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# smart **Business** matters

*Advice for Success!*

SUMMER 2007  
 VOLUME 3  
 ISSUE 2

## These Employees are Not Your Parent’s Workforce. But They Can be Yours!

While you may think a young professional will have “paid her dues” in one or two years, she may be looking to move up – or out – in six months. What you need to know to keep the next generation of workers on board.



The incoming generation of employees is being touted as unlike any other. They’re accustomed to being taught what they need to know, getting what they want more quickly, receiving encouragement to achieve more, and being reassured of their self-worth.

In their work life, they want professional growth; flexibility; a great work environment; and strong managers who will teach, challenge, and help them achieve their goals. As challenging as some of this new employee attitude may appear, the upside is that younger employees are looking for more collaborative management and more collaborative workplaces, and that could ultimately be to your advantage.

**Make yourself available.** Be more “hands on” with your employees: younger employees want more “face time.” Make sure that as a manager you are an active part of their learning process. Provide the strong guidelines and consistency that a boss should provide, but offer to be their mentor as well. Teach them what they need to know, correct them when they are wrong, and resist the urge to have every minor detail done your way. Collaborate with employees to encourage and implement their ideas.

**Be daring, but not “hands off”.** Younger employees can grow your business in a way you might not anticipate. They have more of a feel for what younger customers want and can help you market your product and services to the next generation of clients. Dare to

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# For Business Plans, It's Just Write.

The most important part of your business plan is the process, so if you want to get it right, just write! Here's what you need to know.

**Don't worry, start writing.** While you can hire a writer who specializes in business plan writing, you are still the key component in the process. If you write or participate actively in writing the business plan, you will gain a better sense of where you are and where you want to go through the process of researching, writing, and revising the plan. Have someone with professional knowledge of business plans review your work to ensure that it puts your best foot forward.

**Provide an overview of your business.** A business plan should amount to no more than 20 to 30 pages, but the size will vary according to the nature and scope of your business. The first section may account for six to twelve pages and contain statements backed up with key numbers and graphs. These include an executive summary citing your objectives, mission, and the factors that you feel will lead to your success; information on your services or products; a market analysis including your perceived target market and marketing plans; an analysis of your competition; and management structure including brief information about key personnel.

**Accurate financial information: the key to success.** The second section will contain more detailed financial information. You must back up your statements in the first section with accurate financial information in this section. The financial pages may be as few as five to seven pages, but the primary purpose of your plan and the scope of your business may dictate much more detail. Investors or loan officers look for past financial business history and financial projections. Include revenue projections for coming years, a cash flow analysis, a break-even analysis, expenses,

personnel costs, sales projections, a balance sheet, and a profit and loss statement. Business plans may also contain an appendix for documents that relate back to your text or financials. Some items that might be found in an appendix may include more detailed resumes of key personnel, market study details, product pictures, patents, and legal documents.

**The S.B.A. can help.** If you haven't written a business plan before, the Small Business Association (SBA) is a good place to start. You can visit their site online at <http://www.sba.gov>. Site navigation changes from time to time, but look for the Small Business Planner. Go to "Write a Business Plan" for some basic information to get you started. If you go to Tools, then

Library & Resources, then Publications, and finally to Management and Planning Series, you will find several business plans for various industries in PDF form. Use them as a guideline to writing your own. Just remember your plan must be uniquely written for your business!

Other sources for plan guidelines include books, classes offered by local banks, other business professionals who have been through the process, or someone who specializes in writing business and strategic plans.

**Keep writing and polishing.** Writing a business plan has been described as a looping process. You write, you revisit, and you write again. If there are some areas of the business plan you are unable to pull together, move on to the next section, and then go back. You will find that areas that presented stumbling blocks become clearer once you've moved on. The process will provide you with invaluable, in-depth information about your business, your capabilities, and the direction in which you want to grow.



**Three advantages to having a business plan** Having a business plan can mean the difference between success and failure, so if you don't already have one, start writing. You'll need a business plan to get investors, to secure a bank loan for your business, and to hone in on your vision and mission for the business. Sharing that vision and mission with employees keeps your staff working towards common goals.

# Are You Selling, or Marketing?

The ultimate goal of marketing is to make selling non-essential. Get to know the five “P”s of marketing: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, and Positioning. Use them to create a marketing strategy and to make selling a lot easier.



## PRODUCT.

If you're in business, you're in business to sell a product or service, be it a book, widget, legal services, or a bottle of water. The product (or service), the first “P” in marketing, is what you have to offer your target market. A unique product or service may be easier to market than one in which you'll face stiff competition.



## PRICE.

Your price is determined by what you must charge in order to make a profit: consider the salary you pay yourself and your employees, employment and facilities costs, costs of product, costs of utilities, etc. But price is also determined by other variables such as the perceived product value, competitor prices, and geographical location.



## PLACE.

Place refers to the channels your product will go through to reach your customers. Will you sell online, in a storefront, supply other retail stores, or sell to corporate offices? Determining place also helps you define price and helps to define your customer or “target market.”



## PROMOTION.

If you're in business, and nobody knows, then you will fail. Raise awareness of your product or service to your target market through promotion. Think of cost-effective and traffic-building ways to get your name out there. Promotions include free samples, giveaways, coupons and discounts, radio or news ads, word of mouth, “guerilla” tactics, e-mail blasts, and sponsorships.



## POSITIONING.

The final “P” is critical to your marketing strategy. Positioning differs from place in that it refers to where you will place your product or service in the mind of your consumer. This requires getting acquainted with your target market's needs, wants, and desires. Create an emotional tie to your product or your services. If you're selling a bottle of water, will it make your customer look cool? Satisfy their desire to feel like an ace athlete? Provide them with a more healthy lifestyle?

*While you may not need all five “P”s to be successful, you should be aware of them and of how they work together. Whether or not your product or service is unique, consider how your product, price, place, and promotion will play a role in your success. And don't forget to position yourself in the hearts and minds of your customers in a way that makes you stand out from the competition. It can mean the difference between success and failure.*

## Position, Position, Position

In their book *Guerilla Marketing for the Home-Based Business*, Jay Levinson and Seth Godin remark on the positioning of 7UP. How could it differentiate itself from all the other colas on the market and go toe to toe with Coke and Pepsi? By positioning itself as the “un-cola.”

Apple consistently positions the Mac against the PC through humorous television ads as the fun computer, the computer for life tasks that can handle business tasks as well. Apple continues to position all its products – iPod, iPhone, and iTV – as hip, functional, fun, and easy to use.

When positioning your business, do some research to find out more about your competition. What do they offer? Who are their clients? Is there a market they are missing? Market your business in a unique way, and sum up what makes your business special in a few words or short phrase. Stand out from your competition!

give them a chance to try out new ideas, but be there to support, train, and advise. Allow for mistakes – they can be used as learning experiences and can make an employee better.

**Challenge them.** If employees have a proven ability to problem-solve and meet the day-to-day demands of their job, reward them with “stretch” projects – ones that provide challenge and opportunity for growth. Allow them “ownership” of the project and to find the best way to accomplish a mutually agreed upon goal. Meet frequently, check their progress, and help when asked.

**Cross-train.** Employees may not be as challenged as you think they are. If you can't offer vertical growth, offer a more well-rounded career. Cross-training employees in other areas provides them with a broader base of knowledge and perspective, and it prepares them to grow with your business. It also offers you more flexibility and allows employees with various backgrounds to work together towards the common goal: increasing profit!

**Show Your Appreciation.** Job growth, a voice, and opportunities to learn and make a difference will help you to retain younger employees. Say “thank you,” and offer occasional small perks, greater responsibility, and more challenging projects. Appreciation will reinforce their loyalty to you and your company.



## E-mail: time saver or time waster?

Feeling bogged down with checking, answering, sending, and managing e-mails?

If you kept a schedule of how much time you spent online, you would probably be unpleasantly surprised at the amount of time you can waste on e-mail. Don't let your e-mails derail your day's work plan. Take control.

Set certain times of day to respond to or to send e-mails. Based upon your business, set strict time parameters for e-mail correspondence. For example, if you find yourself spending three hours a day online, you might want to limit yourself to two hours. If you like to get down to work first thing in the morning or use those morning hours for creative work, block out time mid-day and before the day's end to go online rather than jump right into your e-mail. If your business depends upon some online orders, you may need to check your e-mails first thing in the morning, again at noon, and in the evening. Prioritize your e-mails. Respond and act upon your most urgent e-mails first, and hold off responding to less urgent e-mails until you have more time.

**OFF THE BOOKSHELF** For a self described and subtitled “No holds barred, kick butt, take no prisoners guide to time, productivity and sanity,” check out *NO B.S. Time Management for Entrepreneurs* by Dan Kennedy. To Dan – as to many busy entrepreneurs who wear many hats during the day – time is money. And Dan is “stringent” and “militant” about how he spends his time. In this book, he covers it all, from how to calculate the true value of your time to taking the necessary and sometimes painful steps to making your time count. His style, while humorous, is provocative, extreme, and irreverent, but you'll still be sure to take away some great insights and ideas you can put into practice every day. Published by Entrepreneur Press.