

Issue 41

September / October 2022

Steer

STEER YOUR BUSINESS | THE MAGAZINE

“Fix the roof while the sun is shining”

David Faulkner

Business Tips: What your customers want

Leo Michael

Is Poor Writing Killing your Business?

Joanne Parker



BUSINESS DIRECTORY

A USEFUL LIST OF
SPECIALIST BUSINESSES

Editor's Review

So exciting to see the latest issue with new contributors who will be sharing their knowledge over the coming months.

Denise Murphy from the HR Dept talking about finding the right people for your business. As I'm sure you know, this is vital when you are building your team. One bad apple can destroy what you've built and that is costly – something you don't need, particularly at the moment.

Talking about costly, check out David Faulner's article about business protection. It might seem like a cost right now but what happens if something goes wrong and you don't have the right cover in place? Then it can get very expensive ...!

Shareholder insurance is something David knows about but before you get to that, you should have a shareholder agreement in place. If you haven't, then have a look at Aly Young's article and give her a call if that's something you need in place in your business.

We are also delighted to have Joanne Parker on the team. Content is key to getting the right people to engage with you whether that's on your website, on your blog or on the various social media platforms.

We have partnered with The Spark Agency who have a fantastic offer available for our readers as well as some great advice on refreshing your digital presence.

We'd love to hear what you enjoy most about the magazine, what you'd like to see more of and how we can help to share the knowledge and expertise that we all need to support our businesses.

Sally



Sally Marshall

MPH

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<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/392484400407>

Wednesday 9 November
Foundry Brew Pub, Canterbury
3 pm - 5 pm
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/395977317817>

Wednesday 7 December
Orida Hotel, Maidstone
3 pm - 5 pm
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/393081927627>

The Scale Business
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Ashford, Kent
Contact sally@sallymarshallgroup.co.uk for more
information



Join us for the next
meeting

For more information
please contact:

Sally@steeryourbusiness.com

News from the Beach!

We all talk about taking more action in our businesses but often knowing what to do and in which area is not so easy.

In my own business I've been focussing on lead generation and the results have been amazing. My diary has filled with appointments and we now have more regular contributors for the magazine.

But ... what I don't know is the impact on my profits.

Other small changes will also impact on the profits but it's not always easy to see how much difference it will make - or is it?

What if you had a tool which could show you the impact of a small percentage increase in specific areas of your business?

The increase is exponential and can dramatically increase your profits with only a small change. Many business owners don't understand the numbers. For instance, how big a change is moving from 20% net profit to 30%? If you said 10% you'd be wrong - a 10% increase would be 2% so you would then have a net profit of 22%. Going from 20% to 30% is a whopping 50% increase! Imagine what would happen if you made a 50% change!

A conservative increase would be 5% across various areas of your business and if you were to do this, you could make a massive difference, not only to your income, but also to your profit. When we think of an increase in profits, we immediately think of an increase in revenue - or at least I do - but that isn't the whole picture. Having a market dominating position which

everyone in the business has signed up to and is sharing could make a difference. Everyone has competition but what makes your business different? Are you shouting about it?

When was the last time you reviewed your costs - both fixed and product related?

Many of us just do what we've always done and don't take the time to review our bills or our supplies when perhaps we should. Even just negotiating better payment terms could affect your cash flow dramatically.

If you were to generate more profit in your business, what would you do with the additional income?

Would you invest in your business? Or maybe invest in another business?

Or just take out the profits and enjoy the proceeds of your hard work ... I don't know about you but I find the potential of my business really motivating. None of this comes without putting some time and effort into it, but if you're willing to invest in your own business, then you will reap the rewards. I can't wait to see the numbers in my business sky rocket!

If you'd like to know more, book a call and let's see if we can find an extra £10k profit (or more) in YOUR business in just 45 minutes



Sally
Marshall



To find out more please book a time in my diary:

<https://calendly.com/sally-steeryourbusiness/10k-in-45-minutes>
sally@sallymarshallgroup.co.uk or call me on 0777 171 4221.



Business Tips:

What your customers want

The increase in digital business systems has opened up forensic ways of understanding your customer base. That's a huge bonus when you're aiming to build better connections, relationships, and experiences with your audience.

This is an area that most clients of ours don't even think about and, with a little work, can create immediate improvements within your business. Knowing what your customer wants is a fundamental piece of knowledge for any successful business to get to grips with. And when you're running a modern, digital business there's an overwhelming wealth of customer and sales data and analytics at your disposal - making it easier than ever to dig down into the needs and habits of your end user.

Detailed CRM records and customer notes

A CRM system becomes the heart of your customer management, business development and marketing activity, allowing you to log activity, keep notes and record progress throughout the sales pipeline.

The more information you have about your valued customers, the more you can do to meet their needs and deliver the perfect customer experience. And by maximising your use of this customer data, you can tightly focus your marketing campaigns and do more to make every customer feel understood, valued and (most importantly) satisfied.

Drilled-down sales records

Keeping tabs on your sales activity is central to any business model. In an ideal world, you want regular, repeatable sales from a loyal customer base. But sales activity can be hard to predict, especially when you're setting ambitious sales targets for your team to hit.

Having detailed sales records and data at your fingertips has two key benefits:

- ★ You know how sales have fared in the past
- ★ You know how sales may pan out in the future

Being able to run forecasts, based on your historic sales data gives you a stable foundation on which to build your future sales targets. It's a solid projection, based on real business data. But this data also gives you an encyclopaedic overview of what your customers have been buying.

This sales data helps you understand:

- ★ Which products/services your customers want to spend their money on
- ★ Which specific products/services are failing to convert
- ★ Which points in the year will have peaks and troughs in sales
- ★ When it's the right time to invest in more sales and marketing activity

This is all gold dust when it comes to planning out your strategy, assigning your sales and marketing resources and building engagement with your core audiences.

Marketing analytics and customer touch points

Marketing is a vital part of getting your brand message out into the world. Today's digital marketing and email platforms make it easier than ever to see the results and analytics from your marketing campaign and to answer meaningful questions about the outcomes:

- ★ How many customers clicked through from your call-to-action?
- ★ How many click-throughs were converted into sales?
- ★ How many views did your latest blog post get?
- ★ Who opened your latest email campaign?
- ★ Which one of your customer segments is most engaged?

With the marketing analytics that digital systems can provide, you know the answers to all these questions. That's incredibly helpful when working out which

“ Marketing is a **vital** part of getting your brand message out into the world. ”



campaigns delivered a good return-on-investment (ROI), which customer groups are most engaged and where your marketing is hitting the mark (or not, as the case may be).

Social media interactions and feedback

Social media platforms, like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and TikTok, give your business a cheap and effective way of getting your brand messages out to a wider audience. Social media is a two-way communication channel. It's a conduit for your customers and followers to message you, ask questions and give you feedback – and in that sense, it's a vital way of understanding your customers' needs.

As you scale and grow, an increased focus on social media will be vital. Hiring a social media manager, or working with a social media agency, helps you broaden out your social activity and really engage with your followers. Reply to queries, placate frustrated customers and share your latest news and updates. If you can be present and engaging in the social space, that's going to help you cement your bond with these valued customers.

Online customer feedback and star ratings

The acid test of your customer experience is simple: are your customers happy? Satisfied and happy customers become amazing advocates for your brand. But, equally, disgruntled and unhappy customers can quickly undo the good work you've done in building a brand.

In the online age, bad news spreads incredibly quickly, and customer feedback, reviews and trust scores are a vital part of your brand's equity. A series of terrible reviews for your cafe on a platform like TripAdvisor can cause serious damage. So, it's important that you engage with these reviews, run customer surveys and listen carefully to any customer feedback. In every email that MPH Accountants send there is the option to send us feedback on how we have done, this has helped us continuously improve customer services

As you can see, we are not your typical accountants and are helping clients in all areas of their business, if you would like a chat please drop me an email or give me a bell



Leo Michael



If you would like to book up your complimentary session, please phone or email me and I will take care of the rest. **Leo Michael** can be contacted at l.michael@mphaccountants.co.uk

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“Fix the roof while the sun is shining”

Protect your Business Bubble... (other cliches may apply..)

As business owners we generally take time to consider protecting physical business assets such as premises and their contents, vehicles, equipment and stock. We pay due regard to our responsibilities in respect of public and employer liabilities, but an area often overlooked is the protection of the businesses most valuable assets.....its people.

The majority of businesses have individuals who in addition to running day to day operations, are essential to its ability to survive and thrive. Typically these may be the owners of the business and key employees.

Irrespective of whether the business is a sole trader, limited company, partnership or limited liability partnership (LLP), without these key individuals any business struggles. Far worse, the sudden loss of their expertise and experience can have a potentially catastrophic impact.

Where this involves the loss of an owner or shareholder due to death or diagnosis of a critical illness, there can be further turmoil and huge stresses placed upon the business, which will be greatly amplified if contingency planning has been neglected.

Sounding a bit like the Grim Reaper here....scythe in hand, but time spent considering business continuity and contingency planning is rarely wasted.

It's a sentiment that's often aired, but It's fundamentally true that the key to success of any business is its people, yet all too often the What Ifs have not been adequately considered and covered.

What if an owner/shareholder of the business were to die or be lost to the business due to diagnosis of a critical illness ?

- What happens to their shareholding and does the business have concerns over ownership, finance, control and continuity?
- Is there a plan in place to cover this contingency in a fair, binding, and tax efficient way ?
- Does the business have adequate funds to purchase the shares ?
- Will the shareholder, or family, receive a fair value for the sale of the shares, and how was that value set and agreed ?
- Are there appropriate insurance policies, option agreements, shareholder agreements and trusts in place to provide the means, and the funds, for the business to purchase the shares, and for the whole process to be watertight ?

Cover the “What ifs”, and put your people first...provide certainty and continuity in an uncertain world.

Any business, large or small, is likely to face the unexpected at some time.

For many businesses, particularly for those that are owner run, the owners themselves are often key individuals vital to the day to day running of the firm. The loss of Key People, whether they are owners or key employees, or both, should also be considered:

The same What If approach can be applied to the loss of a key person....

- How will their loss impact the running of the business, its profitability, relationships with customers, suppliers and business contacts ?
- At what might be a particularly challenging time for the business, are there funds available to cover loss of profit, and also recruitment or training of a replacement ?

- Is there money available to repay any Director's Loan that might still be outstanding, or any loans / commercial mortgages / overdrafts that may have been guaranteed?
- Again....is there a plan, and are there insurance policies in place to cover this contingency in a fair and tax efficient manner ?

These are a few key questions and concerns that might arise, and of course, every business has its own unique set of circumstances and requirements. I've chewed over these concerns with my customers for well over 20 years now.....no small wonder I'm bald !

Conversations around Business Protection can also present the possibility of considering other solutions which might be appropriate and form part of the overall protection plan. This might include Executive Income Protection and Relevant Life Policies:

Executive Income Protection

- Can help businesses by protecting against the financial impact of their employee becoming ill or injured and unable to work.
- The plan is designed to pay a monthly benefit to the business in the event of a valid claim:
 - The funds can be used to pay the employee's ongoing sick pay.
 - Cover can include employee's earnings, dividends and P11D (benefit in kind) benefits. Additional cover can also protect employer pension contributions and National Insurance contributions.
 ...and finally, but by no means least, and of particular interest if you love a generous tax break...(drum roll please)....

Relevant Life Policies

- Highly tax-efficient life policies for businesses looking to provide employees with a lump sum benefit, but with too few employees to set up a group scheme.
- Also aimed at:
 - Directors wishing to provide their own individual death in service benefit in a tax-efficient manner.
 - High earning individuals, such as Directors, who are looking for lump sum benefits without effecting their Pension Lifetime Allowance.

As with most things in business it all starts with a conversation. With regards to the advice I provide, a review can cover both Business, Personal and Family Protection needs and your only outlay will be your time.

If you can find a little time, then there's no better time than the present to fix the roof while the sun is shining.



David
Faulkner



To start the conversation contact:
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reviewandprotect@gmail.com

Do I need a shareholder agreement?

A business relationship contract will help manage and regulate the relationship between the owners of a business.

As well as recording some formal information, this agreement sets out the rules of engagement between the parties, what each expects from the other, what should happen in certain circumstances e.g., bankruptcy, death, breach of contract, rules regarding duties and protection from other parties around share ownership and the sale of the business. A shareholder agreement can provide a process and a mechanism to solve disputes that may arise between the parties or help provide an answer in the event of certain scenarios e.g., illness, death or retirement. These solutions can provide a much cheaper and quicker result than leaving things to chance. Ideally this is drawn up by a solicitor with experience of these areas but if you are not able to invest in that, at least record the information below, which might be persuasive if you do end up in dispute at any time in the future.



PARTIES

1. Full details of the parties, including their names, addresses and the amount of the business they are going to own, e.g. how big a share they will have /will the parties be equal? As long as all the parties agree, we can act for all of you in drafting a contract.

However, if you disagree with each other or fall out during the process, we would not be able to act for any of you. If you decide to operate through a limited company, we could act for the company itself. It is up to the individual shareholders then whether they wish to take separate legal advice.

How much money will each owner put into the business? Will any other property (e.g. premises, cars, inventions, equipment) be transferred to the business? If so, what and by whom? Is a value being attributed to that?

BUSINESS ACTIVITY

2. Full description of the activities of the business, e.g. vehicle component manufacturer, internet software company, retail? What do you do/supply? Who are your customers?

START DATE

3. When would you like the arrangements to start?

CONDITIONS

4. Are there any other things that need to happen before you start these arrangements?

OFFICERS OF THE BUSINESS

5. Who will be the main representatives of the business? All the parties or just some of them? What will each person's role be? Do you intend that all owners devote their full time and attention to the business? Do you want to be able to nominate other people to represent you in the business if you are unable to? Do you want to have separate employment contracts for those owners who are also working for the business? Do you want to stipulate how much holiday and other benefits each person is entitled to E.g. maternity leave, sick pay, health cover, insurance, car, other expenses? Will all the owners have the same level of responsibility for running the business? Do you want to set the rules now for what should happen if someone else joins as an owner of the business?

OPERATIONAL ISSUES / DECISIONS

6. Who will make day-to-day decisions about the running of the business? Will there be a chairman with a casting vote? Do all owners have to be involved in all decisions? How should decisions be made? Simple majority? / Unanimity?

NB Below is a list of decisions that we would normally recommend are reserved for everyone's approval. Please tick all that should apply consider if there is anything personal to you that should be added to that list.

7. Do you want to include provisions for what should happen if you can't agree between yourselves what should happen both in relation to day-to-day decisions and anything else about which you need everyone to agree?
- Terminate the business.
 - Force someone to sell their share/s in the business.

MEETINGS

8. How often do you want to hold meetings?
- Every week?
 - Month?
 - Every 3 months?
- Do all owners have to be present at all meetings or just the main representatives?
9. How much notice to you want to give/be given of meetings?
10. Do you want to state that a minimum number need to be present at a meeting (a quorum)?
11. Should there be separate meetings for the owners who are not also working full time?

FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING

12. How will the company be financed?
- Now?
 - In the future?
13. Have you got a business plan? Do you want to include this within the agreement?
14. Do you have accountants? If so, please supply details. Do you have a bank account? If so, please supply details. Who will sign cheques?

Is there a financial limit to decisions that can be made by some rather than all of the owners?

15. Do you want to set the rules now for how and when profits should be distributed? Will the owners of the business receive a monthly sum?
16. Do you want to be able to stop an owner from transferring their interest to someone else? Will they be able to do this with your consent?
17. Do you want any other circumstances to force an owner to transfer their share and, if so, to whom? e.g. Death/critical illness. Leaving as an employee Breaching the agreement
If they have to transfer their shares, what will they get paid for them? Face value; or Fair value.

NB If someone leaves for dismissal or breach, it is reasonable to agree they should only get face (par) value. If they leave on "good" terms (e.g. resign, retire or die), it is usually agreed they will get fair current value.

Please indicate what arrangements you would want to apply.

18. Do you want all parties to agree not to compete with the company and should this apply after they have left the business? If so, for how long?

DECISIONS REQUIRING EVERYONE'S CONSENT:

Adopting or amending the business plan.

Closing the business.

Changing the nature of the business or starting any new business which is not ancillary or incidental to the business

Selling the business.

Making an acquisition or disposal by the business of any asset(s) worth more than £X. Entering into a contract worth more than £X. Creating or granting any encumbrance, charge or security. Borrowing money in excess of £X or giving a guarantee. Permitting the registration of anyone as a member of the business.

Removing an officer.

Altering the name of the business. Altering the business's constitution or rights attaching to ownership.
Allowing new participants. Merging the business.

EXIT STRATEGY:

Do you already have an exit strategy? Do you want to stipulate when owners must retire from the business?

All parties should sign the document

Aly Young
Law



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Aly
Young



How can SME's find and retain the right people for their businesses?

With the so-called Great Resignation well underway, and survey after survey telling us the majority of professionals are looking for a new job, staffing has proven to be one of the main challenges for businesses since 2021. I look at the issue and shares some tips to help local businesses overcome their workforce challenges.

How Can SMEs Find And Retain The Right People For Their Businesses?

- Survey by job-board website found that 77% of professionals planned to look for a new job in 2022.
- When staffing your business, retention is just as significant as recruitment and both require effort to get right.
- Think beyond salaries to truly connect with the labour market in 2022 - higher pay is good, but flexible working, training, company culture and employee benefits all play an important role.

With the so-called Great Resignation well underway, and survey after survey telling us the majority of professionals are looking for a new job, staffing has proven to be one of the main challenges for businesses since 2021. I look at the issue and shares some tips to help local businesses overcome their workforce challenges.

"One survey, from an online job-board, found that 77% of professionals were planning to change jobs in 2022. The top five reasons were wanting or needing a career

change, obtaining a higher salary, 'would have moved earlier but for the pandemic', seeking more flexible working opportunities and feeling burnt out.

"Knowing these employee motivations is a great starting point for addressing issues of recruitment and retention.

"For many of these points, introspection regarding your company culture could be invaluable. Quite simply - is your company a nice place to work? You may need to conduct some research to get an accurate answer, surveying staff or commissioning an independent review.

"If there is room for improvement it may well be a forewarning that some of your team may want a career change

"Equally, if your company culture is strong, you can use it as a major selling point for attracting new staff. The survey also confirmed what many of us already know - that flexible working is becoming a must-have for many professionals. Have you fully explored if or how you can make it work for your business?

"When looking at remuneration packages, employee benefits are a smart way for an SME to stand out. It's

not just expensive, big-ticket items, like a company car or private medical insurance, that employees find attractive. Training and development are hugely prized and cost-effective solutions like health cash plans, cycle-to-work schemes and employee assistance programmes are all ways to give value to employees and show them that you care.

“To do it well, the whole hiring process needs a lot of thought and energy put into it. For a busy SME, it can be tempting to think of it as a nuisance which has to fit around your day-to-day operations, but this would be a mistake. Good candidates will be able to read the signals, and it will put them off. So do give this important process the attention it deserves.

“This goes beyond the advert, screening and interview process. Even after your ideal candidate has accepted the job offer, getting the induction right is essential. It should reinforce all the positive messages you communicated earlier in the recruitment process, as well as set expectations for how they will fit into your business.

“At this time, use your probation period to fully assess your new hire’s suitability. There’s a mantra: ‘hire slow, fire fast’, and if I have made the point about hiring slow by giving due consideration to all the stages of the recruitment process, now’s the time to fire fast if they turn out not to be a good fit. It may grate but it will save you time, money and stress in the long-run. However do ensure you do comply with your contractual obligations”



Denise
Murphy



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www.hrdept.co.uk/wimbledon-new-malden

Find out how you can attract more customers

We know how stressful it can be to create a visual design that captures the essence of your company.

After all, you likely didn't get a degree in graphic design and have no clue how to work these complicated design programmes. And here's the thing — you shouldn't have to. We take the stress of designing your visuals off your plate so you can focus on what you're good at: running your business.

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www.graphickat.co.uk

Kathy@graphickat.co.uk



Is Poor Writing Killing Your Business?



“I didn’t mean that.”

“That came out wrong.”

How many times have you said something and then regretted it?

Whether in the throes of a heated argument with a loved one, a simple text message, or an email, being precise with our words is vital.

A missing letter, a typo or predictive text can all hinder our ability to communicate effectively. Whilst nine times out of ten, the result will be wasted time going back to the message’s sender for clarification, the implications for business can be much more critical.

A survey undertaken by Linguix, in which they questioned 50,000 businesses, reported that up to 25% of email recipients would not reply to a company that has sent them an email containing a typo.

Can you afford to miss out on that many leads? What impact is poorly written communication having on your business?

Just think about the amount of written text your company produces. The words on your website, the numerous emails you send daily, quotations, contracts, letters, and reports.

Each one of those points of contact with your customer can enhance or destroy your reputation and your bottom line.

If your employees continually have to go back to the recipient to explain the content of an email they sent, they are clocking up hours of unproductive time.

A poorly written product description could deter someone from making a sale. Likewise, poor wording or mistakes in a contract could have widespread consequences.

What can go wrong with business writing?

Too long – audiences have short attention spans. Don’t waffle. Get straight to the point. Long-winded letters or communication can stop people from paying attention.

Jargon – if you use industry terminology or complex language, people could misunderstand or tune out of what you are trying to say.

Errors – typos, spelling mistakes and omitted words, may seem petty, but they can all affect how well the reader has understood your message. Unnecessary errors like these make you look sloppy and reflect badly on the company. You will save time and money if you get it right the first time.

Words are just as crucial as the design

Whilst it is tempting to think that a website needs to look good (and it does), the words on your site are just as important. A lovely design only goes so far. The words will ultimately persuade somebody to buy what you are selling.

If your staff lacks the skills to produce well-written documents, consider employing a professional copywriter. Polished prose should be seen as a necessity, not a luxury.

Steps you can take to improve your business documents

Create a style guide - this is a simple document that sets out the company’s voice. It will explain the organisation’s vocabulary and words that should be avoided. It helps staff to write consistently so that everything that leaves the business sounds the same.

Proofreading – insist that at least two people proof all important documents or pieces of writing. It can be challenging to spot your own mistakes, so it is always good practice to have an extra pair of eyes look at your writing.

Make writing clearly and concisely a company value that everyone respects. Introduce staff training or hire a professional copywriter, but whatever you do, don’t let poor writing kill your business.



Joanne Parker



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5 simple ways to refresh your digital presence

Did you start a small business in lockdown and now need some help with refreshing your marketing? You're not alone.

For lots of people, starting a new business venture during lockdown was a lifeline. So many of us were furloughed, or without work, and needed an outlet to funnel our energy into. Seizing the opportunity to start a small business provided many with a new, exciting creative avenue to explore. According to the Office Of National Statistics, in the UK alone, more than 400,000 start-ups were formed in 2020. Two years on, and COVID has drastically changed the economic landscape in the UK. We have seen the closure of many well-known high street stores, and numerous businesses have fallen into administration. This has allowed small, independent brands to rise up. However, there is still a lot of work ahead to ensure that these small businesses can continue to thrive!

When we were all stuck indoors throughout lockdown, there was a real boom in demand for online services - whether that was related to food, fitness or more. A lot of small businesses that were set up were passion projects and, of course, it is a challenge to make sure that these projects are both sustainable and scalable.

Now that we're back out in the big wide world, consumer behaviours have changed again, and some small businesses don't know how to adapt to these changes. Are you finding that you're in need of some marketing support to refresh your online strategy and keep your business moving forward? We've got your back.

Think about exploring new platforms

The first thing we would recommend is that you do an audit of your current digital platforms. What social media platforms are you using? Are you active where your customers are?

We are not saying that you have to be on every single social media platform ever made, but if you're not where your customers are, then you might as well just be shouting into the void. As a small business owner, you need to understand that digital platforms are no longer a nice-to-have, they are a vital tool for reaching new customers and growing your business.

So, which platform should you be on? TikTok is the place to be for small businesses at the moment, especially if you have a new product or something exciting to shout about! According to a report from TikTok themselves, 81% of small businesses say that TikTok is fun and 73% say it's easy to use, so why not give it a go?



Platforms such as Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter & Facebook also still absolutely have their place, it's just about working out where your audience is looking. If you have a very visual offering, Pinterest & Instagram are great for showcasing this to your audience. If you are trying to build a brand presence and want to be able to talk directly to your customers via written text, then Twitter & Facebook could be the ones to focus your efforts on.

Change Up Your Messaging

On that note, when was the last time you changed your company messaging? If you've been churning out the same, or similar, online copy since you first started the business, it might be time for a refresh.

Think about how the business has changed since those very early days - could you bring your customers on that journey with you? Perhaps you could write a new blog post for the website, to be shared on social media. Titles could include: 'Our journey so far', '5 lessons from our first year as a small business', 'Life after lockdown', etc.

Likewise, when did you last update the content on your service or product pages? When it comes to SEO, Google's algorithms favour sites that have fresh and unique content, so updating your website content regularly is an absolute must. These pages need to have relevant and natural keyword inclusion and provide the answers to the questions your audience will ask. If you're not sure where to start, take a look at Google Ads Keyword Planner, or websites such as answerthepublic.com.

Shoot Some New Images

If you think that your online presence might be feeling a little bit stale, updating your imagery or 'assets' can really help to bring a new lease of life. Whether that

Continued overleaf

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is new headshots for your staff, an update to your branding, or some new product shots, it can be a very easy way of refreshing your marketing materials.

It is particularly important for small businesses to be able to showcase their personality online, and updating your imagery is a great way of doing this. Maybe think about getting some 'behind the scenes' content of you making one of your products, or out at a job. The old adage is still true, 'people buy from people', especially for small, or local, businesses! So make sure you're showing the people behind your amazing product or service.

Experiment With Pricing

Of course, we understand that for small businesses, there may not be much flexibility when it comes to your pricing. However, making tweaks to your overall costs could be a good way of capturing customers who have been browsing & researching your products for a while. Things such as online sales and discounts can really help to draw these people in! Take a look at how you could repackage or restructure your offerings. Could you offer an incentive for new members, or provide some form of customer loyalty program?

Shaking things up with your pricing will mean that your online presence is refreshed, and might make customers think about your service in a different way.

Test, Test, Test

Of course, the most important thing is that no matter what you change or do, none of it has value if you don't TEST and MEASURE. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it! The beauty of small-business marketing is that you can 'try & fail' different techniques quickly, without layers of company-sign off needed. Have fun, and try the suggestions above, and you won't go too far wrong!



If you're looking for some additional support with your digital marketing, The Spark Agency can help. Get in touch with us on **01303 765390** or visit our website: <https://thesparkagency.co.uk/steer-your-business/>

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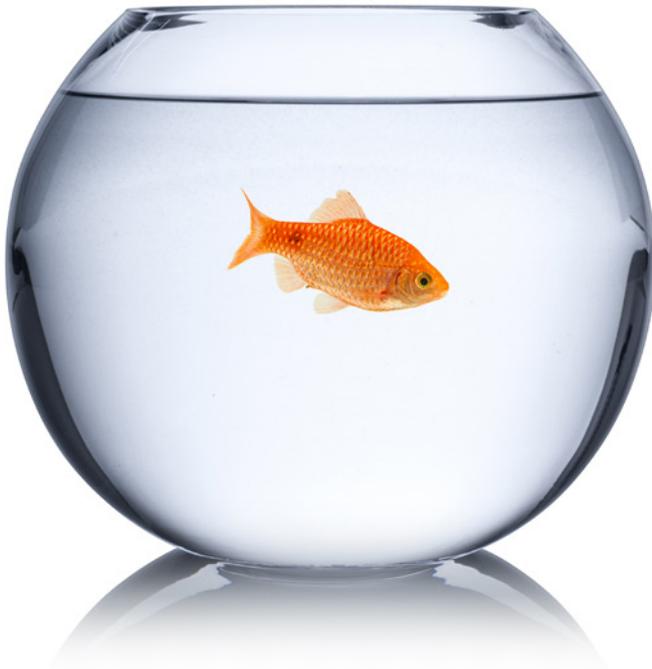
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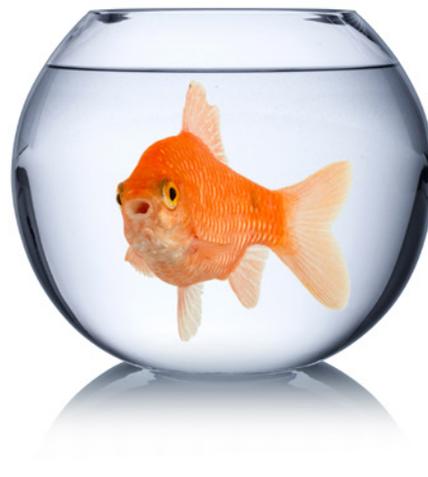
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Is The Time Right for You to Scale Your Business?



Is there ever a right or wrong time to scale a business I wonder?



History tells us that a recession is a time to look for opportunities and get ahead of the competition. In fact, many millionaires owe their success to a recession when times were hard and the competition was falling away.

But what do you need to do to make sure that your business is ahead of the game and stays that way?

There are several areas of your business to look at closely starting with your vision. Things may have changed since you started your business and if you haven't reviewed your vision – and shared it with your employees and other stakeholders – now is the time to do so.

Often people say that they have a vision but that they can't or won't achieve it because of all the things that get in the way.

Is that really true or it just an excuse?

Spending time on looking at the blocks to your success and working out a way round them, will be time well spent. This is probably something that you can't do on your own and often requires a mindset change in order to see the issues – and the solutions – differently.

You would work with your team or perhaps with a group of like-minded CEOs who have similar challenges to brainstorm each other's challenges and find solutions. You'd be amazed how much easier this exercise is when you have input from others. Someone somewhere will have had the same issue and found a way forward.

Once you have a list of tasks which need to be undertaken to move forward and scale, you can start to prioritise them.

- Which of the tasks or projects will make the most difference?
- How much will they cost in terms of finance and resources?
- Do you need to buy in expertise or can you use in-house resources?
- How long will each task or project take to complete? Some will be quick wins and others take longer.

By now you will have a plan to take you forward in the next 90 days. It's amazing what you can achieve in just three months if you really focus on the task at hand.

Once you know where you want to be in 12 months, 2 years and 5 years' time, you can plan the milestones which will get you there.

If all this sounds a bit daunting, then help is at hand.

The Scale Business runs 2-day Traction workshops for CEOs to help them do exactly this and get traction on their business so that they are ready for whatever life throws at them and they are the last ones standing.



Jim Jordan



For more information, contact Jim Jordan at The Scale Business <https://www.thescalebusiness.com/>

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