

Business Growth \Rightarrow Accelerators

For SPECTACULAR business growth!

Business news you can really use...in 60 seconds or less!

Recession? Grow Your Business Anyway! – Part 4 January 2009

Welcome to my first letter of the New Year! I hope your Christmas and New Years holidays were good and that you were surrounded by friends and family. ☺

I'm pleased to share that I'll be presenting **How to Explain What You Do In 15 Seconds So Effectively That Your Prospects Are Begging To Do Business With You!** in Savannah Georgia on the 29th of this month. Check out the bottom of this letter for more on how to register. Hope to see you there.

Like most of you, I spent the holidays closing the books and reviewing the old year, while looking ahead to what 2009 will hold. If you'll forgive me, I'll violate my 60 second rule on the newsletter this month in order to put the current economic situation in perspective.

The gloomy economic news seems to be unrelenting. Nationally, 2.3 million jobs were lost in all of 2008 with over half that number the last two months alone, Christmas sales figures are the worst in 40 years, nearly 20,000 businesses are projected to close their doors in January alone, unemployment is currently 7.2% and forecast to be nearly 10% by the end of 2009, etc., etc. Each day's news report seems worse than the terrible numbers from the day before.

Will your business fail in this recession? Probably, if you expect it to fail. Failure behavior includes continuing business as usual, refusing to acknowledge that you're in trouble, passively waiting for the inevitable end ("It's just a matter of time..."), and refusing to seek help or accept it if offered. If you're in this mode, you won't be here when the economy turns around.

Will your business survive this recession? Probably, if you expect it to survive. Survival behavior includes relentless, mindless cost cutting to the point where the current operation of your business is impaired and future business is being sacrificed in the name of cost reduction. If you're cutting retail prices, selling useful equipment, and/or discharging skilled employees, you're in the survival mode. Survivalists also refuse to seek help or even accept it if offered. They will attempt to cost control themselves back to profitability, rather than generate additional revenue. If you're in the survival mode you may survive the recession, but you won't be able to participate in the recovery because you won't have the resources (financial, physical, or employee talent) to do so.

Will your business thrive in this recession? Probably, if you expect it to thrive. Thriving behavior includes adapting to the economic climate by crafting strategies to meet customer needs during the downturn, retaining skilled employees, picking up equipment at auction from failed firms, cherry picking new talent from the newly populated labor pool, and actively seeking help to keep your business healthy in extraordinary times. Thrivers are the "lean and mean" businesses that will emerge from this recession with the resources and talent to completely dominate their markets.

The Contrarian View

Frankly, what you expect your business outcome to be will determine your behavior in bringing it about. It's worth bearing in mind that even though economic activity may be down by 5% or even 10% over last year, 90% of that economic activity is still going on! Business is still being conducted and money is still being spent! So, whether your business will fail or flourish is largely dependent on what you expect it to do! If you expect to fail, you will engage in failure behavior (see above). If you expect it to thrive, you will engage in thriving behavior. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy and just that simple.

Tom Peterson's quote in last month's Inc. Magazine gives his opinion on the survival mindset which leads to survival behavior:

“(I)ntant, mindless cutting of R&D or training or sales force travel in the face of a downturn is often counterproductive—or rather, downright stupid. Tough times are in fact golden opportunities to get the drop, and the long term drop at that, on those who respond to bad news by panicky, across-the-board slash and burn tactics and move that de-motivate and alienate the workforce at exactly the wrong moment.”

Tom Peters, as quoted in the December issue of Inc. Magazine.

Regular readers of this newsletter will recall that I was preparing them for the coming downturn early in the year, as summarized by this quote from the July edition of my newsletter:

“Your business can actually flourish in a recession by bucking the trend of what every other business owner is instinctively doing. Now is the time to vacuum up all the dissatisfied customers your competitors’ declining service is generating. Hang onto your talent...and hire some of your competitors’ that (s)he’s letting go! Put dollars into promotions that you know (based on data, not “gut feelings”!) generate predictable results. And grow while the others are wondering what to do!”

Business Growth Accelerators newsletter, July 2008. (previous newsletters are available on the BGA free resources page at www.bgaccelerators.com/freeresources.html).

So, there’s hope! The key to thriving in our current economic climate is to 1) decide that your business is going to thrive, and 2) make the changes necessary to make that happen, including getting help if you need it!

Superior customer service is one of those vital components of your business operation to ensure your current customers open their wallet in YOUR business and not defect to the low-priced competition, and is a major attractant to your new prospects who interact with your business the first time.

Before we tackle new material, let’s do a little review from my October, November, and December newsletters Recall:

Important Guiding Principle #1

***** Your service goal MUST BE to make your customer feel successful with EVERY contact and interaction (s)he has with your business, regardless of whether a purchase is made! *****

And, by the way, it’s YOUR responsibility (not the customer’s) to make sure it happens!

Important Guiding Principle #2

***** Never make the customer wrong! *****

Approach problems using the tact of “How can we make this right?” and you’ll maintain your customer’s dignity, rescue the sale, and set the stage for repeat business, because (s)he feels that (s)he has been successful in their interaction with your business.

Important Guiding Principle #3

***** Making your business customer-friendly costs very little and reaps HUGE returns. *****

There is no silver bullet! The reality is that making your business customer-friendly is actually making many small things work together that combined produce big results. Businesses constantly send out non-verbal, unwritten messages on their values, including how customer friendly they are. Understanding that you’re communicating in this way, whether you knew it or not, is the first step in discovering what message you’re sending and how to ensure the subliminal messages you display are the ones you want sent. The good news is that these measures actually don’t cost very much.

In my December issue I discussed **Example #1, Customer Parking**, and the subliminal messages that you send your customers and prospects through your parking lot.

Here are some more concrete ideas to grow YOUR business in a recession.

Example #2 – Your Business Façade

Your business façade is the first impression that your customers have of you and it communicates the kind of experience and service they can expect when they walk in the door. The first impression your façade creates will either help you make the sale or create a negative impression that you'll have to work long and hard to overcome.

Is your façade open and inviting? Are there lots of windows that allow your prospects and patrons to see inside before they enter? Guys, the ladies tell me they don't like to enter a small or mid-cap retail establishments where they may not feel safe because they can't see into it first. If you have lots of windows in the front, covering them up with advertising creates the same negative first impression!

How about the upkeep of your customer entrance? (By the way, the state of upkeep of your rear employee entrances sends a message to your employees, too!) Are the windows dirty, streaky, or full of smudges? Is the paint faded, dirty, or peeling? Are there cigarette butts, wrappers, or trash on the ground? (How about applying this question to your parking lot as well!). Greenery at the entrance is OK, as long as it is well maintained and doesn't block the doors; poorly maintained greenery, whether potted plants or planted hedges, conveys a negative message.

If two businesses are located side-by-side, your prospects are going to choose to investigate the more open, inviting, attractive façade first time, every time.

Example #3 – Your Entrance Doors

This may sound silly to you, but this problem is so widespread that I'm compelled to list it. It's important that your customers successfully navigate your entrance doors. There are 2 major pitfalls here:

First, a 2 door entrance with only 1 door unlocked. Picture your customer fruitlessly yanking on each door handle, trying to figure out which door is actually operable to let them in so they can spend their money at your establishment. Ridiculous, isn't it? Equally ridiculous is the customer crashing their head on glass of the locked door on their way out. I can't tell you the number of locked double doors that bear the print of my forehead on the glass. The next time you encounter one of the doors being locked (and it's not hard!) check for forehead marks on the locked door's glass! Do you think the customer bashing his head on your locked door leaves a good impression (no pun intended)?

I had this scenario happen to me just recently at the offices of a local Chamber of Commerce. The receptionist helpfully raised her voice and said, "Try the other door!" in a sympathetic tone implying that customers crashed into that door all the time! Absolutely incredible!

Only unlocking 1 door in a 2 door entrance is simply being too lazy to bend down to unlatch the secondary door. Make the effort!

Second, having an entrance door without visual cues on which way it swings. Doors designed to conceal hinges and having some sort of uniform push/pull bar without "push" hand plates or "pull" door handles force the customer to yank or shove on each side until they figure out which side opens. Doors like these might look trendy and they routinely win design awards from somewhere, but it's not on the basis of usability. Help your client, patient, or customer feel good about their experience by ensuring they can enter or leave your business with pleasant memories!

Where Would You Rather Shop?

What message is your business façade and entrance sending? Wouldn't you like spend your money in a business with an inviting store front that welcomed you in, rather than one with a neutral or forbidding store front that you can't easily get in to or leave? Wouldn't you prefer to patronize a business, practice, or shop that welcomes its patrons, clients, patients, or customers?

Flourishing in a Recession

Seize the opportunity to make your business customer friendly and stand out in a crowd that features the same poor customer service as everyone else does! As we've seen, making your business customer friendly is doing lots of no-cost, low-cost things right and doing them right consistently. Being customer friendly is more about treating your customers as people who have the ability to choose where they spend their money so well, that they'll consistently choose to spend their money with you...even if your prices are higher than the big boxes!

Your business can actually flourish in a recession by consistently solving your customers' problems in a way that delights them. Decide now to make your business customer friendly and grow while your competitors are wondering what to do!

Business Growth Accelerators Recommends...

Usborne Books

I've had the pleasure of purchasing high quality educational and recreational children's books from Usborne. They provide high quality, graphically rich books and games that are designed to capture the attention of and teach our over-stimulated, over-videoed kids. Their offerings range from recreational reading though math, science, and languages for kids, toddlers through middle school age. And, of course, their service is outstanding!

If your kid needs remediation or enrichment, check out Usborne Books. I did!

BGA Recommends...

- √ [Usborne Books](http://www.usbornehaven.com)
www.usbornehaven.com
912.572.7286
findtheduck2@myubah.com
- √ [Savannah Tire | Brake & Alignment Centers](#)
Montgomery Crossroads at
Hodgson Memorial Dr.
912.925.9101

Check them out at www.UsborneHaven.com. Contact Naomi Havens at 912.572.7286 or findtheduck2@myubah.com.

January Speaking Engagements

On January 29, 2009, I'll be presenting

"How to Explain What You Do In 15 Seconds So Effectively That Your Prospects Are Begging To Do Business With You!"

at a seminar open to the public in room 1002 at the Coastal Center on Fahm Street in Savannah GA. The event is sponsored by the Savannah State University Office of Continuing Education. Networking begins at 6:00 PM with the seminar concluding at 7:30 PM.

Seating is limited to the first 30 people who register and in this economy it will fill up fast, so **invest \$15.95 in your future and register today!**

Contact Marsha Miller at 912.691.5557 to register and for more information. You can also sign up online at <http://www.peopleware.net/index.cfm?siteID=397&event=9SRPE&subeventDisp=9SRFS>
I'll look forward to meeting you there! ☺

Now It's Your Turn

I hope you enjoy our freshened up format for 2009. Let me hear from you on whether you like it or any other thoughts you have on what I've shared this month. Share your thoughts with me at results@bgaccelerators.com or via one of the ways you feel comfortable with, below.

Want to get out of the "failure" or "survival" mode? We can help! Get growing again! **Call us today at 912.538.0746** for a discreet, confidential consultation at no charge, if you really want to flourish. Be sure to ask about our complimentary marketing and sales effectiveness assessment when you call. Our proprietary business growth calculator will show you how to grow in a recession and double your profits in the next 12 months. You'll be glad you did.

Warmest regards, ☺

Dan Elder, principal consultant
Business Growth Accelerators

Author of:

Spectacular Business Growth!*

**...Without Spending the Fortune You Hoped To Earn!*

— and —

Dramatic Business Growth!*

**...In The Face Of Fierce Competition!*

Dramatically improving our clients' condition through:

- Business growth coaching
- Skilled facilitation
- On-location business growth consulting
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