

CHARTING  
**SUCCESS**

# Business Refreshment



BY DAVID BAKER

Ingredients: 177 caffeine-free, stimulating hints and tips to ensure business success

# **Business Refreshment**

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# Introduction

Would you like to refresh your business? Do you want to stimulate some fresh thinking and new ideas? Well have a taste of some of these caffeine-free, stimulating business hints and tips and get some added boost for your business performance.

Like any good recipe it contains some tried and trusted ingredients (the initial chapters are from our original book “Living in chaos... surviving on caffeine” - ISBN 1-905263-00-7) but for those wanting that extra, techno-boost there are some new sections on web sites, e-mail marketing and business networking.

So, if you want a real ‘kick’ to get your business speeding along the road to success, try some – forget the caffeine, this is all the rush your business needs.

Cheers!

David Baker  
Charting Success  
August 2010

# Vision, Values and Goals

If you decided that, this year, you were going to have a holiday and take the whole family to somewhere really special, is it likely that you would then give it no thought at all until the day of departure when you would gather together the family, head for the airport and get on the next available flight to somewhere that looked exciting? An unlikely scenario I would suggest. Surprising then isn't it that many business owners, having decided upon the commercial journey of a lifetime (owning and running their own business), then don't bother to think about where they want to go on that journey?

This first section offers some hints and tips regarding where you might want to go with your business – after all, if you don't know where you are going, how will you ever know when you have got there?

**1 Start with the end in mind.** If you continue the holiday analogy, half of the fun is involved in the vision of where you are going – sun drenched beaches or snow covered mountains, whatever you choose – and the anticipation of achieving that vision is a driving force to enable you to get there. So it should be with your business. Close your eyes and envision where you really want to be with your business in one, three or five years' time. Think of it as a "Dream Destination". Write it down so that you can come back to it again and again and remind yourself of where you

ultimately want to be.

**2 Be clear about your vision.** If you think about it as a Dream Destination then use the “DREAM” part as an acronym to enable you to be really clear about your vision. It should be **D**eterminate, **R**ealistic, **E**xotic, **A**greed and **M**easurable. Write it down and consider it against those headings and check that it is all those things – and if it isn’t, re-think it.

**3 Share your vision with others.** If there are other people involved in your business, consider sharing your vision of your Dream Destination with them. Depending upon what your vision is, you may have to be a little careful with whom you share it (it may be a little demotivating to tell everyone that your ultimate intent is to sell the business and retire, unless you have made plans for them in your vision as well). If everyone can clearly see where the business is heading and is as excited about the prospect as you, then it is far easier to get support for short-term strategies that might otherwise be unpopular.

**4 Review your vision regularly.** Just as with planning the ultimate holiday where you might take out the colourful brochures and read them again and again, imagining yourself actually on that holiday soaking up the sunshine or skiing down the piste; do the same with your commercial Dream Destination. Review your vision at least once a month, make sure that it is still something that excites you

and that it is still a valid destination. After all, you wouldn't continue with your plans of an ultimate holiday if your proposed destination was ravaged by a hurricane or involved in a war (well, at least, most people wouldn't) so you may have to modify your commercial Dream Destination if it is affected by factors outside your control.

All visions are necessarily underpinned by values – those things that define you and your beliefs, the things that are important to you, the things that make you what you are. It might be that you are a religious person and that you wish your business to be conducted along the guidelines and stipulations of your faith. It might be that you are an eco-warrior and wish your business to be ecologically sound in its principles. Whatever the case, you should give this area some serious thought.

**5 Define your values.** Be clear in your own mind what your Vital Values are; these are the ones that you want to govern your business principles. As well as your fundamental values (religious, moral, ethical, ecological etc.), some others you might like to think about could include: quality of service, appearance (of your premises and staff), equal opportunity and conducting personal business in company time.

**6 Communicate your values.** Write them down in a prominent place; make them clear for others to see – placing them at the front of the company Operations Manual would be a good idea. If you are not clear about

your values then don't expect others to support them and don't be surprised if others compromise them.

**7 Monitor the maintenance of your values.** As your business grows, it is vital to ensure that everyone is maintaining the values that are important to you, so monitor them regularly (using customer surveys for this is a good idea because it emphasises those values to your customers as well as checking that they are being maintained).

**8 Employ people who share your values.** This is specifically **not** a license to discriminate against others for their beliefs but, especially in a small business, it is important that everyone should get along well and be focussed on a common vision (yours) and that is far easier to achieve if they share your values as well.

**9 Seek customers and suppliers who have similar values.** If, for example, you are a budding eco-warrior then there's no point in doing business with a supplier whom you know employs manufacturing methods that pollute the atmosphere or damage the environment, it will only frustrate you in the long term.

Let's return to the analogy of the ultimate holiday. Having decided upon the Dream Destination, the next stage would be to set out the supporting goals that will enable you to achieve your vision. In holiday terms this would be things

like; ensuring that you have current passports and up-to-date visas, putting aside money each month to pay for the holiday and give you additional spending money, booking kennels for your animals whilst you are away and making sure that you have booked someone to take you to the airport. Similar things apply in the business environment.

**10 Set aside time to plan your goals.** Your ultimate holiday could turn into your ultimate nightmare if you arrived at the airport to find that your passport was out of date and you wouldn't want your business to fail due to an equivalent oversight. Thinking in advance about all of the things that will enable your success (holiday or business) will not only prevent failure but will also be a significant step to ensuring that success.

**11 Write your goals down.** Committing your goals to paper is the first stage of committing to your goals and committing to your goals is the first stage of making them happen.

**12 Be smart about your goals.** Just as with the DREAM in Dream Destinations, your goals should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**greed, **R**ealistic and **T**imed. Notice the difference – Dream Destinations are exotic and, whilst determinate, are less specific than goals. Goals should also be timed - the timed part is critical; if you don't set out a specific time to complete a goal then it is more than

likely that it will never be completed.

**13 Use positive language when writing your goals.** Don't write "I want to do this" or "I need to do that". Instead write "I will do this (or that) by (time)". Your goals are things that you are committing to; that you are defining as things that are absolutes in your life, so make sure that the language you use in writing them down reflects that commitment.

**14 Keep your goals in vision at all times.** Having written your goals put them somewhere you can see them as often as possible. Pin them to your personal notice board; write them on your bathroom mirror; invest in goal setting software that maintains them on your computer – do whatever works for you to keep your goals in the forefront of your mind.

**15 Regularly focus on individual goals.** Take any individual goal and consider these five focussed questions. To achieve this goal.....

- What do I need to:
- a. **Start Doing**
  - b. **Do More of**
  - c. **Maintain**
  - d. **Do Less of**
  - e. **Stop Doing**

**16** **Goals are what you set for yourself – targets are what you set for other people.** Don't confuse the two because one of the key aspects of goals is that you accept responsibility for them. You may involve other people in your goals but ultimately you own the goals and you must take responsibility for achieving them.

**17** **Measure your performance.** There is an old adage that states that you cannot manage what you cannot measure and this is absolutely true for goal setting and achievement. This comes back to the way you have written your goals (remember SMART?) – if you have written your goal so that it is measurable then it will be straightforward to assess your progress towards achieving it.

Just as Dream Destinations are founded on values and supported by goals so goals are, in turn, supported by tasks. It's fundamental really; to achieve a goal you actually have to do something, to perform a task or a series of tasks. If you fail to perform these tasks then you will not achieve your goal.

**18** **Set tasks on a daily basis.** It's commonly called a To Do list and many people use one in a haphazard sort of way. Get into the habit of creating a To Do list every day. Write it down. Make sure it contains tasks that support the goals you have set. Do it before you do anything else and

keep it in front of you at all times (if possible). Preferably write it in the same place every time for example a hard-back note book, as opposed to on a piece of scrap paper.

**19** **Prioritise your To Do list.** You can write your tasks down in any order you like but then go back and assign a priority to each task so that you can perform them in order. Sometimes there is a natural sequence to tasks – you can't for example make the tea before you have boiled the kettle – other times you will have to decide on your own personal priorities.

**20** **Differentiate between Urgent and Important.** If you are sitting at your desk and the phone rings it's urgent and you are likely to answer it – it might however be someone trying to sell you double glazing which (for most people, most of the time) is unimportant. You might be writing a customer proposal which could, if successful, generate more sales. This would certainly class as important but it might not be due for another week so it isn't exactly urgent. Perhaps you need to phone a customer who has received a proposal but has one more question before he places an order – this is both urgent and important. It is very easy to be seduced by the urgent (especially the phone) at the expense of the important so why not mark your To Do list items in terms of both their urgency and their importance.

**21 Re-prioritise your To Do list.** Sometimes crises happen and sometimes you can't help but get involved in them but don't lose track of your To Do list. If you spend all of your time "fighting fires" then you will never finish your tasks and will never achieve your goals. Sort out the crisis and then go back to the To Do list but re-prioritise it so that you can deal with the urgent and important items first.

**22 Carry forward.** Remember that you are writing a new To Do list each day. Any tasks you failed to complete from the previous day you should carry forward **but** you should clearly mark them as carry-forward tasks. If you find that there are some tasks which you keep carrying forward then you need to decide whether they are in fact important to the achievement of your goal. If they are then either do them or delegate them.

**23 Delegate.** It doesn't matter whether you are a one-man business or a multi-million pound company with thousands of staff, it is always possible to delegate - it might not be desirable, it might not be cost effective but it is always possible. You have to decide what is desirable and what is cost effective and, more often than not, you may have to choose to delegate the enjoyable tasks and do some of the less enjoyable yourself. Well, so be it. If you want to achieve your goals and reach your Dream Destination you will do whatever it is necessary to do and

delegation is one of the most powerful tools in your armoury to enable this.

**24 Value your time.** This is, of course, related to delegation. If you are running a small company there is the temptation to assume that you have to do everything from closing the sales through to mending the leaking tap in the washroom. You need to get the right perspective on what your time is worth though. If you could spend four hours calling customers and getting thousands of pounds in new sales it would be crass stupidity to spend those same four hours fixing the leaking tap when you could pay a plumber to do it for you whilst you were closing sales.

**25 Get a coach.** It takes a tremendous amount of self-discipline to constantly update and maintain goals. It is extremely easy to let them lapse as the occasional crisis commands your time. If you have a coach it imposes a secondary discipline on you because the coach will act as your conscience. A good coach will help you set SMART goals and will keep you on track to achieve them.

**26 Just do it.** Vision, values and goals are vitally important to the success of your business and you really must have them but you can't spend all your time dreaming and planning. At some point (sooner rather than later) you

absolutely have to get up and **DO** all the things on your task list – if you don't do it, it won't happen!

Some further thoughts and quotes on Vision, Values and Goals

**27** "Your goals, minus your doubts, equal your reality".

*Ralph Marston*

**28** "In order for you to profit from your mistakes, you have to get out and make some."

*Anonymous*

**29** "Success is never ending, failure is never final".

*Dr Robert Schuller*

**30** "Look to the future, because that is where you'll spend the rest of your life."

*George Burns*

**31** "Whatever you do may seem insignificant to you, but it is most important that you do it."

*M. Gandhi*

**32** "You can't just dream about success, you have to wake up and do something about it."

*Anon*

**33** "Imagining what you want as if it already exists opens the door to letting it happen"

*Shatki Gawain*

**34** "To change one's life: 1. Start immediately. 2. Do it flamboyantly. 3. No exceptions."

*William James*

**35** "Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal."

*Henry Ford*

# Target Your Marketing – Accelerate Your Sales

In the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when firearms were just starting to make an impact (if you'll excuse the pun) on the methodology of war, there were two schools of thought. The old school was epitomized by the concept of “point your gun in the general direction of the enemy and fire”. The new school, as evinced by the Duke of Wellington, was characterised by the command “Ready (or Present), Aim, Fire”. Obviously the tools (i.e. the guns) evolved too but the latter, precision approach turned out to be the most successful – so it is with Sales and Marketing.

**36 Identify your prospective customers.** Depending upon your particular business, you might say that you will sell to anyone and everyone, but the reality is that for any business there is always a particular type of customer who is more likely to buy from you than others. For example, if you sell garden machinery it is more likely that you will sell to people who have houses with gardens than to those who live in apartments. If you can identify your prospective customers it is far easier and much more cost effective to target them directly.

**37 Match your marketing to your customers.** If you have identified your customers as, for example, people who

have gardens then there is not much point in advertising in a magazine for car enthusiasts – of course a car enthusiast might also have a garden but it would probably be full of cars!

**38 Make it count.** Whatever forms of marketing you choose to use (advertising, direct mail, promotional days etc.) make sure that they are effective. Make every penny that you spend count. Don't be seduced into vanity advertising, it's fine for large corporations but it's a waste of money for most small to medium businesses.

**39 Look to use synergetic relationships.** The dictionary definition of synergy is “the action of two or more (organizations) to achieve an effect greater than the sum of their individual efforts”. Seek other non-competitive companies who are trying to attract the same customers that you do and approach them with the thought of joint marketing or promotions.

**40 Think Purple Cow.** In his book *Purple Cow*, the author Seth Godin relates a story of a family motoring holiday in France where he and his family were enchanted by the hundreds of storybook cows grazing on picturesque pastures right next to the road. He goes on to say that after a number of miles the sight of these beautiful cows became commonplace and they ignored them. Now if they had then seen a Purple Cow – that would have been

remarkable and they certainly would have noticed it. The message here is “be remarkable in your marketing and you will stand out from the crowd”. (It’s also a great idea to read Seth’s book, it’s full of remarkable ideas).

**41 Test.** Whatever forms of marketing you choose to use, vary them regularly. If you run an advert in the local weekly paper then change the copy and the style every week. If you are sending a mail shot to 2,000 people then split it up into smaller batches and vary the content for each batch – and make the batch size as small as is reasonably viable. Test everything; the headline, the body text, the price, the benefits, special offers, response methods.....

**42 Measure.** For each different version or variation of marketing material you use though, you **must** measure the specific response. If you run a different advert then include a different reference number on each so that you can ask which one the customer saw. If you are sending out differing mail shots then use a different response form in each one so that when you get a response you know which version of the mail shot elicited it.

**43 If it works, repeat it.** If, through using your test marketing, you find a particular version of an advert or mail shot that brings a noticeably better response than

others then repeat it – but don't give up on the testing!

**44 Keep doing it.** Don't ever just place one advert or send one mail shot to a target customer base, it's a complete waste of money. People will often need to see an advert multiple times or get a number of letters (each one different remember) before they will respond.

**45 Your name means nothing.** There is always a temptation to emblazon your company name in large type on any marketing material – resist it! Generally speaking people are selfish; they are far more interested in what you can do for them or sell them than they are in what your company is called, so use your marketing space to tell them what you are offering rather than who you are.

**46 You and your.** Ultimately you want to attract the one customer who is reading your marketing material so address that one customer. Avoid the use of "I" and "We" and "Our" (as in "We make this wonderful product") and substitute "You" and "Your" wherever possible (as in "the benefit to you of using this wonderful product is...").

**47 Is the price right?** I was once involved in marketing an electronic product for a company with a recommended price of £500 each – we didn't sell any! After some thought we withdrew the product, waited for a few

months and then re-marketed it at a price of £995 each – we sold hundreds! The customers didn't believe that it could do what we claimed for a price of £500, but at £995 it was credible – the product itself didn't change at all. Research the market and test the price.

**48 Direct mail marketing still works.** There are so many possible marketing methods available today, some which are more technology based than others, that it's difficult to choose the best one for your particular business. Despite (or perhaps because of) the advances in technology, people will still respond to personally addressed letters and, although you have a limited amount of time to get their attention, this is still one of the most effective forms of marketing.

**49 Address the individual.** Sending a general letter with the salutation "Dear Garden Owner" or "Dear Occupier" will seldom work. Make sure you have names for your direct mail campaign (buy an up to date mailing list) and use a mail merge program to insert an individual name into each letter.

**50 Adopt a quality image.** Use a heavy grade (at least 90 gsm) white or almost white paper for your mailing letters and black ink or toner. It might be a marketing document but you want it to look like a high quality letter.

**51** **Headlines get attention.** It has been scientifically proven that the first thing people look at when they open a letter is the headline – assuming that there is one. Make sure that your headlines are well written and capture the attention – and don't forget to test alternative headlines to find the ones that work best to generate a response.

**52** **Don't forget a P.S.** It is another well established fact that the second thing that most people look at when opening a letter is the P.S. Use this fact as another tool to capture the attention – re-iterate your offer or give a bonus in the P.S.

**53** **Stress the benefits.** It's all very well telling people about the wonderful features of your product or service but, as stated before, most people are basically selfish and they want to know what's in it for them. Tell them what your product or service will do for them; tell them how they will benefit from using it.

**54** **The more you tell, the more you sell.** Having just said that you only have a very short period of time to capture people's attention, it does appear to be contra-intuitive to then say this. The reality is that provided that you keep their attention by telling them things that are relevant to them, you can (within reason) write or say as much as you like. If you tell them all the benefits and answer all of

the questions they might have about your product or service then they are far more likely to buy.

**55 Make the first sale an easy sale.** Once you have the customer's attention and have created a precedent by getting them to buy from you then it is far easier to get them to buy again. On this basis, if you can make the first sale an easy sale by using some form of promotional offer then you will have established the buying precedent.

**56 Use risk reversal.** If you remove as much risk as possible from the initial buying decision it is far more likely that people will buy – so use some form of a money-back guarantee. There may be cases where you will have to give someone's money back but these occasions will be far outweighed by the increase in successful sales.

**57 Free offers work.** The word “free” is one of the most powerful marketing tools ever used so use it as much as possible. Offer free consultation, free advice, free extras, free delivery, free installation – just about anything as long as it's free.

**58 Put a value on “free”.** When you do give something away free make sure that it has a perceived value, for example “Free petrol can (worth £5) with every lawnmower sold” or “Free installation (worth £30) with every computer purchased”.

**59 People buy what they want, not what they need.** It comes back to the selfish aspect of human nature; given that most people's basic needs (at least in the Western world) are fulfilled, then they will always purchase the things that they want rather than those they need - a video game for the kids rather than a sensible winter coat perhaps. On this basis you are more likely to get a buying response from them if your marketing appeals to their wants as opposed to their needs.

**60 Ask for a response.** There is no point in creating any marketing material that simply says who you are and what you sell; it's a waste of money. Use every piece of marketing to generate responses even if it's just getting the customers to ask for more information. If you have followed the tip about the more you tell, the more you sell and have given all the required information then ask for the order. Whatever you do though, ask for a response and get the customer talking to you.

**61 Make it easy to respond.** Make it as easy as possible for the customer to respond to you – use a Freephone or LoCall response number, use a FreePost return address, give a fax number to fax an order to, use an SMS response service. The easier you make it (and the more alternatives you offer) the more likely it is that you will get a response.

- 62 Time limit the response.** “Reply immediately, this free offer is only valid until the end of November” – if people are interested in your offer then this form of time limited response will improve the response rate. But do make sure that you send the offers out suitably in advance of the deadline that you set!
- 63 Up sell at every opportunity.** If you have successfully captured their attention with your offer then use the opportunity to up sell – improve the offer with a three for the price of two special offer; offer a bundle of the original offer plus something else at a special price. If you can get them to buy then get them to buy more.
- 64 Include testimonials.** There is no better advert for what you do or sell than a satisfied customer saying good things about it. Make sure you include testimonials wherever possible and (once you have obtained permission) make sure you use the satisfied customers’ full names as anonymous testimonials are worse than useless.
- 65 Spot the opportunities.** Look out for opportunities to market your product in a timely and relevant way – look out for world or local events (the Olympics or a local football team’s success perhaps) and tie your marketing event to it (Olympic souvenirs or a free ticket to the next match for example).

**66 Who succeeds if you succeed?** If your business is successful does that success carry through to others (one of your suppliers perhaps)? If so, are there any possibilities for cooperative marketing events with your success partner? Would that company be prepared to share the marketing cost or extend the promotion to their own customer base?

**67 PR is the best form of advertising – and it's free!** Take every opportunity that you can to get editorial coverage for your business. Cultivate the editors of all your local papers, send out (well written) press releases at every opportunity, do unusual and remarkable things to bring attention to your business – get your company name mentioned as often as possible (preferably for good things!).

Here are a few more quotes on marketing and advertising

**68** “In the late 1600s the finest instruments originated from three rural families whose workshops were side by side in the Italian village of Cremona. First were the Amatis, and outside their shop hung a sign: "The best violins in all Italy." Not to be outdone, their next-door neighbours, the family Guarnerius, hung a bolder sign proclaiming: "The Best Violins In All The World!" At the end of the street was the workshop of Anton Stradivarius, and on its front door was a simple notice which read: "The best violins on the block.””

*Freda Bright*

**69** “Big shots are only little shots who keep shooting.”

*Christopher Morley*

**70** “In the modern world of business, it is useless to be a creative original thinker unless you can also sell what you create. Management cannot be expected to recognize a good idea unless it is presented to them by a good salesman.”

*David M. Ogilvy*

**71** “Advertising may be described as the science of arresting human intelligence long enough to get money from it.”

*Stephen Leacock*

72 “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half.”

*John Wanamaker, US department store merchant (1838 - 1922)*

73 “Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.”

*Mark Twain, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

74 “The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself.”

*Peter Drucker*

# Hug Your Customers

This title is actually taken from another “must read” book called Hug Your Customers – Love the Results by Jack Mitchell. In the book Jack recounts the success story of his family company – a clothing store in Westport, Connecticut, USA – the astounding thing about which is its annual sales figure (\$65million) compared to the population of the town (28,000). In truth there are actually two stores, one in Westport and another in Greenwich (pop. 60,000) but even so this is a stunning testimonial to the concept of exceptional customer care.

**75 Know your customers.** It doesn't matter whether you have five customers or five thousand, you should make it a point that you or one of your staff should get to know each one of them. Think about it; if you do business with someone and they take the trouble to get to know you and remember you, isn't it a much more pleasant experience? Wouldn't you prefer dealing with someone you knew? Well the same applies to your business.

**76 Use technology.** Computer databases are great tools to keep careful records of your customers and their preferences (don't forget your legal obligations with all that Data Protection stuff though!!). You could also use a loyalty card scheme to keep specific customer information current and to record personal details.

**77 Get the details right.** If you do keep customer details (and you should) then make absolutely sure that you have the details recorded correctly. If your customer's last name is Baker then make sure you don't greet him (either personally or via letter) as Mr. Barker.

**78 Communicate frequently.** Once you have (correctly) recorded your customers' details then communicate frequently with them. Write regular letters to make special offers or to tell them about new products or services – don't forget to emphasise the benefits. If your business is telephone based, then call regularly and if the (customer) preferred communication method is e-mail then send regular e-mails.

**79 Use newsletters.** Newsletters are a great way to keep in touch with your customers and, at the same time, to tell them about what you are doing and what is the latest news in your particular sphere of business.

**80 Get Personal.** If you communicate by phone then look-up each customer's details before you phone them and surprise them with your knowledge. If you are writing letters then take the time to sign each one by hand in a different coloured ink to the main body of the letter. If you have time then put a personal note on each letter.

**81 Know the dog's name too.** This also comes from Jack Mitchell's book and it's a great way to remind you to note down and remember all your customers' details – right down to the name of their dog! If you can remember the details and use them it will really personalise your relationship with your customers and they really will keep coming back.

**82 Always say "Thank You".** It's just plain good manners but everyone appreciates it. It is easy to remember when you are talking directly to a customer but if they order by post or e-mail don't forget to put a little note on their invoice (by hand if possible) saying "Thank you for your order".

**83 Celebrate the occasion.** If it's coming up to Christmas for example, then send (personalised) Christmas cards to all of your customers. If you know that it's a special occasion for a specific customer or group of customers (Chinese New Year or Hanukah perhaps) then send an appropriate message. If you can tie-in some form of marketing message or special offer that will help sell more products or services, great. If not then just use it as an excuse to keep in touch.

**84 Arrange special deals.** Arrange special deals for your customers with non-competitive or complementary companies or products. (If you do it well then you could

arrange with the providing company to make a similar offer of your products or services to their customers).

**85 Really special offers.** I mentioned special offers in the Target Your Marketing section along with the power of “Free”. Well if you are talking to your existing customers you don’t need to spend any money on non-targeted marketing (because they already buy from you) so you can afford to be even more generous with special or free offers. And keep the really special offers exclusive to your existing customers so that they get to feel **really special!**

**86 Over deliver.** There’s nothing more likely to make someone feel special than if you do or send more than you have contracted to do. Those little extra touches really count – a full tank of petrol if you are selling a car or a free tie if you are selling a suit for example. Make sure you do it every time someone buys from you and they will remember you. Don’t just meet their expectations; always exceed them.

**87 “Systematise the process – personalise the exception”.** This is actually a quotation by Michael Basch, one of the founders of Federal Express and it neatly summarises the concept that you should create systems to generate an exceptional service for your customers, but when things go wrong (and they undoubtedly will) you should always deal with the problems (or exceptions) personally - not

necessarily by you, in person, but by a person and not just a system-produced letter.

**88 Delegate the authority to fix problems.** Make sure that you tell your staff that they have your authority, if necessary, to spend money (up to a reasonable amount) to sort out a customer's problem. If the problem can be sorted out on the spot and immediately, it will work out far cheaper to deal with than if it is passed through increasing levels of bureaucracy and time until it reaches you.

**89 Even problems are opportunities.** If you deal properly with each and every customer problem (remembering to over deliver each time) then each one becomes an opportunity to remind the customer of why they like doing business with you. Most people recognise and accept that problems happen; it is how you deal with the problem that distinguishes you from the rest of the (business) world.

**90 Look at your business through a customer's eyes.** Try to look at your business as a customer would – if they actually visit your premises for example, is there space to park, is the reception area clean, are there customer toilets available (and are they clean)? If you conduct your business via the telephone then try calling in yourself sometimes or get a trusted friend to call in and make a

note of whether the service was friendly and efficient.

**91 Treat your customers as you would like to be treated yourself.** Note that I said “would like to be treated”. The overall standards of customer care in this country are relatively poor, so don’t think of how you are usually treated by other businesses but how you would **like** to be treated – then treat your customers in that way.

**92 Instil the culture.** If you have staff, then don’t forget to instil the “hugging” culture in them because they will often become the interface to your customers. A great way to do this is to ensure that you treat your staff in the same way that you (now) treat your customers. A metaphorical hug is a great incentive!

**93 Innovate, test and measure.** Constantly think of new ways to “hug” your customers and then try them out. Don’t forget the basic marketing lessons though and measure the results you get from each innovation. And, of course, if you find something that works really well then repeat it.

**94 Interact at all levels.** Ensure, if possible, that it is not just one person in your organisation interacting with one person at your customer’s organisation. If that is the case and the one person you have been dealing with at your customer’s organisation leaves then you will have to re-build the whole customer relationship. If you have

multiple relationships – for example with a buyer, an accounts clerk, a goods-inwards operative – then you can use any one of them to fill a gap when one person leaves.

**95 Customers are people.** Remember that even in this technological age, it is people who do business with other people. Don't treat your customers as disembodied voices on the other end of a phone or de-personalised e-mail addresses – treat them as people and they will remember you when they come to order something.

**96 Listen to what your customers say.** Encourage feedback from your customers. Send out customer surveys (another marketing opportunity) and take notice of the feedback you get from them. Give your customers what they want (within reason) and not just what you think they want.

Here are a few more thoughts on customers

97 “Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning”.

*Bill Gates*

98 “Be everywhere, do everything, and never fail to astonish the customer”.

*Macy's Motto*

99 “A good customer should not change his shop, nor a good shop change its customers”.

*Chinese proverb*

100 “The elements of success in this business do not differ from the elements of success in any other. Competition is keen and bitter. Advertising is as large an element as in any other business, and since the usual avenues of successful exploitation are closed to the profession, the adage that the best advertisement is a pleased customer is doubly true for this business.”

*Madeleine [Blair], U.S. prostitute and “madam.”*

101 “It is not the employer who pays the wages. Employers only handle the money. It is the customer who pays the wages”.

*Henry Ford*

**102** “The magic formula that successful businesses have discovered is to treat customers like guests and employees like people”.

*Tom Peters*

**103** “There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else.”

*Sam Walton*

# All Systems Are Go

You really do have to admire organisations like McDonald's – you may despise the product or you may adore it but either way the organisation is amazing. They have a huge staff turnover, they employ staff from all walks of life with hugely differing abilities and yet, love it or hate it, from Manhattan to Moscow they manage to produce a consistent product. How? Because the business is driven by tried, tested and documented systems. If you create successful systems for your business then your business will succeed through the application of those systems – irrespective of who is applying them. So make a start on your successful systems (if you haven't already done so) and follow some of these hints to create your successful company.

**104 See the Big Company.** This harks back to the first section on Vision, Values and Goals. Try to envision what your business will look like when it has grown (and if you don't want to grow your business, what on earth are you reading this for?!) and see who is doing what in the business. What role will you be occupying (you can't do everything when the business grows remember) and what other roles will be in place?

**105 Create the organisational structure.** Depending upon the current size of your company this may seem

ridiculous, but try to draw an organisation chart for the Big Company that you have envisioned. (Helpful tip: use a big piece of paper, after all it's a Big Company - and leave plenty of space for each position). You are going to need (at the very least) a Managing Director, a Financial Director, a Sales Director, a Marketing Director and, if you are actually making a product, a Production Director and possibly an Operations Director. Think about who will be working for each of these key people and put them on the organisation chart as well. Put in the lines of reporting (who reports to whom). Now put some names against each position (if you are currently a one-man business, guess what, they will all be your name!). As and when your company grows you will be able to employ the appropriate people as per your organisation chart and put their names against the function (removing yours at the same time). This will clarify the reporting structure for each new employee and also help to define their job description.

**106 Define the roles.** On your Big Company organisation chart, define each role by writing a short description against each position. Something along the lines of: "The Sales Director is responsible for; all aspects of sales within the company, the achievement of the overall sales target per the Business Plan, the adherence to the sales department budget per the Business Plan, the recruitment and management of the sales force and any liaison related to sales with the

board and/or shareholders of the company”. This means that you know what to do when you are wearing that “hat” as will anyone you recruit for that position.

**107 List the duties.** Make a list of all the duties that relate to your Big Company (many of which may also be present in your existing company) and ensure that each and every duty is assigned to one of the roles. So if one of the duties is packing the goods to send to the customer and you have created a role of Packing Assistant then assign the duty to that role. It may be that you are performing that duty today but you are doing it with your packing assistant “hat” on and when the company becomes the Big Company you (or the person responsible) will have recruited, trained and appointed someone for that role.

**108 Create an Operations Manual.** Create a file which will become your Company Operations Manual - a decent ring binder is probably the best option for this. By all means keep copies on a computer in a separate folder but it is important to have a readily available hard-copy that can be given to new staff to read (and where, for example, you can hold the procedure for what to do when the computer breaks down and you can't access the stored Operations Manual!!). Divide this manual into sections for all aspects of the company's business (Sales, Marketing, Production etc.) and, as you decide upon a procedure for something (where you purchase

your stationery supplies, what gets cleaned in the building and when etc.) then write it down and put it into the manual.

**109 Set standards.** You may know the standard to which you wish things done, whether it be the dress code for the company or the response time for a specific service that you provide. Make sure you document all of these standards and incorporate them in the operations manual. That way, as your current company progresses towards being your Big Company, every new member of staff will clearly see the standards required and there will be no misunderstanding.

**110 Build-in quality controls from the start.** Don't just document the standards that you wish to keep, make sure that you have procedures set-up to measure and maintain the quality of those standards – as the company grows you won't necessarily be there all the time to keep an eye on what's going on.

**111 Ensure consistency.** It is labouring the point a little, but think back to the comment about McDonald's – you might not like the product (albeit millions of others do) but it is consistent. You need to create systems not only to ensure that your company provides good products or services once, but that it does so all the time, whether

you happen to be there or not.

**112** **K.Y.S.S.** Keep Your Systems Simple. Generally speaking, people will only stick to systems if they are logical and simple. You should document them comprehensively and well but if the underlying system itself is not simple and straightforward then people will not use it.

Here are some more thoughts on systems

**113** “I must create a system or be enslaved by another man’s;  
I will not reason and compare: my business is to create.”  
*William Blake*

**114** “A complex system that works is invariably found to have evolved from a simple system that worked”.  
*John Gall*

**115** “A good system shortens the road to the goal.”  
*Orison Swett Marden*

**116** “Organizations rarely progress in absence of well defined codes of conduct and systems to ensure that these are strictly adhered to. Same is true for society.”  
*B. J. Gupta*

117 “If you can't describe what you are doing as a process,  
you don't know what you're doing”.

*W. Edwards Deming*

# Caught in the Web

As of June 2010 there were 206,956,723 active web sites in the world (Source: Netcraft.Com). It is estimated that the Google search engine performs in excess of 2,000,000 searches per minute – that’s over 3,000,000,000 per day! (Source: Searchengineland.Com). So should your business have a web site, what should it look like and how on earth is anyone going to find it?

**118** **Should my business have a web site?** This is akin to saying “should my business have a salesperson?” A business that doesn’t actually sell anything is not really a business and to sell anything generally requires a salesperson, so whether you are the salesperson or you choose to employ someone else, the answer is YES – as is the answer to the first question because...

**119** **Websites sell.** Again, it’s like sales people; the good ones sell and the bad ones not only don’t sell, they can have a really bad effect on your brand, your reputation and your profits. A good web site will work for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and will represent you in local, national and even international markets. A poor web site or no web site could ensure that any potential customers buy from your competitors.

**120** **What should it be like?** Imagine the best saleswoman you could ever meet (well, you can imagine a salesman if you like – each to their own!), she would be capable of telling you anything you wanted to know about her company; its products and services; its values and principles; where to find its offices; when it's open for business and who to contact for what. She would tell you about special offers; she would listen and take note of your feedback; she would take your order and send it to be processed as quickly as possible. She would be smart, attractive (no, I'm not being sexist, it applies to salesmen as well), professional, well-spoken and you would feel comfortable about communicating with her and doing business with her. And that's what your web site should be like.

**121** **Take Aim!** Go back to Tips 36 to 66 and read them again if you need to; the same principles apply here. Just because it's a web site doesn't mean that the basic principles of targeted marketing change; you still need to know who your customers are and then you need to aim the content, appearance and function of your website at those existing and prospective customers.

**122** **Here's one I built earlier.** Yes, you can build your own web site and many self-build web sites work really well and look right for the brand they are promoting; but only you can decide if it's right for your company. Go

back to Tip 24 though; read it and decide if it's the best use of your time to build your own web site. There really are lots of ways to create a web site and even more individuals and companies who will offer to do it for you, but whatever you do...

**123 Plan it first.** Whether you decide to build it yourself or get someone else to do it, you will make it far easier for everyone concerned if you plan it carefully beforehand. Decide what pages you want to have (because many commercial web designers will quote you based on the number of pages on the site); ideally draw out those pages in the form of a simple 'map' which shows which pages lead from/to which and how they link together. Give each page a name and think about the text you would like on each page. Think about photographs and images (because the Web is a visual medium) and consider where these will come from (if you have them already that's great, if not you may have to get someone to take them or get them from an image library – which could be costly) and don't forget that there may be copyright issues with some photos and images. Decide whether you could usefully use video on the site (perhaps to explain a bit more about your product or service) and where you could get it and where that video would 'reside' (would it actually be on your site or on one of the popular video sites such as YouTube with just a simple link from your site). Remember that it's your web site promoting your

company so whatever choice you make with regard to building it; make sure that you are controlling it.

**124 Rules, Regulations etc.** Depending upon what sort of company you have and where you trade, there will undoubtedly be some regulations on what you should or shouldn't have on your web site (for example, if you are a UK Limited Company then you should have things like your registered address and registered company number on the site). It's beyond the scope of this book but you should definitely check up on what should or shouldn't be there (and it's your responsibility to do so, not necessarily your web designer's).

**125 Extracting the 'We'.** And, no, I don't mean taking the p\*\*\*! Take a look at Tips 45 and 46, they apply here as well

**126 Navigating.** People will use your web site if it's easy for them to find the things that they want, so make it easy to navigate; include consistent navigations buttons on each page so that they can get back to section-start pages, the home page and the contact page at the very least. Include an in-site search facility if possible (you can get these for free from some places) and do check the site thoroughly before it goes live to ensure that there are no broken links on any of the pages.

**127 Words are the key.** Well, the content should be clear, concise and easy to read and should sell your product or service but that's not what I'm getting at here. You need to think about what words your potential customers would use if they were searching for your company; these are called keywords and it is vital that you use them regularly in the text throughout your web site because they are what the Internet Search Engines (see next Tip) will use to index your site and guide those potential customers to it.

**128 Seek and ye shall find.** Think of the World Wide Web (WWW) as the largest public library you could possibly imagine and then realise that the thousands of millions of books in that library are arranged on the shelves completely at random! There are no sections carefully marked "Health" or "Science"; the books are totally muddled up. At the entrance to that imaginary library though are a number of helpful looking people; some are distinctly flashier than others and some have little placards around their necks saying things like "I know where all the science books are" – in WWW terms, these are the search engines. The 'flashy', well known ones are Google, Yahoo and Bing (amongst others) while the little known ones are, for example, Scirus (for scientific information) or WolframAlpha (for mathematical searches). If you want to find something on the World Wide Web you use a search engine and to help you in your search you 'tell' the search engine

what you are looking for in the form of keywords (e.g. moroccan restaurant ipswich). With regard to finding your web site; once your web site is 'live' you submit it to the search engines (i.e. you tell them that it's there) and they will index your site, looking for keywords that you have placed in your web pages. Once again, it's beyond the scope of this book to go into fine detail about how to use keywords and how to improve your ratings with the search engines so that your site appears ahead of your competitors in the listings (which is called Search Engine Optimisation or SEO by the way) but there is a huge amount of information about it out there and any number of companies who would love to help you in doing it.

**129** **Fresh as a daisy.** One of the ways to improve your ratings with the search engines is to ensure that the content of your web site is changed or refreshed regularly. This is an important consideration in the design of your web site since, if you have chosen to get someone else to design and build it for you, you might find yourself in the position where you need to pay that person to make any ongoing changes to your web site as well. This being the case you might be disinclined to change it regularly because of the cost and therefore your ratings position is highly likely to slip. One solution to this might be to incorporate a blog (or Web log) in the design of the site that allows you to put in regular entries highlighting new products and services and generally keeping in touch with your customers. You

might even choose to allow people to respond to your blog by posting entries on your site (be a little careful though because you have no control over what they might say and everyone can read the entries if you allow unrestricted postings).

**130 The missing link.** Another way to ‘attract the attention’ of the search engines is to ensure that lots of other web sites link to yours. I assume that this works on the principle that if lots of other sites find your site interesting enough to link to, then it must be worth looking at and hence it increases its ranking. So, if you have friends, colleagues, customers, suppliers etc. who would be willing to include links on their web sites to your web site (which might well require you to provide a reciprocal link back to their web sites of course) then do it. Also it pays to register with and include your web address on member web sites (Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses etc.) directory web sites (Yell, Ufindus, Upmystreet, 192, Freeindex etc.) or portal web sites (e.g. Bestof) – some of these are free and some make a charge.

**131 Promotion.** What’s that expression; “If you’ve got it; flaunt it!” Well that’s certainly true here so make sure that when your web site is up and running, you promote it at every opportunity. Put it on your business cards, your letterheads, your compliment slips, your invoices, your product or service literature, your

advertises, your promotional items, your directory entries; in fact anywhere your company name is or might be mentioned.

**132 Statistically speaking.** The beauty of web sites is that it is comparatively simple to measure what is or isn't working. There are loads of free tools that can be incorporated into your web site design (Google Analytics is but one example) which will tell you in minute detail how many people have visited your site, how long they stayed, which pages they visited, where they came from, which keywords they used to find you and so on. Re-visit Tips 41-44 and apply them here because it's much easier to do with a web site than it is with many other forms of marketing.

**133 Capture your visitors.** No, I don't mean lock them up; I mean work out a way to capture their contact details because you can then keep in touch with them on a regular basis (see The e-Connection chapter). Generally speaking, people will not just hand over their contact details; you will need to make it worth their while by offering something in return. So what could you offer? A discount off their first purchase perhaps or a free report giving them some useful information? Whatever you choose, make it attractive; something that would make you think 'I want that and all I need to do to get it is to leave my contact details'. An additional tip here though is to make sure that you verify the details

before you give the gift away – send them a confirmation e-mail and wait for their response saying ‘please send me the gift’ before you send it.

**134 Interact.** Allow your visitors to interact with your web site by leaving comments and feedback. This is, after all, the equivalent of the salesperson interacting with the potential customer. You can do this via e-mail or via an on-line forum or blog (but, as I said in Tip 129, be careful of any publicly viewable comments if you can’t monitor them first!)

**135 Call to action.** So what is it that you want the visitors to your web site to do? If you want them to visit your physical business (say that you own a garden centre for example and you want to get people to come and see it) then give them a good reason for doing so (‘Visit our garden centre today and bring this voucher for a free plant’). If you want them to buy something from the site then make it easy for them – provide a ‘Buy Now’ button and, again, offer an incentive. If you tell them what you want them to do and you make it worth their while, then there is a good chance that they will do it.

This is, obviously, not an exhaustive guide to designing and building a business web site but hopefully it has stimulated a few thoughts and, just to reiterate, if you want to do business in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century then it’s pretty much

guaranteed that you need a web site as part of your marketing strategy.

**136** “The Internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow.”

*Bill Gates*

**137** “Almost overnight, the Internet's gone from a technical wonder to a business must.”

*Bill Schrader*

**138** “If you have a web site, it makes your small business look big.”

*Natalie Sequera*

**139** “The message for business people contemplating their place in cyberspace is simple and direct: get linked or get lost.”

*Vic Sussman and Kenan Pollack*

# The e-Connection

In his book *E-Mail Marketing Dynamite*, Ed Ravis states that “E-mail marketing simply means promoting your products and services using electronic mail – nothing more, nothing less”. It’s a cheap, practical, flexible, measurable and instant means of connecting with customers and prospective customers alike – but it’s all too easy to get it horribly wrong! (By the way, Ed’s book is another must-read if you’re going to attempt this).

## **140** **It’s just sending an e-mail to lots of people isn’t it?**

No, it isn’t and this is the first place you can go horribly wrong. If you’ve ever received an e-mail from someone where there is a long list of recipients in the “To” field then you’ll know what I mean. Did you give your permission to broadcast your e-mail address to all those other recipients? No, I didn’t think so! But surely they could put the list of recipients in the “BCC” or blind copy field so that others can’t see the list? Well, that’s a better option but it still runs the risk of the Internet Service Provider banning the sender for spamming and, once again, it doesn’t deal with the fact that the recipients (probably) haven’t given their permission to use their e-mail address for marketing.

## **141** **Spam, spam, spam.** In this context I’m not talking about the somewhat questionably coloured (and

flavoured) processed meat; I'm referring to unwanted, unsolicited commercial e-mails that currently clog up the Internet. (It is estimated that spam accounts for roughly 78% of all e-mails sent!). There are laws and guidelines (both statutory and voluntary, depending upon your country of residence and where you are sending your e-mails) that govern the sending of commercial e-mails and you would be wise to be aware of them and conform to them. In essence they state that you should obtain the recipients' permission before sending them commercial e-mails and that you should make it both easy and clear how they may unsubscribe from your e-mail list if they wish to do so.

**142** **Get permission.** So it's as simple as asking someone for their permission before you send them commercial e-mails is it? Well... yes it is that simple in a way, but how many people would respond positively to being asked "I want to send you lots of advertising e-mails – please give me your permission to do so"? Not many I would suggest. On the other hand, if your request for permission was phrased along the lines of "I have this great free offer for you; all you need to do is to sign-up for our regular e-mail newsletter (which contains even more great value offers) and I'll send it to you right away", it might elicit a more positive response.

**143** **List building.** Use every opportunity to build a list of people who have given you their permission to receive

e-mail marketing material from you. (And don't forget that free offer to make it worthwhile for them to sign-up). Put a link on your web site; add a comment on the bottom of all correspondence (letters, invoices, etc.); mention the free offer in adverts and PR material; put it on your business cards and, if you use social media (Twitter, Facebook etc.) then mention your free offer regularly to your followers. Oh, and don't even think about buying an off-the-shelf mailing list for e-mail marketing, it's a waste of time and money and by the time you have obtained permission from any willing recipients you'll be left with a minute percentage of the original list.

**144 Content.** Don't just send out an advert each time you communicate with your recipient list; send them something that they'll actually want to open and read – newsletters are generally well received, provided that they actually contain something newsworthy! Send special offers – and make them 'special' to those on the list rather than generally available. Put in a joke or a cartoon if you are able to do so (but be very careful that your sense of humour is not offensive to others otherwise you might end up in court!). Make the content interesting and 'valuable' and people will read it and, if appropriate, act on it.

**145 Regularity.** So how often should you send out e-mail newsletters? Well it's down to you and your customer

list really. How much original newsworthy material can you think of? How often do you think your customers would like to hear from you? Understand the difference between frequency and regularity. Sending one newsletter per week would be regular but may be too frequent. However, sending one today followed by another one six or seven months later probably wouldn't be frequent enough. A good starting point would be to plan for sending one per month and ensuring that you sent it the same day each month (the first Monday or the last Friday of each month for example).

**146 Plan ahead.** Don't just wait until the day before your next newsletter is due to go out; plan ahead and fit your newsletters around other things (the seasons, major sports fixtures, public holidays etc.). Involve other people with providing content; ask your customers for interesting stories, testimonials or related anecdotes for example. Build each newsletter well in advance but leave some space in each for topical comments (like who did or didn't win the World Cup or who is the latest Olympic champion).

**147 Enlist help.** If you can't write interesting and compelling content for your newsletter don't despair because there's someone out there who undoubtedly can. Ask around; see who is actually producing the newsletters that you like to read; there are plenty of

journalists and copywriters who make a (generally modest) living out of writing other people's copy so if you can't do it, find someone who can. (But don't forget to ask for samples of their work first so that you can see what you're likely to get.)

**148** **On the subject.** The "Subject" line of your marketing e-mail is an absolutely vital tool to ensure maximum opening rate. Would you open an e-mail if the Subject line said words to the effect of "Yet another tedious and boring newsletter to waste more of your valuable time"? Well, OK you might just open the first one that said that because of the novelty effect but it would wear off pretty quickly. Most people scan the Subject line before opening any e-mail so if you want them to open yours, you had better make sure that your Subject line is eye-catching, interesting and compelling.

**149** **Call to action.** Go on, read Tip 135 again because the same applies here. If you tell them what you want them to do and you make it worthwhile for them to do it then there is a pretty good chance that they will. (And just in case you've forgotten, the idea is that they ultimately buy something from you, because that's what keeps you in business!)

**150** **Soft landings.** Create unique landing pages on your web site for special offers and in-detail articles so that you can see exactly who is responding to your

marketing. (Read Ed Ravis' book for the details of how to do this – he makes it a really easy process)

**151** **Measure it.** The great thing about e-mail marketing is that it's so easy to measure. You can measure how many are successfully delivered; you can measure how many get opened; you can measure how many cause the recipient to click on another link; in fact you can pretty much measure everything which means that you can make far more informed decisions about your next newsletter and your latest special offer.

**152** “No matter what your product is, you are ultimately in the education business. Your customers need to be constantly educated about the many advantages of doing business with you, trained to use your products more effectively, and taught how to make never-ending improvement in their lives.”  
*Robert G Allen*

**153** “Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing.”  
*John D. Rockefeller*

**154** “Make it simple. Make it memorable. Make it inviting to look at. Make it fun to read.”  
*Leo Burnett*

# It's all a question of fish and coffee

Wikipedia defines business networking as “a marketing method by which business opportunities are created through networks of like-minded business people”. In his book *The Jelly Effect*, Andy Bounds redefines it as being “all a question of fish and coffee” insofar as a typical business networking meeting will metaphorically consist of “a large net containing big fish, tiddlers and boots, from which coffee is pouring into a large cup” – it's up to you to categorise the attendees for yourself and then decide how you are going to organise and save your “catch” (and also decide whether you're going to drink the coffee!)

**155 Be prepared.** This is a good Scout motto and one that applies just as well to business networking. Don't just turn up to a business networking meeting without doing any preparation; find out what the structure of the meeting is (for example, do you get a chance to present your business and if so for how long?), find out who else is going and whether they could be of interest to you; are there any “do's” or “don'ts” that apply (perhaps you might not be able to present your business if there is a regular member of the group who has a competitive business) and are you going to be asked to join the group during the meeting and, if so, how will you deal with the question?

**156 Goal.** You will undoubtedly get more from any business networking meeting if you set yourself a goal before you go – and don't forget the SMART bit about setting goals (see Tip 12). Particularly remember the “R” part and make your goal realistic – I have never yet sold anything at a networking meeting and I don't think I have met many people who have, so please don't set yourself a goal that involves selling something immediately.

**157 Anyone for cards?** It's a business meeting; you're running a business; depending on the structure of the meeting it's highly likely that you will be asked for one or more of your business cards so do make sure you have some with you. Also make sure that your business card: says what you do (i.e. not just the name of your business); gives your name (because people do business with people not businesses); has your contact details (phone number, e-mail address etc. – and also make sure that your e-mail address is a professional, business address and not something like Hotmail) and leave a little 'white space' on the card for people to write on (because inevitably they will).

**158 Badge engineering.** At most business meetings you will be asked to wear a badge and visitors will often be given a self-adhesive badge that, from my own experience, will adhere to just about anything... except

your jacket! The easiest and best way is to take your own badge because then you can decide what it looks like, what it says and how it is attached. Don't just put your business card in a badge holder because you will find people peering intently at your chest (which could be embarrassing for everyone concerned) trying to read your name which is in small print. Your badge should have your name and what you do in large print and you should place it high on your right lapel because when someone comes to shake your hand that is where their gaze will naturally fall.

**159** **Take a pen.** Remember Tip 157? You've just read it! Let's hope that the other people at the meeting have read it as well and have left a little 'white space' on their cards because it can be really useful to write an aide memoire on their card to remember them by. ("Grey hair, beard, really helpful business advice" – that's me by the way). If you don't take a pen, how are you going to write those helpful little notes?

**160** **2 ears, 1 mouth.** That's what you've got (or, at least I hope you have) so do use them in proportion! Listen to the people at the meeting and don't just talk about you and your business. Find out about the other people there; find out what they know and who they know because sometimes it will really surprise you and occasionally it will prove incredibly useful for you or your business.

**161 Elevate your pitch.** Your ‘elevator pitch’ is your chance to tell the other people at the meeting what your business could do for them and their contacts and what sort of referrals you are looking for. Typically less than sixty seconds, your ‘elevator pitch’ should cover what your business does, who would benefit from speaking to you, why it would benefit them and how they can find out more about it (by going to your web site for example). Keep it simple, brief and memorable and if you have a good ‘strap line’ (for example the drain clearance man I know who always finishes his elevator pitch with “Your number 2 business is our number 1 business”) then use it.

**162 Farming or hunting.** The people who get the best out of business networking are those who ‘farm’; they grow relationships and develop a trust with other members of the group which is usually repaid with business referrals. The other (generally less successful) approach is to ‘hunt’; to mark out others in the room who you would like to do business with and keep trying to hunt them down and sell to them. Look at it the other way around; would you prefer to be hunted or farmed?

**163 Give to gain.** There’s a well known and generally pretty successful networking organisation with a very similar motto to this and the reason why they are so successful is that it works. Expect to give out some free advice and

help when networking because, to continue the analogy in Tip 162, you can grow far better business relationships with some judicious application of ‘helpful fertiliser’.

**164 Don't sell to the room.** This is not (just) repeating Tip 156 about not directly selling to the individuals present; it's about thinking of those individuals as your potential salesforce rather than your potential customers. If there are 20 people in the room and each one of those people knows 20 other people, then that's 400 prospective customers you could have access to if you can build relationships of trust and knowledge with the people in the room!

**165 Another perspective.** Another way of looking at the people in the room is as potential suppliers both for you and your customers. If, for example, your business was selling conservatories and at a networking meeting you met and developed a relationship with a supplier of blinds, it could work to both of your benefits – you can offer blinds to your conservatory customers as an additional service and the blind supplier can tell all of his customers about your great conservatories.

**166 Follow up.** If there's someone at the networking meeting with whom you would like to develop a business relationship (whether as a prospective supplier, referrer or customer) then decide what your

follow up to the meeting would ideally be (the goal you set in Tip 156 for example). Why not invite that person for a quiet coffee sometime (more caffeine again!) where you can have a much more in-depth discussion. But don't, please don't, send a blanket e-mail to everyone present at the meeting telling them how much you enjoyed meeting them all and, by the way, you have some great products or services that they really ought to buy – it's a guaranteed way to offend everyone.

**167** **Be interested.** Don't just listen to the other people at the meeting, really hear what they are saying and find the point of common interest – there's bound to be one. It might not be in their work, it might be in their hobby or their family life. Just show interest in what they are saying and you will start to build the relationship.

**168** **Be interesting.** When you do get a chance to speak about your business, be enthusiastic – it's your business so if you can't be enthusiastic and interesting when talking about it, it's unlikely that others will be interested in it either. If you are just chatting then pick a current topic that interests you and start a conversation about it – if it interests you then you, in turn, will appear interesting (don't pick a topic that you are fanatical about though because you might just come over as boring).

**169 Be picky.** Unless you live and work in a very remote place it is highly likely that there are numerous networking events occurring on a regular basis somewhere close to you; so which one(s) should you attend? Simple answer; try them all out at least once and pick the one(s) that seems to offer you the best “catch”. Be aware though that they all take time (and some cost more than others) so you have to weigh up which is likely to offer you the best return on your time (and money) investment and pick that/them.

**170 It takes time.** Don’t expect immediate results from business networking. Sometimes they happen but, more often than not it is (as per Tip 162) a farming process where you “sow the seeds” of new business relationships, gradually develop those relationships over a period of time and then, if you’ve been a good farmer (farmer, fisherman, it’s difficult to keep up with all the analogies and metaphors isn’t it?) you will reap a good crop of business referrals.

**171 Enjoy yourself.** Go on, enjoy yourself; eat the breakfast (lunch, dinner, whatever); drink the coffee or tea (but not too much caffeine though) and generally have a good time. But if you don’t enjoy it, don’t do it because those around you will know and they won’t want to build those all important relationships with you.

Some more quotes to finish up.

**172** “Strangers are just friends who haven't yet met!”

*Peter Rosen*

**173** “The currency of real networking is not greed but generosity.”

*Keith Ferrazzi*

**174** “First, you have to be visible in the community. You have to get out there and connect with people. It's not called net-sitting or net-eating. It's called networking. You have to work at it.”

*Ivan Misner*

**175** “Referrals are very powerful. When I refer you, I give a little bit of my reputation away. If you do a good job, my friend that hired you is pleased. But if you do a bad job, that reflects badly on me.”

*Ivan Misner*

**176** “Always remember: your initial approach is about creating impact in order to get the ten-minute appointment. It's a bit like a CV: its purpose is to get you the interview, not the job.”

*Brad Burton*

...and a final tip from me but in another's words

**177** “Be yourself. In the last analysis, what we are communicates far more eloquently than anything we say or do.”

*Stephen Covey*

# The Bonus Seven

On the basis of practicing what I preach, I have included this section as an additional bonus beyond the promised 177 hint, tips and quotes. As is often the case, I would say that this is possibly the most important part though, so, as our American friends would say, enjoy!

**1 Get a life.** There is more to life than business (honest) and it's important that you realise it before it's too late. If you haven't found out already then I have to tell you that owning and running a small business is not an easy option. It's extremely hard work, often long hours and sometimes very stressful so if you want to remain sane then make sure you have a life outside your business.

**2 Dream Destinations.** Just as I talked about a Dream Destination for your business (Tip number 2), you should also have Dream Destinations for your **self** and for your **family life**. My experience is that three is an optimum number by the way, so don't go thinking up any more. Your Dream Destination for your self should encompass things like your health and fitness whilst your Dream Destination for your family should focus on what your ideal relationships will be.

**3 Organise your time.** People talk about “Time Management” but the reality is, you can’t manage time – you can only manage your use of it. When you run a business it is all too tempting to devote all of your time to it – don’t! If you have followed the advice of Bonus 2 then you will have three Dream Destinations – use supporting goals for each of them and set out your tasks so that you allow yourself time for each.

**4 Cultivate your network.** Success in life is often dependent upon not what you know but who you know, and this is particularly true when running a business. Cultivate your network of contacts, acquaintances, colleagues and friends, work on the relationships and, most important of all; give generously to them because you never know when you might need some help yourself.

**5 Have fun.** Life is too short to be miserable and, surely, you didn’t make the move into owning and running a business because you wanted to have a miserable time. Running a business can be immensely rewarding (not just financially) and fun, but you have to have incorporated the concept of fun as one of your personal values (see Tip 5), that way you will remind yourself and others what it was all about when you are having the occasional difficult time.

6 "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."  
*Eleanor Roosevelt*

7 "To business that we love we rise betime,  
And go to 't with delight"  
*William Shakespeare*

# Bibliography

These are some of the books that inspired me to create this book. A couple of them are directly referenced in the text but all of them are really worth reading for the business owner/manager who wants some more really refreshing thoughts and ideas to stimulate their business success.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>ISBN</b>
Coaching for Performance	John Whitmore	Nicholas Brearley Publishing	1-85788-309-9
Getting Everything You Can Out of All You've Got	Jay Abraham	Piatkus	0-7499-2169-2
Guerilla Marketing for Free	Jay Conrad Levinson	Houghton Mifflin Company	0-618-2769-3
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The e-Myth Revisited	Michael E Gerber	Harper Business	0-88730-728-0
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