepless nights despite feelings of exhaustion, anxiety and physiological changes in your body like raised blood pressure. Ensure you aren't consumed by your old life once restrictions lift and that you use what you learnt in lockdown including perhaps slowing down.
- 9) **Feeling overwhelmed? Seek help** – You may have PTSD and anxiety so seek help if you are feeling overwhelmed. Some signs to

look out for include low energy, insomnia, frequent illness, chest pains, rapid heart rate, panic attacks, migraines / headaches and upset stomach. As well as your GP, there are plenty of mental health charities on hand to support you if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

Take stock – The constant adjustments we have had to make to our lives in the last year have been really difficult. Be proud of what you, your family and friends have achieved over the last year and reflect on how well you have done.

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About the Author

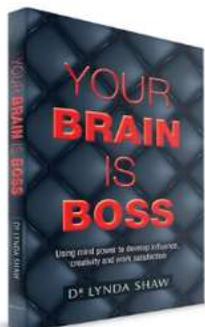
Dr Lynda Shaw is cognitive neuroscientist and chartered psychologist, a Forbes contributor, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a Fellow of the Professional Speakers Association. as well as an entrepreneur and author of adult and children's books.

Dr Shaw has lectured in Psychology and Neuroscience at various Universities in the UK and conducted research on brain function and impairment, specialising in consciousness, emotion and the effects of ageing. She was honoured to receive the Professional Speaking Award of Excellence in October 2017, it is the highest accolade for UK speakers given by their peers.

Co-ordinates

Email: lynda@drlyndashaw.com

Web: www.drlyndashaw.com



Peter Thomson

13 ways to increase sales and qualified leads



Looking for lead generation techniques that actually increase sales? My thirteen top tips will help you to generate lots of qualified leads by avoiding the common mistakes that many salespeople make.

Creating a Lead Generation System That Works

If you're a consultant, coach or the owner of a small business and you help your clients to:

- a) *Know precisely where they're heading in life*
- b) *Get motivated to achieve their goals*
- c) *Get clear on why they want what they say they want*
- d) *Understand the solutions to their problems*
- e) *Maximise the opportunities that come their way*

Then you'll want to create a lead generation system that delivers a stream of qualified leads into the top of your marketing funnel. Nothing is worse, as a self-employed person than a lack of leads. To increase sales, we need to avoid having meaningless conversations with people who wouldn't buy what we have to offer even if they did have the money. Providing our expertise for free (all of the time) is simply having a badly paid hobby.

Common Lead Generation Mistakes You Need to Avoid

Here are the mistakes most people make when trying to generate the "qualified" leads they need — and how you can generate many more leads for your business:

1. **Leaving it too long to follow up on leads.**
Once you receive a lead from any source, follow up on the same day. It's unusual that a person would even remember the web form they completed — especially if asked seven days later.
2. **Not having a systemised referral process.**
One of the best sources of qualified leads is current, satisfied clients. Create a script to ask for referrals and practise it. Ask your clients every quarter for more referrals.
3. **Failing to use a wide range of lead generation tools.**
Create a free report or guide or audio or video that you can offer to prospects to show you know what you're talking about. Give them a fabulous sample of what you know and invite them to enjoy a short complimentary session with you. Read my blog post about how to write a book for your business to help you with this further.

4. **Limiting your routes to market.**

Don't limit yourself to a single lead generation technique. Use multiple methods to increase sales and take many routes to market. Google ads. Facebook ads and posts. LinkedIn ads and posts.

There are so many different ways to contact potential customers and generate qualified leads in 2019. Test them to see which ones work best for you.

5. **Investing in poorly performing marketing initiatives.**

People respond differently to different offers. Try offering a range of useful and unique lead generation tools, such as a free instructional CD or audio download, access to a streaming video or webinar.

Let the market tell you what works. Perhaps offer the first three chapters of your latest book/booklet — free of charge.

6. **Not having a sign-up box on your homepage.**

So many websites have their free marketing offers and lead generation tools hidden away in the copy or worse still — not even on the homepage. Have your potential client details capture box and offer clearly visible the moment visitors land on your website.

7. **Failing to track click-throughs and conversions.**

Failing to track click-throughs and conversions leaves you in the dark about which lead generation activities are producing the best results. This can, therefore, lead to you spending money and time on poorly-performing sales and marketing techniques that you could otherwise have avoided.

8. **Not undertaking lead generation activities consistently.**

As a small-business owner, it's essential to undertake some lead generation and marketing activity almost every day.

So many coaches and consultants suffer from feast and famine because when they're providing their services, they're not also marketing.

9. **Wasting money on non-direct response marketing methods.**

Once your lead generation activities are generating a steady stream of qualified leads, it's time (possibly) to start doing PR or investing in other non-direct response methods. Not before!

10. **Failing to ask the same person twice.**

If you have an email list or have bought or rented an email list, it's always a good idea to send the same marketing email to the list twice. Some marketers claim that you can achieve half as many responses again from sending the second campaign as a follow-up.

11. **Not testing headlines.**

Successful businessmen such as Michael E Gerber (the author of *The E-myth Revisited*) and Ted Nicholas have stated that at least 75% of the buying decision is made at the headline.

Whether that's exactly accurate or not, it's still evident that the first words seen by a prospect will be the headline or subject line. Therefore it makes total sense to test different headlines and see which ones produce higher click-through rates and conversions.

12. **Failing to create timely and relevant content.**

Writing business blogs to boost website traffic? If you can link to what's happening in the news — provided it's not disasters — then this may well increase readership and subsequent click-throughs.

13. **Ignoring the power of endorsements.**

When I interviewed the famous marketer, Jay Abraham, I asked him which of his many strategies he would keep above all others.

His reply: Endorsed mailing!

When the list owner endorses your offer to their list, it's likely to have a higher click through and subsequent take-up rate.

When you have a systemised way of generating leads from a number of different sources and are successfully keeping track of all the tests you undertake — then you have given yourself the best possible chance to convert qualified leads into fee-paying clients or product-buying customers.

Wishing you every Success.

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About the Author

Peter Thomson is regarded as one of the UK's leading strategists on business and personal growth.

Starting in business in 1972 he built 3 successful companies — selling the last to a public company, after only 5 years trading, for £4.2M enabling him to retire at age 42.

Since that time Peter has concentrated on sharing his proven methods for business and personal success via audio and video programs, books, seminars and conference speeches. With over 100 audio and 100 video programs written and recorded he is Nightingale Conant's leading UK author.

Co-ordinates:

E-mail:

success@peterthomson.com

Web: <https://peterthomson.com/>

LinkedIn: [Peterthomson](#)





David Finkel

The single most powerful thought exercise you could do to get your company culture on the right track

As a business coach, I talk to thousands of business owners each year who are looking for guidance on how to shape their company culture for growth and independence. They understand the importance of company culture, but often struggle to shape it in a meaningful way that benefits both their company as a whole and their team members.

So, here I want to share with you the single most powerful thought exercise you could do to get your company culture on the right track.

Your Vision

Most business owners I speak with have at least an idea of what they want their company culture to look like. But very few take the time to sit down and get clear on the specifics. So the first thing that I recommend for all business owners, is to sit down for about an hour and write down what they want their company culture to look like. I suggest turning off your phone and email client, and really focusing on the bigger picture.

Here are a few questions that you will want to consider and put in writing:

- What values do you wish to make a priority in your business?
- How would these internalized values show up in their day-to-day behavior?
- What would an outside observer notice about the feel of your company while spending a day in your offices?
- How will you incorporate these values into your onboarding process?

- How will you incorporate these values into your existing processes and procedures?

Checking In

Once you have your vision down on paper, it's time to take a hard look at your current company culture and how it fits into that vision. This is one of the hardest things for a business owner to do, as there is often a disconnect in what they "want" and what is the actual reality.

If you were an outsider looking in, where would you notice the observed culture aligning, and not aligning with your desired culture?

How do you yourself, as a business owner, fit into the company culture?

Let's say that you want to encourage your employees to manage their own time and give them the ability to focus on the big picture items that fuel growth for your business. But you are constantly micro-managing their time making it almost impossible to set aside any focus time to work on large projects. Your actions are directly contradicting the company culture that you want to work towards. Or perhaps you, yourself struggle with setting aside focus time and rarely if ever make it a priority. Your actions are helping shape the way that your employees manage their time and energy.

Take this feedback and insight and use it to refine your written vision of your company's culture. Talk with your team about this vision. Get their thoughts and input and check in every quarter to see if anything has changed. This is a process that unfolds over several months, not a "sit down one time" event. But the effort is well worth it in the end.

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About the Author

David Finkel is co-author of, **SCALE: 7 Proven Principles to Grow Your Business and Get Your Life Back** (written with Priceline.com co-founder Jeff Hoffman), and one of the nation's most respected business thinkers. A *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week* bestselling author of 11 business books, David's weekly business owner e-letter is read by 100,000 business owners around the world. David is the CEO of **Maui Mastermind**, one of the nation's premier business coaching companies. Over the past 20 years, David and the other Maui coaches have personally scaled and sold over \$2 billion of businesses.

Co-ordinates

Web: www.MauiMastermind.com

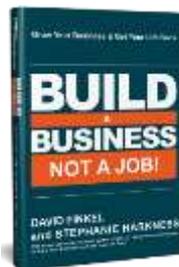
Email:

memberservices@mauimastermind.com

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- And much more ...



Tamara Ghandour

Burst of Innovation - get from obvious to innovative



When we talk about innovation, we tend to approach it as needing to get past the incremental and obvious ideas, and jumping right to innovative ideas. However, as much as you want to get to those big, revolutionary ideas, this technique often falls short.

Whether it's a breakthrough you and/or your team have been chasing for a while or an opportunity in the marketplace you want to capture, incremental ideas, solutions, and approaches aren't going to produce the results you need. You need something big and bold to move the needle. So you tell yourself and your team to avoid the obvious and the incremental and try to make a huge leap from the challenge you have in front of you to a revolutionary, innovative idea.

The thing is, this method often fails to produce innovative ideas. Why?

Why Bypassing Obvious Doesn't Work

Going from challenge to innovation is a massive leap, and it can be scary. There are two factors at play when we attempt to make a leap that big, and we need to overcome these before we can even think about getting from challenge to innovation.

Firstly, we have to overcome our lizard brain. This part of our brain

is trying to keep us and our minds efficient - it doesn't want us to expend energy. In order to do that, it blocks out anything it thinks is complex or challenging. In this case, asking your brain to get from Point A to Point Z without anything in between seems challenging to your lizard brain, and it automatically blocks it out. Your lizard brain is keeping you efficient, but that's not conducive to innovation.

Secondly, we have to get past the Reticular Activating System (RAS). What the RAS does, is it blocks out anything that is different from your internal beliefs. The RAS seeks to validate what you already know and believe, and to only let in new information that is congruent with your past experiences. Big breakthrough ideas that are unique, different and do not correspond to the existing set of beliefs are immediately rejected by the RAS and that's what stops us from being able to go immediately from the challenge to an innovative solution.

How to Use Obvious to Get to Innovative

It may seem counterintuitive to use the obvious ideas to get to the innovative ideas, but when faced with our lizard brain and the RAS that we need to overcome, this is a strategy that works.

What we need to do is to give people permission to explore obvious and incremental ideas. However, instead of stopping there, we need to take it a step (or a few steps) further, and use those obvious and incremental ideas as a springboard for bigger, bolder and more innovative ideas.

When we approach getting from challenge to innovation in this way, by allowing space for the obvious and incremental ideas to come through, we're getting past our lizard brain and the RAS. With incremental ideas, we trick these two "bodyguards" into letting in other, more innovative ideas.

Brainstorming off of the obvious and the incremental is how we can get to the innovative ideas. When we push our teams to leap across a chasm from challenge to innovative solution with no help or step in between, it shuts down their innovative mind. If we give them permission to go from the challenge to the obvious and incremental ideas first, they can then push forward step-by-step to get to the truly innovative and breakthrough ideas.

Bonus: "What do I do if the team thinks the incremental ideas are good enough?"

Incremental ideas may be good enough, depending on the problem that you are solving. The obvious

and incremental ideas can also be the source of a lot of brilliant innovation, and we shouldn't discount those tweaks and optimizations.

However, it's really about how we frame these incremental ideas when we're trying to get to the truly groundbreaking ideas. We as leaders need to validate the ideas and solutions that are already on the table, and recognize the effort and thinking of your team that helped them get there, and then encourage them to expand on those ideas.

So the next time you and your team are faced with a challenge and need to get to breakthrough innovative ideas, don't just throw the obvious and incremental ideas out the window. Use them as a starting point to brainstorm and expand off of - that's how we can get to the novel and fresh ideas that will help you move the needle and take your business where you need to go.

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About the Author

Tamara Ghandour is the President of LaunchStreet and the creator of the Innovation Quotient Edge assessment, the only tool that helps people discover how they innovate best and add value. When leaders and teams dealing with massively changing marketplaces like healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality and education need to up their ability to innovate, they call LaunchStreet. Organizations like Disney, Red Robin, Hilton and Arrow Electronics look to LaunchStreet to help them make innovation everybody's business. Tamara's business innovation podcast, Inside LaunchStreet is continually rated as a top business podcast across the globe.

Co-ordinates

Web: gotolaunchstreet.com

Email:

tamara@gotolaunchstreet.com

Listen to Tamara's interviews with top innovators on: [Inside LaunchStreet](#)



Sunil Bali

Refuse to drink Haterade



Relationships are like seat belts. If they don't click they won't help.

However, when it comes to our own mastery we need constructive feedback that shapes us forward.

The problem is that we sometimes give the wrong people permission to criticize us. Permission, which they haven't earned. This unwarranted verbal friction causes us to lose momentum.

In my experience of coaching business leaders, successful entrepreneurs tend to be independent of public opinion. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." So get rid of the psychic vampires, dream stealers and any toxic relationships that drain you of the vital energy you need to succeed.

Refuse to drink haterade.

Refuse to breathe in the noxious thoughts of those who belittle you.

Refuse to entertain those who have nothing good to say about you or where you're heading.

Accept the fact that for some to love you, some must loathe you. Remember that when it comes to relationships, it pays to be brave and put your mouth where your heart is.

As John Lennon said, "Telling the truth may not get you a lot of friends, but it will get you the right friends."

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About the Author

Sunil is a Performance Coach, Speaker and Author.

Ex Head of Talent for Vodafone Group and Santander, and having run a £50m business, Sunil has been responsible for hiring over 50000 people and has had the pleasure of working with some great entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders.

Moving minds - Transforming performance

Co-ordinates

E-mail: sunil@sunilbali.com

Web: www.sunilbali.com

LinkedIn: uk.linkedin.com/in/sunilbali



Paul Sloane

Harness the random with this method



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The use of chance is a key element in lateral thinking. How can you deliberately introduce chance into your creative thinking? The **Random Word method** is very good. Here is another brainstorm method for you to try – Roll the Dice.

It works well with groups of 4 to 6 people and is excellent for forcing unusual combinations of ideas and settings. If you have more people you can divide into competing teams in separate rooms. All the equipment needed is a flipchart and a dice.

You select a challenge and then identify three or four characteristics and list six choices for each. For example say you wanted to create a new TV drama you might choose the following parameters:

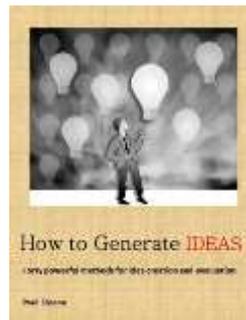
	Lead Character	Secondary Character	Crime	Location
1	Detective	Vagrant	Murder	Hospital
2	Politician	Postal worker	Robbery	School
3	Priest	Shop worker	Blackmail	TV station
4	Company CEO	Teenager	Kidnapping	Football Club
5	Doctor	Journalist	Fraud	Restaurant
6	Teacher	Window cleaner	Smuggling	Theatre

You then roll the dice four times. Say you roll 4, 4, 2, 6 the team has to conceive and design a plan for a TV program about a CEO and a teenager who get involved in a robbery at a theatre. You could spin a coin to determine the genders of the two main characters.

The team spends 10 minutes discussing how this could work. They might then roll the dice again to get another combination and see what they can make of it. There are 1296 different possible combinations! After three or four goes they select the most promising idea, put together a plan and present it to the other teams and the moderator.

I have found that this method can work well for new product, service and marketing initiatives. It is quite remarkable how combinations that initially look unattractive can be molded into interesting propositions.

Taken from the e-book, How to Generate Ideas



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About the Author

Paul Sloane is an author and expert on lateral thinking in business. He has delivered hundreds of talks to executive audiences around the world. His talks are different because they challenge your thinking head-on. He is a skilled facilitator and course leader who helps top level teams achieve breakthrough results in their meetings. He helps companies overcome the problems they have making innovation happen. He can improve creativity and lateral thinking for leaders with leadership and innovation master classes. This results in a more agile culture, more ideas and successful innovation.

Co-ordinates

Web: www.destination-innovation.com
 E-mail: psloane@destination-innovation.com
 Twitter: [@paulsloane](https://twitter.com/paulsloane)
 Facebook: [Facebook page](#)





Debra Murphy

10 practical content marketing tips for small businesses

Content has become a big part of every small business marketing plan. Most online marketing strategies rely on content because without content there is nothing to optimise for search or share for visibility. Below, there are 10 useful tips to help you get started with content marketing.

What is content marketing?

Content marketing is a marketing strategy that focuses on the creation and promotion of quality content for your particular target audience. The key is to create content that your audience needs so that the content is found when they search to solve a particular problem. When you consistently deliver valuable and relevant content, you educate rather than sell your products and services and your audience will be more inclined to seek you out when they need help.

We know that creating quality content can help your business differentiate itself, showing people your expertise and personality. But many small businesses have trouble planning and delivering on a content marketing strategy. Although there are substantial benefits to implementing content marketing, we recognize that there are many challenges as well. Overcome the challenges and realize the benefits with these content marketing tips.

Practical content marketing tips

1. Quality over quantity

Businesses are producing a huge amount of content. For you to get attention in a very noisy and crowded market means you need

to stand out. Publish only the best content you can create.

Many of us don't have a lot of time to create content. When we do, we need to do our best work. It is far better to produce one highly researched and well written piece of content per month than posting more low quality articles. How often you post new content will be based on your available resources.

2. All content is strategic

Given that most of us don't have the time to write just because we love it, we need to take an approach that all content needs to be strategic. We need to research the important search terms that we want to gain high rankings for and plan content accordingly.

Run an SEO report on your website to see how your website ranks for your top keywords. If there are important keywords where you aren't ranking in the top 10, create content for those keywords. And look for questions people ask when they search. Those questions make a great topic for a piece of content.

3. Create a content plan and calendar

You will be far more successful with your content marketing strategy if you create a simple plan and content calendar. Marketers who document their strategy are 313% more likely to report success than those who don't.

Your content plan is the high level strategy that shapes your content. Your plan should include the following:

- Audience you are writing for and what they need

- Types of content you will create
- What categories you are going to write about
- How often you will create new content
- Where you will distribute and promote the content
- What content will be cornerstone or evergreen so that it is timeless

Your content calendar can be simple and contain a list of topics and dates to publish. Or it can provide monthly themes, topics and what type of media you plan to use. If you have been publishing content, you should do a content audit first so you can determine what needs to be replaced, updated or eliminated.

4. Mix up your media and vary your content types

If you like to write, great. Create blog posts with great visuals and share them on your social platforms. Many small business owners would rather not write, so record your thoughts and have a writer use the audio to create a post.

Or create videos or a podcast. The episodes don't need to be long, just make them educational. And when you create a great piece of content, repurpose it into different content types and share on different platforms.

Determine what your audience needs and deliver it in the format that makes the most sense. Consider creating a:

- *How to blog* post to educate your audience on a specific topic

- Step by step guide that helps your customer solve a particular problem
- Quiz or assessment that helps your audience identify their challenge that you can solve
- Podcast where you interview experts in complementary industries
- Video demonstration of how your product works or how you can fix something

A variety of content delivered on different media types keep people interested in what you have to say. By choosing the right piece of content for the problem you are helping to solve, you will connect with people who need what you have to offer.

5. Tell stories

People love stories. The way you tell them can affect people differently depending on their situation. We're not talking about fictitious stories however. If you are a veteran in your industry, you have a lot of experiences that can help others. Attorneys, CPAs, financial planners can turn education into interesting stories. They can take the form of case studies showing how you helped a client resolve a problem.

Stories can make an emotional connection, build trust or provide a motivation to do something. Talk about why you chose a certain solution and how it helped resolve a customer's problem.

6. Include calls to action (CTA)

People need to be encouraged to take action. A call to action is active copy that elicits an immediate response. You are inviting them to do something. It could be watch a video, sign up for your email list, learn more about your services or download a useful piece of content.

CTAs are used in all aspects of marketing and will vary based on your industry. Don't include just any call to action. Make sure you try to match your CTA to what the content is about so there isn't a disconnect. For example, if you are writing about how to see if you have roof damage after a hail storm, make your call to action an

offer to do a free inspection on your roof.

7. Don't forget about email

It's not all about social media distribution. Build an email list and regularly share content with your subscribers. A quality email list enables you to reach interested subscribers on your terms. If they have joined your mailing list, this audience is far more interested in your business than those who might see a post on social media.

Create a customer email list and share content that will help them. Don't let your customers forget about you. Sending them a regular newsletter with helpful tips and special offers will keep your business visible. And depending on your business, these offers will encourage customers to purchase more.

8. Pay attention to visuals and formatting

If you are writing content, visuals and formatting are important for readability. A wall of text in small font sizes is not inviting. People want to scan your content quickly to see if they are interested in the topic. In addition, people are visual creatures. Images, graphics and videos can break up the text to make it easier for people to consume.

Make sure you incorporate white space in your content. Larger fonts, using ordered lists, breaking up paragraphs and adding images and videos to your content makes for a better user experience.

9. Promote your content

If you write a great blog post but nobody sees it, what's the point? Put all of your valuable content on your website and then promote and share it so that it gets the attention it deserves.

Share your content on the right social media channels for your business including Google My Business. Email your content to your subscribers. And see if you can find a place to syndicate your content for a broader reach.

10. Get help

Be realistic in how much time you can spend on content marketing

based on your resources. If creating content isn't your strength, consider outsourcing to someone who can produce the content and distribute it for you. Oversee the process so what is being created aligns with your vision and beliefs. You could also find a marketing agency that specializes in inbound marketing, helping you incorporate content marketing in with search and social.

All businesses have plenty of content to share, but many just don't realize that what they know or do is valuable. Understand what your potential customers want and in what format and share your knowledge. Take advantage of these content marketing tips and invest now in your content marketing strategy.

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About the Author

Debra is a marketing coach and mentor passionate about helping small business owners take control of a critical business asset – their online digital footprint – and use it to increase visibility and generate inbound leads. Through expert guidance and support, they achieve success by learning, incorporating and executing marketing activities that take their business from mediocre to marvellous.

Although experienced across all traditional marketing channels, Debra specializes in inbound marketing, a combination of search, social media and content marketing, enabling small businesses to create a larger digital footprint that increases their visibility and generates more quality inbound leads.

Co-ordinates

Web: <http://masterful-marketing.com/>

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

LinkedIn:

[linkedin.com/in/debramurphy](https://www.linkedin.com/in/debramurphy)

Facebook:

[facebook.com/MasterfulMarketing](https://www.facebook.com/MasterfulMarketing)



Justin Bariso

Feeling Stressed or Overwhelmed? Try the Help-First Rule

The help-first rule may seem counterintuitive-but it has the power to change everyone's perspective.



It was not a good day.

I woke up behind schedule. I had to finish writing an article. I was scheduled to give a presentation later that day, and that wasn't finished, either.

And then, things really went downhill.

I came out of the office to see my wife at her limit. Our three kids are all over the place, and she's on the brink of tears.

What would I do?

I did exactly the wrong thing. I got frustrated with the situation. Already feeling overwhelmed myself, I just gave into those feelings. The next thing you know, I was yelling at the kids, making everything worse. Of course, that just put me more behind on my work, and sent the entire day down the tubes.

Too late to save that day, but it led to a light bulb moment.

I can't do this again, I thought. A few months later, I was in a similar situation. But this time, once I see my wife starting to reach her breaking point, I pause. I take a deep breath, and then I say two simple words:

Help first.

Suddenly, my perspective changes.

Instead of focusing on me, I'm focused on my wife. I'm like a paramedic on the scene: My job is to get my wife to safety, before she breaks.

So, I set up the kids with something to do. I give them something to eat. I clean up a little bit, and give my wife a hug.

Then, I ask if I can do anything else.

This time, things are much different: My wife isn't crying, she's smiling. No longer overwhelmed, she remembers what a huge day I have, and she becomes super supportive. Feeling that support, I'm energised - and I get through my work with a smile on my face.

Much better, right?

That's the power of the help-first rule.

The help-first rule

The help-first rule is simple: If you're in a difficult situation, and you notice someone else is too, try helping first.

The help-first rule may seem counterintuitive. After all, when we're facing a difficult situation,

our default tendency is to focus on ourselves. So when we encounter someone else who's struggling, we might just think:

Sorry. Wish I could help. But I've got my own dumpster fire over here.

In contrast, when you help first, you take advantage of the power of empathy.

When a home or workplace lacks empathy, the bad days usually multiply. Because if one person is having a bad day, everyone suffers. You end up with an environment that's (collectively) full of bad days.

But when one person follows the help-first rule, others usually follow. Now, you're building a culture based on trust and teamwork.

And when you have a team, you combine strengths. You pool resources. You create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

So, take a moment to look around.

Do you see:

A colleague who's struggling with a situation that seems to pale in comparison to yours?

Help first.

A client who thinks they've got it worse than you, when they don't know the half of it?

Help first.

A vendor who won't stop complaining about the same problem, even though it's really not a big deal?

Help first.

A service employee who's having a bad day, just like you?

Help first.

A family member who doesn't seem to get how tough your situation is?

Help first.

By helping first, you break the cycle of misunderstanding. You defy expectations, and overdeliver. You feel better about yourself, and you get others to feel better about themselves-and better about you.

Finally, by helping first, you inspire others to help you, too-usually when you need it the most.

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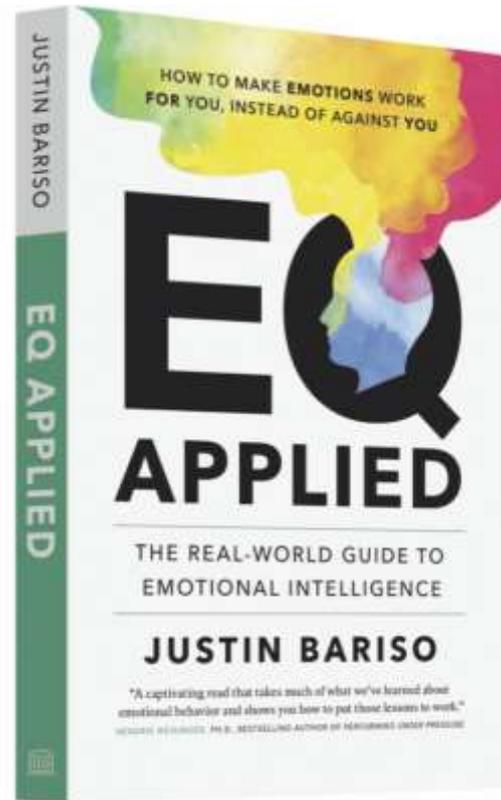
About the Author

Justin Bariso is an author and consultant who helps organizations think differently and communicate with impact. In 2016, LinkedIn named him the "Top Voice" in "Management and Culture." His forthcoming book, *EQ, Applied*, shares fascinating research, modern examples, and personal stories that illustrate how emotional intelligence works in the real world.

Co-ordinates

Web: www.eqapplied.com/

Twitter: twitter.com/JustinJBariso



EQ, APPLIED :

The Real-World Guide to Emotional Intelligence, uses fascinating research, modern examples, and personal stories to illustrate how emotional intelligence works in the real world--and provides a practical set of tools that help you make emotions work for you, instead of against you.

You'll learn how to:

- Transform your strongest emotions from a destructive force to a power for good
- Use knowledge about the brain and the way it works to help shape your emotional habits
- Get the most out of the feedback you receive—whether positive or negative
- Deliver feedback in a way that others are likely to benefit from
- Use empathy to help you (and keep it from hurting you)
- Cultivate and maintain deeper, more meaningful relationships
- Protect yourself from those who want to use the principles of influence to harm or manipulate you and others

Authentic. Balanced. Practical: **EQ APPLIED** is the real-world approach to emotional intelligence you've been searching for.

Mindy Gibbins-Klein

7 ways to find your purpose



Finding your purpose has become an important, almost trendy, thing to do. The pressure is immense, to find your purpose, your reason why. Purpose has become a kind of holy grail, and many people feel like failures if they don't know theirs or can't articulate it, which is sad. Of course, it is really enriching to lead a life with purpose and know you are on the right track and. But how do you find this elusive purpose?

There are some great ways to explore this area, and here are seven ideas you can consider, starting now.

1. Start with what you don't like. This may sound strange, but we all have a sense of what we want to move away from, and this can give us energy and clarity. Just think of the last job or project you hated, or a commitment you made that you later regretted. You will be able to spot a pattern and hopefully learn something from it. Pay attention to any emotions that come up, especially the strong ones.

2. Notice when you lose track of time. When we do things that are fulfilling, we can lose ourselves in the moment. I've been known to lose hours reading, writing and planning exciting adventures. Those things are all part of my purpose. What are the activities that get you so

immersed you forget to eat or get dressed? Imagine if you could do more of what you love, what makes your heart sing... you can!

3. Feel it in your body. Gut feel is real. If you have a gut feel about what you should or shouldn't be doing with your career and your life, consider what that is telling you. When you think back to a project or job that you absolutely loved, can you recall the positive feelings? There's probably a way for you to find that feeling again, by doing that kind of work again.

4. Watch for dreams or goals that simply won't go away. You know, those dreams you have had for several years, perhaps most of your life? They keep showing up on New Year's resolution lists and bucket lists. You keep talking about them to friends. There could be a reason why you are being pulled towards these visions. It may just be habit (you put it on your list at some point or you feel you *should* achieve that goal) but it may be a sign that your purpose is speaking to you!

5. Find a cause. Many people, when working on or towards something bigger than themselves, feel a strong sense of purpose. You don't need to create your own project or start your own business or charity to add your bit to an important cause. You can join someone else's project or

organisation, be part of something and make a great contribution. Too many people think they have to create something big from scratch, and that is too daunting to even start, so they don't do anything.

6. It's OK not to know. After all of these tips, I'm actually saying that if you don't know or can't identify your purpose, it's not the end of the world! As I said right at the start, there's a kind of expectation that we should all have this grand purpose and have our hearts set on changing the world. Let's take away that pressure, OK? You are already changing the world in many ways. Reflect on the people whose lives you touch, and the good work you do every day.

7. Do something. If you have an idea about how you should be spending your time more purposefully, do at least one thing to take you closer to that vision. Scary? That's fine. Do it anyway. Everything you do for the first time is, by definition, something you have never done before. When my first book was being written and published, I was so worried and fearful. It seemed like the biggest monster in the world was standing in front of me, just waiting for me to make a mistake. The truth is, the bigger the goal or purpose, the bigger the risk. However, the biggest risk of all is not getting to do what you were put on this earth to do, not

becoming the person you are meant to be.

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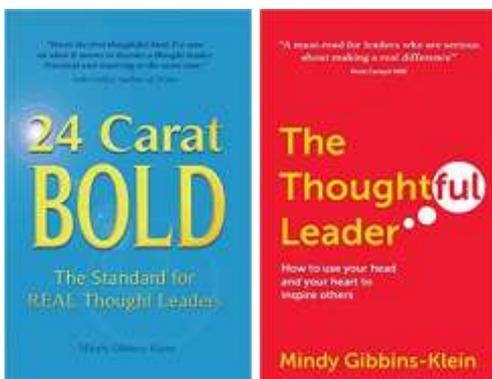
About the Author

Mindy Gibbins-Klein, better known as The Book Midwife®, has helped hundreds of experts get their message out into the market by writing and publishing the best possible books, ebooks and articles, and through delivering high impact, relevant presentations and key note speeches. An MBA graduate in International Business, she established The Book Midwife® in 2001 so that she could fulfil her lifelong dream to provide personal and professional development services. A native New Yorker currently living in the UK, Mindy has also found time to author and co-author nine books and over 100 articles, including 24-Carat Bold: The Standard for REAL Thought Leaders and The Thoughtful Leader.

Some of Mindy's career highlights to date... International speaker, trainer, coach & consultant, Multi-Award-Winning Entrepreneur, Managing Director of two profitable companies.

Co-ordinates

Email: info@bookmidwife.com
International Speaker and Thought Leadership Coach: www.mindygk.com
Founder of The Book Midwife:
www.bookmidwife.com
and Panoma Press:
www.panomapress.com
Twitter: [bookmidwife](https://twitter.com/bookmidwife)



Virtual comms can be very dry

(Or as someone recently described them to me – “an unending morass of tedious rubbish”).

One reason for this is that face-to-face is more intimate.

And people aren't working hard enough to replace this lost intimacy.

The solution?

Work hard to replace the intimacy!

For example:

- **Swap slides for questions.** Instead of spending ages creating slides that guarantee only you talk – instead prepare great questions, to ensure *they* talk
- **More often; shorter length.** Replace the weekly one-hour meeting with two half-weekly, 30-minute ones
- **Small talk.** Discuss things that aren't work – family, hobbies, sport... anything
- **Find the fun.** Before every meeting, one of my customers Googles the meeting's topic, plus the word “funny”. They then choose a funny comment, joke, quotation or image, and mention it in the meeting

To be honest, I miss some of the things we all used to do.

But I also miss the excitement of believing in Father Christmas.

But things are different now.

Andy Bounds

Small talk. Soft skills. Subtlety.

And it's up to all of us to help each other – and ourselves – enjoy things as much as we did.

Are you doing your bit?

Action Point

Add more fun to your – and others' – day.

This will help: it's my short video showing how to be more interesting.

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About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success. Marketing legend Drayton Bird said Andy had taught him ‘... more about effective communicating than a lady who'd taught two American Presidents’.

Are you following me on twitter?

To receive my weekly tips on how to communicate more effectively, [click here](#)

Short of time? Here are my [Quick Wins](#)

Co-ordinates

E-mail: andy@andybounds.com
Web: www.andybounds.com/tips



Thom Dennis

How to stop tokenism & break the stigma of disability in the workforce



Approximately 15% of the world's population live with some form of disability but only 2-4% have disabilities which cause significant difficulties functioning, yet disabled people are over a third less likely to be employed than non-disabled people. It's probable this will have multiplied as a result of the pandemic, directly contributing further to the likelihood of lower income, fewer career opportunities and increased isolation.

Thom Dennis, CEO of Serenity in Leadership argues that disability is one of the greatest challenges around Diversity and Inclusion because fear and misunderstanding is leading the disabled to be ignored, misunderstood, over-looked, and left unemployed or under-employed; but ultimately businesses are also losing out.

Businesses are missing opportunities to be ethical, open and inclusive and have access to some serious talent; something that interestingly millennials are more mindful of. The reality is that the more inclusive and diverse teams are, the more creative and productive a business is likely to be. The additional life experiences disabled people bring often means they are extremely resilient, good at looking at different ways of doing things, good communicators, and

problem solvers. They are also more likely to be loyal to a business that appreciates their talent and stay for longer in their job. Disabled people are more often than not an incredible asset.

ARE WE FRIGHTENED OF DISABILITY?

We are herd and social animals and naturally congregate around what is similar or familiar to us because over centuries we learnt that 'others' so often constitute a threat. This is one of the great challenges around Diversity and Inclusion as we are going up against deeply seated conditioning which causes unconscious drivers – we are less prone to liking those who look and act differently to us.

Taking the fear out of disability involves reducing the stigmas and lack of experience around it according to Jane Hatton, CEO of Evenbreak, the UK's most accessible job board: "We worry we might get it wrong and offend someone when we try to be inclusive. The onus then falls on the disabled person to make it easier for the non-disabled person and we spend a lot of time reassuring rather than relaxing into work relationships."

Misinformation also means disabled people are often thought of as risky, unproductive, unreliable, time-consuming, expensive, tricky, unskilled, unambitious, off sick a lot and a

health and safety risk. Will it be hard and a bit awkward to talk about our needs? Is it all too much hassle for the business and would an able-bodied person just be easier? How will the non-disabled workers know when to help and when not to? It's the elephant in the room.

The more disabled you are, the harder it is to be accepted. Ironically on the other hand sometimes we are seen as not disabled enough to get support, but too disabled to be employed. The long-term impact of this prejudice and fear is that businesses are failing to utilise the talents of disabled people and they in turn don't get employment opportunities, suffer from poverty and are very isolated.

CHANGING THE WAY WE VIEW DISABILITY

Thom Dennis says: "The way we see disability is complex and the questions that need addressing are endless. Are we disabled because we are different? Are we disabled by the steps that block the wheelchair for example, if a ramp would in fact enable us to reach the same place? Does that therefore mean we are impaired rather than disabled and actually just need to be empowered or enabled? Why do we feel disabled people need fixing? Do we actually want perfect looking clones? Why do we assume if you are disabled you are disabled in every way from physically, mentally to

emotionally? It is important to note that the more disabled you appear the more assumptions society makes. And what of those whose disability is invisible? In fact we are disabled by society and people's lack of education and experience, and their fear, and the only way to fix that is through education towards inclusion."

Jane Hatton agrees: "We are all ever changing and many of us at some time in our lives will acquire a disability as we age so is that the point that inclusion starts to matter to us?"

WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO REDUCE THE STIGMA AROUND DISABILITY AT WORK? By Thom Dennis, CEO at Serenity In Leadership and Jane Hatton, CEO of Evenbreak.

1. **Change the narrative.** Most people perceive disability as a 'tragedy' and that we should feel sorry for someone who is disabled. Disabled people are not objects of pity, frightening and helpless, but potentially resourceful and skilled people who have different challenges to other people.
2. **Educate, educate, educate.** Most misconceptions are built on myths and inaccurate presuppositions and lack of experience or willing. Replace myths with the facts and encourage warm inquisition.
3. **Open communication.** Disabled people are often happy to be asked questions and are appreciative of others taking an interest in their story. Likewise, if you want to help a disabled person, ask them what they need. Make it ordinary conversation. Replace fear with curiosity and understanding until there is no need for further questions and the disability just isn't 'a thing' anymore.
4. **Be inclusive.** Not having disabled people as part of a diverse workforce means there is a strong danger of lack of innovation and creativity. Instead the group may develop the same mindset and goals, and simply agree with each other, rather than stretch the possibilities in thinking. Break down the barriers.
5. **Remove the fear and stigma.** We are all different and difference is to be celebrated. That makes us interesting. See the fear, feel the fear, and work through it instead of projecting it onto someone else.
6. **Avoid tokenism at all costs.** Disabled people don't need charity and they certainly don't want to be the token disabled person in the workplace when they are as talented as the next person.
7. **Designing inclusion from the beginning is easier than retro fitting it.** Don't allow disability to be something you have ticked a box for. Design for inclusion from the outset.
8. **Collaborate with disabled people.** Invest in their good advice for meaningful input and to avoid tokenism. Don't second guess what disabled people need. Disabled people are crucial in educating about disability – ask them.
9. **Leaders must model positive behaviour.** People emulate the behaviours of those they admire so leaders need to model by encouraging open, inclusive and curious behaviour. This makes them an ally and a part of the legacy of enabling, not disabling.
10. **Recognise disabled candidates are premium candidates** because they are often extremely resilient, good communicators, loyal to a business that treats them well and excellent problem solvers. They've had plenty of practice!
11. **Stop disabled people from limiting their own expectations.** Giving equal opportunities to disabled individuals will directly lead to greater quality of life and control over their own lives. Offer opportunities to reach for the sky.
12. **Just care a little more about people.** Put yourself in someone else's shoes for a moment and consider how you would you feel if people were clearly embarrassed or awkward around you, if you were segregated and isolated, or if society told you it would be better if you were someone else. Being aware of how we are behaving and how it can make others feel can have a monumental impact on each other's self-esteem and confidence. It's time to take the fear out of disability.

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About the Author

Thom Dennis is CEO of Serenity in Leadership. He is a facilitator, speaker, consultant, change agent and educator. For the last 29 years, he has led companies dedicated to coaching executives and teams through personal and organisational change, defining strategy, working through M&As and improving communication.

With Serenity in Leadership, Thom is focusing his depth and breadth of experience to help organisations move into the 20s and all the changes that are developing. He is intent on resolving issues of inclusion to help people whoever they are, whatever background they have come from, shine and thrive, and their organisations with them.

Co-ordinates

Web:

www.serenityinleadership.com

Email:

serenity@serenityinleadership.com





Amy Vetter

3 ways to combat workplace stress and anxiety

In the past year, our **workspaces** have changed a lot. Many of you have gone from having a dedicated office to working entirely remotely to switching back and forth in a **hybrid** model. No matter where you do your work, though, a lot of the stresses are the same. Deadlines, high-pressure clients, and complicated tasks are perpetual concerns—so you need skills and techniques to manage stress and anxiety that are effective no matter where and how you work.

Luckily, managing stress doesn't require enterprise-level internet speeds or a private garden in your backyard. In fact, you don't even need a backyard. What you do need, however, is the tools to identify and alleviate a particular kind of worry. Stress comes in countless forms: short and long term, small and large scale, etc. There's no single cure-all I can prescribe that will make your work life a breeze. Instead, I can offer a suite of tools that will help in various situations and help you find balance at the times you need it most.

In the Moment: Controlled Breathing. Everyone knows what it's like to feel completely overwhelmed in a situation. Maybe you've just received bad news or you have to think on your feet to solve a problem quickly. Whatever the case, these experiences only go worse when you're not able to get a hold of yourself in the middle of a storm. Often, the best remedy is to take a second to slow things down and gain perspective. This process is often referred to as "taking a breather," and that's exactly what you should do. More specifically, you should consider practicing controlled breathing.

"Take a deep breath, expanding your belly. Pause. Exhale slowly to the count of five. Repeat four times," writes Lesley Alderman. "Congratulations. You've just calmed your nervous system." The beauty of controlled breathing is that it requires no equipment and almost no time, making it perfect for spur-of-the-moment stress that you can't plan or prepare for. The next time you find yourself in a foggy or frenzied mindstate, just remember to take a controlled breather.

Day-to-day: Good Habits and Mindfulness Apps. In addition to alleviating stress as it arises, it's good to engage in behaviors that provide the foundation for mental clarity and emotional control. Practices like eating well, getting a regular eight hours of sleep, and engaging in regular exercise aren't just valuable in and of themselves; they also help you perform better at work. When we're frazzled, it's all too easy to cut corners when it comes to our wellness, but doing that only makes matters worse. It's important to maintain healthy habits even and maybe even especially when you're stressed.

Beyond regular strong habits, I recommend adding some **mindfulness apps** to your routine. Platforms like Calm and Headspace allow users to get the benefits of a clear head in a way that suits the modern business environment. Through guided meditations on your phone, you can find time to treat your psyche the same way that a good meal and a sound night's sleep treat your body.

Always: Keeping an Open Mind. It may seem simple, but I can't stress enough how crucial it is to be open and amenable to change in order to keep from feeling under constant stress. If you are unwilling to deal with any variation from the norm, you put

yourself in a losing position from the start. Those who are open to change are less likely to find triggers for stress, as well as being less able to cope with it. As the past year has shown, anything and everything about our lives are subject to change at the drop of a hat. Unless you're able to reckon with that fact, you're going to struggle to find any sense of tranquility.

Whether we're talking about our personal or professional lives, or about the ways those two intersect, all of us have to deal with stress. What matters is *how* we deal with that stress. It's not always easy but knowing how to manage feelings of frustration, anger, anxiety, and all the other emotions we associate with extra pressure can make the difference between a few seconds of panic and a week or more of misery.

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About the Author

Amy Vetter is an accomplished entrepreneur, business executive, national speaker, CPA, and yoga practitioner. She is also the author of *Business, Balance & Bliss: How the B³ Method Can Transform Your Career and Life* available in June 2017. As a third-generation woman entrepreneur, Amy has launched and sold multiple businesses including yoga studios, an accounting practice, and other business ventures. Amy has also held corporate leadership roles overseeing customer, sales, education, and marketing functions. Throughout her 20-plus years in business, Amy has learned valuable insights on how to achieve work-life harmony and live a more purposeful life.

Co-ordinates

Email: INFO@AMYVETTER.COM
Web: www.amyvetter.com/



Jeff Haden

The only sure way to become successful: Do the thing no one else will. Lasting success is often built on the humblest of beginnings.



For a moment, a question I was asked during a Q & A with several thousand college students stumped me: *"If you can only give one piece of advice about how we can become successful, what would it be?"*

I thought for a moment. Being **likable** matters. Being an "and"-**always trying to be this and that and maybe even this** (whatever your chosen *this* and *that* may be)-can be key to long-term success and fulfillment. Having **one or two close friends is better** than collecting thousands of virtual connections.

Still, it's a hard question to answer. Everyone is different. Generalizing is tough.

Then I remembered my grandfather.

One day, when I was 10 or 12 years old, I helped my grandfather muck out a few long-neglected horse stalls. Think multiple layers of fun and the ammonia-like smell that results from time and biological decay.

Even then I knew my grandfather lived a hard life. So I tried to tough it out and stay quiet. Eventually though, I caved.

"Ugh," I groaned, turning my head away in disgust.

He stopped and leaned on his shovel.

"That smell?" he said. "That's the smell of job security, boy." Then he nodded and started shoveling again.

I did too. Experience had taught me that watching him work Instead of pitching in would mean watching him eat dessert I would not be offered.

Some years later, I understood. Other people may be smarter. More experienced. More connected. More *something*.

You may feel like you have nothing going for you.

But what you can always do is what others will not.

Walmart founder **Sam Walton** was willing to open department stores in small towns established retailers would never consider. **Michael Ovitiz was willing to stay at his desk** until 10 at night so he would be the only person the president of William Morris could turn to for help. **Kobe Bryant** was willing to make-not take, *make*-100,000 shots one summer to correct a flaw in his shooting technique. (And that was after he had already made the NBA All-Star team.)

Want to build a business? Be willing to do a few things your competition will not. Want to build a career? Be willing to do a few things the people you work with will not.

Scratch the surface of any extremely successful person and you'll likely find someone who was-and most likely still is-willing to do what others will not.

Because that's the one competitive advantage available to everyone.

Especially you.

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About the Author

Jeff Haden is a ghostwriter, speaker, LinkedIn Influencer and Inc. magazine contributing editor. In 2020, his online articles for Inc. alone attracted more than 30 million readers. He has ghostwritten a number of bestselling books and even more articles, presentations, scripts, reports... and even one eulogy.

Co-ordinates

Web: www.jeffhaden.com

LinkedIn:

[linkedin.com/in/hadenjeff](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hadenjeff)

Twitter: twitter.com/jeff_haden



Pete Foley

Zoom fatigue and creativity



If you want to be innovative and creative, being well rested isn't a luxury, it's essential. And I mean really *well* rested. It doesn't take a scientific study to know that someone who is exhausted is probably not at his or her creative best. But there is compelling data that shows creativity and decision making suffers before we are even aware of fatigue, and long, long before we get to the exhausted stage.

Fatigue and Covid19.

Covid19 has of course impacted every aspect of life. One of the less discussed aspects is growing evidence that the crisis may be making many of us less well rested, and so may ultimately be impacting our creativity, both as individuals, but also across organizations. One size certainly doesn't fit all: Some people may be benefitting from work from home, while others struggle to juggle work and home schooling kids. Many are stressed and sleep deprived simply by the disruption of their normal life, or the fear of the disease itself. These are all part of our Covid19 narrative, but Zoom fatigue may be a surprising, and less discussed drain on our creativity.

Fatigue, Creativity and Decision Making:

Before I get into that, why is being rested so important for creativity? In some ways, this is counter intuitive. Many successful innovators seem to thrive on

stress and deadlines, and the executive who only sleeps a few hours a night is often lauded as an example of dedication. But there is growing evidence that a rested mind is more likely to make better, and more creative decisions. A recent study published in the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience by Fang et al (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27626227>) suggests that *fluid intelligence*, or the ability to connect dots and identify patterns suffers even when we are slightly sleep deprived or tired. This is crucial, as the ability to connect dots, spot patterns, and make surprising, yet useful connections lies at the heart of innovative thinking. So any drop in fluid intelligence should be concerning for an innovator. A second, classic Behavioral Economics study, published in the Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences by Danziger et al (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3084045/>), describes an effect called decision fatigue, sometimes called ego depletion.

The study followed eight Israeli judges as they ruled on over 1,000 parole applications. It discovered that at the start of the day, the judges made better, more balanced decisions than they did at the end of the day, when they were tired. Later in the day they reverted to safe, default decisions that reduced risk, but at the cost of optimal outcomes. Safe, default decisions are of course, not



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conductive to innovation and creativity. It's perhaps not altogether surprising that tired people make poorer decisions, but the difference in the quality of the decisions was dramatic, and the judges were oblivious to the change in their decision making ability. I've discussed both of these studies in more detail in this article

<https://www.disruptorleague.com/blog/2018/01/16/fluid-intelligence-are-you-getting-enough-sleep-to-innovate/>, but I revisit them here because there is such a close, and somewhat unintuitive relationship between quality of creative thinking, and even slight levels of largely unconscious fatigue.

Zoom Fatigue:

That brings me to Zoom, and video conferences. Do you feel exhausted after a day of back to back Zoom meetings?

Many people do, and as we look at the behavioral and perceptual changes forced on us by video-conferences, it appears there are a number of reasons why. The short version is that we've evolved to interact with people face to face, not via a computer monitor. The subtle changes we have to make to adapt to communicating via video-conference increase cognitive load, which can in turn

significantly increase fatigue levels. Probably not a huge deal over a single call, but for those who find themselves on multiple calls a day, or worse, back to back calls, the fatigue likely adds up, and probably has an impact, even if we are not aware of it. Some of the specific effects include:

- Eye gaze, we stare at people for up to 8 times longer in a video-conference than we do in a physical face to face meeting. This increases cognitive load.
- Size matters. Unless we have massive monitors, people are smaller in a video-conference, and so it requires more concentration to attend to them, and read expressions, or even lips, which we use unconsciously to clarify words. The latter can add particularly high cognitive load for non native speakers, or when listening to people with strong or unfamiliar accents.
- Non verbal cues. A huge amount of human communication is non-verbal, whether it is facial micro expressions, body language, pupil dilation, eye gaze or vocal tone. These are harder, or sometimes impossible to discern via video, forcing us to concentrate more, both in order to read cues such as facial micro expressions, and to fully understand subtleties of intent and meaning.
- Reduced mobility. In face-to-face meetings we are able to move more. We stretch, maybe pace, grab a coffee, etc. In video calls, people tend to move less, removing a key, largely unconscious relaxation mechanism.
- The mirror effect. We are often forced to look at ourselves when we talk during a video-conference. This forces us to monitor our body language, actions, and behavior as we talk. This mirror effect means we may end up with better posture,

or less quirky mannerisms than we have during face-to-face meetings, but it comes at the cost of increased cognitive load.

These are discussed in more detail in this article:

<https://tmb.apaopen.org/pub/nonverbal-overload/release/1>

What can we do?

Zoom calls are a necessary reality in our Covid19 world, but there are things we can do to reduce their negative impact. Take breaks between calls, avoid Zoom marathons, talk to real people in between Zoom calls if possible to reset our behaviors. Consider if we can use a phone instead? We all miss physical interactions, and it's nice to see people. But Zoom has become a default, and is not always necessary, especially when dealing with people we know well.

The post-Covid19 World:

As Covid19 recedes, there will be much discussion around the 'post-Covid' work environment. Video conferencing, working from home, and more flexible working are undoubtedly here to stay, at least to some degree. We've learnt useful new ways to work, and there are clear benefits that accrue from avoiding time wasting commutes.

But there are also a lot of largely intangible benefits that we derive from human interaction that are lost in remote working. Empathy, team building, and the role of serendipitous information sharing in innovation are some that are often discussed. But it appears that individual personal creativity may be another casualty of too much remote, Zoom-based work. As we strive to find new normal's, and benefit from new skills, and new habits that have evolved from Covid19, there are going to be hard to measure factors, such as individual creativity, that we'll also need to factor in as we try to optimise our inevitably changed work practices.

This article originally appeared on LinkedIn: [Zoom Fatigue and Creativity | LinkedIn](#)

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About the Author

Pete Foley is a Behavioural Science and Innovation Consultant who specializes in applying Psychology, Behavioural Economics and Perceptual Science to deliver innovative solutions to a wide range of business challenges.

An experienced innovation leader, facilitator and practitioner. He draws on 25 years' experience at P&G, whereas a serial innovator, he published over 100 patents, and co-led the foundation of their Behavioural Science capability.

For the last five years he has been an independent consultant, working with large and small companies across a broad range of businesses.

Pete is a sought-after keynote speaker, has extensive experience in designing and leading customized innovation and design thinking workshops, and in supporting the design and placement of consumer tests built around principles of consumer psychology.

Pete blogs regularly about the science and psychology of innovation. He has been recognized as one of the top 20 bloggers on Innovationexcellence.com for the last three years, has written multiple articles for the award-winning biomimicry magazine Zygote.

Co-ordinates

Web: www.mindmatters.biz

Twitter: [@foley_pete](#)





Nigel Collin

Is your ability to influence important in leading change?

To get people embracing change you need to become a master influencer.

I've been **speaking and facilitating** most of my life. I read a magnificent article from **HBR** on the art of influence and persuasion. It was so compelling it got me thinking about the importance of influence when it comes to leading change.

People want and need to understand the importance of change and how it will be a benefit to them if they are going to embrace it. In fact, they will fight it. As leaders, it is paramount that we become masters at communicating the importance of change and what it means for others. Otherwise, change simply won't happen.

It's one thing to be the instigator of change but it's a different thing to have change thrust upon you. According to **McKinsey** there is a 30% more chance of a change initiative succeeding if people embrace it and are invested in it.

Which is why this article by Carmine Gallo in HBR was so profound for me because its spoke of 5 keys that Aristotle wrote about more than 2000 years ago. What I find fascinating is that these ideas are still relevant today, more importantly, vital for anybody within an organisation leading and communicating new initiatives.

Let's have a look at each of these 5 elements and how they relate to making change happen within teams.

1. Character in leading change

When it comes to change, we need to know the person leading

us has the character and credibility to do so. Otherwise, we just won't accept it. As leaders, if we expect our people to adopt change and act on it, we better make sure we believe in it and act on it as well.

2. Reason in leading change

A few facts and figures go a long way because they satisfy the logical part of our brain. Of course, not everybody wants to be overwhelmed with statistics but a few quantitative examples of why a particular change is important (such as an increase in real wages or decrease in stress levels) can make all the difference

3. Emotion in leading change

As humans, it is when we become emotionally connected to something that we begin to embrace it and engage with it. When trying to influence people as to the need to make change happen, finding 'what's in it for them' emotionally is powerful.

4. Metaphor in leading change

At film school one of my tutors once said to me 'we are genetically engineered to understand story' in the world of business, the storytelling is becoming more and more popular and for good reason. One of the simplest ways to use story is metaphor.

5. Brevity

No one likes changes because it seems too hard, too big and too scary. A great antidote to that is making it simple so it doesn't seem overwhelming or complex. Keeping a message concise and clear isn't easy but it worth the effort. Take time upfront to keep it short and simple.

Unless you can influence the people within your organisation to adopt new ideas and new ways of doing things the status quo will remain. And in a rapidly changing world, status quo is the nemesis of business growth.

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About the Author

For over the two decades Nigel has advised C-Suite executives, Ministers of Parliament and entrepreneurs in both public and private sectors. He has presented to organisations in industries like IT, Franchise, Events, Marketing, Finance, Pharmaceuticals, Government and Telecommunications.

Nigel is author of three books, a TedX-er, with a client list including Australian Government, IBM, Samsung, Pfizer, and many more...

He started his first business at the age of 21 and sold it and the age of 22. He is now founder of '**Ingenious Oz Project**' and 'Game of Inches' business process. Nigel has spoken throughout the world including in the US, Canada, UK, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

He is chair and an Associate Fellow of Meetings and Events Australia (AFMEA), which means as a keynote speaker he understands the importance of helping get your message across, changing behaviours and achieving your conference outcomes.

Co-ordinates

Email: support@nigelcollin.com.au
Web: www.nigelcollin.com.au
Twitter: twitter.com/nigelcollin



Marla Tabaka

Productivity increases when Entrepreneurs celebrate small wins



What if I told you that acknowledging and celebrating your **completed goals**, you know, the small stuff, can **boost your mood**, energy, and productivity?

“But Marla,” you might say, “Isn’t it a bit self-centered and a waste of time to celebrate the small stuff? Anyone can do these things.”

Nope, none of that is true.

If you work hard, never pausing to acknowledge the **completion of your goals** and other small wins, you are missing out on an opportunity to increase your productivity, mood, and energy levels. Let me make my point: Which of these two entrepreneurs is more likely to succeed?

1. The entrepreneur who takes time out of the day to reflect, appreciate, and share his or her achievements.
2. The entrepreneur who dismisses small wins because, after all, the little stuff completes only a portion piece of the big picture—there’s so much more to do.

You guessed it: number one, the latter will burnout. Entrepreneurs who don’t celebrate themselves and their achievements tend to get depressed and negativity

becomes omnipresent. Productive actions are overridden by meaningless time-suckers as they lose focus. Acknowledgment of your achievements helps to keep the focus and momentum. And, it will help you to feel good about yourself.

High-performance entrepreneurs don’t wait for milestone achievements to celebrate.

Think about **the parent** whose young child takes his first steps. Does the parent hold off on joyfully acknowledging him until he has walked his first mile? No, because one small step is a milestone. The family claps, laughs, encourages him, and tells everyone the exciting news. This reinforces the child’s commitment to walking and lets him know that he’s achieved something notable. It inspires and motivates him to do it again, even though it’s likely that he’s going to fall down quite a bit.

The acknowledgment of small accomplishments motivates and inspires us, and it also relieves stress. As big breakthroughs happen, they merit a celebration that is commensurate to their significance, but how often do these breakthroughs come along? It takes many small wins to add up to a milestone. If you neglect to acknowledge your productivity at

all levels it may have a negative impact on your energy, attitude, and productivity, therefore your business.

Celebration and acknowledgment change your physiology.

Try this experiment:

Spend ten seconds thinking about all of the hard work you have to do. Feel the pressure mounting. Now notice your posture, is it strong and upright or slumped? Take note of how your body feels. Do you feel stressed out? How productive can you possibly be under these conditions?

Now, spend ten seconds mentally reviewing the things that you achieved over the past week, or month. Mindfully highlight the tasks that are off your plate and acknowledge how good it feels now that they’re done. Give yourself a pat on the back. Now how do you feel? You’re more likely to charge into your next steps with a good attitude and higher energy.

When we focus on the good stuff it sparks the reward circuitry of our brains. This causes a chain reaction as the brain releases chemicals that stimulate feelings of pride, excitement, and happiness. It makes us want to dig deeper into our next achievement.

Celebrations come in all shapes and sizes.

You complete a small project and it feels nice to finally have it done, but there's another project that needs your attention. Who has time to celebrate?

A celebration of achievement doesn't necessarily mean a party or treating yourself to a day off. Here are a few ways to acknowledge and appreciate your amazingness.

How to celebrate your small wins and productivity.

- At the end of your day spend five to ten minutes reviewing everything you've completed from your list. Most likely, many of the things you've done weren't even on your list so add them and flag them as complete. A visual of your accomplishments is very rewarding and will lend to a greater appreciation of your achievements.
- Tell someone who understands the significance of small steps. Positive auditory feedback, along with a few verbal pats on the back, gives us a mini rush that helps buoy our motivation, therefore increasing productivity.
- Let your mind wander to future images of your success. Painting this uplifting image will help your subconscious mind communicate your desires to the brain. This is important since a well-informed brain opens your eyes to opportunities and ideas that help get you what you want.
- Acknowledge your wins by doing something a little different. I have a theory that we all need to put a little vacation in each and every day. This stimulates the brain's reward center, helps us to celebrate our freedom as an entrepreneur, and energizes us.
- Express gratitude for your achievements. Gratitude has a strong impact on your mind and body.

- Thank those who contributed to your wins and spend a bit of time to think about the skills, commitment, and endurance it takes to achieve your goals.

You really do rock, ya know? Now, close your eyes, put a smile on your face, and count your blessings!



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About the Author

Internationally known business strategist, national radio show host (www.bigpitchradio.com), and Inc. Magazine (inc.com/author/marla-tabaka) author, Marla Tabaka helps entrepreneurs achieve personal happiness and financial success. Her integrative approach to coaching combines mindset management and strategic planning, resulting in multi-million dollar businesses for many of her small business clients.

Marla has appeared in noteworthy publications such as American Express Open, Fox Business News, TIME Business, The Huffington Post, Entrepreneur.com, Social Media Mags, and The Business Intelligence Report.

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If you would like to take the next steps toward a healthy life and business, contact Marla for a complimentary consultation.

Co-ordinates

Web: <https://marlatabaka.com/>
 Email: marla@marlatabaka.com
 Twitter: twitter.com/MarlaTabaka





businessVision

We are different to other accountants

We work much more closely with our clients than traditional accountants. We also have a much smaller number of clients than normal and are selective in the clients that we act for. We want to get to know our clients businesses inside out, enabling us to easily identify problems and spot opportunities. We want to help improve profits and encourage growth.

Our mission is to always add value

Whatever we do for you, we will always carry out our work with the aim of adding value to your business. We run a very cost effective business by making the most of modern technology and homeworking, but we will never be the cheapest solution. John Ruskin defined value as follows:

"It's unwise to pay too much, but it's also unwise to pay too little. When you pay too much you lose a little money, that is all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought was incapable of doing the thing you bought it to do.

The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot. It can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it's well to add something for the risk you run. And if you do that, you will have enough money to pay for something better."

A unique feature of our service is fixed price agreements

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Background

businessVision are a small friendly firm of Chartered Accountants specialising in small and medium sized businesses. The practice was formed by Marc Lawson in 1985.

Our aim is to provide small and medium sized businesses with information and advice that goes beyond the traditional accountancy services of preparing accounts and tax returns.

businessVision benefit from having a stable number of long serving team members and a reputation in the South West as being a practice that is different from the typical accountancy practice, is small and friendly, but able to offer the type of services more commonly associated with large accountancy firms.

Tel: **01752 752210**

Fax: **01752 752211**

Email: marc@marclawson.co.uk

Web:
www.bvisionaccountants.co.uk

Address:
**Unit 4
Sandy Court
Ashleigh Way
Plympton
Plymouth
PL7 5JX**

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