

Small Business Success

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Community
Futures Newsask



Getting Started with LinkedIn

If you aren't on LinkedIn, or haven't investigated it yet you really should check it out. In basic terms it is the business version of Facebook. It has over 300 million members in over 200 countries and territories worldwide. What LinkedIn does, and does well, is to connect businesspeople to each other and in turn, each other's connections.

Published in cooperation with [Blue Beetle Books](#)

LinkedIn gives you access to people, jobs, news, updates, and insights in the world of business. So, if you are new to this medium, how do you get started and make yourself known? Here are 12 quick tips to get you going.

- Sign up for LinkedIn, create a profile, and then search for businesspeople you know and ask them to be a connection.
- Once you have some connections take a look at their connections and see who you know and ask them to be a connection. Every connection you get leads you to further connections. With a little effort you can have hundreds of connections in no time.
- Now what you really want to happen is for people you don't know (potential clients perhaps) to start noticing you, so you need to widen your horizons in terms of connections.
- Post regular updates to let your connections know what's happening in your life and business.
- Join groups that relate to your industry and join the conversation. The more comments you post, and the more you contribute, the more people (and businesses) will take an interest in you.



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- Write articles about your industry, or market and post them for your network to read.
- Create a business LinkedIn profile, or company page, to complement your personal business profile.
- Add pages to your business profile that profile your management staff and encourage them to add posts, or put someone in charge of managing the business page.
- Use the LinkedIn help center to see how you can make the most out of your membership - there are webinars, videos and a place to simply ask questions. You can even request a LinkedIn mentor.
- Go back to your original profile and add to it. And, keep it up to date.
- Endorse people and request that they endorse you.
- Ask for recommendations and recommend some of your connections.

LinkedIn is an amazing vehicle for you to promote your business; the tips above will get you started but I encourage you to read more about LinkedIn and grow your knowledge as you grow your connections and your influence.

20 Things You Can Do to Increase Your Chances of Success

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This is the start of a series that will end up giving you 140 tips for success! Here are the first twenty to get you started.

Have a vision

Being clear about your vision is vital to the success of your business. How can you do this? Helen Keller said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight and no vision."

- Imagine you have a magic wand and think about what you would like your business to be in 5-years' time. Will it have employees? How many? Will it have offices, a warehouse, a manufacturing plant? Dream big, but with your feet firmly planted on the ground.
- Set goals and objectives - break down the road to your business dream into smaller increments (goals) then consider what objectives you need to be able to reach those goals (objectives) - now break the objectives down into action points and create an action plan.
- Be optimistic - if you can dream it you can do it!
- Plan, prioritize and implement - every day! Keeping moving forward on those action plans - deliver on the objectives and meet your goals.
- See and understand your market - make sure your product, or service, has a market now and into the future.

Be curious - where are the new opportunities?

Curiosity may have killed the cat, but it made the entrepreneur!

- Be an information junkie - the most successful entrepreneurs are those hungry for more knowledge - they devour news about trends, and business, and their industry.



- Keep learning and constantly improve - being a success in small business means continually learning and being open to new ideas.
- Network - all the time and discover what's going on in your city, with your competition and with your customers.

Success is an attitude

Attitude is the one thing that can make a difference in our lives every day. But remember it goes both ways, think of the difference a positive attitude might have on your business and then consider how a negative one might impact your success.

- Do you think of what you do as a job or a business? This difference is huge - you can grow a business, but if you're self-employed then you can only sell your time once.
- Can your business exist without you? If it can then you have a business, if it can't you're self-employed.
- Systemize your business. If you want to turn your self-employment into a business then you need to put systems in place so that if you go on vacation, or become sick then the "business" goes on regardless.
- Keep the end in mind from the beginning - true entrepreneurs know where they are going, they see the road ahead clearly.
- Believe in what you are doing and what you are selling - keep motivated. Successful businesspeople have faith in themselves, their business, their product, or service, and the people who work for them.
- Look for what is working and what is not. Never be blind to what is going on in your business, continually look at how you can do things better.
- Remember random events can derail you, so have some contingency plans in place for the more obvious random acts such as fire, flood, earthquake, key personnel leaving etc.
- Forming an alliance with the right people creates power in numbers. Network with allies and competitors in your industry and marketplace and form formal, or informal partnerships that benefit all parties.

Knowledge is power

The more information you have about every aspect of your business the more prepared you will be to tackle any problems that might appear.

- Consider all the problems you might face before they become a reality. Earlier we encouraged you to have a vision - dream big; now think about all the things that might go wrong and make a list of them.
- Plan ahead for tough times - carry out a risk analysis using the list you created above, and consider what you might put into place to mitigate these negative influences on your business.
- Handle tough times aggressively when they hit your business. Do not go into denial when things get a little tough - don't try to wait it out - take action immediately.
- Re-visit your business plan once every few months and update it regularly - a business plan is a dynamic document which you only really learn from when you are writing it, not when it's stuck on a shelf.

Next time we'll look at tips to help with financial issues and a whole lot more.

Challenge 4 Communities 2014

4 Weeks 4 Challenges 4 Winners 4 Prizes

Community Futures Newsask is hosting our fifth annual "Challenge 4 Communities"

All community groups (service groups, neighbor groups, youth groups, etc.) are invited to submit community projects that compete for prize money. The public will decide the winners with weekly voting on the internet over a four week format beginning October 31, 2014. Rules and an application form are available on our website at www.newsaskcfdc.ca (click on Challenge 4 Communities)

Get involved with your community today, submit a project, and compete for prize money!

Simple Ways to Green Your Business

This month sees the start of a series of articles on making your business more environmentally sustainable. In this article we take a look at lighting; in future we will discuss heating and cooling, office equipment and supplies, refrigeration, waste and recycling, food and health, and conservation culture.

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Turn off Lights

This is a simple strategy that's good for the planet and will reduce your utility bills; encourage staff to turn off lights when they are not needed, or when there is no one in the room.

Make the most of natural light

Artificial light is never as good as natural light so find ways to make better use of what natural light you have coming into your workplace. Perhaps changing your blinds, or the layout of offices/work stations/desks might improve access to nature's light source.

Match light levels to needs

Ceiling lights illuminate the entire room; try bringing light to specific areas where it is needed. Task and desk lamps can be used effectively and provided better light for most purposes. If you need a broader scope of light try to switch on one or two banks of overhead lights, rather than illuminating the whole room. If you can fit dimmers or sensors this can also save energy and money.



Get a lighting assessment

Having a professional lighting assessment carried out by a government certified energy auditor is the way to go if you are serious about saving energy. There are also lighting assessment contractors that work through lighting companies but unlike government certified professionals they may well have a sales agenda. Both however are likely to give you good advice. If your operation is large then this can certainly help reduce your annual costs.

Upgrading

A drug store chain in BC, with 24 stores, carried out an audit and subsequently upgraded its lighting saving over \$72,000 a year in energy bills. As mentioned above, an assessment can identify areas of inefficiency and help you find ways to reduce energy consumption. Experts say that replacing an entire lighting system with energy efficient products can reduce your energy bill by 40 per cent.

Incandescent bulbs

We all know that these old bulbs are being phased out, but there are still plenty around in offices, warehouse and other workplaces. The new, 'green' products replacing them can use one-tenth the amount of energy, so simply replacing them will go a long way to 'greening' your business.

Use timers or photocells outdoors

Many businesses use outdoor lights as part of their security systems, but they account for a large chunk of your overall lighting costs - especially as they are often left on all day. Changing them to work on timers, or automatically having them turn on at dusk, and off at dawn, can save money and make your company more sustainable.

Use LEDs for exit signs

If your exit lights are not already using LED technology then you need to make the change immediately. Canada's Energy Efficiency Regulations require that all new internally lighted exit signs consume no more than five watts per word (Exit or Sortie). LED lamps require a fraction of the energy the old technology used.

Switch to LED holiday lights

Most businesses get into the holiday spirit and put on a good display for their customers, but it's time to replace any of your old festive lights that are not using LED lights. Reduce the energy cost, and still bring smiles to children's faces - now there's a win-win!

Based on information from BC Hydro's website (www.bchydro.com)

Cartoon

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“What if we don't change at all ...
and something magical just happens?”

Getting People to Read Your Blog

A few months ago we talked about setting up your blog; how to design it and how important it is the content is up to date. This month we'll take a look at how to drive visitors to your blog - after all you've done all that hard work, invested all that time, now you want people to read what you've taken all that time to write!

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The first thing you need to decide is whether you want to set a budget to promote your blog, or you want to try various strategies that don't carry a cost. Remember though, there is always a cost to free - it may be hidden, but the cost can be in the time investment you must make.

You may want to try the free approach initially and then move to paid advertising once you start to see results and can put some of those new found profits into a new eMarketing budget.

Dollar free

I mentioned earlier this approach may not cost you any cash, but it does take time; on the upside it can be very effective. Join message board communities - basically all you need to do is find forums that are frequented by people in your target market and join in the conversation. The key to this strategy is not to overtly promote what you sell, but rather provide useful information and advice and demonstrate that you have a degree of expertise. This will encourage forum users to trust you and your advice. If you then have a link to your blog in your signature line, people will start to visit to learn more about you.



Sometimes promoting your blog is not allowed by forum managers, but in these cases there is usually a folder available within that forum that does allow you to advertise your sites. Often, you have to 'earn' the right to be able to have a link; this can be based on how regular you post perhaps, or on the length of time you have been posting messages. All sites are different so make sure you know the rules for the site you are using.

There are many social networking sites; if you choose one that is frequented by like-minded people, you will be blogging about similar topics. This way you get to become part of a 'community' and get to know others who will be happy to promote a link to your blog. Often these social networking circles allow cross-promotions. It's all about building the number of readers of your blog - spreading the word. Another approach is to use your expertise to write thought-provoking posts and submit them to bookmarking websites such as digg.com and delicious.com. People spend hours wandering through these sites looking for interesting websites and blogs. This is a strategic and viral sharing method.

Okay, so you have a budget...

Google AdWords is still probably one of the best forms of promoting your website, or blog. You will need to check out for yourself how it works, but there are good guides to follow so don't be intimidated. How it works is that you place a simple ad on the search engine result pages (you choose the search words - note: do so carefully) and you only pay when someone clicks your link. You also choose how much you are willing to pay for each click. The more you pay, the more likely you are to appear on the page and

how high up. You control the budget, so if you say you are willing to pay 20 cents for each click and put \$200 in your account, you will get 1,000 click-throughs to your website or blog.

Another way is to look at other blogs covering the same topics as you and see if they are willing to let you pay for a text link. Not all will allow this, but some do so be patient and ask several.

Think of your blog in the same way as you do your website and drive traffic to it in the same way. Talk about it - and provide a link - whenever you contribute to anything. It doesn't have to be expensive, but it's worth investing a little time and money in marketing what is increasingly become a vital marketing tool.



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