

SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS



February 2009

[Rewards for Gen Y Employees](#) | [Making the Most of Your Marketing Creativity and Improving Your Business Edge](#) | [Change is Good - You Go First!](#)

Heart Healthy in 2009

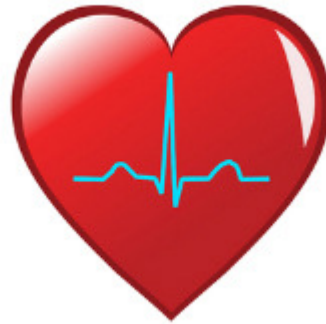
February is the month of love - a time when we all focus on what (or who) is on our hearts. It is also a month that also focuses on heart health. While this newsletter is typically not focused on health, I got to thinking about how it might be relevant to a small business owner, and let's face it, running a business is stressful, demanding, and often gets in the way of making healthy choices. Sure we'd love to sit down for a heart-healthy lunch every day, but who has time? Instead, it's racing through the drive-through for a burger or fourth cup of coffee, or grabbing a candy bar from your desk. But the bottom line is, if you don't take care of your heart, your business isn't going to matter anyway! Complements of the British Heart Foundation, there are 10 ways to increase your heart health in 2009. You'll find the first five (along with some tips on how you can manage them in spite of your busy, demanding business) in this article, and the last five will follow next month!

1. Get your 30 a day - try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on 5 days or more every week. Your heart will love you for it, and the bonus? Overall better health leads to more energy, greater alertness and creativity, and a healthier brain. That's good for business! **Business Tip** – if 30 minutes at a time seems like too much, break it down. Do 10 minutes 3 times a day, or 15 minutes twice. It doesn't matter how you do it, as long as you get it done! No matter how busy you are, you can find 10 minutes a few times a day to give your heart a boost.

2. Kick the habit - if you're a smoker, make this the year you finally say "enough". A major risk factor for coronary disease, smoking brings you ever closer to a shortened lifespan. The good news is, the effects of smoking can be reversed. Don't wait another day to make this commitment. Your business can only benefit from a healthier you. **Business Tip** – identify the ways in which running your business has created a barrier for you to quit smoking. Are the hours too long? Stress too high? Are you too isolated so there's no accountability? Find the barriers and come up with specific

strategies to overcome them. Talk to a doctor or therapist for physical and emotional strategies to help you quit.

3. Lose the Christmas pounds right away - most of us if we're honest, tend to put on a few pounds over the holidays. That's not so bad – but the problem is we let those pounds remain there until the next Christmas, and after a few years we've put on 20 extra pounds – and we all know excess weight is bad for the heart. So this year, decide you'll take them off now! Don't hang on to them until they become accustomed to sitting on your hips or tummy. Those pounds can be really stubborn once they find a home on your body! **Business Tip** – eat a heart healthy breakfast every day – protein, low fat and whole grains. It will set the tone for the rest of your day. Take an extra 10 minutes after dinner to pack a healthy lunch. If you have a sandwich on whole grain bread to reach for when you're hungry, it will make it easier to resist the candy-bar AND the drive-through. It really only does take a few minutes, but makes a world of difference in your busy day.



4. Lower your salt intake - most of us are so used to adding salt to our foods, we don't even know what food really tastes like. Salt can dramatically impact your blood pressure and overall heart health, and it's insidious – it's in almost everything we eat! **Business Tip** – start looking for foods that are labeled “sodium reduced”. Commit for one month NOT to put salt on your food until you've eaten at least half the meal. If you can't stand it after half, go ahead and add a little, but just by doing that you'll have already reduced your salt intake by 50%! You may find you even enjoy the way food tastes naturally – without all the added salt.

5. Commit to 5 - that's a combined total of 5 fruits and vegetables every single day. Your heart is dying for the benefits of heart healthy antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables, and this small change in your daily eating habits can make a big change in your health. Try as much as possible to choose fruits and vegetables with deep, rich colours, and reduce starchy veggies like potatoes, corn, and peas. **Business Tip** – for a busy person on the go, this can be the most challenging part of a healthy diet. Who has time to make a salad and cook veggies during the day? Packing a salad the night before will give you quick easy access to a healthy snack or addition to your lunch. Also, saving your veggies for dinner and eating fruit during the day might make it easier to get them all in. Grabbing an apple on the go is easy! Another great way to get your veggies in during the day is to buy soups laden with veggies – another quick and easy option to get in your 5!

None of these tips have probably come as a surprise to you. Most of us know how to be healthier, but hopefully being reminded of how important it is to stay healthy – for the sake of your business – will motivate you to actually make some changes that stick. Next month, look forward to the second 5 strategies to keep your heart healthy in 2009.

[Top](#)

Will Yesterday's Rewards Motivate Today's Gen Y Employees?

For many leading employers, the end of the calendar year suggests a time to reflect and reward employees for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. While this gesture will go a long way towards encouraging employees to remain and contribute to an organization, employers should also consider “how” employees are rewarded and whether or not their current recognition program meets the changing expectations of today’s employees. As the generation of Baby Boomer employees begin to retire and more Generation Y employees enter the labour market it is important to recognize that not only do these generations view the world of work differently, they also have very different expectations when it comes to rewards and recognition.

Let’s focus on the example of annual Service Anniversary or Long Service Awards, which many organizations have used successfully for many years. While the idea of receiving an anniversary award will likely excite the conventionally dedicated, live-to-work Baby Boomer employees (particularly if they are celebrating 10-25 year milestone tenures) this type of reward might not seem as exciting to their younger Generation Y counterparts who are typically more focused on working-to-live and for whom 1-2 years with the same employer is considered long service.

In order to understand how to effectively reward Generation Y employees, here are a few key considerations and suggestions:

- ***Born into a technological world.*** This generation doesn’t know life before the internet, social networking, instant messaging, cell phones, ipods and reality TV.
- ***They are “plugged in” socially*** and value spending time with their friends and families. Thanks to technology, this is the first generation that is truly getting to know their grandparents.
- ***A strong desire to work on their own terms.*** Generation Y employees typically focus more on actually accomplishing the task (so that they can be social), as



opposed to “how” the task is to be accomplished.

- **More value on whether or not the job is accomplished** than on how long or the amount of effort it takes.
- **Conscious activists**. Thanks again to technology, this worldly generation is not only aware of local and international events, they will also seek to be part of the big picture and wants to make a difference.

Rewards and recognition suggestions:

- Time off with pay
- Social activities where they are encouraged to bring a partner/spouse/friend
- Rewards that recognize their achievement of goals - Gift cards (itunes, Starbucks, Tim Horton's, Online store – Chapters/Amazon)
- Environmentally sensitive gifts (ie. Notebooks of recycled paper, gifts that donate a portion of the price to a local charity, trendy and recyclable shopping bags)

When it comes to recognizing and motivating today's employees, it is important to understand that yesterday's tried and true methods may not be as effective as they once were. Is it time to re-evaluate your existing rewards & recognition program? Not sure what kind of rewards would motivate your employees? Ask them. No matter what generation they belong to, employees appreciate being asked and are more likely to work harder for a reward that they have suggested.

Ginger Brunner is the founder of Dynamic HR Solutions Inc., (www.dynamichrsolutions.com); Ginger is a specialist in leadership development and trains on Bridging the Generation Gaps in the Workplace. For more information, contact ginger@dynamichrsolutions.com

[Top](#)

Making the Most of Your Marketing

It is significant to note that leading companies don't subscribe to the misconception that marketing is a discretionary expense. Many small business owners in these tough times are hacking their marketing budgets, believing that it is an “extra” in the long list of expenses. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, according to Fayazuddin A. Shirazi, writer for ChiefExecutive.net, “Industry pundits are of the opinion that it is not only essential to hold on to the existing marketing budget allocations, but also bolster them to extract maximum out of the ‘opportunities triggered by the onset of recession.’ Recessions offer opportunities for businesses to make their mark when there is less “noise” in the market as other competitors are cutting back. Wise investors, during times of recession, increase their investment purchases when prices are

low – trusting those stocks will eventually recover, and anticipating a significant return. Similarly, smart companies not only continue to spend on marketing, but many increase spending to take advantage of the existing holes in the market due to others pulling out. That doesn't mean however that you shouldn't consider HOW you are marketing. Tough times require creativity and a fresh look at your opportunities.

McGraw-Hill did a study of US recessions that analyzed 600 industrial companies. They found that Business to Business firms that maintained or increased their advertising expenditures during the 1981-1982 recession grew their sales by 256 percent, both during the recession and for the following three years compared with those that eliminated or decreased advertising.

A fear-based response caused hundreds of thousands of investors to pull out their investments during the recent economic crash, causing catastrophic results that have left businesses reeling. Financial advisors recommend frugality during difficult times, but advocate patience and faith in the financial products to regain their value over time. Similarly, businesses must clearly focus on marketing efforts that create the biggest return on investment, be cautious with spending, and keep an eye on the bigger picture rather than reacting to the immediate challenges.

According to Jeff Swystun, Les Binet and Dan Miller (DDB Company), authors of the Yellow Paper Series titled “Capturing Opportunities in Challenging Times”, customers are behaving differently right now, so your marketing efforts need to reflect those behaviours if you are to be successful.

Customers are considering needs vs. wants. When money is tight and people are pulling back, before they make a purchase they are asking themselves “do I really need this?” Wants will be restricted, especially for larger items. Therefore, if you focus your marketing on repositioning your product or service to become a need, you’ll be way ahead. Perhaps they won’t buy a brand new washing machine from you, but can you convince them that they need to protect their existing washing machine through a service agreement so it doesn’t break down and force them to buy a new one? They aren’t going to buy the new machine anyway, so why not sell the something that will keep them coming back when things pick up again?

If they do consider it a need, price will be the major purchasing factor. So your customer has decided they DO need a service agreement for their old washing machine. Chances are they’re going to do some comparison shopping. This is where you need to be savvy in knowing your competitor’s pricing. Now your marketing efforts must focus on how you can beat what they are doing. This doesn’t necessarily mean reducing your prices, but it does mean being creative. Can you throw in a supply of laundry detergent, or offer the first service visit at a percentage off? If you can add something to make them feel like they’re getting more for their money, you’ll win their business.



Finally, they’ll consider value. In times when the economy is good, people find value in a greater number of things. In good times, people have the luxury of remaining committed to brands they like – even if they are more expensive than others. In difficult times, they re-evaluate whether the value they get for that brand is really worth the extra money they are spending. These “value” based

perceptions are often more emotionally motivated in good times, but tend to be more fact-based in tough times. “Winning companies will ideally use marketing and advertising to communicate to consumers the story of their brands in a way that moves them from a “want” to a “need”. This will entail a clear statement of benefits that represents the overall value and justifies the associated price through a strategic program of communications.” (Capturing Opportunities in Challenging Times)

Before you throw in your marketing towel, make sure you’ve considered whether that is the best decision. Remember, the most successful companies use recession times as an opportunity to create an impact in the market when others are pulling back. Change your marketing to adapt to consumer economic realities rather than simply cutting back, and your patience and strategic plan will see you through the tough times.

[Top](#)

Creativity and Improving Your Business Edge

Many of you may have heard about how the Swiss thought only analogue watches were a marketable commodity. Then the Japanese grabbed Swiss digital technology and stole much of the watch market. It sounds incredible that the Swiss couldn't see the usefulness of what was right in front of their own eyes, but unfortunately, this sort of thing happens every day. You may think you don't need to be creative in your small business, but creativity can help you do a better job of what you do. Doing a better job of what you do makes you look better to your customers and your industry. And it also makes you feel more fulfilled and satisfied. Those are two very good reasons for cultivating creativity in your business.

What exactly is creativity?

According to Michael Michalko, one of the world's leading experts in the field, creative people are those who come up with more ideas in a shorter space of time. They had more good ideas. But they also had more BAD ideas. The key is generating ideas quickly. Out of this wealth of ideas will spring some that better solve your problem in new and exciting ways. Let's look at this in another way - let's draw a picture of creativity.

Imagine two people, Joe Average and Cathy Creative. They work in the same department of a large telecommunications firm, and they both have problems they need to find a solution for. Joe Average holds his idea gun and slowly moves towards his problem. He carefully takes aim and holds his breath. Then he squeezes the trigger. He hits, slightly off target, but he breathes a deep sigh of relief because he hit what he was aiming at and he puts his idea gun away. Cathy Creative, on the other hand, has a idea machine gun. As soon as she sees the problem, she aims her machine gun in the direction of the target, presses the trigger, and sprays ideas all over the place. Some hit; some don't. Some are far off target - actually hitting the ceiling and the floor. But ten are close to dead centre.

Why do many business owners lack creativity?

Part of the reason could be that the ever-present "profitability focus" of business, plus the downsizing trends of the last decades have put blinders on people. Why? Cutbacks in staff have made for more work in less time. And people worried about losing their job – especially these days - are too stressed out to relax and think creatively. Another reason is that people mistakenly think they aren't creative - and because of that mind set, they continually miss opportunities and insights that people on the look out for creative ideas immediately pounce upon.

So, if you are stressed, always thinking of the dollar, and don't think you are creative, what can you do to bring innovation to your work? The first thing is to assess what you realistically can and cannot do. After all, no one is Superman (or Wonder Woman)! If you don't have time to impart a creative touch to your work, then hire someone to either do it for you, or to look your work over and then talk about it with you. It is amazing how often people who think they aren't creative can come up with good ideas when they bounce ideas off of someone who is innovative, non-judgmental, and enthusiastic.

The second thing that even the most time-stressed person can do is to take a few seconds here and there throughout the day and notice things. When you flip through a magazine, pause if something catches your eye and spend 15 seconds thinking about exactly what it is that you like, and how you might be able to do something similar in your own line of work. When you are watching television, look at the advertisements that make you smile, or think, and try to figure out how the advertising executive came up with the idea for that commercial. When you are cooking, look at the cut kiwi in your hand and see how two totally different colours and textures form something visually appealing. Doing this will help you realize that creativity is just a word for the merger of childlike curiosity and what experts call "unusual connection". Creativity really is simply the ability to bring two things totally unrelated together in order to solve a problem.



More ideas and better ideas - that's something that can help any person in any job, especially a small business owner. After all, who doesn't have problems to solve? Everyone benefits from being creative. And, fortunately, being creative, or coming up with more ideas and better ideas, is something YOU can learn. Religiously doing these things will help you, the non-innovative and time-stressed person, actually become creative. You will start seeing associations between totally different things. You will begin to be adventurous in your choice of colour, texture, and language. And you will find that over time, you will come up with more and more ideas that astound your staff and especially your customers. That makes for great business!

[Top](#)

Change is Good - You Go First!

The funny but oh-so-true title of this article comes from a fabulous little book of the same name, by Mac Anderson and Tom Feltenstein. The subtitle is “21 Ways to Inspire Change.” Given the current economic climate, it appears that change is the only thing anyone can guarantee. If you aren’t able to deal with it as a small business owner, and help your staff deal with it, you may end up being one of those statistics of the businesses that didn’t make it in 2009. In this little 100 page book, Anderson and Feltenstein provide 21 practical, relevant ways to manage change. They do it in bit-sized pieces so that anyone can apply the principles to their business. Anderson says, “Sameness is the fast track to mediocrity. And, mediocre companies won’t survive.” Here is the first of the 21 ideas to inspire change. If you feel inspired by this challenge, you can order the book at www.simpletruths.com.

Change what needs changing – not what’s easy.

The story is told of a London ad agency being courted by the enormous British Rail. It seems they had experienced a fall-off in business and wanted to hire an agency to help them bring their customers back. British Rail executives arrived at the ad agency for their first meeting and were greeted by a rude receptionist who insisted they wait in the lobby. After a lengthy wait, they were led to the conference room by an unkempt, scruffy employee. The conference room was dirty, cluttered with plates of stale food, and smelled musty. People wandered in and out of the room, paying no attention to the executives, and they again experienced a lengthy wait. When they attempted to ask people what was going on, they were brushed off. When the executives decided they had finally had enough, disgusted with the way they’d been treated, one of the agency representatives met them at the door. He announced that their visit to the agency had been elaborately staged to make an important point – to show them what it was like to be a customer of British Rail. He had the executive’s full attention.

He went on to tell them that their real problem wasn’t their advertising, it was their people, and by addressing the employee attitude program, they would have greater success than in attempting to change their advertising. The agency got the account, and while the book doesn’t tell us the outcome or the strategy, it leaves the reader with this thought: “If you don’t like change, you’re going to like irrelevance a lot less!”

How does this apply to your business?

When business owners are faced with tough times, they often have a knee-jerk reaction to the circumstances, and make the changes they feel are obvious (cut back on marketing, lay people off, reduce expenses, to name a few). While some of these strategies may be good and even necessary, it takes an extra effort to really look at what NEEDS changing, instead of



changing the seemingly obvious.

First, identify the problem, then find its source. British Rail was losing customers – their solution was to do the obvious – increase their advertising. While they appeared to have identified the problem, they did not understand why the problem existed, therefore their solution was irrelevant. British Rail could have spent millions on a clever advertising campaign, but if people didn't like how they were being treated, they wouldn't use British Rail no matter how much money they spent to get their attention.

In what areas is your business struggling in these difficult times? Write them down so you are clear. Ask your staff what they feel are the problems you're facing. Sometimes they have a better perspective than you do. Once you've figured out the problems, don't immediately go to finding solutions. Instead, ask yourself why this problem is occurring. Be honest. Look around. Ask people involved with your business (your customers, your suppliers) and be willing to look at some answers you may not like. The British Rail executives were put off at first – shocked even – but they were able to look beyond their own perceptions and hear what someone from the outside was saying. Only then were they able to find the solution that would truly address the problem and affect change.

Anderson says, “The truth is, change can be a wonderful gift. In fact, it is the key that unlocks the doors to growth and excitement in any organization. And, most importantly, without it . . . your competition will pass you by. A big part of your success, as a leader, will be your ability to inspire your team to get out of their comfort zones; to assure them that even though they are on a new path, it's the right path, for the right reasons.” Don't jump to conclusions. Be thoughtful about what NEEDS changing, and then make the RIGHT changes. If you do, you'll stay a step ahead of your competitors and be a survivor of these challenging times.

[Top](#)

Community Futures Centre West
6, 205 1st Street
Cochrane Alberta T4C 1X6
Tel: 403-932-5220 Toll Free: 1-877-603-2329
Fax: 403-932-6824
dgraham@cfcwest.com
www.cfcwest.com

Published in cooperation with Your Corporate Writer - www.ycw.ca