

It's A Different World Out There



It is different now. The world is changing once again. Just when we thought we could launch new dot-coms, run up the stock price, have a grand party and rejoice in a New Economy, reality has a nasty little way of peeking in like Dr. Seuss' *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* and disrupting our pattern.

Yes, it is different now for businesses in the New Economy. Yet, we can learn a lot from the Old Economy and the principles that don't change. The mood in technology today is that we have to get down to serious business. Off come the coats and ties, and the mood is "roll up your sleeves and get to work" in three key areas: 1) Increase sales, 2) Tighten internal procedures, 3) Strengthen ties with vendors and customers.

So, what is a small business to do? Is the picture bleak? Is the party over?

Not on your life!

We are just beginning a new phase. Some are saying that we are really just at the end of the beginning. Enormous new opportunities are waiting for those willing to grasp the market and seize the chances. Here are some action steps you can take now to be ready for the good that is coming.

Realize the Enormous Opportunities Ahead

The world has changed because of the Internet and technology. It will never be the same. There are wonderful opportunities as we move to more mobile access of data (small laptops, Palm devices, more powerful cell phones, etc.), faster access to the Internet and a more rich and full functionality of the Internet. Think of how you can align your business with these trends to better serve your customers.

Blow the Dust Off Your Contact Management Software and Use It!

Programs like ACT!, Maximizer, GoldMine and even Outlook can help you stay in touch with people in a meaningful way. This is nothing new. However, we have to use them to get the greatest potential from them. The slowing economy and tech sector can serve as a splash of cold water in the face to wake us up to do more and lean on that technology more than ever. Learn how to use the mass e-mail function and mail merge functions of your

program. Stay in touch in a meaningful, helpful way with past clients and customers.

Analyze Your Internal Procedures

What costs can still be shaved from your operation? How can you make things more efficient? Yes, you're using technology now, but what measures can you take to increase efficiency more? What can be done on the Web through an ASP (Application Service Provider) that can push the heavy lifting onto them rather than your staff? This will require a lot of serious thinking and critical examination of your core business strategy. In the words of award-winning business speaker Michael McKinley, "What are you doing that you don't have to do?" Eliminate the "B" and "C" stuff you're doing and focus on the "A" priority tasks that only you can do.

Enhance and Fine-Tune Relationships

Now is a good time to review your relationships with key vendors and suppliers. Which ones do you view as part of the team?



This is a regular series of articles on technology that appears monthly in *Agency Sales*. If there are any subjects that you feel should be explored, or if you have any comments about this subject, please contact the Tech Talk editor at: alaplante@MANAonline.org.

by **TERRY BROCK**

Which of those vendors view you as part of their team? Because you can't do it alone in today's world, you have to have strategic relationships with lots of vendors that will provide key assets and strengths. Find the key factors that each vendor brings to the relationship. Focus on those vendors who will stick with you through thick and thin. Prepare for contingencies now and have a team in place. Think of yourself like the character Jim Phelps on the old TV show *Mission Impossible*. Remember how he as-

sembled a team each week comprising select individuals who had key skills to accomplish a given task? That is what you have to do. Have a large "portfolio" of potential vendors that you can use from time to time as the need arises.

Things are different now, but the future looks better than ever. Re-focus on those principles that you know will help you achieve your goals and success. Lean heavily on the technology and always go back to the core business strategies for profitability that will work for you. □

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Terry Brock is a marketing coach who helps business owners market more effectively leveraging technology. He shows busy professionals how to squeeze more out of their busy days using the right rules and tools. He can be reached at (407) 363-0505, by e-mail: terry@terrybrock.com or through his web site: www.terrybrock.com.

