

Business Growth = Accelerators

For SPECTACULAR business growth!

Business growth strategies for business owners... in 60 seconds or less!

Recession? Grow Your Business Anyway! – Part 5 February 2009

Welcome to February! Guys, don't forget that Valentine's Day is just around the corner! (Hint: It's February 14th this year.) ☺

I'm pleased to share that I'll be presenting **Slaying the Fear Dragon – How to Turn Yourself Into a Networking Dynamo!** in Pooler Georgia on the 17th of this month. Check out the bottom of this letter for more on how to register. Hope to see you there.

The gloomy economic news continues unabated. According to news reports some 600,000 jobs were lost nationwide in January alone. According to President Obama that's a number equal to all the jobs available in the entire state of Maine.

Will your business fail in this recession? Probably, if you expect it to fail.
Will your business survive this recession? Probably, if you expect it to survive.
Will your business thrive in this recession? Probably, if you expect it to thrive.

The Contrarian View

What will happen? It's worth repeating what I shared last month, that 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. If you expect it to thrive, you will engage in thriving behavior. It's self-fulfilling prophecy and just that simple.

Before we tackle new material, let's do a little review from my previous newsletters in this series (previous newsletters are available on the BGA free resources page at www.bgaccelerators.com/freeresources.html). 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 his or her problems (with your business, by the way!) using the tact of "How can we make this right?"

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.

Examples I used to illustrate these principles from previous issues:

Example #1, Customer Parking, and the subliminal messages that you send your customers and prospects through your parking lot.

Example #2 – Your Business Façade

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.

Example #3 – Your Entrance Doors

It's important that your customers successfully navigate your entrance doors. Have both doors unlocked and make it obvious which way they swing.

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

Example #4 – Answering the Phone

It's vitally important that your customer immediately feel welcome when your business answers their phone call.

Phone queues, so popular with business owners, are nearly always poorly implemented and actually create a negative "audio façade" first impression of your business. Think for a moment about the last time you encountered a phone queue when you dialed a business. Did you really enjoy the experience of being forced to navigate the business's internal structure by listening to multiple options to dial (*"Please listen carefully because our options have changed!"* Great. Changed from what? Why do I care what they used to be?)?

Phone queues have been touted as the way for the business to save a few cents by having the caller route the call. But often the implementation is poor, creating many problems with this approach.

Phone queues attempt to "automate" the receptionist. Often the recording is poor quality, heavily accented, or speaks too fast. Many dialing options are offered and it's often not clear which is appropriate to choose for your reason for calling. Frequently, phone queues:

- Are poorly constructed, e.g., no way to "back up" to the main menu in the queue, so the caller that makes a wrong selection is forced to dial in again (or dial your competitor who doesn't have one of these instruments of torture on his business phone).
- Don't have an option matching the customer's need, e.g., is "order fulfillment" the shipping department? Parts maybe?
- Don't have options to get a live voice to help with problems or information needs, so the caller wanders around in your queue hoping to find a live voice (*"Maybe if I press '0' several times someone will answer!"*) or find the right department by chance.

What impression of your business do these problems communicate?

Further, some phone queues now force you to "speak" your selection. The problem is that many times the system can't understand your selection so you have to resort to buttons eventually anyway, which immediately brings the irritations listed above back into play.

Finally, if the employee eventually answering the incoming call can't answer your question or doesn't want to fool with you, their solution is to politely (because the call is being recorded "for quality assurance purposes") ask you to hold while dumping you back into the queue for someone else to deal with. Phone companies, credit card companies, and computer manufacturers are probably the best examples of employees using this little demotivating trick.

Contrast that experience with the same caller who has a real person answer the phone, who may recognize you as a regular customer and welcomes you back, and knows where to send your call if you have a problem you can't describe.

Where Would You Rather Shop?

What message does forcing your customers to navigate a phone queue send? What's their first impression of your "audio façade"? Wouldn't you prefer to call a business, practice, or shop that features a helpful live voice that welcomes your call and can quickly direct you to the right place the first time?

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!

February Speaking Engagements

On Tuesday morning, February 17, 2009, I'll be presenting

– Slaying the Fear Dragon –

How to Turn Yourself Into a Networking Dynamo!

an interactive breakfast seminar sponsored by the Pooler Crossroads Chamber of Commerce. It's open to the public and will be held at the Western Sizzlin' on US 80 at I-95 exit 102 in Pooler Georgia. Networking begins at 7:15 AM with the seminar concluding by 8:45 AM. Admission is \$5 for Pooler Chamber members and \$15 for non-members (why pay \$15? Become a member of a Chamber actively helping local businesses with seminars and workshops like these and get the discount!) Seating is limited to the first 40 people registering, so register today!

Call the Chamber at **(912) 313-4417** or send an email to marketing@poolercrossroads.com to register and for more information. I'll look forward to meeting you there! ☺

Now It's Your Turn

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, business growth strategist
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
- Performance improvement speaking/seminars/workshops

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