

Systemize YOUR BUSINESS



HOW TO SYSTEMIZE AND
STREAMLINE YOUR BUSINESS
SO YOU CAN ENJOY MORE FREEDOM!

Written by

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About the Author



Hi, My name is Caelan Cheesman and I am an entrepreneur living in the United Kingdom who loves sharing knowledge and helping others on the topic of Internet marketing and self-improvement.

I am a passionate person who will go the extra mile and over-deliver.

My words of wisdom:

"I believe that knowledge is power. Everyone should improve themselves and/or business, no matter what stage in life they're in. Whether it's to develop a better mindset or to increase profits. Moving forward is key."

If you would like to learn more from me, Caelan Cheesman, please visit:

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Introduction

The ability to do business on the World Wide Web has changed the way people think about companies, especially when it comes to the prospect of owning their own business. It seems as if the Internet is loaded with all sorts of potential, just waiting for the lucky entrepreneur to tap into those vast resources and begin making a fortune. Already millions of people have taken a shot at starting an online business and creating a whole new way of life for themselves.

Unfortunately, very few of those millions have actually made it.

While there are a number of reasons why an Internet business would never get off the ground, there is one that stands out above all others: the owner failed to learn how to systemize the business and make the best use of all the resources available. This applies to resources within the company as well as online support services that could have made all the difference in the success of the business enterprise.

All too often, entrepreneurs have a wonderful idea that has unlimited potential to make money. The problem is that the idea is often all they have.

There's a tradition in the business world that tends to divide businesspeople into two categories. The first category is reserved for those who are known as visionaries. Purportedly, visionaries are the ones with the creative juices to come up with great ideas for products and services. Creativity is the name of the game for the visionary, who can foresee the product taking the world by storm and making a

fortune for everyone involved.

Unfortunately, the visionary is also considered to be completely devoid of any practical skills that can address all the nuts and bolts necessary to build the network, distribute the product, and generate the sales.

The second category is generally known as the drone or traditionalist. Drones are directly concerned with how a business is organized, setting proper schedules for getting things done, and in general has the background and skill set to handle the everyday operation of any business. The drone knows how to market a little, advertise a little, handle the accounting, oversee employees, and basically keep the ship moving along.

What the drone lacks is the vision to foresee changes in the industry and come up with creative ways to stay ahead of the competition.

What the Internet has done is allow visionaries to explore their ideas to their heart's content, unfettered by practical matters. While that sounds good, it simply doesn't fly in the long run. The great idea founders because there is no network to market, sell, and deliver the wonderful brainchild of the entrepreneur.

People who have been successful with online businesses know that you need a great idea and the resources to cultivate a customer base for that great idea. They also know the same sort of day to day housekeeping that is done in brick and mortar businesses also apply to Internet based businesses and take steps to either learn those skills or outsource them to trusted and reliable sources.

Internet business systemization is all about marrying the vision with the practicalities of the business world and becoming successful. There is no great mystery to the process, although many people are intimidated by words like "systemization". If you are a reasonably intelligent person, it is possible to learn how to effectively systemize your business and position yourself to be the proud owner of an online business that consistently makes a profit.

The Idea of Systemizing Your Business

As mentioned earlier, people start to get uptight when they hear any talk of systemizing anything, much less a business. Their thoughts immediately turn to the idea of an endless array of meetings that produce a mountain of action items that must be followed up on at the next meeting so even more action items can be generated. In short, people see systemization as some ongoing convoluted series of processes that only make things more complicated and kill the entrepreneurial spirit.

There is a good chance that you also have this rather bleak view of systemization. Before going any further, let's define what systemization is and what it isn't:

What Systemization Is Not

To be systemized does not mean to be caught up in so many policies and procedures that there is no time left to do anything productive.

Systemization is not about filling time or creating the illusion of being busy. A systemized person is not someone who is so hard-nosed that any deviation from the norm is considered scandalous or harmful to the organization.

In short, systemization is not about creating a machine and being dominated by that machine. It does not have to be complicated, function for some unknown reason, or even remain the same from one year to the next.

What Systemization Is

True systemization is more or less the opposite of what most people think it is. In reality, a truly systemized organization has a solid functioning procedure that knows what must be done, has a way to do it, and gets the job done. When a business is truly systemized, there is time to devote to other pastimes - in the case of an Internet business, making good use of that creativity that is so common to true entrepreneurs.

With a properly systemized company, the procedures make sense and always have a purpose. There is no room for empty actions that stir up a lot of dust but accomplish nothing. Within this framework, everyone knows what to do and when to do it. There are no endless meetings to contend with, no complicated policies to observe, and no time wasted spinning the wheels.

That is not to say that every process within a properly systemized company is fun. Few people find the tasks of calculating and paying taxes to be fun, for example. Still, the tasks, if organized properly, can be completed in a reasonable amount of time and leave the rest of the day to move on to something that is more interesting, such as earning new customers, working on a new product, or writing new sales copy.

The bottom line is that true systemization frees you, while a lack of properly systemized organization creates nothing but endless work and stifles you and your business until both are ready to give up.

Why You Should Systemize Your Business

Now that you understand that systemization is a good thing, let's explore just exactly how this approach to your online business is good. There are actually quite a number of benefits that come with creating an organized and systematic environment for your business. Here are some examples:

- You can measure your progress. Sure, money coming in is one measure. But what if you could also figure out how to measure how well things are coming with that next big ad campaign, or the development on a new ancillary product that will enhance your main product? If your business is organized, it is possible to do a quick check on these and other ongoing processes any time you like and get real time data on what is going on.
- Little things get done on time. Without some basic plan for each day, the little things that keep operations going can build up and eventually create a bottleneck. For example, if the posting on the Accounts Receivable and Payable are not being done on a regular schedule, you could find yourself with a lot of work to do when it comes time to cut paychecks to employees or calculate your taxes for the current period. An organized system helps to ensure you don't run in to situations where your back is to the wall and you have to drop other tasks in order to play catch-up.
- There is automatically time built in to work on business networking. If your business is systematic in its operations and functions, this

means you can spend some time in networking activities that will help your business grow. You'll be able to devote an afternoon to submitting online ads, sending promotional emails, or even promoting your business locally at Chamber of Commerce events. Best of all, you can spend your time on these endeavors knowing that the company is moving right along without your direct attention for a few hours.

- You can take time off. After all, wasn't getting control of your time one of the reasons you wanted to set up an Internet business? If your business is systematically organized, you can take time off for your son's Little League game, or your daughter's dance recital. There is also the chance that you can even take several days off in order to take a short vacation if you like. Best of all, you can do this without getting any permission or approval from anyone else, and rest assured your business will continue to move forward in your absence.

At this juncture, it would be a good idea to take a moment and evaluate your own circumstances. Make a list of what it is you want to accomplish with your Internet business. Don't hold back anything, not matter how small, vague, or inconsequential it may seem. If one of the reasons you want your own online business is so you can play poker every Thursday night instead of working a part time job to make ends meet, put it down. Should your goals have to do with finally being able to afford a two week vacation every year without worrying about how much money you spend, add it to the list.

Once you have the list written, put it to one side and keep reading. We'll come back and address the list a little later and relate it to the process of systemization in ways you may not have considered up to this point.

A Lesson Learned From The Book "The E-Myth"

Since 1985, there has been one book that has become something along the lines of scripture for many entrepreneurs. That book is "The E-Myth" by Michael E. Gerber. While the book was originally focused on business systemization in the world of brick and mortar companies, subsequent editions have included data that is inclusive of the world of Internet commerce. However, many of the ideas and strategies outlined in the original edition are just as relevant to online businesses as the more traditional ones that function with physical facilities.

The phrase "e-myth" is short for the Entrepreneurial Myth, which is easily one of the main reasons businesses of any type fail. Basically, this myth holds that if someone is an expert in a particular field, he or she should have no trouble setting up a successful business. After all, they have the vision, right?

Gerber systemically dissects this myth and lays it out for the fallacy it truly is. Within the pages of "The E-Myth" there are many lessons to learn that can help a fledgling business owner, or even someone who wants to start a business, to avoid a lot of ideas and situations that ultimately lead to failure. However, there is one core lesson that you should take away from Gerber's work, if nothing else in the book sticks with you.

That one lesson is to not work in your business, but to work on your business.

But what does that mean? Is Gerber urging business owners to be detached from the business, allowing others to handle everything as he or she blithely goes in whatever direction they wish to go?

Not at all. The point Gerber is making is that the true entrepreneur sets up a system that is able to allow the business to function efficiently, and with the full participation of the business owner. But, the business owner is not bogged down in having to take care of so many different tasks that there is no room left to grow (or work on) the business.

So How Do I Work ON My Business Without Working IN My Business

One easy way to think of the distinction between these two states is to think of working in your business as essentially having a job. With this job, you have assigned tasks that you do over and over again. Your focus is on those tasks, leaving you little or no time to think of any other tasks or functions that may be going on at the same time you plod through your own assigned list of tasks.

From this perspective, being "in" your business is a lot like working for someone else. When you are an employee, you don't spend much time wondering what tasks the VP of Marketing is doing, or how the Accounting department works. You handle things in your own little world, collect your paycheck, and go your merry way.

By contrast, working on your business encompasses a lot more territory. As a business owner, you must think in terms of not one little corner of the business operation, but the entire organization. This means you can't afford to be bogged down in tasks associated with one area. If you want to be successful, you must always have a view of the big picture.

Being able to see the big picture and work on growing your business is where the idea of systemization comes in. You create and implement systems that allow all those little things to work while you are focusing on a broader view of things. Working on your business means you don't have to do everything yourself, and you don't have to micro-manage anyone you've hired to do specific tasks for you. If the

system is designed properly, the day to day aspects of the business will continue with or without your attention, effectively freeing you to spend your days working on making the business stronger, more profitable, and bigger than ever before.

Is There An Example of Working On Your Business Rather Than Working In Your Business?

While there are a number of examples of working on versus working in your business, perhaps one of the easiest ways to grasp the idea is by looking at a company that just about everyone in the world is familiar with: the McDonald's Corporation.

Most people have heard the story of the beginning of McDonald's, how a single restaurant became one of the most efficiently ran franchises in the world. What many people don't think about is how the business system developed by McDonald's has made all the difference in how quickly the company was able to expand while still maintaining consistent quality everywhere.

Without getting into a lot of detail, here are a few examples of what proper systemization has done for this one company:

- There is clear and concise process for earning the right to become a franchisee in the McDonald's chain. Not everyone can do it.
- Continuing education programs for people who want to stay in the business. Yes, folks who enjoy food service really can make a career out of working at McDonald's, not just pick up some money after school or during summer vacation.
- Consistent standards in dining room and kitchen hygiene. No matter where you go, a franchise must meet the same standards as any

restaurant owned directly by the corporation. If a restaurant fails to meet those standards, the franchise can be revoked.

- Consistent quality in the food served at each restaurant. No matter where you go in the world, you can still get the same signature dishes that you've known and loved for years.
- Room for experimentation. Above and beyond the core menu, McDonald's has practical and systemized procedures for serving items of special interest in a given region, often using this tool to experiment on possible additions to the core menu. All through the process, the quality of the food served remains high.

By digging deeper into the history and current operating structure of McDonald's, you can find plenty of other examples of how a sound and working system have made this one of the more stable companies in the world today. For now, these will suffice to illustrate just what can be done by developing a strong system that allows you to work on your business rather than work in your business.

The Lesson To Take Away From "The E-Myth"

In a nutshell, if you don't get anything else from Gerber's book, make sure you get this:

- You don't have to do everything in your business to make it successful.
- You don't have to involve yourself in every last bit of minutiae related to the daily operation of your business.
- You must always keep yourself in a position to see the "big picture" of where your business is going.
- You must allow yourself to steer the ship without worrying if the guys in the hold are feeding the coal into the boiler properly.

One of the easiest ways to burn yourself out before your business can even get off the ground is to try to master everything yourself, and do it all. No matter how good you are, it simply is not realistic. That is where the development of a logical and workable business system comes into play.

So How Do I Create This Wonderful Business System?

Whether you already have a business and find yourself exhausted from all the work each day, or plan on opening a business soon, there is still plenty of time to get into the swing of systemizing your business venture. Many of the steps in the process are common sense, once you actually begin to work on them. Let's take each step in turn and talk about what you want to accomplish with that step.

A. Make a list of all the general functions that apply to any type of business. It doesn't matter if you are thinking of a brick and mortar business, an online business, or a hybrid business that involves an Internet presence as well as a physical site. Some examples of the general functions that will always apply are:

- Accounting. Simply put, you have to create some sort of process for keeping track of what comes in and what goes out. Not only do you want to make sure that the business is working its way toward profitability; you also have to deal with making sure there are records to back up your tax filings, that you have indeed paid your vendors, and that your customers are paying you within terms. In addition, someone has to make sure you and any other employees you have get paid on time, have the right amount of taxes deducted from their gross pay, and all those other little things that keep the finances in order.

- Product Development. The bottom line is that unless you have something to sell, no one is going to buy it, and your company ceases

to have a reason to exist. Product development is not just about coming up with a better widget. It is also about making sure that better widget is likely to offer something that people want. Extra bells and whistles are of no value if nobody wants to play with them.

- Marketing. No matter how good your products are, unless people know they are around, there is no chance of ever getting your Internet business off the ground. Marketing involves creating strategies, learning how to reach niche markets among consumers, how to position your product to best advantage, writing effective marketing copy for use on your web site and in general marketing collateral, etc.

- Sales. While many people lump sales and marketing together, they must be treated as different functions in order to truly be a systemized business. Think of marketing as the way of getting the general word out and creating the basic tools that Sales will use to go after and win specific customers.

- Administration. Somebody has to mind the store and make sure the day to day tasks are being accomplished properly. Depending on the size of your venture, this may involve one central manager or supervisor, or several managers who oversee one or more departments or sections of the business. Keep in mind those managers will be your pipeline to what is happening in every area of your business.

- Technology Support. It is nearly impossible to operate any type of business these days without some sort of resource that can help keep your web site functioning, your servers running and your work stations from losing important data.

- Human Resources. It doesn't matter if it is only you and one other person involved in the business venture. The bottom line is someone has to make sure you are functioning within any guidelines or regulations that may apply to the type of business you are operating. Managing HR policies and procedures can get very involved, so this particular function must be managed by someone with an eye for detail and the ability to assimilate a lot of data.

- Purchasing. No matter how lean your Internet business runs, you will have to buy items for your business from time to time. It may be nothing more than general office supplies, a software program now and then, or promotional materials that Sales and Marketing can use as giveaways at conventions and other venues.

In any event, someone has to establish relationships with vendors, maintain the rapport, and make sure your company is getting the best price on any goods or services purchased. At the same time, whomever handles the purchasing has to make sure you don't run out of something important and slow down the processes of filling orders or meeting any expectations of your established customers.

- Customer Support and Service. Somebody has to keep the

customers happy. CS functions include responding to questions regarding services, dealing with client concerns, and in general making sure each customer will come back again and again, as well as recommend your products to their friends, relatives, and acquaintances.

Get the idea? Your initial list needs to break down all the essential functions related to operating any business from a simple home affair to a multinational corporation. Once you have the list in place, you can move on to the second step in the process.

B. With your list in hand, the time has come to organize and prioritize those functions. Depending on the size of your company, what you will find is that it is possible to combine some functions under one general category, at least as long as your business remains relatively small. Keep in mind you can always split categories at a later date, as they become necessary. Here are some examples on how to prioritize.

- Before you even have a company, you must have a core product. This means Product Development is at the top of your list. It is also likely to remain high, since you will want to refine your product over time to remain competitive in your market, as well as come up with new products that compliment your core line.

- Administration and Accounting. For a small business, you may want to consider an office manager who can take care of the day to day clerical duties, including posting credits and debits in the books. As you grow, these two functions can be split between different teams. In any event, this group must be structured and in place before you start

selling.

- Tech Support - No Internet business can function without someone who knows how to build and manage a web site and keep the equipment running.

- Sales, Marketing, and Customer Support. Again, you can possibly begin with one or two people who handle all three of these functions. Over time, your goal is to segregate all of them into their own sections or departments, but for purposes of getting started, these three distinct components do compliment one another enough to put them under the direction of one or two people.

C. With your priorities in order, it is time to talk about developing policies and procedures to keep each of these functions moving along smoothly. Keep in mind that even if you are placing two or three functions under one umbrella initially, you want each of those functions to be clearly defined, with specific processes and responsibilities attached to each one.

Essentially, you are creating a logical process that can be documented in a training manual, and have it be as relevant for a team of three as for a team of three hundred. Here are some examples to help you begin crafting the procedures for each of the essential functions.

- For Accounting, include guidelines as to how frequently posting must be done to Payables and Receivables. Daily is a good option, even if you only have one post to make per day. At least your books will always be current.

- Administration will need guidelines on how to schedule employees, how to draft letters and general correspondence, and how to arrange the filing system.

- Sales, Marketing, and Customer Support will need instructions on how to interact with the public. Marketing will after all be creating ads that must appeal to consumers, while Sales and Customer Support will be representing your company when approaching prospective customers or taking care of existing ones.

D. Put everything down in writing, so there is no opportunity for confusion or miscommunication on what should be done in any given situation. While this task can seem to be pretty intimidating, you actually have some great resources for managing all of this:

- Your new hires. Presumably, the people you hire will have some experience in the area where they will work. Draw on that to create policies and procedures.

- Templates and samples obtained from other businesses as well as online sources. There is no point in reinventing the wheel. A lot of what you need has already been written and can be adapted for your company with very little effort.

- Business consultants can also help you develop policies and

procedures that not only can be used in a training manual, but also to create a workable employee manual. The money spent on engaging the services of this type of professional will be well worth it in the long run.

E. Implement the business structure and take it for a test drive. Don't be upset if every little thing does not run like clockwork at first. No business of any size ever gets it totally right the first time. What you want to determine is if the basic structure is sound and has the potential to be tweaked slightly and make the company run easily and efficiently.

As the company grows, you will find it necessary to add positions to various areas or departments, adjust policies and procedures to accommodate any new laws or regulations that you must observe in order to keep operating, or to create new departments by splitting older ones. If your basic system is sound, tasks of this nature will be relatively painless and will not require a complete overhaul of the way you do business.

F. Diagram the flow of your business. It is not enough to identify and prioritize each of the functions within the structure of your business. You also want to make sure there is a logical ebb and flow between each of those areas. While this aspect may seem redundant once you've figured out what each department or group is supposed to do, think of it as having created the jewels to go in a necklace. They may be beautiful in their own right, but nobody can wear them until they are properly linked.

Here are some ideas to help you with the diagramming and definition

of the communication flow within the business:

- Diagram how things flow through each department. For example, a new customer order begins with Sales, makes its way on to Order Processing, then to Shipping and finally Billing. At some point, Customer Support will also be involved, since you want to follow up and make sure the customer is happy with his or her purchase.
- Identify who is responsible or accountable for each progression in the flow. To a degree, this was already done when you defined the roles of each department, but it never hurts to make sure you did make that clear earlier.
- Evaluate how long it takes for the flow of this order to make it all the way through the process. Could Sales have been quicker about taking the order and passing it on to be processed. Could the order have been shipped more rapidly? Was it billed accurately using the payment method preferred by the customer? Has Customer Support followed up with the customer in a reasonable time frame?

Taking the time to diagram various processes will help you in two ways. First, it will make it clear that what has been implemented is working properly. Second, it will help you and your team spot any areas where communication could be improved, procedures could be more well defined, and steps could be streamlined to save time and money.

While this seems like a great deal of work to do, especially if what you

have in mind is a nice little Internet business you run out of your spare bedroom, it really is fairly easy to accomplish. Keep in mind the degree of detail and time that you must spend with your team developing each of these facets, departments, and procedures depends a lot on the size and nature of your business. Some of these steps can be completed in a matter of minutes, while others will take days or weeks to put in place. In any event, building a solid foundation at the beginning of your business will save you huge amounts of time and money once the company is up and running.

Outsourcing As a Way of Systemizing Your Business

Unless you have unlimited funds, chances are you cannot hire a number of full-time employees to handle many of your essential functions. One great way for a small Internet business to have all the efficiency of a larger corporation is to outsource functions when and as necessary. There are several important advantages to this approach, especially when money is tight:

- There is a good chance you will pay only a fraction of what it would cost to keep someone on the payroll, plus you don't have to worry about benefits.
- One flat fee per month is much easier to budget and is likely to provide you with all the services you need for any given area, such as Tech Support or Accounting.
- You don't have to buy software, computers, or other office equipment; your outsourcing partners will already have those in place.

Finding services that you can outsource various functions to is not as hard as you may think. Here are some examples of where to look for professionals who will do the work at excellent rates:

- Check with your local business association. Freelancers who keep accounting books or handle computer maintenance for small businesses often belong to associations of this type.

- Peruse the local telephone directory and other locally printed matter. Freelancers often advertise in these venues, making it easy to find local support.

- Spend time checking out freelancing boards online. There are a number of sites that are set up to allow freelancers with expertise in a given area to connect with clients who need their services. Some of the boards have a broad structure that will allow you to look for several different types of services at one site. Check out both the specialized boards as well as those with a wider range of freelancing professionals posting in different categories.

You may be surprised at the range of functions you can effectively outsource. For example, you can outsource:

- Composition of ad copy and sales collateral. There are a number of freelance writers with a business background that can easily come up with text for ads and electronic brochures, introductory emails, and even create letter templates that you can use in your business.

- Accounting. Freelancers can take on the task of managing your books, including calculating the amount of taxes you owe on monthly revenues and making sure your vendors are paid on time.

- Customer Support - There are freelance services that will conduct customer satisfaction surveys, handle inbound customer concerns, and

also provide basic information about your product line to interested parties. Some of these services even offer support 24/7, which may be important if you are going for an international clientele.

- Marketing campaigns. Freelancers who specialize in marketing can get to know what you do, where you want to take the company, and help you determine what markets to target and create a marketing campaign that is sure to get you the right kind of attention.

- Systems Support and Troubleshooting. When your autoresponder quits working or your online credit card payment program is not functioning properly, you need help now rather than later. A local service that manages computer systems for small businesses may be just what you need. Most will charge a flat fee per month that will cover most routine problems, as well as provide a schedule for any issue that is not covered under the agreement.

Outsourcing will help you make the best of limited resources as you position the company to become profitable. However, there is no rule that says you have to pull those functions in house once the online business is doing well. If you are happy with the way your freelancers work and you have established a solid working relationship with them, continue to outsource those functions. You can always use the extra money for other purposes, such as growing your company.

Growing Your Systemized Business

With your online business properly structured and people in place to handle each of the essential functions, the time has come to begin growing your business. The best part is that since you now have a well structured operation in place, you have the luxury of using your skills to grow the business in whatever area that you have expertise.

This is the point where most people attempt to begin their online businesses. The general thought is that if you have expertise in a given area, that is enough. As we've already seen by taking a look at the many functions that go into creating and running any business, talents in one area are not enough.

However, you are at a distinct advantage here. Unlike others who quickly get in over their heads and scramble around trying to master a dozen different tasks at one time, you have a system in place that frees you from having to deal with every little thing personally. Instead, you can concentrate your efforts on using your talents while also interacting with the member of your team to move the business forward.

While there are a number of ways to approach the task of growing your business, here are some ideas on how to implement this process:

Get the word out

The bottom line is that if consumers don't know you exist, there is no chance they will ever buy one thing from you. You have to make some noise, be seen, and get in front of people if you want to make any money at all.

If you don't have a web presence, get one immediately. You want a site that is easy to navigate, is not cluttered with all sorts of worthless text or images, and offers visitors a chance to buy something on each page, usually with an icon that is easily visible at all times. Even if your business is based on being an affiliate and selling someone else's products, you need a place for customers to go and get to now you. That "buy now" link can always redirect them to the affiliate site where they can make the purchase.

To get people's attention and draw them to your web site, launch a marketing campaign. Use opt-in email lists, although make sure they are targeted and purchased from a reputable company. Otherwise, you will simply waste your time and money. Post links on online classified sites, in chat rooms that allow company advertising in the posts, and consider purchasing ads that can be placed on other web sites that have some relevance to your product line.

Don't forget to start building your own opt-in email list. Have a page on your web site where people can sign up to receive periodic emails about special offers, product updates and helpful hints regarding how to use the products. Since people on this list have expressed an interest in your business, there is a much better chance they will buy

products on some type of recurring basis.

Making sure people know about you and have some way to connect with you will allow you to begin building a reputation and earn the trust of consumers.

Start a Blog

If you look around the Internet, you'll find that businesses of all types and sizes have blogs. They use these blogs to promote their product lines, even including those all important links back to places where consumers can order these products. You can also include the ability for readers to subscribe to your blog via RSS feed.

Use Online Social Networking Sites

These are great places to post news about your company, build a loyal list of followers and friends, and in general raise public awareness of your company and products. Along with text and images, many of these sites will also allow you to display video on your member page, which makes it possible to create interesting, funny, and attractive visual elements to entice consumers to give your company a second look.

Network Offline

Even if your business operates entirely online, it still helps to network with local organizations. If there is an association that is related to the products or services you offer, join it. Make it a point to participate in local job fairs or various Chamber events. If possible, sponsor something at a local event from time to time. Always keep business cards on hand to give out when someone expresses interest.

Advertise in Print and Local Electronic Media

In spite of the Internet, sales are still made by placing ads in newspapers and magazines, as well as running an advertising spot on radio stations. Assuming the products you offer would be of interest to local consumers, look into using these resources as well. The rates are often very inexpensive and have a lot of potential to attract customers.

As you continue to expand your client base, you will come upon other ways to grow your business that may be especially relevant to your products and your goals for the business. Always keep an open mind, since you never know when an opportunity to move your company along will present itself.

Some General Ideas To Consider As You Systemize Your Business

Just as every business shares characteristics with other businesses, your online business will also have some aspects that make it a little different from everyone else. Those differences may have to do with the corporate culture you want to cultivate, the organizational structure, the products, or even the mission and goals of the company. With that in mind, here are some ideas that may or may not be helpful as you organize your business and refine the process over the years.

First, be flexible. No matter how well you organize the initial system, there will be some small changes to make as circumstances change. Back in the 1980's and 1990's, many businesses had to completely rethink not only their product lines but also the way they did business in general. The Internet made some approaches and structures obsolete, called for the restructuring of others, and in some cases required completely new ways of functioning in order to be competitive. Never assume what you have in place will last forever and be ready to make changes when and as they are in the best interest of you and your business.

Second, remain teachable. No matter how much you know, there is always something else to learn. There is every chance that someone will come up with a new twist on an old product, or develop a new form of advertising, or come up with some great new innovation in company organization that would make your company explode with new activity. If you think you know it all, opportunities of this type will pass you by, or at least not be recognized until it is too late.

Next, never assume you have covered every sector consumers. There is always one more niche market that is out there, waiting to be conquered. Your task is to identify those niche markets and capitalize on them. Just because your products were developed for use by other business, they may also be suitable for some personal use as well. Work with your marketing and product development personnel to find those markets and build a presence in them.

Fourth, be on the lookout for new online innovations that may be helpful in growing your online company. Ten years ago, the idea of using social networking sites to promote a product or service was unheard of. Today, the use of these sites, blogs and several other online tools are so common that just about everyone uses them. There is every chance that you will come across another tool to use, and possibly make the most of that tool before anyone else wakes up to the potential.

Fifth, feel free to develop other talents and skills as you go along. Just because you will not be performing every task associated with the business does not mean you can't become familiar with those functions. Since others are handling those responsibilities, you have the luxury of pursuing your education at your own pace, while still focusing your attention on aspects that relate directly to your area of expertise.

Last, don't fall into the trap of micro-managing your support. They are there because they know their stuff. As long as they are producing the desired result, leave them alone and focus your attention on other areas. They will work more efficiently without you standing over them,

you will get more done in the way of working on your business, and everybody will sleep better at night.

Conclusion

As you now understand, Internet business systemization is not something to take lightly. The process does require a great deal of thought, the creation of the right structure, and assembling the right team to handle all the little things that go into making a business a success. But the effort is well worth it in the long run.

When you make the decision to systemize your business, you put yourself on a path that would be impossible to follow otherwise. Assuming the implemented structure is sound and you choose the right people to work within that structure, you will have much more time to devote to working on your business. The business will also benefit from the presence of people who are proficient in each area of operation, rather than having to limp along as you try to master a world of functions that may not come easily to you.

Because the whole point of creating your own Internet business is to free yourself and enjoy a higher quality of life, there is no reason to turn your opportunity into another situation that is more or less like working for someone else. When you make a decision to systemize your business, and take the time to do it thoroughly and responsibly.

Even if your business is already launched, take some time at how the company currently functions. Would you and your company benefit by tightening up certain procedures or outsourcing certain functions, giving you more time to work on your business rather than working in it? There is a good chance you can identify at least a few constructive changes in existing procedures that would serve you well. And there is

also every possibility that you will begin to see ways to organize the company to include key functions that have been on the back burner up to this point.

While exploring the potential of systemizing your business, don't forget to have fun doing it. In spite of all the planning, implementation, and general hard work involved on the front end, the results of your efforts will make it possible to enjoy what you do more than you ever dreamed possible.

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