

WANT TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS?

Every owner of a small business in the 1990's knows that it is a dynamic world out there. Small businesses that stay still, are going backwards. The businesses that maintain quality control over every aspect of their work will win the battle for the elusive dollar of profit.

"That's great, but how do we do it?", I hear you ask.

Sure it's tough, but only the best strategy and tactics, and the best troops, will win the battle.

Battle Strategy No. 1 - Be absolutely organised.

Plenty of small businesses go broke. Most of those business owners were busy but they weren't productive. What's the difference?

- **Take time to get organised.** Spending half an hour before everyone else gets in or after they leave is a great way to begin. No telephones ringing, no staff interruptions, and no clients dropping in on you unexpectedly.
- **Never begin the day without a plan.** If you want to make something out of your day, plan to do it. Set a list of tasks that is challenging, but no too ambitious. Make it achievable. Failing to plan is planning to fail.
- **At the end of each day, take that extra half an hour and review your day.** Consider how you could have done it better, and commence your plan for tomorrow.

Battle Strategy No. 2 - Do it once, do it right, build a better Australia.

Today's business environment is competitive, your customer, your client, your patient, your passenger or your subjects will vote with their feet. If your business has a plan check it and make sure its going in the right direction. Make sure that everyone in your business is aware of and following the same plan. Your staff should be well trained know their role and what's expected of them. You must make sure your business does what it says its going to do. If you say you will ring a client back, then ring them. If you say you will send the goods tomorrow, then send them. Consider the thought, would you be frustrated if you were dealing with your business?

Battle Strategy No. 3 - Under promise and over deliver.

It's easy to make promises and not keep them. Don't negotiate a deadline with a client and then fail to keep it. If you think it will take you a day to do a job, consider quoting a day and a half, but say to the client it won't be late. This way when you deliver the product prior to the deadline, the client won't be waiting for it, and will be pleasantly surprised.

Remember to explain this concept to your staff, as "loose lips sink ships", as Winston Churchill said.

Battle Strategy No. 4 - Train your staff.

Companies don't do business with companies, people deal with people. Train your staff so they don't pass the buck. Allow them to take the enquiry and deal with it themselves, with the aid of other staff if appropriate.

Every company's biggest asset is its people. Are your staff switched on or switched off?

Battle Strategy No. 5 - Customer service is the key.

It's the little things that people remember, the attention to detail and well rounded service.

It doesn't matter whether you're a doctor, an electrician or a boiler maker, the customers you have, have perceptions of you.

If you make them feel special, they will beat a path to your door - and bring their friends as well!

Always remember it's that little extra touch that makes you different from the competition. This may be in your product, the service you provide, or preferably both.

Battle Strategy No. 6 - Always be on the lookout for prospects.

Businesses are transient things. Customers come and customers go.

No matter how good your business is, external reasons dictate that your customers will come and go. They will meet new people, they will come across other businesses, etc.

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Whilst you work hard to keep the customers you have, always be on the lookout for new ones.

Battle Strategy No. 7 - How's your reputation?

Because people deal with people, your reputation usually precedes you.

You may know that you have the most outstanding product in the market place, but do your clients?

Do the aspects of the business that they see, the little things, ensure that they never forget you?

Word of mouth is your best advertising. Customers that come from word of mouth seek your expertise, your skills and your abilities, and are not always shopping for price. They come because others have told them how good you do your job.

Battle Strategy No. 8 - Fix it up and fix it quickly.

Mistakes will happen. No matter how good the quality control, no matter how closely the work is checked before it goes out, mistakes and accidents will happen.

You can't win all of the people all of the time.

If you make a mistake, or if a client complains, ensure that the matter is dealt with promptly and to their satisfaction. Most customers will be satisfied if you handled the matter efficiently, as they realise that people are human, which is probably the reason they are choosing to deal with you in the first place.

Communication is the key.

Battle Strategy No. 9 - Developing loyalty.

Relationship building with customers is an integral part of your business. Ensure that once you sell them your product, you bring them back next time.

Don't let them forget your name, and give them a reason to come across your name regularly, even if they don't need your services right now.

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Consider following them up after the sale. Make sure they were satisfied with the way you dealt with them. Its that extra after sales service that will stick in their mind as the effort that you made even after they gave you the business.

Battle Strategy No. 10 - Change is here to stay.

We live in the era of mobile phones, photocopiers, scanners, computers and remote controls. The days of the golf ball typewriter and carbon paper are gone.

The world we live is dynamic and always changing.

A small business that plans to consolidate is planning to go backwards. Learn to live with the changes, make them part of your life and ensure your business moves with the times.

Be ready to face new ideas and new challenges and view them as exciting, new ways to operate.