

Have you ever thought about...

...the 'secrets' of getting rich?

AS MANY PEOPLE HAVE OBSERVED, "Success leaves clues." If you want to achieve extraordinary success, study the experts, do what they do, and modify their techniques to suit your particular situation.

It's easy!

Well, maybe not easy, but there are basic fundamentals. In the belief that we all need to be reminded of them regularly, here are some of the secrets that have helped me and my clients over the years:

Focus on values. I've known people who made some money, but I've never known anyone who got rich without examining their own values, priorities and beliefs. Start by writing down a list of things you value, things you believe, what you want, and what you plan to do with this incredible life you have. Start with your values.

Get a life. Before you can handle great wealth, you must make room for it. This is the old, "if you build it, they will come" model. Trying to squeeze success, wealth, fame or fortune into a small life won't work. Create a life first; the lifestyle of your dreams will follow.

Eliminate clutter. Trying to create success and achieve wealth while your life's a mess won't work. Success requires clear priorities and a passionate commitment. Simplify your life. Eliminate the excuses. Clean up everything that distracts you from reaching your most important goals.

Specify your results. Nobody can hit a target they can't see. Define your outcomes and set clear, achievable results in advance. Know what "success" looks like! Have measurable, specific outcomes and determine that you will achieve them!

Burn your ships. There's an ancient story about a Greek general who landed his troops on an enemy shore, then burned his ships. He wanted to make it very clear: Retreat and failure were not an option! Leave no room for failure.

Put in more than you take out. No one will pay you more than your services are worth! Get clear about that! You just can't fool people very long. Your services and your results must be far more valuable than the small fee you charge. Some people will rip you off; the rest will make you rich!

Live below your means. Rich people know this. Wealth is accumulated, re-invested, used wisely and given away. It is never spent!

Let the millionaire athletes and folks who win lotteries buy the fancy cars and flashy jewelry. If you want to achieve great wealth, live simply, invest wisely, enjoy it all! ■

SOURCENOTE: Dr Philip E. Hubert, Top Tips.

BUSINESS

ALERT!

Hands-on help that works

Vol 7 No 2

'Have your cake and eat it, too,' with an independent advisor

An expert outside adviser can vastly increase your chances of success by cost-effectively extending your available skills base.

IF YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED weaknesses in specific skills, you must ensure that these are covered, as this could make the difference between the success or failure of your business.

Having a group of external advisers to call on — early on — can help you get your business off on the right foot, and keep it there.

You need to find a professional who is prepared to look forward with the business and explore the options. For example, a company can apply for a particular type of loan and be turned down, or they could work with the bank/accountant to determine the range of options on how a funding requirement could be met."

With good information you can push the professionals to deliver more.

This is where specialist support organisations and peer-to-peer business networks can help.

But see a range, not just the first one you come across. And if you find information from another source, go back and ask again.

Individual advisers don't know everything or may not pick up all the nuances of a business on the first meeting, but a good adviser will look again.

The more seriously you take getting the advice, the more seriously the advisers will take you.

If you are an ambitious company, Herd suggests holding a beauty parade of banks, accountants, lawyers and independent advisers to ensure you are getting the most appropriate one for your business.

Of course, you rarely get something for nothing — advice costs money and

this is where most mistakes are being made.

Start-ups are usually looking for cheap solutions for immediate needs — and businesses are right to watch the costs in this way.

But what is the value of having an accountant who each year provides you with a historical record of where you lost money, compared with someone who can look forward to help you manage your ongoing business and provide the information to maximise the potential?

Here are five steps that can help influence the quality of advice you receive.

Find the right accountant. The fact that someone is completing your VAT returns does not mean you are getting the best out of your accountant. A fast-growing enterprise needs a financial adviser who can plan ahead and proactively suggest ways to make strategies financially possible.

Select the most appropriate professional independent advisors for individual tasks. A common mistake is to appoint a lawyer or accountant to handle all legal or financial matters, but it may be wiser to pick and choose specialists for different functions.

Assess your banking needs. Find a service that supports the company you want to become, rather than the one you are now.

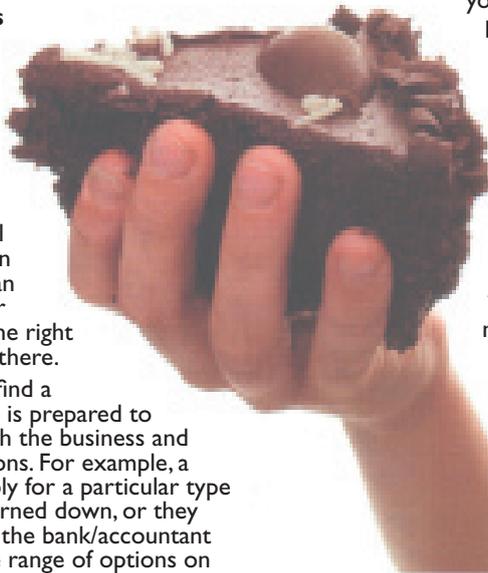
Work with people you like. In business, it is often necessary to cooperate with individuals whom you may not like or respect.

However, when seeking advice on the future of your firm, you need to ask someone you trust.

Ask yourself whether they understand and have an affinity for what you are trying to achieve.

Don't be too proud to ask for help. Never see it as a failure to ask for guidance. No-one is infallible, and having people to support you can make the journey to success much smoother. ■

SOURCENOTE: Lloyds/TSB BusinessGO



WE ALL HAVE GOALS that are important to us. They range from quitting smoking, to creating our own businesses, to raising great kids.

Unfortunately, most of us also have the experience of being unable to reach our goals, of having them always seem just out of reach. almost like magic! They will help you reach your goals, every time!

- **Precisely define the objective.** Exactly what do you want? Measure it, put a number on it. How many pounds do you want to lose? How many dollars do you want to earn?

- **Align the objective with your values.** You won't work toward a goal that conflicts with your values or sense of purpose. Make sure your goals are consistent with your religious and moral beliefs and with other goals that you have.

- **Develop appropriate affirmations.** A series of positive, powerful, present-tense statements that describe the benefits of having your goal and how you'll feel when you've reached it are essential. Write them down and repeat them many times, every day!

- **Develop powerful reasons to achieve your goals.** "If you have enough why's, you'll find a way." We reach goals that excite us, that stimulate our imaginations. We reach goals that are vital to our health, our family and our future. Find lots of reasons! When it's important enough, you'll make it happen.

- **Write your goals and your reasons down!** Write them on file cards every day! There is power, magic and mystery in writing your goals down. Put the cards where you'll see them through the day. Put them on your mirror, or on your desk. Carry them with you and read them, over and over, through the day. ■

SOURCENOTE: Top Tips weekly



Ian McFarlane-Toms

The way I see it...

AFTER A GOLF MATCH that he did not win, in part due to a minor injury that adversely affected his game, golfer Tiger Woods was asked by a TV interviewer if he would go "rest up" for a few days.

Although he had completed the tournament round only minutes before, Woods responded by detailing his plan to practise certain shots that very afternoon, then fly the following morning to the site of the next tournament, acclimatize himself, do more drills, and play practice rounds.

He certainly didn't acknowledge

— In fact he didn't seem to even hear — the broadcaster's implication that he might take even the briefest break from his in-season routine.

No one is born with skill to do anything. People may have special aptitudes — some things may come to them relatively easily — but in order to excel, they still must practise.

This is true in all callings, whether you're a leader of industry, a golfer, a parent, or a rock-band drummer.

The most skilful are those who practise the most. ■

Effective selling

Eight classic web marketing mistakes

WITHOUT DOUBT, most of us are constantly finding out new ways to improve our small business web marketing efforts — this is only natural.

However, given that the Internet is jam-packed with sites which have run into all sorts of trouble in their quests to get noticed, I thought I'd list down some of the classic ways to ensure that your site will get no visitors whatsoever — reverse psychology perhaps!

1. **Spam** — The surefire way of getting your site blacklisted from the major search engines. Never ever resort to this nasty method to get noticed.

Overusing multiple 'doorway' or 'gateway' pages (small pages of text, stuffed with keywords) is a surefire way to get your site banned by the search engines.

2. **The Wrong Traffic** — It's great if your website is receiving hundreds of visitors, but are they the type of visitor you want?

Make sure your keywords and other meta tags reflect the true content of your business, otherwise you'll be disappointing both your visitors and yourself.

3. **Single Keywords** — Unless you're in some incredible niche marketplace where a single word can only be identified with your product with few competitors, single keywords aren't going to hit the bullseye in a traffic sense.

Go for keyword phrases which accurately reflect the theme of your website and the page they're coded into.

4. **Sloppy Site Design** — There's no way around this one. Even if you get the visitors through good web marketing, they'll leave within seconds if your site is not up to scratch.

5. **External Links** — Absolutely essential. Many small businesses don't even have a links page as they feel their visitors will desert them.

Not true. Google, for example, looks at the quantity and relevancy of links coming in and out of all websites to determine its 'Pagerank' and how high a site appears in search results. Exchange links with sites similar

in theme to yours — go for quality rather than exchanging links with US-based casino software sites which have no relevance to your small business whatsoever!

6. **Bad Code** — After the search engine robots have visited your site, they'll see the meta information first, then they'll scan your page for the first chunk of relevant text.

A large number of sites have cluttered code (Javascript usually) after the meta tags. Either have a re-think, or place any code in a separate file on your server and 'include' it in your web page.

7. **Watch out for SEO 'Experts'** — There must be a million so-called 'search engine optimisation experts' out there.

Make sure you know in advance exactly what you'll receive in exchange for their promises to boost your site traffic.

There are plenty of good companies out there who can do the work for you, but seek recommendations from other small business people before making the decision.

8. **Patience** — Building up your website traffic will take quite some time from a standing start.

Not only is Google rumoured to implement a 'sandbox' on new sites to deter spammers (new sites typically take several months to be ranked correctly), but link building and publicising your site to others is an ongoing and essential process.

If you look at web marketing as an ongoing activity and avoid some of the classic mistakes mentioned in this article, you should save quite a bit of time and the rewards should come. ■

SOURCENOTE: Bytestart

Words of Wisdom

"Try to learn something about everything and everything about something."

— Thomas H. Huxley

MOST OF US are used to the concepts of risk management or time management. Many of the same principles can be applied to creating and responding to opportunities.

Instead of thinking of opportunities as just 'coming along', you can actually increase the number of opportunities available to you and there are specific principles you can use to assess whether a 'possibility' has real 'probability' and 'profitability' for you.

● **Enlarge your circle of friends.** To increase the number of opportunities available, you need to go beyond traditional networking to generate friendships and trust with people who 'aren't like me'. Use any system you prefer, but be certain that your friendships include various ethnic, economic and social backgrounds, people who 'think differently'.

● **Practise creativity.** Intentionally think of a way to turn every crack-pot, bad idea into something useful. This is not about finding a way to invest in every scheme that comes your way, it's about practising creativity, turning ideas on their heads, finding the kernel of wisdom or value, and throwing the rest away.

● **Avoid being overly tied to your goals.** Goals, and plans for achieving them, can be extremely useful. They can keep us on track, focus our efforts and motivate us when we're tired. But they can also blind us to new possibilities. Work toward your goals; don't let them run your life.

● **"He who hesitates is a damned fool!"** This quote from Mae West is a classic call to action. Being 'light on your feet' or, in Muhammad Ali's old phrase, being able to 'float like a butterfly and sting like a bee' is useful business advice. There are times when opportunity knocks, but only stays at the door for a moment. Be prepared to respond quickly.

SOURCENOTE: Top Tips Weekly

Fraud prevention

In suspicious circumstances

by Peter Hodges

Here are examples of fraud within the owner-managed business sector and some simple measures to protect against it.

Fraud most often hits the headlines when the people involved have a high profile; where the issues raised are complex; or when the amounts involved are huge.

Owner-managed business (OMBs) will rarely be involved in this type of fraud.

However, frauds that do occur in OMBs are normally fairly simple and opportunistic and, whilst the amounts involved may not be on a headline-making scale, they are often significant enough to cause the business serious financial hardship, and even failure.

I was once instructed in a case that involved a bookkeeper who had recorded herself (under a false identity) as a supplier to the business for whom she worked.

She submitted invoices, which — as part of her job — she checked herself. She then paid herself mainly with cheques signed in advance by the directors.

When pre-signed cheques were not available, she simply presented a cheque to the directors without the payee line completed, claiming she would have to find out the correct name. She later completed the cheques with her own name.

The fraud was only discovered when the directors noticed a marked increase in costs and ordered an investigation. By then, the business was running at a loss and had a substantial bank overdraft.

In another case, a bookkeeper saw the opportunity to misappropriate cash received from customers. Although the business received cash and cheques, he only banked the cheques and kept the cash.

To avoid detection, he recorded all amounts received from customers, including cash receipts, in the books but manually amended the total to the amount of cheques banked — omitting any cash amounts from the total.

If a second person had been involved in the

process or the business's financial affairs had been carefully monitored, the fraud would have easily been detected.

However, the bookkeeper was in full control of the accounting function and was able to continue the fraud for over a year.

In each case, the fraud was discovered by chance. There are a number of ways to protect against fraud. Here are a few simple suggestions:

● It is comparatively easy for a fraud to be committed where just one person is responsible for the entire accounting function or a substantial part of it.

Segregation of duties between staff reduces the chance of fraud, as long as the parties do not collude.

● Management should always retain a degree of control, which could be exercised in the signing of cheques or passing of invoices for payment.

Effective control can be maintained by insisting that invoices are always presented in support of cheques being raised.

● Signed cheques are a licence to print money. Blank cheques and cheques without the payee name completed should only be signed on exceptional occasions.

● Most business owners instinctively know what the cash position of the firm and its profit levels should be.

Acting quickly when the results do not tally with expectations could result in the early discovery of fraud.

● Watch out for unusual requests from the person in charge of the accounting function.

● If an employee is unusually protective of certain tasks, they may have something to hide. For example, is there a reason why your company accountant always insists on doing the banking himself rather than delegating it?

● A marked change in cashflow or profit levels during an employee's holiday can indicate a fraud.

Similarly, a member of staff who never takes a holiday may be trying to cover an on-going fraud.

SOURCENOTE: Peter Hodges, a partner at leading Lancashire accountancy firm Jackson Stephen, specialises in forensic accounting.

Face-to-face

Control your volume to keep the discussion going

WHAT YOU SAY COUNTS in handling an argument, but so does how loudly you say it.

Said in a loud voice, even a sincere offer of compromise is likely to fail.

Communications consultant Jo Condrill suggests focusing on vocal volume instead of content alone.

As a conversation heats up, listen:

Are you and your opponent talking louder and louder?

If you are, consciously keep your voice from following the upward trend.

Relax the muscles around your jaw, neck and shoulders, and forget about outshouting your opponent. ■

SOURCENOTE: The Manager's Intelligence Report

The Institute for Independent Business

FOUNDED IN 1984 in the UK, the Institute for Independent Business (IIB) is now one of the world's largest international networks of business advice providers.

As of 31 March 2006, 3697 carefully-selected men and women had been accredited as IIB Associates worldwide.

Experienced professionals

Experienced senior business people in their own right, who have elected to become self-employed business advisers, Associates and Fellows of the IIB have received additional training to enable them to focus accurately and cost-effectively on the needs of clients and prospects.

This ensures that Associates' clients receive the "practical advice that works" — the Institute's mottos in every country in which the Institute operates. ■

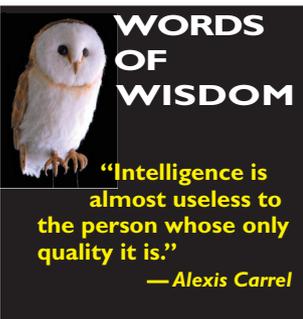
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Leadership

Dive into the pool — again and again

What impresses author Robert Rosen most about Kermit Campbell, CEO of the Herman Miller furniture manufacturing company, is "his insatiable thirst for growth."

CAMPBELL SAYS, "I must understand more today than I did yesterday, and I must be better equipped to do something today than I was yesterday. I have always been that way..."

This trait inspires Campbell's management philosophy, "I encourage people to step out from where they are," he says, "to expose themselves to growth opportunities."

Campbell has a thought-provoking metaphor for the leader's role. Try it on for size:

Campbell asks, "Have you ever stood in a swimming pool and caught a leaping four-year-old? The first time you see the hesitation, fear and excitement on the child's face.

"After the first leap, however, you can't stop the youngster from climbing out and leaping in again and again."

That, in a nutshell, is his idea of leadership. But wait, the leader isn't the adult in this

picture — it's the child.

Campbell points out that "Managers today are leaping into waters of risk, constant change and increasingly tougher competition - and it's scary."

Who is there to catch a manager leaping into uncertain business conditions? Campbell's answer is: "The people in our organizations. What will save us is the creativity and commitment of our employees, the skills and knowledge of a diverse organization. What we leaders have to do is, like the child on the edge of the pool, trust our people."

Of course, Campbell adds, "Trust means doing one crucial thing before taking that leap: untying our employees' hands so that they can, in fact, catch us when we jump."

He finds that employees in most companies wear shackles — they're prevented from taking responsibility and innovating.

Instead of hands-on management, Campbell believes that "managers achieve the best results when they use their own hands to untie those of their employees." ■

SOURCENOTE: Robert H. Rosen, LEADING PEOPLE: TRANSFORMING BUSINESS FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Brief and to the point

Environment law 'burden rather than opportunity'

Cutting costs and complying with the law are the main motivations for small firms when it comes to the environment. So says Government agency Envirowise, which surveyed firms' green credentials in a report called Tomorrow's World, in partnership with the University of Bath. Almost 80% of the firms polled said environmental concerns were of "little or no importance" to their customers. ■

Read more about the report at: <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/page.aspx?o=194215>

New tax dates announced

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has announced that it is bringing forward the deadline for filing hard copy income tax self-assessment returns by four months from 2008. The move is part of HMRC's efforts to encourage more taxpayers to file their returns online. It will see the deadline for paper-based returns pushed forward to 30 September, while online forms will be able to be submitted up until 30 November. The current deadline is 31 January. ■

There are full details in a Government press release at: <http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=192149&NewsAreaID=2>

Have your say!



Add your voice to those of other business people on important business issues. Each issue of Business Alert will feature a Statement on which you can voice an opinion. Simply select the view that reflects your opinion and email it to me. Your opinion will be submitted to the Institute for Independent Business for inclusion in its continuing business research.

The Statement:

"The biggest problem I face is government red tape"

Please email me with the letter (A-E) expressing your opinion from the following choices:

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Unsure
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree

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