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Is Your Business Green & Growing Or Ripe And Rotting?

Most businesses are either green and growing or ripe and rotting. Where is your business at?

Courtesy of the internet, smart phones, Google and the cloud, the way we run our businesses has changed dramatically over the past decade. Technological change continues to accelerate and you simply can't afford to adopt the SALY (Same As Last Year) approach in business.

New technology should create efficiencies and pave the way for growth and expansion because it is designed to save time or reduce costs. It should also impact on your bottom line, however, in some cases there is a significant learning curve with new systems and technology so productivity can suffer in the transitional period.

Of course, there are the hidden costs of technology. The iPhone was released in June 2007 and today the average iPhone user unlocks their device more than 80 times a day! People struggle to unplug from these devices and staff get distracted, impacting on their creativity and productivity.

They say, if you keep doing things the same way and expect a different result, you're insane. The SALY approach in business could be the first sign of madness. There are countless stories of businesses who failed to adapt to change and paid the ultimate price. For example, Kodak, who once dominated the photographic film market failed to respond to the changing market and the transition to digital photography. Despite developing the first self-contained digital camera in 1975, Kodak filed for bankruptcy in 2012. Steve Sasson, the Kodak engineer who invented the digital camera, described the initial corporate response to his invention this way:

"But it was filmless photography, so management's reaction was, *that's cute - but don't tell anyone about it*". For people old enough to remember, that could be described as a real 'Kodak Moment'.

Drive Your Business with a Forward Focus

No industry is immune from change and many of today's game changing products will become mainstream very quickly. The iPhone is a great example. You can accept or reject innovation but if your business is flat lining or in decline you need to have a forward focus. Use historical data and marketing techniques as a guide, but don't hang your hat on them.

We all know that if you drive your car looking in the rear-view mirror one of two things will happen - you'll either lose control and run off the road or you'll collide with the vehicle in front of you. Similarly, you can't run your business with a focus on what's behind you and the only real reason to glance in your rear-view mirror is to make sure your competitors aren't gaining ground on you. You need to focus on what lies ahead including innovative technology and software that could give your business a serious competitive edge. Watch for emerging trends in your industry and monitor what your competitors are doing.

Apple claim they have always focused on '*what it's doing, not where it's been*'. It serves as great advice because most small business owners are focused on duplicating past successes. Unfortunately, past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. While it's always nice to occasionally reflect on your past accomplishments, don't dwell on them. Don't get complacent but also don't completely abandon strategies, tools and marketing techniques that are proven

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The greatest compliment we receive from our clients is the referral of their friends, family and business colleagues. Thank you for your support and trust.

Is Your Business Green & Growing Or Ripe And Rotting? (Continued)

performers.

Marketing

Marketing has been turned on its head in the past decade. Ten years ago, sales representatives ran the show and controlled the sales process. If buyers wanted anything, they had to channel everything through a sales rep. In 2019, buyers operate in a self-service model, they go online and do their research and the sales rep role has shrivelled up in most industries. Prospective buyers *only* reach out to you for that last piece of information they can't find online like the price and delivery cost.

Old marketing tactics like letter box drops, yellow pages, local paper advertising and sponsorships have lost their mojo. They simply aren't as effective as online searches, content marketing, email marketing and social media channels. Even referrals have shifted online with customer reviews. Of course, in today's internet fuelled world your website should be the nerve centre of your business and you can't afford to have a website that is fundamentally an electronic brochure.

The digital transformation has seen an explosion in the breadth and depth of digital and social tools. As such, a SALY (Same As Last Year) approach to marketing is fraught with danger. Change for the sake of change is illogical but you have to adapt to the changes in consumer behaviour. Your marketing needs to target your niche markets and your ideal type of customer. Here's some questions that serve as a great starting point:

- Who is your target market? Start by identifying your ideal type of customer.
- What demographic? Where do they live? What forms of social media do they prefer?
- What irresistible message would force your ideal type of customer to contact you?
- How will you take them through the customer journey and turn them into loyal customers?

You'll get plenty of advice from people telling you that you need to be on Facebook, spend money on Google AdWords and invest in SEO and local search marketing, however, before you throw your dollars at various tactics you need to develop a marketing plan. Adopt a strategy first approach because, in business, failing to plan is planning to fail.

With the end of financial year now behind us let's look at a couple of things to address to tidy up last financial year and plan for 2019/20.

Single Touch Payroll

Single Touch Payroll (STP) is a massive change to how and when you are required to report your payroll information (tax and superannuation) to the Australian Tax Office. The legislation came into effect on 1 July 2018 which meant businesses with more than 20 employees were required to be STP compliant as of that date. The legislation was extended to small businesses with less than 20 employees from 1 July 2019.

Single Touch Payroll is a cloud-based system designed to simplify the way payroll is reported, allowing both employees and the ATO to access payroll and superannuation information on a timely basis. STP is currently available through payroll, accounting and business management software (such as Xero and MYOB) that sends your tax and super information directly to the ATO as you process your payroll.

What you need to know:

1. Each payroll you run must be submitted to the ATO.
2. Before processing your first pay run, you'll need to register your unique Software ID with the ATO.
3. Your Software ID must then be added to the ATO's [Access Manager](#).
4. Each pay run will submit Year To Date (YTD) values each time.
5. All payroll types and allowances must have the correct STP classification selected.
6. Staff not paid in a particular pay run are not reported on.

New Financial Year Brings Change

7. The employee Tax File Number is included with STP.
8. For final payments, employees must be terminated before the STP submission.
9. Once successful, a summary can be viewed in the ATO's Business Portal under 'Manage employees'.

For small businesses with 1-4 employees, there are a number of low-cost solutions available to assist with the transition to STP. Both major software providers Xero and MYOB have low-cost options available, however, if you're currently not using a software solution, there is no requirement (yet) to purchase one. In addition to the options mentioned above, for a transition period the ATO provides the option for Registered Tax or BAS Agents to report STP on your behalf on a quarterly basis, rather than with each payroll run.

Immediate Asset Write-offs

For small businesses, assets costing below the instant asset write-off thresholds can be written off in the year they are first used, or ready for use. This threshold applies to both new and second-hand assets and businesses are allowed to claim a deduction for several assets, as long as each individual asset is below the relevant threshold.

The ATO announced the instant asset write-off threshold had been increased to \$30,000, for assets purchased from 7.30pm AEDT on 2 April 2019. As of this date, the instant asset write-off has also been extended to larger businesses, with a turnover from \$10 million to \$50 million. If you purchased the asset prior to 2 April 2019, the write-offs are only available to small businesses with a turnover up to \$10 million and separate thresholds apply, as listed below.

- \$30,000, from 7.30pm (AEDT) on 2 April 2019 until 30 June 2020
- \$25,000, from 29 January 2019 until before 7.30pm (AEDT) on 2 April 2019
- \$20,000, before 29 January 2019.

If you have any queries in relation to Single Touch Payroll or the Instant Asset Write Off contact us today.

The digital marketing landscape continues to change. In fact, in the last decade the internet and social media have rewritten the sales and marketing handbook. Incredibly, the rate of change continues to accelerate and many business owners are confused about how to market their business.

The internet has changed the way consumers behave and they now start their research for products and services online. With this shift, traditional marketing techniques like printed flyers, newspaper ads, face to face networking, club sponsorships are no longer primary marketing tools. The new marketing magnets are all online tactics including Google Searches, Content Marketing, Email Marketing and Social Media.

In today's internet-fuelled world, your website is probably the first touch point with prospective new customers. You only get one chance to make a good first impression and if your website simply lists the who, what and where of the business then it's just collecting dust. These types of websites aren't going to impress your prospects and they are really just 'electronic brochures'. They won't rank well with the search engines and certainly won't generate traffic or leads.

It's obviously challenging to get found online but the good news is, the internet provides a level playing field so small businesses can compete with big businesses. Research suggests that buyers are somewhere between 60 percent and 80 percent of the way through the purchase process before they make contact with you, so your website is probably your most valuable marketing tool. It's your 'online shopfront' and silent sales person working 24/7 to promote your business. It should be the hub of your marketing activities and you need to treat it as an investment not a cost. Your website will remain a constant work in progress because of technological advancements, changes to Google's algorithms and new marketing techniques.

Your website should serve as your communications hub, connecting to your blog and social media sites, providing free resources plus encouraging comments and discussion. Not everyone who lands on your website is ready to buy, so including calls-to-action on every page will steer prospects through to take the next step which could be booking an appointment, subscribing to your newsletter or downloading an e-book, checklist or report.

Essentially there are three key website issues that confront most business owners - not enough website traffic, poor conversion of leads to sales and a lack of strategy. Let's look at these issues and how to address them going forward.

How to Improve your Website Ranking and Results

Increase Website Traffic

Increasing traffic to your site is a major challenge for most business owners. With over 200 million active websites on the world wide web, the competition is hot for page one rankings.

Search Engine Optimisation (or SEO) is the process of getting your website pages ranking higher with search engines like Google in the free or 'organic' listings. The major search engines produce search results where pages of your website and other content such as videos or local listings are shown and these are ranked based on what the search engine considers most relevant to searchers.

Search Engine Optimisation techniques have changed and the days of cramming a web page full of keywords to climb up the rankings is over. To improve your web page rankings here is a checklist of SEO items to consider:

1. When it comes to search engine page rankings they say, 'Content is King'. As a consequence, keyword research is a big part of SEO so before you focus on the other things on this list, you need to have a clear idea of the main phrases and key words in your subject areas. There are a number of SEO tools that provide keyword suggestions and data on the amount of traffic and competition you can expect for each keyword. Most of the tools will cost you a subscription fee but they could provide a great return on your investment.
2. Do you have a secure https website? Note the 's' in 'https' stands for secure and Google gives secure sites a small ranking lift.
3. Is your website responsive to mobile devices? Many of the SEO algorithm updates Google have announced in recent years have been about mobile. People now use their phones to do most of their browsing and both users and the search engines expect your website to provide an intuitive mobile experience. Google uses mobile-first indexing which means they index and rank your web pages based on the content in the mobile version (not your desktop version) of your website
4. Website load speed is important and there are several tools available to test the speed of your website.
5. Do you have the right keyword in your title, meta description and content? Customise the URL of every page on your website and remember, Google is a robot. Don't forget to customise the name of every image you use on a web page by adding the main keywords you are targeting.
6. Never copy and paste from other websites and check for grammatical and spelling errors. Google will punish your rankings for duplicate content.
7. Adding fresh content is important so adding blog posts and new content is crucial.

Ultimately, to attract the attention of Google you need to focus on your prospects and provide them with educational and relevant content.

Improve Website Conversion Rate

Attracting traffic is one thing but turning those visitors into prospects is the next challenge. Around 97 percent of visitors leave your website without providing their contact details because they are still in research mode. They simply aren't ready to buy your product or service even though most websites are full of 'buy now' signals.

To increase your conversion rate, you need to include 'lead magnets' on your website. These are often free educational resources like an e-book, white paper or tool that you give to the visitor in exchange for their contact details. When the visitor supplies their contact details, they are giving you permission to add them to your CRM system and continue to market to them.

Driving website traffic from search engines and social media channels is crucial but without a lead magnet you are missing a key part of the marketing jigsaw. Another strategy to consider is re-marketing that basically chases your website visitors around the web with display ads.

Strategy First

In business, failing to plan is planning to fail. Without a marketing strategy then you are really just guessing, and we see lots of business owners burning money on marketing tactics that will never work in their industry. Running Google Ads and

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How to Improve your Website Ranking and Results (Continued)

Facebook Ads are tactics, just pieces of a larger marketing puzzle. Before you rush off and spend a small fortune with a group promising to rank your website on page one, think about the strategy first and what tactics are going to have the biggest impact on your lead generation.

Create educational content, promote it to your ideal type of customer and precise demographic, then get them to exchange their contact details for your lead magnet so that you can then nurture them bit by bit until they are ready to buy from you.

Make sure you have a plan that identifies how you are going to attract traffic to your website and then convert these prospects into customers. A marketing strategy that identifies your target audience and lists the tactics you will use to draw those ideal type of customers to your website is a winning formula. Next, have a strategy to convert those prospects into customers. Put in the effort to provide consistent value on your website and leverage the immense power of today's marketing technology to assist prospects along their buying journey.

Tax Office Launches Tip Off Service

The Tax Office has launched a whistle-blower hotline that encourages people to expose business owners who are suspected of operating in the black economy. The hotline went live on July 1, 2019.

The focus of the service will be on businesses who offer discounts for cash payments in a bid to tackle what the Deputy Commissioner Deborah Jenkins describes as our “rampant black economy activity.”

The whistleblowing hotline is an anonymous reporting service and encourages a ‘know something-say something culture’. The ATO have signalled the fact that they expect some vindictive reporting and the hotline is part of a plan to reduce the small business tax gap that includes changes to the Australian Business Number (ABN) system and efforts to eliminate dodgy cash-in-hand wages.

Australians blew the whistle 51,000 times on suspected tax dodgers in 2016/17 and that figure was close to 60,000 for the 2018 financial year. The figure for 2019 is close to 70,000.

The Tax Office says that taxpayers can now report suspicious activity even if they don't know exact addresses or company information. According to the Tax Office, "People ring in and say, 'a person living near me has some unexplained wealth'. Or, 'It appears that the person living next to me is running a business out of their home'."

One third of the reports this past year have been from people suggesting someone they know is under-reporting their income. More than one-in-four cases related to the cash economy, while eight per cent of reports came from workers saying they were chasing unpaid superannuation from an employer. Unpaid superannuation payments will be increasingly easy to track thanks to Single Touch Payroll that provides up-to-date reporting for companies of all sizes from July 1.

While a tip-off won't lead to an investigation by itself, it can be used with other information already on file to trigger an audit. To report suspicious activity call 1800 060 062. Due to the privacy laws, tipsters will not be informed about what happens once they've made their phone call.

The Tip-Offs Split: Why Aussies Call The Tax Man

- Suspected under-reported income
- The cash economy
- Non-lodgment of tax
- Inadequate or no super
- Over-stating expenses

What to Do About A Bad Google Review

Research suggests three out of four customers will look at reviews before buying online. 92% of consumers report trusting recommendations from friends and family above all types of advertising and 72% report trusting online reviews as much as a personal recommendation. In the digital era your online reviews are gold!

However, what do you do when someone posts a negative review?

A bad review might make your blood boil and your first instinct is to have it deleted. This might not be the right move because every client interaction offers an opportunity and even a bad review comes with a silver lining.

You obviously can't expect to please all of the people, all of the time. Dissatisfied customers are part of running a business and by embracing the authenticity, it proves your reviews are not all being posted by your friends and relatives. Businesses removing negative reviews are denying their customers the opportunity to provide honest feedback on their experiences.

Say That to My Face

In today's online environment, customers are more inclined to post feedback online than to discuss it face to face. This means reviews are somewhat out of context and sometimes they can just be downright rude or undeserved. Even so, deleting them may not be your best course of action (unless they are violent, discriminatory or inflammatory). Consider a negative review as an opportunity to investigate why the customer has left that comment and try to speak to them regarding the circumstances around their review.

Sensis' data shows that 80 per cent of customers will change their online review when a business gets in touch to try and resolve the issue. Often by reaching out to the reviewer and offering potential solutions or some form of redress will be enough for them to change their review. The first step is apologising, even if you don't think it's necessary. Potential customers will always side with other customers, not the business, so arguing the point or telling your side of the story will not improve the 'look'. A genuine, human response demonstrates positivity and transparency. Offering to fix the problem, refund or replace an item may not achieve the review being reversed but it creates a record of you displaying great customer service, reassuring Joe Public that you listen to your customers.

Removal is the Last (And Not Always Successful) Resort, Even for Fake Reviews

Sometimes you will just not make any headway with your bad reviewer and if their review is abusive, untruthful, false or misleading you can take steps to have it removed, especially if you can prove they have never been a customer or they are from a competitor.

Getting a Google Review deleted is not straightforward. The review has to fall within Google's Prohibited and Restricted Content policy (i.e. spam or fake, off-topic, restricted, illegal, sexually explicit, offensive, dangerous, derogatory, impersonation, terrorist or conflict of interest content). If the review falls into one of these categories, you can take the following steps: -

1. Sign into your Google My Business account.
2. Choose your business location and click '**Reviews**' from the menu.
3. Find the review you'd like to flag, click the 3-dot menu, then click '**Flag as inappropriate**'.

Then it's up to Google whether they agree to remove the review or not.

Apart from flagging the review using your Google My Business dashboard, you can also expedite the process of deleting a Google review by requesting call back, requesting chat or emailing support.

Here's how:

- On Google My Business, click **Menu**, scroll down and look for **Support**.
- A popup will appear, look for **Contact Us**, and click **Need More Help**.
- Choose **Customer Reviews and Photos > Manage Customer Reviews**.

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What to Do About A Bad Google Review (Continued)

- Choose from any of the three contact options: request call back, request chat or email support.

In the meantime, respond to the fake review. In this case, your response obviously won't actually solve a problem if indeed, it is a fake review, but your response shows other potential customers how you handle criticism. The point to make is that your response to negative customer feedback can have a greater impact on your business reputation than the original negative review. Take a deep breath, sleep on it if you need to, and compose a professional response, something along these lines: -

“Hi, (Reviewer’s Name), here at (business name) we take these matters very seriously. Unfortunately, we have not been able to identify any customer experiences described in this review, nor are we able to find your name in our records. We would like to investigate this issue further – please assist us by contacting (Team Member’s Name) at (Email Address) so that we can resolve this issue immediately.”

The [ACCC](#) has further information regarding managing online reviews (including previous actions they have taken where businesses have created false positive customer reviews or offered incentives for positive reviews, but that’s a whole other story).

The Best Defence is a Good Offence

Lastly, the best defence is a great offence. Develop a review generation strategy such as routinely requesting feedback from your clients. Tools are available online such as Whitespark’s [Review Handout Generator Page](#) which can be customised and provides instructions for your customers on how to leave reviews for your business on Google.

You can generate a Google review link by signing into your Google My Business page. Search for your business in Google and click on Reviews, then Write a Review. Copy the long URL from the top of the browser (you can use an online tool to shorten this, such as Tiny URL, etc.) then share this with your customers.

The more positive reviews your business receives the more they will drown out the negative reviews, as well as pushing your Google ranking up.

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