



NDSU Extension

Small Business Newsletter

Business Owner Tips and Resources

February, 2012

February saw us celebrate Entrepreneurship Week. I hope that everyone had a chance to visit and shop with their local small business owners.

I have some people ask what is included in these newsletters and what they can get from my Facebook page and Tweets. The goal of the newsletter is to provide a broad range of information for the small business owner. You will find some social media articles but largely the material covers general management and operational issues. This month you will notice a blurb on the required online steps you should take. But most of the other blurbs are offering general information to help you as a manager.

And why do I call them blurbs? While I may add some focus or a key idea that I have distilled from the resource, my goal is to give you an abstract to help you decide whether you want to read the entire article. There is so much information coming at us each day. I just am trying to help screen that deluge, or that is what it feels like, for a selection of topics. These topics will vary from month to month. I do have your feedback where I heard that marketing and getting started information were the two topics most sought after. But anything goes

So what will you find in my social media efforts. First, it is new releases, breaking news, etc. Typically that is where I put most of the social media/online/tech articles I come across.

Well, enough for today. Hope you are enjoying these newsletters. Be sure to pass them along to others and encourage people to sign up to get their own copy.

Till next time,
Glenn Muske
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Customer Loyalty

Keeping an existing customer has been estimate to cost \$1 to \$5. Getting a new customer has a typical price tag of \$20 or more. Now a new customer may be spend a significant amount of money with you but you have to ask: (1) will they continue that pace; and (2) how much has your regular customer already spent at your business and what might they spend in the future?

Keeping customers is a great way to build your business. You do it by first putting their needs and interests first. The attached article from Inc. offers other ways to build customer loyalty.
<http://bit.ly/A331d1>

Maintaining Balance

If you are in business for yourself, you know what a difficult job it is to maintain the work-family balance. If you are not in business, then be aware. And don't forget that you are also balancing

friends, health and integrity. Can it be done? Yes. Is it easy to do? No. Is it necessary to work on? Definitely. So do some reflection, read this article and perhaps some other resources. Then figure out how you will put it all together. <http://bit.ly/yu9rFn> . You also might want to take a look at the thoughts of our new ND Dept of Ag Marketing and Information Director's, Katie Pinke, recent blog post, <http://bit.ly/xzpqUT>.

The History of Marketing – Infographic

Great visual tool leading us through the history of marketing. As noted, there has been marketing as long as people have been trying to sell something. And many of these tools, when they initially came out, were considered too radical for use. Yet the innovators gave them a try and over time they have become another tool for our use. Take a moment and check it out. Thanks to HubSpot. <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/31278/the-history-of-marketing-an-exhaustive-timeline-infographic>

Two Required Online Steps You Must Take

You probably are tired of hearing about online marketing. In my reading it seems like just about everyone is talking about how great it is. And it certainly has possibilities and should be included in your marketing plan. And your online activity has to start with:

1. Claiming your place on Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc. And don't forget the companies that provide the GPS information for companies such as TomTom.
2. Watching your online reputation. Do you know what past customers or potential customers are saying about your product or store?

The author of the attached article encourages both of these and reminds us that you need to keep a constant watch over your online information. Take a look.

<http://www.newcustomerworkshop.com/has-your-competitor-nuked-your-business-online>

Start-up Mistakes

If you are starting a business, you can be guaranteed that mistakes will be made. They can't be avoided. However by being aware of the most common ones, you can minimize the number and the severity of them. Check out this list of common problems faced by start-up businesses.

<http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/the-9-most-common-start-up-mistakes.html>

Financial Statements: Understanding What You Have

For many business owners, doing financial statements is not something they look forward to or pick up if they have hired others to prepare them. It isn't that we don't want to know what they say; it is that we often are confused by what they say.

There are several ways to help you feel more comfortable with reading financial statements. Take a class; Ask your accountant to help you. However you may want to get a jump on both of these methods. The attached link does a nice job of outlining the basic titles you might see and what they mean. Once you understand this, you will feel more comfortable working with your accountant when they explain your statement in even more detail.

<http://blog.intuit.com/money/how-to-read-an-income-statement/>

Encouraging Small Business Development

It is generally acknowledged that small businesses are an important part of economic growth. One source of future small business owners are today's students. Read how one area is encouraging youth to think about business ownership.

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/222576>

Does Your Marketing Include a Call to Action?

Effective marketing asks the potential customer to do something. Obviously one thing that you might ask is to buy your product. However you may also just ask them to visit your website or contact your for more information. There are ways to make sure your call can generate more action. Check out these tips and think about how you might work them into your marketing plans. <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/31314/how-to-master-the-design-of-compelling-calls-to-action>

Working from Home – Holding a Meeting

This article from the National Federation of Independent Businesses offers some good ideas on where you can hold meetings if you work from home. Before giving you the link however two comments are required.

First, today working from home is becoming more and more a part of life. Many individuals would not hesitate or offer any thought to meeting at your home. However you must feel comfortable in doing so and you also must consider your client. For those you have a working relationship, you can probably judge how meeting at your home may resonate with them. If you are trying to bring in a new client, then perhaps meeting outside of your home would be the prudent thing to do.

Second, if you do meet from home, make sure you have an appropriate place to meet. Also make sure that you will not be disturbed. This means no family, pets, phone calls (let the answering machine pick up the call), etc.

Now to the article: <http://bit.ly/xTSjvr>

Competing with the Big Online Merchant

We have all heard the small merchant express concern regarding how to compete with the online merchant. Yet some would argue that the independent small business owner has opportunities to successfully meet that challenge. As one independent bookstore owner argues, "Even with all of Amazon's merchandising programs, a well-curated bookstore is still better at discovering the thing you didn't know you're looking for." Praveen Madan, This article provides some ideas on how one bookstore is responding - <http://usat.ly/AfkKJe>

Is Cutting Expenses a Viable Way to Grow?

Often when business owners are faced with slow or no revenue growth, one response is to cut costs. Quite often however, this strategy can backfire as you may eliminate items that are essential in maintaining your existing base or are necessary for long term development. This article from Inc. provides some deeper insight into this potential harmful solution - <http://www.inc.com/karl-and-bill/you-cant-cut-your-way-to-growth.html>.

Thoughts on Why Businesses Fail

There are lots of reasons why businesses do not succeed. This article provides a look at some of those. Having a product that people, other than family and friends, want is on the list as is not knowing how to pitch your product and your business. And as much as marketing is talked about as a key business strategy, this author suggest that too much time, energy and resources may go into marketing at times. Read the other reasons suggested at: <http://www.businessinsider.com/13-reasons-why-your-startup-will-fail-2012-2>

New Farmer's Market Vendor – Possible Grants

Go to: http://ndfarmersmarkets.com/grants_17.html

Grants up to \$200 to the vendor who applies. Only brand new vendors are eligible for this grant. In other words, someone who has sold at a different market before and then changes markets is not eligible. However, if someone has worked at a different stand but branches off to create their own business/new stand, they would be eligible. The vendor must sell a specialty crop (such as vegetables, fruits, cut flowers, horticulture plants, etc.). If you have a question if a vendor would be eligible for this grant or not, please feel free to contact us.

The \$200 is to be used for equipment and supplies related to starting to vend at a farmers' markets. This could include but is not limited to the purchase of tables, canopies, signs, vendor fees, display boxes, cash box, scale, etc.

This grant is a great way for your market to recruit new vendors. If you have someone interested in joining the market make sure they know they could get \$200 to help with startup costs. Vendors can apply at any time until **August 31st, 2012**.

Contact info is:

North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association
c/o Stacy Baldus
105 Simrall Blvd.
Bottineau, ND 58318
Telephone: 701-228-5649
Email: stacy.baldus@dakotacollege.edu

Upcoming event

March 20, 2012 – Pride of Dakota Annual Meeting – Doublewood, Bismarck -

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world - Albert Einstein

MORE INFORMATION

Website: www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusines
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