

Have you ever thought about...

...how to change your life?

● Be crystal clear about your own life purpose. You have to be clear about your Personal Purpose. This gives you the direction and the decision criteria to understand what is right for you. Your Personal Purpose Statement links what key passions drive you forward and the core message that you are here in this life to express.

● Have an outrageous vision. The bigger and bolder the vision, the more it will propel you forward. Focus on the experience you want to create, not the physical form (that's too limiting). Outrageous visions are contagious!

● Tolerate no delay. Set up supports and systems around you to instantly translate your ideas into action. Don't depend on others, but invite them to join you at your speed. After all, you're setting the pace for change!

● Experiment, experiment, experiment. Have many small, inexpensive experiments running simultaneously. The more experiments, the larger the number of successes. If things fail, take it in stride, look at what you can do differently.

● Be ruthless about cleaning up your life. Simplify your life to make room for the energy, money and time to let powerful change happen.

● Listen listen listen. Get input from others. Listen to what the real question is. If people have the question or problem and say it can't be answered, all the more reason to plunge ahead and make it happen.

● Jump on every opportunity. This point is all about keeping momentum going in your life. Over-respond to every opportunity that is in line with your purpose and vision, at least to check out what it is about. But be ready to bail out as soon as it is ineffective. Remember to honor the others that are involved in the opportunity, and keep the doors open to future partnerships (don't burn bridges).

● Be visible and networked. Create a profile for yourself so that people come to you, rather than you having to "sell" your idea to others. Even if you only want to have a local impact, network yourself worldwide. The more networked you are, the more impact you have.

● Give and you shall attract. Be overgenerous of your time and attention to others, in alignment with your purpose and your vision. People will respond in wonderful ways when you least expect it!

● Laugh out loud. Enjoy the process: when you are making your vision happen, you are fully alive! ■

SOURCENOTE: Submitted by Davender Gupta, MS, PEng, who can be reached at davender@visioneering.ca, or visited on the web at <http://www.davender.com>

BUSINESS

ALERT!

"Practical Advice That Works" Vol 6 No 2

Perceptions: put your company under the magnifying glass

by Sloan Campbell

Every single business person in the world today is reminded, almost daily, of the importance of how they are perceived by their customers, suppliers, partners and employees.

PERCEPTIONS ARE ESPECIALLY important in today's global business environment where first impressions can make you or break you — first impressions made in your lobby, from your website and by your employees in non-business environments.

Right or wrong ... that's the way it is, and we all understand it.

Most organizations have come up with catchy little logos to further bolster the public's perceptions — logos like "I'm Loving It" (McDonalds), "Ideas for Life" (Panasonic), "Working Late, So Are We" (UPS), "Think" (IBM), "Always Low Prices!" (Wal-Mart) and "Enough Dreaming — Time to Ride" (Harley Davidson).

These mental images pave the way for possible business dealings long before cold calls and business meetings ever happen.

So life is simple ... create great perceptions of the organization externally, then make an excellent first impression and your business will flourish.

Your suppliers and partners will all develop a perception of trust, but most importantly your customers will perceive an environment of trust and will begin to recommend you to other companies, starting a networking effect that will grow your business to unimaginable levels of success ... end of story, right?

Wrong, there is an important part of the equation missing here — the perception that employees have of their organizations, or internal perceptions.

Internal perceptions are much less cultivated by companies, for no

other reason than a misguided lack of importance of the issue.

Let's take innovation for instance — in this day and age it is very important for organizations to be innovative in the solutions they provide and/or to be the first company to market with a new idea.

If the perception (rightly or wrongly) of the employees in such an organization is that mistakes will be punished with reprimand or firing, then the likelihood of innovative solutions to problems or new creative ideas for future business developments will be few ... very likely non-existent.

It is my experience that managers in many organizations simply don't consider internal and external perceptions on the same level of importance — this is so wrong, it should almost be criminal!

What is at stake here is the future fate of an organization.

I am not talking about the "principle or determining cause or will by which things in general are believed to come to be as they are or events to happen as they do — or **destiny**".

I am referring to "an inevitable and often adverse outcome, condition, or end — a **disaster**".

Since the fate of an organization ultimately rests in the hands of its employees, why do many companies ignore the internal perception of employees in favor of the external perception?

The answer, sadly, boils down to nothing more than a lack of encouragement.

Few organizations know how to encourage their employees, all the while spending a great deal of time encouraging their customers to shoot for the stars — assuming they will take their current partners along for the ride.

This is a recipe for disaster; people (i.e. employees) are critical.

The key, in my opinion, is for an organization to make their employees feel, think and act like owners — this can absolutely not be achieved when they have negative internal perceptions.

Concluded overleaf

HERE'S A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION for how to grow your business without spending a fortune on costly marketing tactics.

Developing a membership program is a great way of turning occasional buyers into loyal repeat customers.

Membership programs help to increase customer loyalty, sell more products and services, generate higher revenue per customer, and improve referrals.

Every business has products and services it can package into a membership program.

For example, a dry cleaner could offer a 10% discount on all cleaning, or a café could offer five lunches a month for the price of three for members of the program.

Even better benefits could be added for a more expensive, premium membership package — such as free alterations and delivery in the case of the dry cleaner; or a free bottle of wine for members of the café's program.

Having multi-levels to your membership program in this way entices customers to spend more by moving up to higher levels of the program.

Membership programs also make customers feel loyal to your business, which means they're less likely to go elsewhere and more likely to recommend you to their friends.

It just takes a little creativity to come up with a list of ways you can package the products and services you offer into a membership program.

Other low-cost or free ways to encourage your customers to buy from you again and again include the following:

- Perform mystery shopper surveys with your customers from time to time to gauge their level of satisfaction.

- Establish a regular newsletter that details compelling offers that cannot be turned down.

- Follow up with your customers to see how they're enjoying the benefits of the new product or service you sold them, and suggest products or services that would increase their satisfaction. ■

Sourcenote: Enterquest



Mark Fricks

The way I see it...

Time is running out

THIS IS FROM AN EMAIL that I received and its truth makes you think. I thought I'll pass it on.

Here it is:

To realize the value of ten years, ask a newly-divorced couple.

To realize the value of four years, ask a graduate.

To realize the value of one year, ask a student who has failed a final exam.

To realize the value of nine months, ask a mother who gave birth to a still-born baby.

To realize the value of one month, ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby.

To realize the value of one week, ask an

editor of a weekly newspaper.

To realize the value of one hour, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.

To realize the value of one minute, ask a person who has missed the train, bus or plane.

To realize the value of one-second, ask a person who has survived an accident.

To realize the value of one millisecond, ask the person who has won a silver medal in the Olympics.

Time waits for no one. Treasure every moment you have. You will treasure it even more when you can share it with someone special.

To realize the value of a friend: lose one. ■

SOURCENOTE: Forwarded by Vic Stephens FlinstilB

“The simple fact of the matter is that positive internal perceptions are essential to the consistent success of the organization.”

PERCEPTIONS — concluded from overleaf

Companies need to have employees that are optimistic, conscientious and passionate. Positive internal perceptions will help support this kind of work endeavour. Negative internal perceptions and the company grapevine will devastate this effort.

Since I used Harley Davidson as one of my perception bolstering logos, I will also use them as my example of what to do in this situation.

Harley Davidson has made a science out of making their employees feel, think and act like owners — in fact this effort has been so successful that they have turned this concept into a marketing campaign, and extended it to their customers.

Harley Davidson's Code of Business Conduct (CBC) opens with a caption which reads *“Ever since three brothers and a friend began our business over a century ago, Harley Davidson has grown on a foundation of basic values that guide not only the way we do business, but the way we interact with the world around us every day”*.

The CBC then includes a letter from the Chairman and CEO which states *“To My Fellow Employees - Once you join the Harley Davidson family, it doesn't take long to get swept up in the excitement of everything our brand represents There aren't many companies that can commit to fulfilling the dreams of their customers. Harley Davidson can. It's up to each of us to commit to that goal by demonstrating the highest level of integrity in all our actions. We owe it to our customers, fellow employees, suppliers, investors to our government and society. And we owe it to our predecessors to make the right decisions for the next hundred years”*. Included in the same article is a list of their values; *“Tell the Truth, Be*

Fair, Keep Your Promises, Respect the Individual and Encourage Intellectual Curiosity”.

Finally with every Harley motorcycle sold, the buyer receives a package from Harley Davidson which reads **“Welcome to the Family”**.

These types of business conduct statements are not new for many organizations, but you must admit that Harley Davidson's 22-plus years of record-breaking sales makes for more than a good argument to follow (or at least investigate) the idea of positive internal perceptions to achieve ultimate success.

The simple fact of the matter is, if an organization wants to be successful in today's age of lean manufacturing when fewer people are asked to do more with fewer resources, positive internal perceptions are essential to the consistent success of the organization.

After all, if an organization is already imparting a positive external perception to the business world, then expanding this effort to include an enhanced internal perception should be straightforward and will ultimately improve the organization's overall business value ... the rest is all details. ■

SOURCENOTE: Sloan Campbell is a Program Manager at ELCAN Optical Technologies.

“READY, FIRE, AIM!” can help you avoid the business plan mistakes made by millions of other small business owners and start-ups.

Simply speaking, there are three big mistakes you can make when it comes to your business plan:

- You don't do one (or it's in your head). Not doing any sort of business plan is the cardinal sin, like “Fire, Fire, Fire.” If you don't have a plan then you don't have anything to execute. Writing a plan is simply the “Ready” stage of the process.

- You spend too long at the drawing board, or “Ready, Aim, Aim, Aim, Aim,” if you prefer. You should test your idea on the market as early as possible. Far too many businesses leave it too late, in order to launch with a bang.

- You complete your plan, and then never update it. You think your business plan is for life. Too many small business owners never touch their business plan once it's complete, let alone update it.

For your business plan to be useful, it must evolve with your business.

The most important part of “Ready, Fire, Aim.” is the last word, “Aim”. Are you learning from your mistakes and your successes? And how are you feeding that back into your business plan?

The founders of INNOCENT DRINKS tested their business plan early. In the summer of 1998 they bought \$1000 worth of fruit and set up a stall at a small music festival.

Behind the stall they displayed a sign saying “Do you think we should give up our day jobs to do this?” Customers voted by throwing their empty bottles into “Yes” and “No” rubbish bins. At the end of the weekend the “Yes” bin was so full they gave up their day jobs to grow the business.

Innocent spotted a market (“Ready”), tested it out by setting up a \$1000 fruit stall (“Fire”) and responded to the test by giving up their day jobs and focusing on making premium fruit drinks (“Aim”). ■

SOURCENOTE: Business Bricks.

Personal development

Don't PARK in the comfort zone

“Minds, like bodies, will fall into a pimply, ill-conditioned state from mere excess of comfort.” - Charles Dickens

MOST OF US HAVE a thermostat that regulates the temperature in our house.

When it gets a bit too warm, we open windows to bring the temperature down to an acceptable range. When the temperature drops below a comfortable point, the heater comes on to bring the room temperature up to a more comfortable level.

The “comfort zone” is the range of temperature that is not too hot and not too cold; just comfortable.

Your personal “comfort zone” is where you are comfortable in what you are doing in your job, your life and your experiences.

It is when you have no feelings of risk or anxiety. Some call it “being comfortable”. Some would call it “a rut”.

Your own personal comfort zone

Your built-in “thermostat” regulates your level of anxiety, fear and discomfort. When you step outside your normal, existing boundaries in the areas of your knowledge, skills, habits and attitude, you begin to feel a bit anxious. The natural tendency is to pull back.

Try this: fold your arms. Now, fold them the other way.

How did that make you feel? Felt a bit unnatural, didn't it? That's why you usually stay within your comfort zone. When you try something new, you often feel uneasy about it, and frequently pull back.

The security feels good.

The downside of all this is that always staying in your comfort zone can be very limiting.

The world passes us by as we stagnate. Complacency, in our fast-paced competitive world, can be fatal to business and severely limit personal and professional growth. If you are not learning, trying new things and growing, your job or business may be deteriorating.

How do you <— e x p a n d —> your comfort zone?

Before you just throw all caution to the wind, try some simple things.

Drive home a different route. Shop at a different supermarket.

Order something from the menu that you've never tried before.

Words of Wisdom

“Believe those who are seeking the truth. Doubt those who find it.”

— Andre Gide

Sleep on the other side of the bed.

Make a conscious effort to experiment.

Let yourself feel the adrenaline level rise a bit. Allow your anxiety level to increase. Feel your heart rate and breathing going faster.

The adrenaline is your body's natural drug that, in moderation, makes you sharp, creative, and quick. It creates the feeling of excitement and exhilaration that comes from trying something new. Recognize that it also can be scary and stressful.

Some stress is useful. Too much can be harmful. Some stress provides energy. Too much stress causes distress and can lead to burnout if done to extreme.

Why would you want to give yourself the stress of stepping outside your comfort zone?

Because that's where growth takes place.

Just like a muscle gets stronger when you exercise it outside its normal range of use, you get stronger when you get out of your rut. And just like your muscles, once you stretch beyond your current capabilities, you don't ever go back to your original dimensions.

As you try new things, you gain confidence. Confidence makes you feel powerful and good. And when you are confident that you can survive new ideas, you allow yourself to try even more new things.

What's the limit?

Obviously, you need to be realistic in your risk management. Most successful people think through the possible outcomes of taking a risk. Then they prepare for how they would deal with each potential outcome. Successful people take risks, but they are not foolhardy or stupid.

What are some higher-level activities that could add to your personal and professional growth?

Here's my challenge to you.

Make a list of 50 things that, if you really were successful in doing them, you would be a better person or have a better company.

Things like:

- Give a speech (oh no!),
 - Write and publish an article,
 - Start an exercise program,
 - Meditate daily,
 - Teach a class,
 - Feed a homeless person,
 - Volunteer,
 - Climb a mountain,
 - Learn to play a new musical instrument,
 - Sign up for a dance class,
 - Try for that promotion,
- And so on.

Then choose one or two that you are willing to do within the next 90 days. Schedule those new activities, and then go for it.

Afterward, choose one or two more and do it again. Make personal and professional growth a lifelong habit.

Don't stay PARKED in the comfort zone! ■

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The Institute for Independent Business

FOUNDED IN 1984 in the UK, the Institute for Independent Business (IIB) is now one of the world's largest international networks of business advice providers.

As of February 2005, 2858 carefully-selected men and women in 16 countries had been accredited as IIB Associates.

Experienced professionals

Experienced senior business people in their own right, who have elected to become self-employed business advisors, Associates and Fellows of the IIB have received additional training to enable them to focus accurately and cost-effectively on the needs of clients and prospects.

This ensures that Associates' clients receive the "practical advice and hands-on help that works"—the Institute's motto in every country in which the Institute operates. ■

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I wish I'd said that...

"It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either."

— Mark Twain

IT tip

Getting your e-newsletter past the spam filters

How can you ensure yours gets through the filters and entices your subscribers to read it?

E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS are a good way of staying in touch with customers and letting them know your latest news, promoting special offers, or simply reminding them your business is still around.

Complying with the law is only half the story; even legitimate newsletters are often stopped by spam filters even before reaching the recipient, and others are deleted without being read.

● First of all, you need to consider how to avoid your e-mail getting caught in a spam filter, which can happen if an Internet Service Provider (ISP) decides it looks like spam.

This problem is becoming more widespread, and there are no golden rules, although clearly you should avoid using colourful language.

If you have repeated problems, you should look at cutting out words which may appear harmless, such as "free" or even "credit card".

● The Newsletters and Electronic Publishers Association offers a guide to avoiding spam traps, and anti-virus firm Sophos has published a list of the 25 words most commonly disguised by spammers, so check that your newsletter doesn't contain any of these.

● Next you should think about whether to use HTML or plain text for your newsletter.

Plain text is becoming less fashionable as more people connect to the Internet using broadband.

Using HTML is also a good way of personalising your message with your business logo, a more attractive font, and even graphics and photographs, all of which can create a more appealing overall appearance.

● To avoid your recipients receiving the e-mail addresses of everybody on your mailing list, add one more e-mail address to the list — your own.

Right click on your name in Outlook and click on 'Properties', then change the display name to the name of your newsletter.

Finally, when you add names of recipients to the e-mail, add them as blind copies (using the 'BCC' button), and add only your newsletter name and e-mail address to the 'To' field. ■

SOURCENOTE Enterquest

Branding strategy

Great brands just say "No"

by Claude Singer

PEOPLE HAVE OBSERVED THAT A BABY'S FIRST WORD IS OFTEN "NO." A friend of mine says that his baby son's first complete phrase was, "No way."

"No" is such a common first utterance because babies are constantly fussed with, propped up, and wrapped up. Adults badger them with objects to bat, suck, get into, and swallow. Under such ceaseless demands, no wonder the little critters communicate defiance. "No" is a primitive declaration of one's personal freedom.

The marketing world's term for independence is brand differentiation. Brand differentiation separates a company or product from the pack. It presents a different point of view, a style or voice that customers can notice and favor.

What's significant is: **Achieving brand differentiation is, to a large degree, a daily exercise in saying "no".** No to fads and conformity; no to temptations to wander from a brand's core; no to departures from what makes a brand great.

Sometimes it's "We won't sell that," as when the 100 year-old Bartlett Tree Experts won't lop off the top of a mature tree or treat a tree that's clearly dying. Even if customers want to pay for such futile or destructive work, Bartlett refuses because the company has a single-minded purpose of maintaining healthy trees.

Sometimes "no" comes in the form of, "We won't buy that," as when CIGNA was tempted to buy a large managed care company several years ago. CIGNA executives pored over issues of financial and strategic fit.

But one matter proved decisive: The offered company did not — in its culture, policies, or reputation — have anything close to CIGNA's brand values as captured in the tag-line, "A Business of Caring."

And sometimes it's a matter of, "We won't go there," as when one of the dominant figures in the building of McKinsey rejected plan after plan to remake the firm into something it wasn't.

Marvin Bower, called by The New York Times the man most responsible for McKinsey's preeminence, opposed taking the firm public, even though it would have enriched the partners. He said no to mixing consulting and accounting.

Last year the CEO of BMW told *The Wall Street Journal* that, when it comes to maintaining a brand, "The biggest task is to be able to say, 'no.'"

"When something doesn't fit, you must make sure that that it is not done."

The example he gave was clear: "We don't have a van because a van as it is in the market today does not fulfill any of the BMW group brand values.

"We all as a team said 'no.' We will not bring a van." ■

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