



Entrepreneurs'
Advice Bureau™

THE CUSTOMER MAGNET

**HOW TO FIND, ATTRACT AND
KEEP CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE**

MICHAEL CHENEY

Praise For Michael Cheney

"In a world of 'gurus' Michael Cheney stands among few, for a true guru not only possesses comprehensive knowledge, but also an ability and willingness to share it with those who desire to learn. A highly effective teacher, Michael is one of only a few mentors I've worked with who truly have a genuine concern for my success. Whether it is to help me hone an idea or gain an otherwise overlooked perspective, or to willingly share with me his limitless font of success-generating techniques and insight, he has always been available. As a professor and graduate advisor myself, I recognize that the best teachers are those whose guidance and personal integrity extend far past the actual 'tuition'. When you add to that magnetic personal warmth, it is immediately understandable why he is a terrific friend and colleague to so many of us and a valuable resource to the profession as a whole. Our profession grows because of people like Michael Cheney."

— **Todd Fiegel, Utah, USA**

"With everything you have done for me, with everything you have done to change my life it floors me every day. It is amazing the things you are able to do as a coach. The way you support your customers, the way you help them, how much you push them to get them through to that next level. You want them to succeed just as badly as they want to succeed. And that is what is so amazing about you. You truly care about your customers. It's absolutely amazing. I am blown away with everything that's happened in my life since I started training with you. And it happened so fast! We love Hawaii, we've always wanted to live there and guess what – now we're doing it. That is absolutely amazing. I spent almost six years trying this and you managed to pull it out of me so I could figure it out in a couple of months. Even within a few short weeks of you teaching me these techniques and showing me what to do I was increasing my income. It was exponential, it was happening so fast – up, up, up, up! It was amazing! I can't wait for the next success story that you have because I know they will be absolutely amazed, flabbergasted, blown away by what you're able to help them accomplish to get them to where they want to be. You are an absolutely amazing coach Michael. Thank you thank you thank you for everything you've ever done for me."

— **Shannon Lueck, Hawaii, USA**

"First of all I want to personally thank you for all that you have taught me. With all of your help, I have found a new life. Not only for myself, but for my entire family as well. As you may or may not know, I have been trapped in a job that I absolutely despise for almost twenty years. Even though I have been making over six figures, I have had an empty void that could never be filled. That empty void has been the lack of happiness and quality of life. Thanks to you and all that I have learned from you, I have now found a way to fill that void. After years of being a slave to my job, I started my new path to freedom. I consciously made the decision that I was going to leave my job and told my managers that would be my last day of working. You should have seen the looks on their faces. Again, I cannot begin to thank you enough for all of your help."

— Dan Higgins, Portland, Oregon, USA

"Hey Michael, I just want to let you know that what you have created is awesome! I have applied your techniques and I've immediately seen a massive increase in my earnings, thanks a lot Michael. Keep up the good work!"

— Brent I. Turner, Sydney, Australia

"My bank manager hates you Michael, she seriously does! £21,210 in just a few days... that was the result of your coaching Michael. She craps herself dealing with the kind of money I'm making now. All the "do this, do that, change this" ear beatings you gave me threw me head first at success. But it was much more than just money. Who knew a pom would ever get me this far!"

— Matt Haslem, Australia

"I wanted to show my appreciation and gratitude for the life and success that I've been able to live because of the stuff that I've learned from you. Since using the strategies for everything that you teach my business has exploded. Last year I earned £92,834 in net profit. It wasn't gross profit where £91,000 of that was spent on advertising – I actually earned £92,834 net profit from my businesses. It's been an amazing journey in this business for me, because of you. I love you man. You're the best thing that's ever happened in my life."

— Rhys Davies, Wales, UK

"Aside from the fact that I wouldn't have launched at all, had it not been for Michael's relentless bullying (boy! he's a slavemaster!), as a complete no-namer in my market, I was able to generate £11,342 in less than 3 days. Might not seem like much, but it just secured me my University spot ten years in advance!"

— David Wilkinson, Manchester, UK

"Michael, I'd just like to thank you for all your assistance and guidance that you have provided me as a mentor. I am absolutely certain that I would not have been able to achieve many of the things that I have done in the last few months without your help and guidance. Your insight, suggestions, and guidance, have been priceless, and put a lot of money in the bank for me."

— David Watson, Cyprus

"Hi Michael, Just in case all the thank you's that I sent to you via email weren't enough I just want to say thank you again. With your help and guidance I made over £6273 in sales in just two weeks. I can honestly say that the money I spent on your coaching was the best money I have EVER spent. It's like trading a penny for a £100 note a total no brainer. Thank you, thank you, thank you."

— Randy Baustert, US Virgin Islands

"Michael, at last I'm in control of my life and the best part is I know exactly what I want out of it. Now I'm working less hours and I'm making more money at the same time, it's fantastic!!! Thank you so much... The results have been truly outstanding."

— Alex Jeffreys, Wales, UK.

"Michael is a master communicator and this couldn't be any easier to follow and implement, it doesn't matter if you are a total newbie or you have been around for a short while, there is something here for you. Stop wasting time doing bits of everything and feeling like you're going nowhere fast - allow yourself to be given the killer action points and then get started profiting today."

- Chris & Laurence, Birmingham, UK

The Customer Magnet

*HOW TO FIND, ATTRACT AND
KEEP CUSTOMERS FOR LIFE*

MICHAEL CHENEY

First published in the United Kingdom by Lulu.com Publishing in 2011

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Produced in association with the Entrepreneurs' Advice Bureau
www.entrepreneursadvicebureau.org

ISBN 978-1-4709-4057-7

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For my wonderful wife,

LAURA

who inspires me, motivates me and makes me laugh every day.

I love you more than the words of a thousand books could convey.

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INTRODUCTION

As entrepreneurs there is nothing we like more than the buzz of getting a new customer! Whether it's your first ever sale or your 1001st the feeling is the same. You get that rush of adrenaline as you stand on the precipice of greatness ready to simultaneously help that person improve their lives with your product whilst also adding profit to your bottom line. It's a *magical* feeling. So where does it all go wrong?

In all too many businesses, there is an exhausting fight to attract customers followed by a desperate struggle to keep the customers then a catastrophic ending, laden with frustration as they abandon ship, leaving you to start the whole energy-sapping cycle once again. But what *causes* this phenomenon and what can you do to resolve it?

Over the years I've had the privilege of helping thousands of entrepreneurs and business owners and without doubt, the single biggest problem they face, regardless of their industry, is how to *find, attract and keep customers*. The book you have in your hands, "The Customer Magnet", was created to solve that problem. My own personal journey to achieving millionaire status has also highlighted the ongoing importance of ensuring these three activities remain the primary focus for any business. Before we get stuck in to how to successfully address each of these three areas, let me ask you a question...

Have you ever wondered what the secret buying triggers are that automatically convert prospects into buyers?

Have you been tearing your hair out in frustration as customers abandon your business quicker than rats leaping from a burning ship?

Would your business benefit from doubling, tripling or even quadrupling the number of customers it attracts using a system that requires virtually no extra cost or effort?

Do you already have plenty of customers but they're making your life hell by controlling everything you do and sapping all your time, energy and resources?

If you answered "Yes!" to any of these questions then The Customer Magnet is for you. We'll be tackling each of the three steps you need to take to turn your business into a customer magnet. These are:

- Finding Your Ideal Customers
- Attracting Customers
- Keeping Customers for Life

As you are reading this very sentence countless customers out there are desperately waiting to give you their money so shall we begin?

STEP 1

Finding Your Ideal Customers

“First, have a definite, clear practical ideal; a goal, an objective. Second, have the necessary means to achieve your ends; wisdom, money, materials, and methods. Third, adjust all your means to that end.”

— Aristotle

1.1 THE CUSTOMER IS NOT KING – YOU ARE!

This is a rather bold statement that might shock you as an entrepreneur. From an early entrepreneurial age we are taught that the customer is king and we should bow down to them at all times and under all circumstances. Whilst this is true on most occasions there is one key time in your business when your customer is NOT King (and you are!).

That time is when you are undergoing the process of deciding on what type of customers you want to take into your business. Most of the time in business we are taught that the customer is always right, we should always listen to the customer and that nothing is quite as important to us and our success as the customer.

This is difficult to argue with, but before you start a business, or if you want to redesign your business so that it better suits the type of lifestyle, income and day-to-day experience you really want, then the customer must come second. What must come first is your needs as the entrepreneur and business owner. All too often, we fall into the trap of bending over backwards for the needs of customers and putting their own needs before our own.

Think about why you got into business in the first place. Was it to constantly be pampering that nightmare customer who always complains and moans? Was it to be on permanent standby so that you can jump at a moment's notice whenever your customer tells you to? Or was it to work 23 hours a day giving your absolute all just to try and make your customers feel satisfied?

Of course not!

Although we all have different reasons for getting into business some of yours might have included greater freedom, increased income, greater control in your life, more free time to do what you want, ability to take holidays on demand and being your own boss. Throw a few awkward customers into this mix, however, and these dreams start dropping like flies.

Unfortunately in a lot of cases, the greater freedom you'd hoped for as an entrepreneur feels more like an inescapable prison with your worst customers holding the keys. Getting rid of your worst customers might seem like the easiest option but what if *all* your customers are awkward, over demanding and a nightmare to work with? They have you by the short and curlies! Combine this with the state of the world economy right now and the option to fire all your customers and start again is not really an option at all. The most frustrating part can be the fact that your customers *know* this and they start imposing ever-increasing demands upon your time, resources and patience.

The greater control you wished for in your life before you started your entrepreneurial enterprise becomes nothing but a distant memory. You feel like you're a slave to the job. Before you know it, what started out as an exciting adventure has become a slow, boring and arduous journey where you feel as if you're battling through every minute just to survive. The control of how your day pans out, the type of experience you have in your business and the freedom you get to have in your life are all controlled and dictated by the customers. So much for having greater control – many entrepreneurs feel like they're trapped in their own personal hell which is made even worse by the fact that they created it themselves in the first place!

What Free Time?

As for free time, as a modern-day entrepreneur you can forget it. Business owners are working longer hours than ever and none more so than those in the United Kingdom. So your visions of taking several afternoons off a week to play golf, go fishing, spend time with the kids or just take a breather have evaporated under the constant pressure to deliver. This is made worse by an environment in which customers are increasingly disloyal and more likely to change provider at the drop of a hat. When you add increasing price pressures and price sensitivity of customers into this equation it becomes a lethal cocktail of longer hours, more stress, less exercise, poor health, personal burnout and eventually failure.

The dream of taking multiple holidays every single year also transpires to be nothing more than a mirage for most entrepreneurs. Almost a third of business owners have reduced the amount of holiday time they take during the year because of worries about their finances and finding sufficiently qualified numbers of staff to man the ship whilst they're away. Even those that do manage to get away are unlikely to be able to really switch off from work and relax.

There are few sights more depressing than an entrepreneur on holiday unable to relax on the beach and play with their children due to taking an unforeseen customer phone call or e-mail arriving on their Blackberry. It's true that part of the blame for this has to lie with the business owner themselves for not being able to disconnect from their business and not being able to establish sufficiently streamlined systems to deal with their absence. The deeper issue, however, lies with the *type* of customers the business has attracted in the first place.

Customers to Blame?

Is it really fair to lay the blame for all entrepreneurs' problems and stresses squarely at the feet of their customers? I would say that yes, for the large part, it definitely is. Think about it – every single thing you do in your business is dictated by the customers. Without your customers you don't have a business. The type of customers you have and the way in which you communicate and interact with those customers has a direct influence on every aspect of the experience you personally have as the entrepreneur in your business.

The question is - what type of customers *should* your business attract?

This might seem like a trite question that can only be answered theoretically. After all, if your business is currently trading then you already have customers so how can you possibly choose the *nature* of those customers when they've already chosen you? The key here is to realise that it's never too late to swap out your customer base and get the *correct* type of customers to replace the *wrong* type of customers.

As with many things in business, the easiest way to start this process is by looking at what NOT to do. Or in this case – the type of customers you *don't* want in your business. Let's use an analogy to delve into this a little bit deeper...

All Aboard!

I'd like you to imagine that your journey as an entrepreneur and growing your business is like a long bus journey. You're the driver of the bus and you have a specific destination in mind where you'd like to take your business. There are certain resources you

need as the driver in order to make the journey a success. You need fuel, a route map and paying passengers who will provide you with the money you need to get all the resources and get you to where you want to be.

For the purposes of this analogy your customers are the paying passengers on your bus because without customers you're going nowhere! The key point here is that you don't just want to accept any old customer on to your bus just because they have the fare. Before we talk about *which* customers to let on board your bus, let's just analyse the situation for a moment.

It's your bus - you've decided on the direction, the destination, the route and the rules by which anyone else can join you on the journey. If a passenger turns up with the right fare but they give you a bad attitude then *don't* let them on the bus. If a passenger turns up with the correct fare but they demand to be taken on a different route than you'd like to go then *don't* let them on the bus. And if a customer turns up with the correct fare but they demand to be taken further than you're willing to go then *don't* let them on the bus!

This is, of course, easier said than done. As the pressure on businesses and entrepreneurs continues to grow we are all sometimes guilty of seeing the pound signs rather than looking in more detail at the bigger picture. What you really need to do is thoroughly examine every customer before they get on the bus and ask yourself this question:

"Will this person make my journey more enjoyable and more profitable?"

If the answer is no then... Yes, you've guessed it! Don't let them on the bus!

It's time for you, as an entrepreneur, to take back the control of your business. It's time for you to rise up and create a business that is suited to your needs *first* and to the customer's needs *second*. It's time for you to build a real business that serves you, not the other way around.

Before you start running to the hills screaming and wildly waving your arms in the air let me just qualify this with one key note. We've already said that the customer is *not King* (and that you are) but this only applies until the point the customer does business with you. If we were being anal about this, we would say the *prospect is not King* but the customer *is*. What this means is that you control the overall quality and characteristics of all the prospects who become customers in your business. Once they become customers, however, and they hand over their hard-earned money to buy a product or service from you, then they *do* become king.

The last thing you want to do is start disagreeing with customers, saying you are the king, asking them to work around what it is you want to do and telling them constantly that they're wrong. So please understand that this is not what I'm saying at all. Before they engage with your business, however, then you are totally within your rights, both morally and legally, to make them jump through as many hoops as you want to ensure that you do actually want them on the bus.

Before we can even start addressing the issue of how to find these perfect prospects, who will become perfect customers, there is one key issue we need to resolve first. Namely that of...

Setting Your Final Destination

The desired destination you have in mind and the desired destination the customer has are obviously different. For example, if you're a dentist your desired destination might be to grow as large a practice as possible with as many customers as possible and to generate as much profit from each customer as you can. The desired destination of the customer, however, is to what avoid you at all costs! Or at least to have healthy teeth for as minimal expenditure as possible.

We'll come onto communicating these desired destinations and how you can encourage and persuade more customers to come "onto your bus" later in this book. Firstly, however, before we start appealing to the destination desires of customers we first need to agree on *your* desired destination as the business owner.

This is the scary stuff that most entrepreneurs shy away from.

We'd much rather get down to business and start *doing* stuff. As entrepreneurs we want to roll up our sleeves and start doing the business, exploring the opportunities and start implementing our ideas (or at least thinking of new ones!).

The harsh reality though, is that setting an ultimate destination for your business is possibly the single most important task that you can do as an entrepreneur. You wouldn't leave the house without an advance plan of where you are going. Nor would you get into your car, start the engine and drive off down the road without knowing where you are heading to!

As ridiculous as these examples sound I have to tell you that I've lost track of the number of business owners I've spoken to over the years who do exactly that with their businesses. They start driving without knowing where they're going! And then

they wonder why, after a number of years, they haven't arrived and they feel "lost".

It's a pretty old cliché but it holds true – you can't hit a target if you can't see it. You must have a clear, detailed and well laid-out plan of where you want to take your business before you start. This is an ideal world scenario of course so if you've already started your business you need to pull your bus over to the side of the road, turn off the engine, and work out where you are really headed.

This doesn't just mean mapping out the financial figures and profit projections of where you would like the business to be. Nor does it mean detailing the number of employees or customers you would like to attain over the next five years. Although both these components would be a good starting point. More than that, this exercise needs to engage you on an *emotional* level as well.

How to Design Your Ideal Business

- What do you want to be doing on a day-to-day basis?
- What type of business do you really want to operate?
- How do you want to be remembered?
- What can you see yourself doing five years from now?
- If fear was no object what would you do?
- What is your 20 year goal for your business?
- Do you plan to sell your business?
- Do you have a franchise model idea for your business?
- Who are you really trying to help with your business?

- What are you best at?
- What do you love to do?
- What are you passionate about?
- What interests do you have?
- What are your core skills?
- How can you change the world?
- Is this a lifestyle business or do you want it to be a global empire?
- Is there a social- or charity-related element to your business?

It's only by asking these questions (and lots more!) that you can begin to understand your own personal motivations for starting a business. By understanding yourself a little bit better you can then start to design the structure of your business around this.

In this way you will start to feel a lot more at home in your business rather than as if you are struggling and fighting against it every single day. Whilst some of these questions and some of the research you need to conduct is purely factual and statistical, much of it comes down to your emotional gut feel.

It's important that you don't underestimate how critical this exercise is for your future success as a business owner. It's all too easy to just start doing business, get some customers and start bringing in a bit of money. We can kid ourselves into thinking that this is enough to get by and that "things will work themselves out". This might work for a certain time but after a while you will start to feel disillusioned, lost and disappointed with your overall progress in business. Perhaps that's where you are right now.

In addition to this, without having an overall plan and strategy to where you want your business to go and what you want your business to achieve you will lack that much-needed and much sought-after enthusiasm and energy. Do you want to be dragging yourself out of bed every day with no real motivation about what lies ahead of you? Wouldn't it be better if you could wake up every day feeling like you're some sort of superhero?

Is it a Bird? Is it a Plane?

You need to find out which type of superhero you really are. Every morning, I personally feel like I am leaping out of bed and putting on a superhero uniform. The superhero image that I have in my mind is that of "entrepreneur helper". This is the vision that gets me out of bed every morning even when it's cold, rainy and miserable. Having a mission like this motivates me at the start of the day and keeps me going when times inevitable get tough on occasions, as they do for all businesses. This fact holds a secret key that leads to ordinary business owners becoming extraordinary business owners. This key is *servicing others*.

You won't get very far in business if you're only trying to look after number one. By having an overall final destination and an ultimate goal and mission for yourself and your business which inherently includes some aspect of helping others you will find that you are more motivated than ever to succeed. Without having that final destination in mind it's very difficult for you or your subconscious to get on board.

If you've ever found yourself struggling for ideas, struggling to find energy throughout your working day, struggling to get

motivated on a Monday morning or just feeling like you're trying to push treacle up a hill then the underlying factor might be that you haven't set a final destination for your business yet.

Use the Forces Luke!

When it comes to achieving things in business there are always two forces at play. First there is the pushing in force. The pushing force is what's pushing you away from your current circumstances. Maybe an unsatisfactory level of income is pushing you on to better things. Or perhaps the frustration you experienced in an old day job pushed you to become an entrepreneur and set up your own business. Maybe, like me, you became totally disillusioned and disenfranchised with the corporate world so you turned your back on it and set up your own business to become your own boss.

Whatever it is, there will be something, or possibly many things, pushing you forwards towards success. This pushing force however is not enough. Generally, the pushing force will move an object but not necessarily in a forwards motion. The pushing force will get the object moved but sometimes it moves it to the left or to the right or in a random way rather than in a straight line to a specific destination. This is where the second force comes into play.

The second force is a pulling force. This force represents anything that you are being drawn towards. This could be the aspiration of becoming a millionaire, the dream of owning a multinational corporation, the desire to buy a Ferrari or the altruistic notion of building a school in Africa. Whatever the dreams and hopes are - the effect is the same. These pulling forces assist you

towards your desired outcome and keep you on a straight line path towards your goal.

The *pulling* forces, however, are not powerful enough on their own to get you to where you want to be. As we've already discussed the *pushing* forces, whilst strong, are not accurate enough to help you reach your destination either.

It is only when you combine the power of these two forces *together* that you will finally start getting some traction and begin moving to where you want to be. Using the pushing power alone - that is relying on fears and pain and the things you wish to escape from as a motivating factor - is like trying to push a train from the rear without any tracks to guide it along. It will crumple, buckle and end up in a heap. But when you combine the two forces together you fully harness their potential. The train is then being *pushed* from behind and simultaneously *pulled* to its final destination along a clear straight-line track that will get you to exactly where you want to be.

The difficulty comes in actually getting down to it and doing the exercise of working out exactly what you want. In this fast-paced world we all too often run around trying to get things done and feel like we are achieving a lot. But quite often, to quote Stephen Covey, we are "*straightening deckchairs on the Titanic*". We might feel like we're making a lot of progress and getting a lot of things done but our entire business could well be moving in the entirely wrong direction.

Where Are You Heading To?

It takes a brave entrepreneur to take a deep breath, pull over to one side and take stock of their overall destination and the

path they're currently on. People say it's never too late to turn back from a wrong path. I agree with the sentiment wholeheartedly. You owe it to yourself to step out of life for a few hours and plan exactly where you want to take your business. As entrepreneurs we'd probably be the first to admit that our business comes pretty high up in priority of things in life. You will agree with me, therefore, that it is worth investing a substantial amount of time to plan your route and decide exactly what your destination is.

You can start doing this by writing down what it is you want to achieve. Write down things such as your desired profit levels, how many customers you would like to attain, how many staff members you would be comfortable taking on, where you would like to operate your business from, what you would like to do on a day-to-day basis etc. To all intents and purposes what you're trying to do in this exercise is paint a mental picture of exactly what your business will look like down the line. This includes everything from the number of employees you will have right down to what you will be doing on a day-to-day basis and what your customers will look like.

It's okay for you to say that you need to attract the right customers but if you're not clear on what your business is going to be like and what the right type of business is for you then how can you match customers to that business? So your first mission is to have a clear picture in your mind of the right business for you. The type of business that fits your personality, your skills, your passion and your vision for success. Then, and only then, can you start the exercise of locating the right customers for this business.

Vision Boards – New Age Woo-Woo or Genuinely Effective?

Alongside writing down detailed descriptions of what your business will look like, there's another strategy that I've used personally to create a vivid picture of my company's final destination. This is sometimes referred to as "vision boarding" or "dream boarding", both of which sound like new-agey nonsense. I would have previously avoided this strategy myself had I not experienced its effectiveness firsthand.

The process is very simple. All you have to do is get a blank sheet of board – it could be cardboard or you can even use a spare piece of wall and this becomes your "vision board". What you need to do is stick things onto this board or wall that are part of your ultimate vision. Right now we are talking about the vision for your company or your business but it will also help you to add your personal visions to this board as well.

You just treat it like a giant shopping list of things that you want to have such as:

- Things that you want to achieve
- Things you want to own
- Things you want to buy
- Places you want to go
- People you want to meet
- The type of person you want to become
- The type of attributes you want to attain, things you want to learn

- Moments you'd like to experience
- Any other facets of life that you would like to be part of your imminent future

Before I go on to explain this strategy in a bit more detail I do need to plead with you to believe me when I say this strategy directly helped me become a millionaire in just a few short years. It really is *that* important. Okay let's get back to the strategy...

One of the easiest ways to start finding the things you want to attain, own and experience is to flick through magazines or to do a search online for the type of images that portray the goals you wish to attain. Let's just say you would really like to own a yellow Lamborghini Gallardo. You would find a picture of the Lamborghini (preferably in colour), cut it out and then paste it onto your vision board. You want to place the vision board or choose a wall that is close to where you work on a day-to-day basis so that you will see it regularly throughout every day.

Once the picture of the Lamborghini is on your vision board you must write the date by which you hope to attain that item. Again, this does sound otherworldly so I ask you to bear with me and trust me on this – it really does work! So now you have a picture of the Lamborghini on your vision board with a date written on it.

Next, you may wish to add a picture of the Seychelles if that's somewhere you've always longed to visit but you've never been before.

As before, you print out the colour picture or take one from a magazine and put it on your vision board and write the deadline

date onto the picture for when you want to achieve or experience that item.

To give you ideas for your own vision board here is a taster of some of the things that I've put on my vision board over the years:

- Take multiple holidays a year (achieved)
- Buy house in the country and live mortgage-free (achieved)
- Visit the pyramids in Egypt (achieved)
- Become teetotal (achieved)
- Launch multiple successful businesses (achieved)
- Become a millionaire (achieved)

The sky is really the limit and you want to make sure you have a really good balance of different types of goals. You might want to have travel-related goals, charity-related goals, financial goals, learning goals, materialistic goals, spiritual goals and health goals.

You also want to make sure that the goals you attach to your vision board have a widespread of time spans amongst them. This means that not all your goals will have a deadline date of this year or next year on them. Think short-term, medium-term and long-term. i.e. 6 to 12 months, five years and 10 years. This way, you shouldn't have to wait too long until one of the goals has been achieved but at the same time you will still have the medium-term and longer term goals to aspire to.

The other secret to this is to constantly refresh and review your vision board. As humans we are a pretty fickle bunch and

I've noticed sometimes that the goals I once added to my vision board with great excitement were, on review just a few months later, no longer a desired priority for me so they got removed.

This vision board exercise will really help you crystallise in your mind your final destination for your business and for yourself personally. Not only this, but it will also become a visual representation that you can look at on a daily basis to check your progress. In addition, it also acts as a highly effective motivating tool to drive you on through tough times. If you are struggling with a particular project or you're finding a Monday morning particularly difficult – look at your vision board to remind yourself of *why* you are doing this. The vision board will trigger the feelings you have about your goals and why you established the business in the first place and where you're headed to.

What I've personally found particularly useful with this technique is to have a second board in addition to the vision board. I call this my "goals achieved board". It does exactly what the name suggests. When I've achieved a goal that was previously on my vision board I move it over to my goals achieved board. This gives me a great sense of purpose and well-being whenever I achieve the goal. It sounds simple and basic but it works.

Like the vision board the goals achieved board can also act as a really good motivator because you can look at all the things you've achieved to inspire you and drive you forward. It also gives you a great sense of perspective. For example, I'm able to look at my goals achieved board that I've used for several years and look back at some of the earliest goals I set and see how far I've come since that time.

Don't be afraid to take a lot of time away from your business to do this exercise. Contrary to what you might think taking that time away will make you even more efficient and effective when you return.

Taking Time Out To Reflect

When I first started setting business goals and personal goals in this way I did it in a rather unorthodox fashion. I was away travelling on business in Scotland and I decided to get away from it all. I took a PDA and a foldable keyboard and walked several miles into a wild forest. After leaving civilisation behind I reached a spot in the forest where all I could hear was the birds and the sound of the breeze in the trees. Something caught my eye in a nearby clearing – it was a lone tree stump...

I sat down on the tree stump, took out my PDA, folded out the mini-keyboard and began typing out my goals and vision from my business. To say that the words flowed would be a dramatic understatement! I set goals and created a vision that day that has totally shaped my life ever since. It was one of the most exhilarating and liberating experiences I can ever remember. The best part is it helped me clarify in my mind what the right business was for me. From that point forward I was then able to start planning and implementing a strategy to attract the right customers into that business.

The fact that many businesses and entrepreneurs are struggling right now is an indication that they either have the wrong type of customers or the wrong type of business. Sadly, in many cases, they have both. Hopefully you've now realised that having the

right business is not down to luck or coincidence but something which you can actually *design* yourself.

Let's now turn our attention to other aspect which is pin-pointing the RIGHT customers. When it comes to this area it's extremely important that you avoid...

1.2 THE SINGLE BIGGEST MISTAKE 99% OF ENTREPRENEURS MAKE

So we've already taken a look at setting goals for yourself as an individual and also for your business. The next step in designing your ideal business, now that you have your personal goals set and a clear vision of your business itself, is to design your perfect customer.

This might seem like an alien concept. How on earth can you be expected to design your own customers as if you were manufacturing a product? This kind of closed-minded thinking is what causes the failure of many business owners and entrepreneurs. In fact, as the subject of this section says, this is the single biggest mistake that 99% of entrepreneurs make - NOT designing their perfect customer.

It's clear that when you are operating a business you need to plan and carefully strategise every single manoeuvre that you make. This sounds great on paper but we don't always do this. There are certain aspects of business where you always feel like you must stick to the rules and have a clear plan and strategy defined before you engage in a specific business activity. For example, a new project that you release, a recruitment drive or perhaps a new advertising campaign. So why should choosing the type of customers you have be any different?

The mistake many business owners fall into is thinking that customers cannot be designed. You might look at your business landscape and feel that you have to work with what is already there rather than make plans of your own to create something from new. Of course, when you just start out in business any customer is good news – at least until they become one of those nightmare customers! So it goes against the entrepreneur’s nature to want to design the ideal customer when there are so many customers in existence already that could be attracted into the business.

This is why the mistake is so easy to make. A lot of entrepreneurs fall into the trap of just attracting *any* old customer rather than having a clear design and picture in their minds of their ideal customer. Whilst it’s very difficult to take your ideal customer design and find an endless supply of customers that match it, without having an ideal customer design it’s highly unlikely that you will ever find a customer that approaches this ideal because the ideal won’t exist! Again, this is yet another example of how hard it is to hit a target that doesn’t exist.

How to Catch a Fish

It’s a bit like going fishing. If you don’t know the type of fish you’re looking to catch how can you possibly prepare for the trip? How do you know which type of rod, which type of line and which type of bait to use if you don’t have a clearly-defined picture of the ideal fish you want to catch? How can you even know which stretch of water to go to in order to try and catch the fish?

Fishing for the large, spike-toothed pike, for example, requires an entirely different set of equipment than you need to

catch an eel or salmon. The techniques involved to catch each of these three fish are also entirely different.

To catch a pike, for example, you would need a steel-reinforced line, a metal lure and a short rod to enable you to land the heavy fish effectively. The metal lure imitates the behaviour of one of the pike's favourite prey. The reinforced steel line protects against the sharp biting teeth of the pike.

Fishing for salmon is a totally different proposition. You need a lighter and longer rod that enables you to cast the very light "fly" on the end of the light line into the water. Salmon prefer shallow, fast-flowing water whereas pike are often found in deeper and slow-flowing parts of the river.

As for eels, they normally reside on the very bottom of the river bed so you need heavy weights to take the line down to the bottom and some live bait to attract the eel.

So if you try and attract a salmon using the pike method or you try to catch an eel by floating a fly on the top of the water it won't work. Whilst this might sound ridiculous this is exactly what 99% of entrepreneurs do. They don't adopt a different approach for the different types of customers that they want to catch. Instead they try and adopt a "catch all" philosophy for every single customer. What's worse is that they don't even know the type of customer they want in advance or where to find them.

To extend this metaphor further – this kind of "catch all", non-specific approach is like going to the nearest stretch of water and tossing in a few hand grenades. Yes, you will catch fish but it will be a messy business, you will end up with lots of fish bits everywhere including many parts and types of fish that are poisonous and totally inedible. In short, it's not a good idea.

WANTED: Ideal Customer. Have You Seen This Person?

So the art of designing your own ideal customer is not so much about creating a form of customer that has not previously existed before, but rather, it is about seeing all the customers in the marketplace and *targeting* a specific group of them who would be ideal for your business. Once you have this “photofit” identity of what constitutes your ideal customer you can then go after those customers with the right strategies, the right tactics and the right equipment to get as many of those customers as possible into your business.

Armed with the portrait of your ideal customer you can enter the marketplace and compare it to the customers and prospects that you find. It’s then simply a case of finding those customers that match your profile and when you find them using the right methods to attract them into your business. You don’t want to attract customers who are going to cause you too much grief, too much hassle or will effectively make the journey on your bus unbearable or unprofitable.

So let’s talk about how to design your perfect customer. You need to bear in mind at all times that the objective of this exercise is to create one single representation of your ideal customer so that you can use this as a model to attract many of these types of customers into your business. It’s similar to the child’s game where you have different-shaped blocks and a square hole, a circular hole or a triangular hole. What you’re doing is saying that your perfect customer is represented by a circle. The square customers are not what you’re looking for nor are the triangular ones. So by going into the marketplace with your circular hole you can test every prospect and customer against this and if they

don't fit through the circular hole this means they don't match your template of the ideal customer and you do not accept them into your business or waste your marketing efforts and resources trying to attract them.

This is an important point because not only do you want to avoid having the wrong customers in your business (who can undermine your profits and waste your resources) but you also want to avoid wasting the time and resources you have to attract customers in the first place. If you attract the wrong type of customer into your business you get hit with a double whammy because they've wasted your time and resources when you've had to attract them and find them in the first place plus once they come into your business they can wreak havoc there too.

The art of designing your own customer has at its core the notion of arming yourself with as much information as possible. We'll take a look now at different ways that you can find information about your ideal customers and how you can start to build up an accurate picture of what your perfect customer looks like. Once you have this picture you can then use it to attract the right customers into your business and keep them there.

The first step in all this is to truly understand who your customer is on *all* levels. Once you have a deeper understanding of what makes your customer tick, you can then begin to use this to your advantage. You need to get into your customer shoes.

How To Step Into Your Customer's Shoes

- Why does your customer buy from you?
- What is your customer most worried about?

- What is the ultimate dream goal for your customer?
- Which problem is your customer most desperate to solve?
- What will your customer buy after they buy your product?
- What does your customer buy before they buy your product?
- What annoys your customer?
- What makes your customer feel happy?
- How old is your customer?
- Where does your customer live?
- Does your customer have children?
- Is your customer married?
- What is your customer's salary?
- What type of house does your customer live in?
- What political persuasion does your customer have?
- Which newspapers does your customer read?
- Which TV programmes does your customer watch?
- What does your customer do in their spare time?
- What kind of books does your customer read?
- What type of websites does your customer visit?
- Where does your customer go on holiday?

You need to ask yourself as many questions as possible about your ideal customer. It might seem strange to be asking these questions, particularly when they are formulated on an individual basis, as if there is only one customer in existence. Yet the reason for this is that your end goal in this exercise is to develop one single named ideal customer. This named customer does not really exist but they are a full and total embodiment and repre-

sentation of the ideal customer for your business. We'll come onto this in a moment...

You need to start out by getting data on average statistics such as the average salary of your customers, the average number of children your customers have etc. Once you have a clear overview of this average data you then need to make some assumptions so that you can collate all this information into one single ideal customer. This way it makes it a lot easier for you to use this one single ideal customer as a template to get new ones rather than constantly thinking of averages and large sets of data. It also makes your ideal customer seem more personal because you're going to be giving them a name, an age and occupation etc.

You might be able to answer some of these questions already from your existing experience with dealing with your customers. Just make sure you exercise an air of caution that you are not using any information or data from non-ideal customers in your database. Whilst you could easily create an "average customer" model using all the information you have at your fingertips for your existing customer database, this is not the exercise. The exercise is to paint a picture of your *ideal* customer. So your first step is to look at your existing customer database and consider if there are any ideal customers within it.

If you are fortunate enough to have ideal customers already in your database then you can ask the above questions related to these ideal customers to start to fill in the gaps for your ideal customer portrait. If you're starting with a blank canvas and you don't have any ideal customers yet then before you look at their attributes and their characteristics you need to have it clear in your mind what an ideal customer means to you. Whilst this will

be different for every entrepreneur and business owner there are some core fundamentals that you need to watch out for.

Who is Your Ideal Customer?

- Your ideal customer will enjoy being part of your business
- Your ideal customer will always be open to new offers that you put out in your business
- Your ideal customer will communicate with you on a regular basis
- Your ideal customer will understand you and understand the message your business is trying to convey
- Your ideal customer is loyal
- Your ideal customer generates huge amounts of profit for your business through repeat purchases
- Your ideal customer is happy almost all of the time
- Your ideal customer does not moan, whinge or waste your time with petty complaints

As you start getting into the data acquisition and analysis phase you will begin to see patterns emerging. You might find, for example, that the best customers you have are all of a certain age range. Or perhaps you might find the most difficult customers mainly come from a certain source of your marketing efforts. Perhaps one gender remains, on average, a loyal customer of yours for longer than the other. Maybe a married man with one or more children generates the most profit for you. Without looking at this information in detail you are operating totally blind. You are trying to fish using hand grenades. You are driving

your bus blind. And regardless of the metaphors being used – you are messing up!

So utilising your existing customer database is a great starting point to start painting that picture of your ideal customer. But you may not have the luxury of having an existing customer database or if you do it may not have any people in it that you would be happy to label as “ideal customers”. If this is the case you’ll need to use your intuition to draw out a characterisation of what your ideal customer looks like.

There are really two sides to this. On one side of the coin, your ideal customer represents the attributes that the customer needs to have in order to be attracted to your business. This means - do they have sufficient funds, do they have a demand or a need for your product and are they aware of your offer? On the other side of the coin you need to know that your ideal customer is going to be just as good for your business as your business is good for them. The mistake that is commonly made by entrepreneurs is to focus only on attracting customers who the business can serve rather than the other way around. i.e. customers who can serve your business.

Entrepreneurs who have been their own customers have a head start in this exercise. If you have been a customer in the type of business you now operate then you will have a greater understanding, naturally, of what it’s like to be a consumer in this arena. You can cast your mind back to the feelings you had of being a customer in this marketplace.

- What worries did you have?
- What frustrated you?
- What problems did you need to solve?

- How did you try and find a solution?
- Which solutions did you seek to avoid?
- Which businesses attracted you and why?

Having been a customer in the same marketplace that you are now selling to you will truly be able to connect to and resonate with your ideal customers. You know the pain they're going through and the stories and marketing messages you use in your enterprise will hit the mark far more often as a result. It doesn't matter if you have never been a customer in the same market that your business is serving. You can still apply these methods, let me explain...

As entrepreneurs we are often so immersed in businesses that we forget that we are also customers. Even if you're not a customer in the same marketplace that your business operates in you still have a core understanding of the customer-to-business relationship. It will pay big dividends if you can remove your "business owner hat" during the exercise and put on the "customer hat" in its place. Stepping into your customer's shoes and feeling what they feel, seeing what they see and thinking how they think is the key to understanding what makes them tick.

Once you've used your existing customer database and any other information you have at your disposal (including the questions outlined for you above) then you can start to piece together the portrait of your ideal customer. This portrait will be a combination of the two facets we mentioned:

1. Describe a customer who is *attracted* to your business
2. Describe a customer who is *attractive* to your business

Only when you have these two things present in equal measure can you be assured that the customer is ideal for your enterprise.

If you're able to use an existing customer database or portfolio for this exercise you will, of course, make progress a lot quicker and easier. If you don't have this luxury available to you in your business then you will need to go out into the marketplace and conduct extensive market research to ascertain the attributes of your ideal customer. We'll look at market research and how to find extremely valuable data and information in a moment. But first, let's talk about *personalising* the identity of your ideal customer.

Remember, the more you can personalise and humanise this portrait of your ideal customer the better it will serve your business. It will be easier for you to connect to your ideal customers and easier for you to grasp all the attributes they have in one simple package. Once you've collected all the data and started to put your portrait together you need to give your ideal customer a name. You also need to give your ideal customer an age, an occupation, a salary, some leisure interests, a political persuasion, hobbies, favourite books, and other habits etc. Each of these attributes is not chosen at random but rather based on the average of all the data that you've been able to accumulate during the exercise.

When done in this way your ideal customer portrait will feel like a *real* person. Whilst each of the attributes and characteristics of this ideal customer will be based on average statistics there will of course be an element of assumption that you need to make in some cases. Where this need arises just go with your gut instinct - the more specific you can be when painting this picture, the better.

Take a Sneaky Peek at Your Competitors...

If you don't have any ideal customers already in your business then you're going to have to conduct market research to pinpoint the attributes for people that might be considered "ideal customers" in the business arena you operate in. You can begin this exercise by first looking at your competitors. What type of customers do *they* have? Are these the type of customers that you would like in your business? If so, then you need to reverse-engineer the attributes and characteristics of these customers. Whilst this is not an exact science there are many conclusions that you can draw from your initial research.

For example, if you were creating a new deodorant and entering into this marketplace you could look at one of your main competitors to ascertain what their ideal customers were. Seeing as corporate espionage remains both illegal and unethical your only option is to use the information that is publicly available to draw your conclusions. You could look at the advertisements for your competitor to see who it is they are trying to attract with their marketing messages.

It doesn't take a genius to realise that most deodorant advertisements are targeted at single males aged 16 to 25. The advertisements often feature young attractive females, high-speed car chases, explosions, fast-paced music and other devices that are all being used to cater to that specific demographic. Further research would show you that your competitors are using online social media in addition to television advertising to try and reach this demographic. So whilst it is not always possible to get direct access to a list of ideal customers or their characteristics, these can be determined, to a certain degree, by analysing the outward

communications of the competing businesses and their attempts to attract these ideal customers.

In some cases it is possible to get the customer information handed to you on a plate directly from your competitors. Some businesses release catalogues, magazines or annual brochures and accounts containing detailed breakdowns of their customer demographics. If this isn't the case for your industry then you can widen the net slightly by thinking about what other products and services your customer buys.

For example, if you sell dog food then ideally you want to find a competitor also selling dog food and ascertain their ideal customers based on the previous methods we've explored. But if this is impossible you can also widen your research to include people who buy dogs - it's fairly obvious that anybody buying dog food has already bought a dog! Operating in this way you could carry out some simple research to find out the average age, income and geographical location of dog owners in the UK. This would form the basis of your customer research for dog food buyers. As you can see there are many different ways that you can tackle this.

Armed with the two ideal attributes for your ideal customer (knowing *why* they want to do business with you and what makes them *attractive* to your business) you can begin conducting market research to build up a very detailed picture of what your ideal customer looks like.

Case Study - Ideal Customer Creation

Having done this exercise myself many times it's now become second nature but as this is probably new for you let me show you exactly how it works with a case study.

One of my businesses was targeting the lucrative “seniors” market. We had a service that was particularly relevant to people aged 50 and over in the UK. Whilst from the outside this may seem like a very specific niche it is in fact extremely broad – there are several million people in the UK alone aged over 50. It quickly became apparent as we faced increasing pressure from competitors that we needed to zero in more accurately on what our ideal customer looked like.

We weren’t of course looking to target everybody aged 50 and over in the UK, that would have been entrepreneurial suicide.

(On a side note – whilst the world’s increasing globalisation, speed of information transfer and the ever-closer “global village” phenomenon comes to fruition one downside has been the myth amongst naive business owners that their product or service can be sold to a mass market. Whilst there are exceptions to the rule most entrepreneurs would generate far more significant profits if they focused their efforts on targeting a smaller and more specific sub niche of their market.)

The particular section of the over 50s demographic that we were targeting were the more affluent and time-rich members of the population. Whilst feeling for the plight of the less well-off members of this demographic it didn’t make good business sense to be targeting our marketing messages at those with lower incomes or less savings.

As a result we began to research the details of how our competitors were targeting this vast and complex demographic. We were fortunate enough to receive a very useful document directly from one of our competitors regarding their advertising rates. They had a publication where businesses could advertise to reach

the 50+ members. In the advertising brochure the competitor dutifully handed us on a plate everything we needed to know about who they were targeting and who their ideal customer was. We could literally read it there right on the page in black and white. They had a detailed breakdown of the ages, gender, incomes, savings, geographical locations and interests of all their members. It was like gold dust!

Whilst we had put together some pieces of the jigsaw ourselves, this advertising brochure proved to be a revelation. We took this information from our competitors and added to it with our own online market research about this demographic in general. It didn't take us long to find several sub niches within this demographic who were the perfect match for the ideal customer portrait we were building up.

We began to see a very clear picture of our ideal customer including their average age, their average salary, the type of employment they were in, their most pressing issues, the type of property they lived in and their geographical location. As a result of this we were able to create our ideal customer portrait that I'm presenting to you here is an example...

**Sample Ideal Customer Portrait for the
"Over 50s Market" in the UK**

Howard is 56 years old. He is approaching retirement in his job as a government auditor. Whilst his job pays well (over £60,000 per year) he's calculated that his pension won't even cover the most basic of his current expenses.

He's getting increasingly worried that his pension will not be able to support the plans he has for his fast-approaching

retirement. He's concerned that he might need to carry on working. He no longer has the desire to do this.

He's also under pressure from his spouse to continue their comfortable standard of living in their 5-bedroom detached house in Kent, England.

Howard considers himself to be fairly physically fit although the amount of time he spends exercising each week has been on a gradual decline for the past 10 years.

Howard is looking for ways to supplement his income from employment and eventually replace it in time for his retirement at 65. Howard considers himself above average intelligence and he's a hard worker. He is an autonomous thinker but also puts a large degree of faith and trust in experts that are recommended to him by friends or by the media.

Howard likes travelling, reading crime fiction and reading consumer magazines. Many of his purchases are made after detailed research and / or recommendation from his friends or relatives. His main online activities include researching travel destinations, emailing his children (now grown up), buying books on Amazon and comparing deals for insurance and domestic bills.

As you can see from this sample customer portrait – it is *extremely* detailed. Did we have a 56-year-old customer called Howard who lived in Kent? No. Were all of our ideal customers going to be government auditors? No. Were all our ideal customers 56 years old? No.

The ideal customer profile was created based on the *average* data we extracted from our own customer database, combined with what we'd ascertained from our competitors and from

independent market research. We also looked back at our sales records and tracked the most high-value customers we had and which characteristics they portrayed. As mentioned earlier, the more information you have at your fingertips *before* creating your ideal customer portrait, the more accurate it will be.

Having completed our portrait we were clear that whilst there were other customers out there that didn't quite fit the portrait, the small lucrative sub niche that we were targeting would fit with this template very well indeed.

The Hidden "Side Effects" of Your Customer Portrait

As a result of creating this ideal customer portrait we were quickly able to communicate what are our ideal customer looked like throughout our business. It became a very simple snapshot that we could pass on to everybody in the company to explain who we were targeting and how our customers might think. I'm not suggesting, of course, that you treat all individuals as one homogenous mass. But when it comes to targeting a specific section of a demographic which will hopefully lead to the acquisition of thousands, if not tens of thousands, of new customers then some assumptions do need to be made. The ideal customer portrait also assisted at the commencement of any new marketing initiatives because we were able to refer back to it and instantly see who it was we were trying to attract.

Creating advertisements, writing sales copy and explaining to third-party suppliers exactly who our ideal customer was became a real time-saver in addition to the increased profits it brought to our bottom line. It helped us craft marketing messages that

spoke directly to “Howard” in a way that would resonate with him and persuade him to take action on our offers. The portrait also assisted from a customer service point of view because it put a name and face to the masses of customers we attracted which, in turn, encouraged staff to be more friendly, approachable and understanding when dealing with the customers.

What you soon realise, once you have your own ideal customer portrait, is that it starts to have a positive impact on almost every area of your business. For example, here are some of the most common and debilitating problems entrepreneurs face in their businesses:

- Poor marketing
- Miscommunication
- Poor customer service
- No clear direction / Lack of strategy
- Poor customer retention

Many, if not all, of these problems can be alleviated or solved completely by having an ideal customer portrait. Being able to clearly market the message your business has to say to the world is a lot easier when you know WHO it is you are targeting. Even those businesses that succeed at communicating to their prospects and customers can sometimes fail because their internal communication lets them down. This is where having an ideal customer portrait also comes into play because it’s a simple document that can be read *once* yet retained *indefinitely*. In the space of just a couple of minutes all the members of your business can understand *exactly* who it is they are ultimately supposed to be

serving in your enterprise. Whilst this doesn't remove the need to communicate with your staff members on a regular basis of course, it does allow you to know with a great degree of certainty that all members of your enterprise are at least steering the ship in the same direction.

Having that clear direction and an overall strategy for your business is the weakest link for many entrepreneurs. We are instantaneous, compulsive and excitable animals – we often shy away from the idea of sitting down and planning something out methodically. Having your ideal customer portrait is almost a strategy in itself because it clearly outlines the final destination for your business. It's like having the "X" already drawn on the treasure map – you might not know exactly *how* you're going to get there but at least you know where "there" is!

Add to this, the fact that retaining customers is a lot easier when you know *who* it is you're dealing with. If you know the circumstances, the desires and the motivations for the customer you are dealing with you can easily get to the source of any problems and keep that customer happy and loyal to your business. This is not easily possible without an ideal customer portrait.

Now that you have a clear picture drawn out of exactly *who* your ideal customer looks like it's time to really start accelerating your business by....

1.3 TRACKING DOWN YOUR PERFECT CUSTOMERS

It's great having a clear picture of who your ideal customer is but now you need to use that information to actually track down those perfect customers.

Your ultimate goal in all of this is to attract the ideal customers into your business and keep them there. We've already explored in some detail how to paint a picture of what your ideal customer looks like and how to ascertain whether or not they fit into the ideal model you have for your business and for the life you want to lead.

The next piece of the jigsaw is to locate *where* these ideal customers are based. As we start to get into this you will see that there is no end of possibilities for where your ideal customer can be "hiding out". Your mission is to find as many sources of ideal customers as you can and then, from all sources you find, focus your efforts on those which provide the highest number of ideal customers.

Firstly, it's question time...

Why are we doing this and how does it fit into the bigger picture?

So far you have successfully created your unique plan for your business and for yourself as an entrepreneur. This now forms the backdrop for everything you do in your business. With the planning stage tackled you can now move onto the research stage. This is what we addressed in the previous section – conducting the research about who your ideal customer is and what makes them an ideal customer for your business.

The next steps are to analyse and understand your customers. Not just on an ethereal level but also on a real, true-to-life level whereby you actually observe the customers in action and monitor their behaviours and decision-making. To conduct this type of analysis and begin to reach a high degree of understanding about how your customer operates you need to observe them

in their natural habitat. You need to take on the role of detective and investigator. The analysing and the understanding of your ideal customer can be achieved by tracking them down, seeing which fields they are operating in and observing how they behave in these environments.

Then, after you've tracked down your ideal customers and discovered where they are hanging out you can then make moves to attract these customers into your business and keep them there for life. Let's just break this down, here is the entire journey of creating your customer magnet.

How to Turn Your Business into a Customer Magnet

- #1.** Planning (what do you want for your business?)
- #2.** Researching (what do you want from your customers?)
- #3.** Analysing (what are customers doing before they come to you?)
- #4.** Understanding (what makes customers buy?)
- #5.** Attracting (how to get customers into your business)
- #6.** Keeping (how to get customers to stick)

Just locating your ideal customer and finding out where they are in the marketplace is not sufficient. You must begin to have an understanding of how they *think* by analysing their behaviours. This will help you massively when it comes to creating your own marketing messages and offers for your business. You might know how they behave in your business but how do they engage with *other* businesses? You might be able to think about the customers you already have in your business and feel that you

have a good grasp of what makes them tick, what shapes their decisions and how likely they are to respond to different offers that you present them with. But as we mentioned earlier in this book, the chances are, that customers you already have in your database are *not* ideal customers and therefore should not form the basis of any research or analysis of conduct.

It's a tricky situation but as an entrepreneur you need to constantly keep yourself in check to make sure you're not reverting to the misperceived easy route of accepting any old customers into your business. You want the *right* customers. The right customers for your business and the right customers for you.

In the last section we spoke about the importance of creating your ideal customer portrait. This is a very powerful tool that you can use internally in your business to drive things forward. By its very nature, however, the ideal customer portrait is merely a static snapshot of an average customer. It is not intended to be as accurate or insightful as monitoring, analysing and observing the real-life behaviour of *actual* individual customers. When it comes to tracking down your ideal customers in the field this activity becomes more like video surveillance rather than a static single picture of your ideal customer portrait. Nothing is more powerful and effective than watching your customers or potential customers actually move around in their natural habitat. That is, watching them as they make considered buying decisions and as they take action on their desires and impulses.

Winging Your Way to Failure?

Watching your customers behave in this way can give you more profitable insights that you can use to further advance your business

than anything else. After all, how many entrepreneurs can truly say that they know *why* people buy from them and what shapes their customers' decision-making process? I've helped thousands of entrepreneurs over the years and I'm sad to report that most of these entrepreneurs were "winging it". This may be the by line of the entrepreneurial world and the phrase itself is often used with a smile and a wink but this hides a sinister underside of missed opportunity and lack of strategic planning.

When it comes to tracking down your customers, the common theme of arming yourself with the right information yet again rears its head here. Too many business owners create their marketing messages and advertising campaigns on the basis of assumptions, bad gut instinct and pure guesswork rather than hard data, detailed analysis and direct research from the trenches. But *you* are different. I know this because *you* are reading this book. *You* will take the time to get the data, to do the research, to complete analysis and to collate your findings in such a way that almost every decision you make in your business will no longer be a "finger in the air" process but rather a simple case of looking at the data and seeing exactly and clearly what the best course of action is every single time.

Success is not built on guesswork; it is built on measurable, testable and proven data.

This brings us nicely around to the *big* question which is...

Where Are Your Ideal Customers?

This question is easier to answer the more time and effort you put into the previous research step when you were putting together your ideal customer portrait. If you don't have your ideal

customer portrait available then how on earth can you be expected to find people that match this template? The answer is – you can't! But armed with your ideal customer portrait you can quite easily step into the marketplace and begin tracking down your customer like a detective tracks down a wanted person. Your ideal customer leaves clues as they go about their business. It's your job to find these clues and interpret them to stay hot on their heels.

The idea of playing a detective sounds like fun, and it can be, but don't underestimate the importance of completing this task efficiently and effectively. The value of the information you gather from this exercise can set your business on an entirely new trajectory, one that can quite easily see you bringing in double, triple or even four times the amount of your current profits in a very short period of time. This may sound remarkable to you but I've witnessed it happening first hand time and time again. This very exercise played a key role in my own journey towards becoming a millionaire.

Whilst I initially started out in business thinking that I could do things my own way, be totally different to everybody else and create something so unique and invaluable that people would "beat a path to my door" I soon realised the nonsense of this thinking.

Almost the very instant I changed my business around from an idea-centric business and entrepreneur-centric business to the more lucrative customer-centric business things began to change rapidly. The pursuit of the perfect customer became a personal obsession for me. I stopped at nothing in my attempts to find this wily animal! Rather than spend thousands of hours trying

to dream up some whizz-bang marketing campaign I quickly realised that if I could observe my ideal customers in action, see how they thought, watch them make decisions and see how they bought products I could leverage this information to make my business and the offers I was presenting to customers completely irresistible.

This totally changes the way you operate your business because you no longer have to keep banging your head on a brick wall wondering why people aren't buying from you. And whilst you still need to deliver value, of course, you don't need to break your back in the process. You don't have to work too hard to convince customers to come into your business because you are attracting the right customers in the first place – the type of customers that really *want* to do business with you anyway.

Herding Cats

An analogy for this would be if you were set a task of herding a group of animals into a small pen. Many entrepreneurs, having the natural tendency to act quickly because of an in-built time-pressure, would start this task immediately. They would look around their immediate environment for any nearby animals and begin trying to herd them into the pen. They may get lucky and have perhaps a nearby sheep or two close by to get them off the mark. But their attempts to herd the birds and cats that were close by would be doomed to failure of course!

The smart entrepreneur would hear the details of this challenge and hesitate before taking any action. Realising that all the animals in the nearby environment were averse to the notion of being herded, the smart entrepreneur would use whatever means

necessary to find ten nearest *sheep*. This is exactly what you're doing in the process of tracking down your ideal customers. You are bypassing the cats (because herding cats is difficult!) and you are solely focus on finding the sheep i.e. the *right* type of customers for your business. This will often mean that you have to travel further, try a lot harder and spend a lot more time finding these customers than you would if you just tried to attract the first people you come across. But as this analogy explains – you want to focus your efforts on the *right* targets rather than just and any old target.

I don't mean to disparage the nature of customers with this analogy by the way! Whilst it can be proven that some people do like to be led, the last thing I want to have you believe is that all customers are like sheep!

There are various methods for tracking down your customers that we'll be exploring in a moment. Whilst you may be tempted to engage in all these activities I would ask you to focus your efforts on those that you have some experience in or at least a high level of *interest* in. I'm presenting an exhaustive list of possibilities for you to demonstrate the amazing variety and almost endless supply of customer sources that exist. Whilst I feel it's best for you to focus on what you're good at, in terms of pinpointing your customers, you may also have the luxury of colleagues or employees who can assist you in this mission.

So where are your ideal customers hiding out?

The starting point for all this is to look at your *existing* customers. Whilst this is an obvious place to start it can provide vital clues before you head further afield in your search. We'll take a look at how to do this in a moment.

Heading over to your competitors is also another good strategy for finding ideal customers so we'll explore this avenue as well. If the customers are in your marketplace and you can demonstrate and provide more value than your competitors then these customers are fair game.

But first let's talk about something that affects all entrepreneurs but only the smart, successful ones are aware of it – it's called...

The Chain of Sales

It doesn't matter where your ideal customers are right now, you need to be one step ahead of them and know when they are about to buy from you, even before they know it themselves! This is called the Chain of Sales.

The Chain of Sales is the unique set of circumstances and the pathway that your customer takes from their initial purchase through to purchasing a product or service from you. You might like to think that your business exists in a bubble and that when your customer buys from you they have come specifically to you and have never purchased anything similar before. The truth of the situation is that when your customers buy from you this is just one link in a long chain of sales. The challenge is to investigate this chain of sales and reverse-engineer what people are buying before they even come into contact with your business.

When you do this you are almost able to look into a crystal ball and predict, well in advance, when your customer is likely to buy from your business. At this stage the customer is not really a customer but actually a prospect. They are a prospect of *your* business before they come into contact with you but this does

not mean they are not a customer for *another* business. By observing what people buy before they buy from you, you will be able to better understand their decision-making criteria, their motivations for buying and the trigger points that you can use to encourage them to do business with you. This is where the power of the Chain of Sales truly comes into its own.

So what *do* your customers buy before they come into contact with your business? Are you aligned with existing business owners or do you have strategic alliances with other entrepreneurs because you've already been made aware of this fact? Very few sales are made in isolation – they are merely one sales link in an entire chain of purchase-related events. If you can start to ascertain what your customers buy before they buy from you and what they are going to buy after you've made a sale you can start to develop a very valuable picture of how your customers think and operate.

This all starts by considering which products and services are related to the one that you're offering. Perhaps your product is complimentary to another product or provided in conjunction with another service. Maybe your customers need to have certain items or own certain things before your product is even relevant to them. Perhaps there is a set of circumstances that your potential customer needs to be in before they buy from you and turn from being a prospect into a customer.

This is a very important exercise because it enables you to step out of the small world that you are usually encased in within your own business and step into the wider marketplace. Doing this makes it possible for you to widen your horizons, adopt a more rounded view of what your customers are being exposed to

and achieve a more accurate picture of the environment in which your business operates. As you start to delve deeper into the behaviours and habits of your customers you will begin to notice trends and similarities emerging. You will start to see that there is a finite number of similar and related triggers that create a need or desire for your product or service.

As entrepreneurs we like to believe that we caused these triggers and that the chain reaction of *impulse* through to *purchase* is down to our great product and ingenious marketing. This may be the case in a small percentage of examples but usually what triggers the need for a product occurs in the mind of the customer and from a previous exchange they have had with another business outside the walls of your enterprise. Just knowing this fact is powerful enough but when you start to act upon it and seize the data that is openly available to fill in the gaps of your customers' behaviour, your business and its bottom-line profits will quickly benefit from the result.

Flushing Profits Down the Drain?

Let's take the example of somebody buying a sink unblocking product. If the customer has just purchased a bottle of sink unblocker we might also expect this customer to be making additional sales in their chain not too far into the future. For example, if the unblocking fluid does not work the customer may also buy a plunger to try and unblock the sink. This in turn may lead to the next link in the chain of sales – the realisation in the customer's mind that neither the sink unblocking fluid nor the plunger are doing the job and therefore they need to enlist the services of a plumbing contractor.

So from the simple sale of a bottle of sink unblocking fluid the chain of sales may lead the customer to purchasing two or more additional items and services. But what does this mean and how can the smart entrepreneurs out there use this information to their advantage? Smart plumbing contractors could start by associating themselves with the providers of the sink unblocking fluid. A lucrative partnership could be struck up where the fluid manufacturers sponsor the plumbing contractor on their packaging in return for a percentage of the profits that the plumbing contractor generates as a result of the referred business. Alternatively, the plumbing contractor could send out a series of free samples of unblocking fluid with their phone number on stating:

*"If this doesn't work call the experts
on 123123888".*

A smart plumbing contractor would also start to explore the possibilities of advertising in the same locations as the sink unblocking fluid. They could also leave behind a bottle of sink unblocking fluid after every visit they make to customers. Each bottle could have the phone number of their business on and serve as a reminder not only of generosity of the company (for providing free gift) but also as a reminder for how they can be reached.

Pasta La Vista Baby!

Another example is that of the customer buying a pasta machine. What else is this customer likely to buy in the subsequent chain of sales? Many would-be chefs are drawn to the notion of creat-

ing their own home-made pasta but few know exactly how to go about it without a recipe. Therefore it's not unreasonable to expect a pasta machine customer to also purchase a recipe book or cookbook shortly after buying their pasta machine. If you've ever made home-made pasta yourself you will also know that the pasta needs to hang for a short while before it is cooked so many pasta machine purchasers will also buy a pasta rack or hanging device for this exact reason.

This particular chain of sales is based on a series of assumptions that would need to be backed up by hard data.

For example, it's possible that the customer may purchase the recipe book *first* and the pasta machine *second* in which case the sequence of the chain of sales would occur in a different order. If you are a pasta machine manufacturer a clear strategy to take advantage of this particular chain of sales might be to give away a free recipe book of top Italian pasta dishes sponsored by your company. This way you would attract many new customers into your business who are not quite at the point of purchase for a pasta machine but who definitely have it on their radar not too far into the future. You could also strike up in partnership with the provider of the pasta machine accessories for drying the pasta, cutting the pasta and even cooking pots and oils with which to cook and prepare the dishes.

Healthy Profits Ahoy!

What about somebody buying a will? The customer who's just paid legal fees to create a will is likely to have other items on their "wish list". The next link in their chain of sales might include life insurance if they're currently reviewing their circumstances and

financial future. This may in turn lead to the sale of a health plan to protect the individual in the event of accident or illness. This introspection from the customer and review of their financial situation and fitness could also lead to them buying an exercise bike. In addition they may also pursue the goal of improving their health and fitness by joining a gym.

So a health plan provider could offer incentivised rates and discounts if the customer demonstrates that they are taking care of their health. For example, if the customer demonstrates that they have a gym membership which is being utilised on a regular basis the health plan provider could offer them a discount. But why would the health provider do this? Wouldn't they be losing money?

Actually the health plan provider would be making more money from this strategy as long as their discount was offset in some way. They could establish a strategic alliance with a gym so they get paid a referral amount for every new membership which could more than offset the discount they offer for their health cover plan. They could also secure a lucrative advertising deal across the entire network of gyms thereby targeting health-conscious individuals. These would certainly be ideal customers for the health plan provider because these individuals, by way of the fact they are regular gym attendees, are less likely to encounter health problems and require payouts on their health cover. This means the health plan company would be getting more profits (more customers) whilst lowering costs (better customers with less claims).

Setting up a strategic partnership in this way generates positive outcomes for everybody involved. The health plan provider

gets a new influx of healthy customers, the gym also receives new business through referrals from the health plan provider and the customers themselves are given a discount on their health plan merely by joining a gym that they were likely to do anyway.

So as you can see, using the Chain of Sales is a very effective way to pinpoint your ideal customers and locate where they might be in the buying process at any given point in time. But where else can you search for customers? Before heading off into the wilderness of the marketplace you'd be better served in the first instance to dive into your existing customer database for information. It's a great rule in business that it is always better to use what you have close at hand before crossing the street or travelling to the other side of town looking for the same thing.

You may not have many, or indeed any, ideal customers in your database but this needn't stop you from getting information from these customers to find out how they found you and what made them buy from you. You can then use this information to attract customers that you do *want* rather than those that you *don't*.

Our Survey Said...

Using surveys and questionnaires is a great way to do this. You can ask your existing customers about how they found you and what shaped their buying decisions. As more and more businesses are now fighting for information of this kind, the consumers are becoming less willing to divulge this information and give over their time to help you improve your business. This means you need to become a smart entrepreneur and incentivise your customers to be forthcoming with this valuable information that

will help shape the future direction and profitability of your enterprise.

You can give people a discount voucher, a money-off code or even just a free gift if they complete a short questionnaire or survey that will help you understand what makes them tick. Even something as simple as this classic question is a step in the right direction:

“How did you hear about us?”

By rewarding your customers for providing you with this information you are further reinforcing a positive relationship with them and also planting a seed in their minds that their communication with you is to be encouraged. Harnessing the power of your existing customers is relatively easy. It’s just a case of using the right mechanism to convince them to impart the information and then using that information to your best advantage. Asking your customers if they found you through an advertisement, a recommendation, a search engine or other method is a good foundation on which to base your future marketing decisions.

Whilst this sounds relatively basic I am regularly surprised by the number of entrepreneurs I encounter who are not utilising this simple yet effective strategy. Many business owners use the excuse that it is difficult to track the original source and location of their customers when using certain advertising and marketing methods. It’s true that certain strategies of customer acquisition are easier to measure and track than others but there is always a solution to ascertaining how people came to be customer in your business.

For example, you will regularly see companies advertising on TV and driving new customers to a website or phone number. But how can they measure the effectiveness of each individual advert? The smart entrepreneurs get the customers to quote a certain phrase or use a specific web address to register their interest and “raise their hand” for the offer in question. This means that people in the marketing department of the business can see how many customers phoned up asking for “offer 123” or “John from Sales”.

Similarly, sending people to a specific website address, dependent on the advertisement or the marketing campaign they have responded to, enables you to accurately track the response rates of each advertisement. Utilising these strategies can prove challenging in certain media, such as radio, but on the whole there is no excuse for not tracking where your customers are coming from.

Are Your Customers at Your Competitors?

You are definitely missing a trick if you don't also check out your competitors as a source of potential ideal customers. To be crystal clear on this – this strategy is not concerned with stealing customers from right under the nose of your competitors; rather it is about seeing how your competition operates and how their customers are interacting with them. By observing this first-hand you can gain a greater understanding not only of the thought processes that go on in the customer's mind but also the marketing methods and strategy of your competition.

Many entrepreneurs fall into the trap of believing that they have all the answers and no weaknesses. They often believe that

they exist in their own little bubble and that what the competition is doing is of no interest to them because they are working harder, smarter and have a better overall product and service. To operate in this way is a sure-fire recipe for disaster. In the many years I've been helping entrepreneurs I've been unfortunate enough to witness the devastation that such a blinkered view can have on the business and on the entrepreneur themselves.

Operation "Competition Recon"

If you begin any analysis of the competition with the sentiment that you wish to destroy your competitors or steal customers from them you are missing the point. This negative approach is totally misguided and will not yield the kind of valuable results that are possible with an alternative approach. You need to engage with a competitor on the understanding that this is a *reconnaissance* mission. Yes, of course, what you learn during this sortie may lead to you attracting customers from your competition but your interaction with the competition is not done with this purpose in mind from the outset. You are not going to your competition to steal customers – you are going there to take notes, observe how they operate and gather data on how customers interact with your competitors.

Once you have gathered all this information together, developed a plan and then acted upon this information then yes, you will of course attract customers from your competition. But this is different to marching up through the gates of your competitor and stealing customers from right under their noses!

The easiest way to do all this is to *become a customer* of your competition. You may need to put someone in your place to do this to keep your anonymity. It goes against our entrepreneurial

spirit to give business to the competition but in this case it will be one of the most intelligent investments you ever make.

I remember several years ago when one of my businesses was “fighting it out” with a big competitor. The competitor was the main focus of our day-to-day operations. We became obsessed with how well they were doing, where they were marketing and how rapidly they seemed to be stealing market share from us. Their marketing campaigns were out of this world and they had a budget to match. At one point we thought it was only a matter of time until they crushed us into oblivion!

However, all of this was in our minds. You see, we were naively taking everything we learned about this competitor at face value. We hadn’t actually stumped up the money and become one of their customers to find out what was going on behind “the Wizard of Oz”, as it were. The public portrayal of our competitor was outstanding and intimidating to competing businesses but we were soon to discover an altogether different truth...

It was only having ordered and received the product that we realised we had nothing at all to worry about. The competitor certainly talked the talk but their product was substandard, lacklustre and only delivered a *fraction* of the value that ours did. Armed with this invaluable information we were able to adapt our marketing messages accordingly and better portray the value that our product was offering to the marketplace. Having seen what our competitor was advertising versus what they were delivering to customers, we soon realised that we had been undervaluing our own product. Changing our marketing messages was relatively easy to do and the results on our profits were as dramatic as they were rapid!

You owe it to yourself not to make the same mistake we did. You must become a customer of your competition. It's exciting! You get to see the prices they charge, the products and services they offer, what their customer service is like, any upsells and downsells they have, the quality of their product, the speed of their delivery and the overall feel of what it's like to do business with them. Whilst this is not directly observing their customers it will tell you a great deal about your competitor's marketing strategies and, by inference, how they treat their customers and how their customers interact with them.

Having done this myself on numerous occasions, as well as consulting for clients and assisting them in their own reconnaissance missions, I can assure you that it's always a journey worth taking. You will learn so much it's hard to believe. And not just about your competitor either because it will also encourage you to look at your own way of doing business and how you interact with your customers. One of the best aspects about it, is that it removes all the mystery and unknown factors that you associate with your competition which is worth doing because, as I explained earlier, these can often lead to paranoid thoughts and distractions that pull you away from your long-term business objectives.

Now that you've pinpointed the secret hideaways of your ideal customers it's time to move onto...

STEP 2

Attracting Customers

“Sell them what they *want* then
give them what they *need*.”

— Michael Cheney

2.1 THE SECRET TRIGGERS THAT MAKE PEOPLE BUY

Okay so you've found where your ideal customers hang out, now it's time to attract them. In this section we are going to explore the secret triggers that make people buy from you. Having conducted many years of research into this very subject through study and direct implementation in the field, I'm going to reveal to you some *exceptionally* powerful methods of encouraging people to hand over their money.

WARNING

You must promise me that when you discover these methods you won't misuse or abuse their incredible power. This may sound dramatic but I can assure you that these secret triggers have an almost *hypnotic* impact on customers. I once used a combination of these triggers to launch a product in the marketplace that generated over £1 million in a week without spending a single penny on advertising! Used on their own, each of these strategies has the potential to dramatically increase the number of customers that come into your business. The real power, however, comes when you combine the methods because you will experience the exponential multiplying power of these forces acting together simultaneously.

Of all the mistakes entrepreneurs make, and during my many years of working closely with thousands of them I've seen a *lot*, perhaps the most prevalent of all is when a business owner tries to create a product and market that product based on what the

customer *needs*. This may sound contradictory. How on earth can a business stay profitable if it's not selling products and services that customers need? The fact is - there is a big difference in how customers think versus how many entrepreneurs *perceive* the way customers think. Having a need might seem like a powerful trigger for a customer to want to buy something from you but unfortunately this is not the case.

Every buying decision that every customer makes is made not because they have a *need* but because they have a *want*. If customers only bought things that they needed or if they only made a buying decision because they had an urgent need then marketing as a whole would become redundant. There would be no requirement for business owners to convey the details of their product and service because the customers would either need it or not. Needing a product is not an emotional response – it is simply a statement of fact. You either need something or you don't.

The key difference here, and this may in fact be the most powerful lesson that many entrepreneurs learn, is that *customers buy what they want, not what they need*. The best way to explain this is using what I call...

Chocolate-Covered Broccoli

The exploitative business owners out there are selling their customers “chocolate” - it's tempting and delicious but when you “bite into it” (get inside the product) there's no real substance or nutrients. In other words, it looks exciting and will attract a lot of customers but it doesn't contain very much of value. It's *bad* for you. Fortunately there aren't too many business owners who are selling products in this way and it's pretty much a case of natural

selection because anybody operating a business like this will not remain in business for long. The truth always comes out.

Marketing methods and business strategies that rely on attracting customers with something delicious-looking yet delivering little on the other side are often only a hairsbreadth away from being scams and are soon outed as such.

At the other end of the spectrum you have “saintly” business owners who are trying to sell customers “broccoli”. Broccoli is not exciting or delicious and as a result is not very easy to sell. But the undeniable fact is that you *need* broccoli because it has vital minerals, vitamins and nutrients inside it. It’s *good* for you. The entrepreneurs trying to sell this “broccoli” are attempting to help you by delivering products and services that have real value and “nutrients” inside them. This is all fine and well but the problem here is that nobody *wants* broccoli! As a result, and despite their best intentions, the entrepreneurs trying to sell broccoli with the aim of helping people and giving products with substance are not actually helping anybody at all because nobody buys their product!

What is the answer to this dilemma?

What you must do is sell “chocolate-covered broccoli”. This way you are positioning your product or service so that it excites and entices people to take a bite and then they get the good stuff that they really need on the inside. This truly is the best approach possible to attract the highest number of customers and improve the lives of as many people as possible with your product or service. **Sell them what they WANT and give them what they NEED.**

Selling “chocolate” alone will get a lot of customers but without the substance on the inside most customers won’t stick

around for long. It won't take much time for your bad reputation to spread either and your business will soon go under.

Trying to attract customers to your business by selling “broccoli” won't work either because, as we've explained, very few people like broccoli or want it. This goes back to what we discussed a moment ago – just because a customer *needs* something doesn't mean they will actually buy it. Many people *need* a pension to ensure their future financial stability but an alarmingly high percentage of the population do not have a pension at all. This is despite the fact that they definitely *need* a pension and do have funds available to contribute to one.

What are they spending their money on instead? Chocolate. That is – other purchases that they *want* rather than boring purchases that they simply *need*. To clarify this further you might wish to think of your product or service as the broccoli. It contains all the vital nutrients that the customer needs. It improves their life in some way and gets them from where they are now to where they want to be, or at least a step closer to that place. Your product or service must, at its core, improve the customer's circumstances or life experience in some way once it has been bought and used.

The chocolate, on the other hand, can be viewed as the marketing and positioning of your product or service. This is sometimes known as “the sizzle”. Let's look at the example of a Lamborghini.

The “broccoli”, as far as a Lamborghini is concerned, is the nuts and bolts inside the engine, the chassis, the exhaust system, the interior and all the other physical components that comprise the vehicle. But do you think that people would buy

Lamborghinis if they were marketed and positioned as “a collection of metal and plastic objects fused together to form a vehicle that costs £100,000”? Of course not!

This is where the “chocolate” comes in. The “chocolate”, as far as a Lamborghini is concerned, is the sexiness, the ability to look cool, the free entry into nightclubs and the turning-heads-in-the-street factor etc. It is these factors – *the wants and desires* of the customer – that trigger the sale. It is not the need of the customer (to get from A to B) that triggers the sale. In this way you can see that both the chocolate element and the broccoli element need to work perfectly in tandem. A product cannot succeed without having both of them in play.

If you try to be a “saintly” business owner and sell broccoli alone (i.e. just provide customers with what they need rather than what they want) you will actually reach out to and help far less people than those entrepreneurs who cover their broccoli in chocolate. If you go the chocolate-selling route then you risk ruining your entire reputation because when people’s teeth start falling out and they come crying to you that there is no “nutritional” value in your product the buck stops with you.

Now that you know the difference between selling customers what they *need* and selling customers what they *want* it makes sense for you to explore the *desires* of your customers. The last thing you want to do is second-guess what your customer wants. Your marketing efforts and business strategy need to be based on facts and hard data. Once you conduct your research you will begin to know your market and have a full understanding of how your customers operate within that market and what drives them to make purchases.

This section is all about the secret triggers that make people buy and we've already uncovered the first one – a desire or want. Knowing that your customers buy what they *want* rather than what they *need* changes everything. You can now look at your own product and service and consider if it is being represented in the right way to the marketplace. It then becomes your mission as an entrepreneur to ensure that your product becomes something that customers want and rises above the lowly status of merely something that they need.

Making Paper Sexy (Yes Really!)

Even something as basic as paper can be marketed using this principle. If you sell paper to businesses then you might argue that this is always going to be something they need. Many businesses will always have a *need* for paper. This is true and most entrepreneurs operating in this space rely heavily on the fact that they are selling a simple, yet *needed*, commodity. But the smart entrepreneurs raise their product to an elevated status by changing their marketing messages and communications to ensure their product becomes *wanted* as opposed to just needed.

How do they do this?

They align their marketing messages to some of the core desires of their target customers. When an ordinary paper-seller goes about their business they might try to sell using the criteria of price, quantity, delivery or customer service. In days gone by this would have been sufficient to secure the order. The more advanced method however, which will ensure a higher number of customers and a greater degree of loyalty amongst those customers, is to position the product as a highly *sought-after* item.

This doesn't mean generating marketing fiction or hyping up the product to anything more than it is. It simply means making a slight shift in how the marketing communications portrays the product.

Whilst business owners *need* paper what do they actually *want*? They want more sales. They want increased profits. They want greater cash flow. They want more customers. It's the job of the paper seller to tap into these desires and link them directly to the product that they're providing. i.e. wrapping their broccoli in chocolate.

This can be done by differentiating their paper from competitors and stating that the quality of their paper will ensure a higher degree of success when the customers uses it for their business proposals. They could communicate the fact that their flyers are printed on a higher quality and more durable material than others and will therefore lead to more new business and customers when used in advertising campaigns.

They could even conduct a study about the types of direct mail pieces that are opened and read versus those that are discarded and ascertain that the quality of the paper has a direct impact on how many potential customers read the marketing message of the business. This approach of matching a product or service to the exact wants and desires of the customer is possible in every industry sector. As with previous strategies, the greater level of your knowledge and understanding about who your ideal customer really is, the easier this strategy becomes to implement.

It is clear then that knowing what customers really *want*, as opposed to what they need, is of paramount importance when it comes to how you shape your marketing messages and com-

munications. But what else actually dictates the reasons behind customers purchasing decisions? Are there other strategies that you can employ as an entrepreneur to encourage people to do business with you and if so, what are these strategies and how can you implement them?

Well yes, of course, there are many more strategies that have a direct impact on your customer's willingness to do business with you. The next one we'll look at is something of a *secret sales catalyst*. By harnessing the power of this catalyst you can very quickly start to attract many more customers into your business. This secret sales catalyst is experienced by us all but only harnessed by a few smart entrepreneurs.

The Two Factors That Shape Every Decision

Before I reveal to you exactly what this secret sales catalyst is, it will be helpful to describe the background and environment in which it exists. It can be said that every single decision we make as human beings has only two factors which affect the decision. These two factors are pleasure and pain. Every decision we make will either move us closer to pleasure or further away from pain. This takes the analysis of what customers truly want a step further because it seeks to explain the reason behind those desires and not just the mere existence of such desires.

Things are pretty painful for many people in the UK right now. Warnings about increased interest rates, double-dip recessions and continuing global crisis are rife. The UK government has also announced the biggest round of budget cuts since World War II and the Bank of England is predicting yet more slowdown in spending.

We're now in the middle of the highest unemployment increase for over two years and over 2.5 million people in the UK are now unemployed. Both consumers and businesses are feeling the pain of the current economic downturn. So it's pretty clear - there's more pain around right now than ever before.

And this is GOOD news! Yes, you read that correctly. This is *good* news. I know it sounds strange but this really is a big opportunity for you as an entrepreneur because pain is like a powerful explosive. It has the potential to cause huge change and cause actions and results on a grand scale. But how can you channel this pain for the greater good?

What can you do with all this pain and how can you use it to help people improve their lives whilst simultaneously growing the bottom line of your business? Let's delve deeper right now and take a closer look at...

Pain – The Secret Sales Catalyst

As an entrepreneur you should be fascinated with what influences people's decisions and what makes them want to change. Because when they buy from you and become your customer that's what they're doing – they are making a change. Whilst there are always several factors at play in any decision, you can boil down all decisions to just two important components as we've said - pleasure and pain.

This is an oversimplification of things but it holds up to scrutiny in 99.9% of cases. Think about the last time you bought car insurance. You made the decision to buy because you wanted to avoid the *pain* of not having insurance. The pain, or at least the threat of that pain, was enough to get you to buy car insurance.

Without the insurance, you would have run the risk of painful consequences such as hefty fines, large costs if you had an accident and even a criminal prosecution.

These are all pretty painful persuaders!

But what about the pleasure side of things? Was there pleasure involved in your decision to buy car insurance? Probably not. You could argue that buying car insurance gives you a certain peace of mind and a feeling of security which is a low form of pleasure. But the interesting fact about this Pleasure-Pain decision making process is that the pain factor has a LOT more sway in our decision making than pleasure.

This is a core rule of business that you need to commit to memory – **people will do a LOT MORE to avoid pain than they will to seek pleasure.** It's your job as an entrepreneur to capitalize on this and help people improve their lives whilst growing your business at the same time. So how is this done?

Well, at this point we really need to address an important question that might be concerning you...

Is Using Pain as a Marketing Tool Even Ethical?

Look, pain is the single biggest catalyst in every decision we make. If you ignore that power and don't use it to help people make the right decisions then you are wasting a hugely valuable resource. I'm assuming that, like me, you started your business to help other people in some way and bring value to the world.

Yes, of course, you want to be richly rewarded for doing so. But you're not just in this for yourself. So you really owe it to the potential customers you come into contact with, to do everything in your power to improve their lives in some way. This might

be by providing them with better leisure time (if you're a gym owner) or a greater sense of security (if you're a locksmith). But the point is this – whatever you provide in your business should improve the lives of your customers. If it doesn't you won't be in business for very long!

What you do is for the greater good - so don't you think you should use whatever tools are available to help people improve their lives and make things better for themselves? Just to be clear – you are not *creating* the pain. That would, of course, be totally unethical. What you're doing is merely *highlighting* and *emphasizing* the pain.

By asking the prospect to focus on the pain of their current circumstances you make it easier for them to make the right decision and use your services. To be blunt – if you don't emphasize or highlight pain in your business then you won't make the sale. It really is that simple. People buy a new house when the pain they associate with their current accommodation becomes unbearable. Maybe the commute is too long, maybe the upkeep is too expensive or perhaps the council tax is too high.

People buy a new washing machine when the pain of using the old one becomes unbearable. Maybe it has a leak, maybe it's really noisy or perhaps it won't fit all the family's clothes in. Pain sells.

Of course, you can try to get people to buy from you using the pleasure component instead but it's like using a peashooter compared to the machine gun of pain! The most successful entrepreneurs don't sell on features. We all learned this one a *long* time ago! But they don't sell on benefits alone either...

They sell on PAIN.

They sell on the pain of the prospect's current circumstances and how not buying the product will lead to a continuation of this pain. Let's delve deeper into this and reveal how to apply...

The Little-Known Secret of Using Pain to Sell

The key to effectively using pain to create more profits is to use it in *all* of your marketing. This means from your first contact with the prospect right through to when you are closing the sale – whether that's on the phone, online or in person. Using pain in your sales process only works if you're consistent at it and have it going through all of your marketing like words going all the way through a stick of rock!

To tap into the pain that people are feeling you need to know *exactly* what that pain is. A moment ago, we spoke about the general pain that consumers and businesses are feeling in the UK right now. You could draw on some of this pain for your marketing materials if it's relevant. An even better proposition, however, is to closely analyse, like a doctor, what your potential customer's *specific* pain is. Single mothers working at home looking for a new washing machine will have very different pains to high-flying city executives searching for life insurance. Match the pain to the prospect.

This needs to be based on hard evidence and data. You must do market research about your target market so you can really understand what their pain points are and what is triggering them to make buying decisions. Once you know this, there are countless ways to incorporate the powerful pain point method into your marketing and see dramatic results very quickly.

If you're selling business cards the pain might be "losing customers", "being ignored" or "going out of business". If you're selling gas boilers the pain could be "poor quality competition", "high maintenance costs", "bad reliability" or "being freezing cold in winter when the old boiler breaks down". It's easier to apply this pain principle to some businesses than others, but it IS possible for every type of business. It just takes a slight shift in thinking.

You must seize the opportunity that the current economic downturn brings with it. We can look back at history to learn the lessons of those great entrepreneurs that have gone before us and faced similar adversity and won through in a big way. Back in the 1930s when times were extremely hard there were businesses that survived and grew.

These businesses thrived in hard times because they recognized that people were in a lot of pain and they positioned their products to provide the solution to, and escape from, that pain. Anything you can do to ease the struggle or capture people's imaginations and take them away from life's hardships is going to be a success.

But you must first take the prospect into that place of pain to show them what life would be like if they carried on with their current circumstances. As American billionaire Warren Buffett says:

*"Where there is greed be fearful,
but where there is fear be greedy."*

— Warren Buffet

So your job as an entrepreneur is to explore that fear and delve into that pain. By fully understanding the main *pain points* of your prospects you can then help them to see the light of changing their ways and buying your product. Knowing exactly what makes people buy from you and implementing that knowledge is the difference between ordinary businesses and extraordinary businesses.

It's not just what makes people buy from you either. It's also the issue of what makes people *stay* with you once they have decided to become a customer. Whilst, as entrepreneurs, we are always excitedly chasing new customers and new prospects we mustn't forget that a large percentage of business is based on harnessing the value and leveraging the profitability of long-term existing customers who can often have a lifetime value far exceeding that of newer, less loyal customers.

With this in mind, let's explore four more secret buying triggers that turn your prospects into customers. These are trust, social proof, authority and recommendation. Let's look at each of these in detail.

"Trust Me, I'm an Entrepreneur..."

Nobody in this world buys anything, whether it's a product or service, unless they trust that product or service and the person or organisation behind it. The business-customer relationship is like every other relationship – it's based on trust. I'm sure you've had negative experiences before when the trust you had in a business or a person is somehow undermined and this leads you to end the relationship. So engendering a high level of trust to start a relationship and ensure that it continues for as long as possible must be high on every entrepreneur's priority list.

When people trust you they buy from you. It's that simple.

They will buy the products you offer, they will buy the services you provide and they will take action on the recommendations that you give them. But with this level of trust comes a high degree of responsibility – you must of course do everything in your power to maintain this level of trust and build on it as the relationship continues to grow. A single step over the mark, for example making a poor recommendation or delivering a poor product or service, can undermine in an instant all the trust that you worked so long and hard to build up.

The Proof is in the Social Pudding

Next comes social proof. Social proof influences many of our human interactions and decisions – not just buying decisions. It can even be traced back to our ape ancestors who behave differently in crowds than they do on an individual basis.

The main premise of social proof is that we only take decisions and take actions after we've seen others make the same decision or take the same action before us. A common example is if you see a group of people pointing and looking at something in the street. You automatically assume that there must be something worth pointing at and looking at so you join in and try to find the object of fascination. This in turn, leads to more social proof and more people jumping on the bandwagon.

The more social proof that exists, the more likely we are to take the same decision and follow the action of other people who have gone before us. Clever entrepreneurs realise this and either amplify existing social proof or try to engineer social proof for

their own advantage. A classic example is nightclub owners. Have you noticed how the most popular venues always have a long line of people waiting outside? Is this because they don't have enough capacity inside their venue to cater for everybody? No of course it isn't!

The real reason for keeping a queue of people outside a popular venue is so that it can *remain* a popular venue. Anybody walking or driving by will see that there are lots of people wanting to get into that venue and therefore they think:

"That must be a great venue!"

This particular example also takes advantage of another key trigger – scarcity. By turning a certain proportion of people away (normally ones they don't deem attractive enough!) the venue owners are creating a level of scarcity. Whenever there is something that is in scarce supply, or soon to run out, it creates an almost illogical desire in humans to acquire that item or service, at any cost. You only need to look at the psychology present during "Closing Down Sales" or "Limited Edition" releases of highly sought-after items.

So any way in which we can foster or create social proof as entrepreneurs will encourage prospects to become customers. If we can demonstrate that many other people have already taken the same decision and become a customer of ours we can more readily convert new prospects into yet more customers.

"Demanding Authority"

Now let's take a look at authority. This goes hand-in-hand with trust and whilst there are many levels of trust (and people trust

other people for many reasons) one of the main reasons is if that person or organisation has authority. Take a look at these authority figures that everybody trusts and respects:

- Police
- Judges
- Doctors
- Dentists
- Airline pilots
- Soldiers
- Church leaders

Many of these types of people engender instant authority and an air of respect. This is down to (amongst other things) their qualifications, their attire or uniform, their experience and their role in society.

However, it is not just these types of individuals that have authority. It is your responsibility as an entrepreneur to convey a similar level of authority to all your prospects and customers. This way they will build up a higher level of trust with you than they will with your competitors. By receiving coverage in the media, writing a book, being interviewed or passing comment on themes related to your industry sector you can quickly establish yourself as a trusted authority in the eyes of your customers.

“Highly Recommended!”

The fourth and final secret trigger that turns prospects into customers is recommendation. It doesn't take a genius to realise

that many sales and purchases are made on recommendation as opposed to direct marketing from the entrepreneur or the business. If you can acquire a third-party recommendation for your product or your service this can reap rewards long into the future for your company.

Not only will the third-party recommendation generate new business for you right away but it will also assist with the other triggers as well – building trust, demonstrating social proof and displaying that you are an authority in your field.

The tricky part is knowing how to manufacture or encourage people to give you recommendations. Once you have these recommendations you then also need to know how to correctly use them to maximise their value and create as much new business and customer value for your company as possible.

Qualify First, Communicate Second

Using any of these secret triggers to encourage customers to buy from you is a lot easier the more qualification you have done on prospects before letting them hear your message. Many entrepreneurs are obsessed with getting as many customers as possible through their doors without fully understanding the 80 / 20 principle. It's a well-known fact that, on average, 80% of your profits come from just 20% of your customers. Knowing the exact breakdown of this lucrative 20% group, why they spend more money with you, what makes them such great customers and how they found you in the first place is an essential step on your path to entrepreneurial success.

The more you are able to qualify your customers in advance, the better positioned you will be to maximise that relationship

once they do actually “take the plunge” and do business with you. Whilst all entrepreneurs are keen to get new customers and new business you must remember that there is a cost associated with every new customer that you attract. This is not just the cost of production, manufacturing, packaging, delivery, customer service etc. but also the cost of communicating with and educating each customer.

As many secondary school teachers will testify, there are few things more demoralising than trying to get your message across to people who don't want to listen! Ensuring you have a tight qualification procedure in place at the starting point of your customer funnel will reap rewards for you and the bottom line of your business. It's far better to weed out the time wasters, whiners and nightmare customers before they even start doing business with you than have to waste your precious time and resources on them to find out that they are the polar opposite of your ideal customer.

One of the easiest ways to qualify customers is to be totally transparent and upfront with them and clearly outline who you *will* and *will not* accept as a client in your business. This serves multiple purposes. On the one hand it wards off the types of customers you do not wish to attract into your business – the time wasters, the whingers, the “everything is a problem” people. On the other hand it also engenders a sense of scarcity amongst those customers who *do* wish to do business with you. It fosters a sense of belonging, ownership and exclusivity for anybody who does get accepted into your fold.

The tighter your qualification process is at the outset, the less hassle you will face as a business owner on the other side. This does take bravery and commitment because it goes against your

entrepreneurial instinct to accept as many customers as possible. But turning business away when you know it is the *wrong* type of business is a liberating and empowering experience! You truly start to feel that you are finally the master of your own destiny. You will no longer be held ransom to by unyielding and unreasonable nightmare customers. You lay your stall out and only accept the right type of customers on your terms, not theirs.

2.2 CHOOSING YOUR SALES WEAPONS

Now that you know some of the secret sales triggers which make people buy from you, it's time to drill down deeper and explore the wide breadth of sales "weapons" that you need to arm yourself with.

I will be presenting a number of various options and strategies for you to choose from but I would urge you not to limit yourself to just one or two. Once you begin implementing these tactics I can assure you that you will become addicted! Making sales becomes so much easier when you're using these tactics that it would be a crime against your bank account if you didn't learn and then apply each one in turn.

The first sales weapon you have available at your disposal is bonuses. Whilst the word "bonus" is often associated with salaries and employees it has, over recent years, started to become a mainstay for smart and successful entrepreneurs. As times get hard and money gets tight, customers want *more for less*. You can always strive to increase the value and perceived value that your product or service provides but doing this is not enough. You need to push the envelope and start doing things that your com-

petitors would never dream of doing and your customers would never expect.

Regardless of how much value you inject into your product or how long you spend crafting the product and ensuring it has the highest quality possible, it is, at the end of the day, still just *one product*. Let's take the humble picture frame, for example - how much value can really be injected into a picture frame? Well, to illustrate this, let's talk about the importance of using bonuses in your marketing and how doing so can double and even triple your sales – even if all you're selling to start with is picture frames!

Big Bumper Bonus Bonanza

The idea of a bonus is that it is something unexpected that further sweetens the pot for the customer. It's a public demonstration of your willingness to go the extra mile and of your generosity and determination to win over the customer. With the amount of information customers have at their fingertips nowadays you need to do everything you can to rise above the crowd and make your offer standout. No one business exists in isolation any more - all entrepreneurs are scrapping it out with many competitors operating in the same field. It's getting noisy out there!

Although this does present opportunities, as well as challenges, the main difficulty that arises is having to combat the indifference in the eyes of the customer when they are faced with so many seemingly similar offers. Surely one picture frame is pretty much the same as the next? So how can the provider of picture frames set themselves apart from the competition using bonuses?

As we've explained, it's now become a matter of course for entrepreneurs to provide as much value as possible for the in-

vestment they are asking in return for their product or service. Margins are being squeezed lower and lower as customers become more information-rich and market-aware. Using bonuses can give you the *edge*. It can take your competitors by surprise whilst simultaneously raising the eyebrows and opening the wallets of your customers.

An easy way to do this, as a picture frame provider, would be to offer one or more free bonuses with every purchase. This method again calls upon your instinct to ascertain the core desire and reason for the customer's buying decision. Of course they want a picture frame, that much is clear, but what is the picture frame for? You could offer the bonus of a free picture or piece of artwork to include in the frame. You could offer a free hanging service where an expert comes round to the home of the customer and helps them hang the picture frame (assuming the investment for the picture frame justifies this outlay).

You could provide a free bonus picture frame with every large frame purchased. You could provide the free bonus of special UV glass in the frame which protects the contents from deteriorating over time. You could give a free bonus of a glossy catalogue or small book that outlines various pieces of art. Needless to say, these artworks would be available for purchase from your company in your most valuable frames!

The opportunity to give away free bonuses with the product or service you provide is limited only by your imagination. The emphasis here is on adding extra value for no extra cost and providing an additional free item (or items) to your customer that augments their experience with you. As with the artwork example, giving away certain free bonuses can also open up new

revenue streams for your business by introducing your customers to products they might otherwise not have encountered.

It's also important to keep the bigger picture in mind when giving away free bonuses. Here's one example of how I did this to illustrate this further...

I once released a basic audio training package that cost £50. To encourage as many sales as possible I created an entire raft of bonuses that every customer received with their purchase. These included exclusive interviews, videos, special reports and further audios. The combined value of all the bonuses added up to more than *three times* the cost of the basic program! Taking into account of all the production costs for each of these items, and the main program itself, I wasn't generating that much profit from every sale. So why did I do it?

The secret here, lies in the fact that I had a long-term, *bigger picture plan*. The front end product was primarily a lead generator to attract the ideal customers into my business. I wasn't using the launch of this product to make money directly but rather fill my business with perfect customers who would benefit from my future offers and promotions. Once all the customers had received their product and completed the training on their own by following the audio program I then released a separate and even more comprehensive training program that included personal coaching, support and direct access to me. This program was, of course, in the region of several thousand pounds. By using bonuses with my front end product I was able to attract a very large number of customers into my "funnel". This enabled me to simultaneously qualify customers so that I attracted the right ones and also break even on the front-end to pay for my production costs.

The initial training program that the customers purchased also prepared them and whet their appetite for the much more extensive and in-depth personal coaching program I offered them shortly afterwards. It would not have been as simple to achieve this result without giving away free bonuses whose value far exceeded that of the basic product itself. So as you can see – using bonuses is a very effective strategy that you can use to attract large volumes of the right type of customer into your business.

Another extremely effective way to push prospects “over the edge” and turn them into buyers is to use...

The Awesome Power of Scarcity

Scarcity simply means a natural, manufactured or perceived shortage of a product or service. It plays heavily on the human psychology that we “always want what we can’t have”. For example, my wife and I once became addicted to the TV programme “House” starring Hugh Laurie as a Doctor who diagnoses weird illnesses. It aired once a week on television and we used to look forward to watching every episode and learning about the latest mysterious disease his character would discover and how he would diagnose and then cure it. With just one episode on every week we made sure not to miss a single one and if we had a prior commitment we would ensure the episode was recorded.

This “addiction” went on for quite some time and we became obsessed with the program. So much so, that we decided to order several DVD box sets containing many series of the program that we’ve never seen before. We were excited about the arrival of the DVDs and being able to watch our favourite program whenever we wanted to. At first things went well – the first day the DVD

box set arrived we watched three episodes of the program back-to-back. The next day we watched two episodes. A few days went by and we watched another episode from the DVDs. But then something strange happened...

We had satiated ourselves on the TV programme. Now that it was no longer a scarce commodity or only available in certain time, we no longer craved or desired it in the same way. If we were out at certain times during the week there was no risk of missing an episode because we had them all on DVD. The sense of an “event” that happens at a specific time on a specific day of the week was lost. And lost along with it was our sense of excitement and desire to watch the program. Having an almost endless supply of episodes at our disposal had done something remarkable. It had converted us from raving fans of the program into people that could care less! Around a week after receiving the DVDs we never since watched a single episode of the program again!

This simple example just goes to show the power that scarcity can have over people’s desires and actions. You can use this to your advantage by releasing your own products or services using scarcity. The first time I applied the scarcity principle to the launch of one of my own products the results were incredible...

Normally, when businesses release a product they do so simply when the product is ready and available and they sell it for as long as they have products in stock or for as long as they are able to keep on producing the product. But this isn’t always the smartest way to go about things. When releasing my product I set very clear and restricted timelines for what would happen during the “launch week”.

I made sure to communicate to all my prospective customers that the product would be released and made public at 12 noon on the Monday. This in itself infers scarcity because you are stating publicly that before this time it is impossible to buy the product even though the product is completed and market-ready. But this strategy went a lot further than that.

I also set a hard deadline for purchasing the product. This can be done by literally limiting the amount of products you produce or make available. You can also achieve the same result by having a cut-off time or date after which the product is no longer available. I used a slight variation on this theme and announced to the world that the price of my product would be increasing at 12 noon on the Friday of “launch week”. So prospective customers were now armed with the information that they could only buy the product *after* 12 noon on Monday and that if they failed to do so *before* Friday at 12 o’clock they would be “penalised” with an increase in price. (Interestingly, I did not communicate the nature or amount of this price increase. In the end, the price increase was fairly minimal but the threat of its impending enforcement created a high degree of scarcity and therefore action amongst customers.)

In combination with this strategy I also used a limited number of bonuses for the early adopters who purchased the product in the first two days. By doing this I was making my core product scarce (with the inferred price increase) but also creating a level of scarcity around the availability of these free bonus items that came along with the purchase for those who acted quickly.

The results were dramatic. A product that would have usually generated around £50,000 over the course of the 12 month period brought in £156,000 in the space of one week! The vast majority of these profits were down to the fact that I used scarcity to encourage the prospects to become customers. Also having a “launch week” created a sense of the entire release of the product being an event and something that customers wanted to be a part of. Making your marketing an event is an essential strategy if you want to generate excitement, enthusiasm and high levels of desire for your product or service.

By selling this particular product on the Internet I was also able to harness the power of certain technologies that further magnified the element of scarcity. I had a countdown timer on the webpage which counted down the minutes until “impending doom” (the price increase!). My programmers also created a nifty tool that counted down the number of bonus items that were left and reduced the number every time somebody purchased the product. Both these simple tools showed customers in a very graphic way that time was running out to get the best deal and that the number of bonuses left was also decreasing rapidly.

Now that your eyes have been opened to how scarcity works and the methods you can employ in your business to harness its power, you will start recognising its use more frequently in your marketplace and in the business arena generally. Something as simple as a bank holiday sale, for example, is a clear demonstration of scarcity in action. As we all know, basic economics is driven by supply and demand, so if your product or service is in short supply this will create high demand. The trick is to balance this intelligently to maximise your profits.

Customers at the Crossroads

Scarcity is also used to great effect by television shopping channels. Many of the products on offer are only available on the day you happen to be watching. In addition to this, they often have a time-linked discount that expires after a certain number of minutes or hours. On top of this the number of products available is also limited in many cases. When all these factors combine the customer realises that this is a “now or never” situation. It encourages the customer to heighten their awareness of the deal. If we view every decision as a crossroads, including buying decisions, then using scarcity is like placing your customer directly at the fork in the road and telling them they have 60 seconds to make a “Now” or “Never” decision. Powerful stuff indeed!

Scarcity is a supremely effective tool at encouraging your customers to make quick buying decisions. It speeds up the whole sales process and enables you to sharpen the customer’s mind so they can zero in on what really matters – the value that you are providing and the investment you’re asking from the customer in return.

You have to walk a tightrope to ensure that you are using scarcity in the right way and not generating immunity in your prospects. For example, we’ve all seen advertisements on TV for companies that seem to be in permanent “sale mode”. They have a bank holiday sale, an Easter sale, a Spring sale, a Summer sale, a Christmas sale, an autumn sale, an end of year sale, a closing down sale, a reopening sale, an everything-must-go sale and a sale for just about every reason or excuse you can think of! This is a clear example of what *not* to do.

Scarcity Only Works if it's Scarce!

Once or twice a year the large clothing chain Next has a huge discount sale. People queue up for hours and hours before the doors are open to snap up the best bargains. People camp out in sleeping bags, it makes the local news, it's the talk of the town and it becomes a real "event". As a result the shop generates a huge amount of income whilst simultaneously getting rid of its old stock in time for the new season and new product ranges. But if they tried to do this *every* weekend its power would be totally undermined. The scarcity would no longer be scarce. It would be clear to everybody that the company was trying to manufacture scarcity rather than backup their claims with a big reason why.

The Next clothing sale works not just because it is scarce or because it only happens twice a year but also because it has a *big reason why* behind it. Their "big reason why" is that they have to get rid of their old stock to make way for the new and therefore they are slashing prices to clear out the shop.

Compare this "reason why" with a typical bank holiday sale and it's easy to see the difference. What is the "big reason why" for the furniture stores offering a 50% discount over a bank holiday? The answer is – they don't have a big reason why! If they did, they would use it in their advertisements. But they don't, they just tell us all to get down to their store to "save 50% this bank holiday only".

What is the result in the mind of the customers? They assume that the "big reason why" the furniture store is having a discount sale on a bank holiday is to cash in on a national holiday and make as much money as possible from customers. Hardly a powerful incentive to encourage customers to do business with you! So you need to use scarcity in a smart way. It's like dynamite - a little can

go a long way but if you use it all the time you'll scare off and deafen your customers so they won't listen to you any more! It would be a classic case of cry wolf – "I don't believe your sale is genuine this weekend because you've had one *every* weekend for the past 50 years!".

Have You Got a Secret Salesforce?

Another powerful sales weapon you can add to your armoury is referral business. Can you imagine having a secret salesforce who work for you around the clock sending you new business and you don't even have to pay them a salary? This isn't a dream or made-up scenario this is a reality for many smart entrepreneurs who have set up their own referral business systems.

When you think of referral business you may, in the first instance, be drawn to the notion of having other businesses sending you customers. Whilst this is a definite possibility, and the strategy that many business owners have harnessed effectively to create more profits, there is an *even more* effective and efficient way to attract new customers through referrals. It might surprise you...

One of the best ways to get referral business is to use your *customers* as salespeople. Asking your customers to refer you new business might sound a bit cheeky but it works. If you can communicate with your customer at the top of their "gratitude curve", when they are happiest with the product that you have provided them with, there is a strong possibility that they will be open to the idea of introducing new people into your business to enjoy the same level of services they've just received from you.

When this tactic first started to be adopted by businesses it was enough just to ask the customer to spread the word about

what your business was doing and what you had to offer. But as the years have gone by, the demands on the customer's attention and time has increased exponentially, so now it's of paramount importance that you incentivise the customer's behaviour and also make their ability to introduce new customers to your business as easy and as fast as possible.

I subscribe to sky TV and they've been experimenting with this very idea of having customers refer them new business. Their initial attempts, whilst interesting, did little to inspire me to send them new customers. They sent me a letter with a dummy £20 voucher from Marks & Spencer's. It got my attention. I then read that if I introduced a friend to Sky television the friend would receive £20 of Marks & Spencer vouchers. So what? What was in it for me? Nothing!

Their initial proposition was that I become a salesperson and tell all my friends about how great Sky TV was. If some of my friends then joined Sky television I would have received the reward of... Absolutely nothing! Why on earth would anybody do that? It came as no surprise then, when their next attempt to convert me from customer into salesperson was done using a slightly different strategy...

This new strategy included rewarding my friend for joining Sky as a new customer *and* rewarding me for introducing them to Sky television. Finally, they had created the triple-win scenario. I get a reward for telling my friend about Sky television, my friend gets a reward for joining Sky television and Sky television gets a new customer. A great referral business strategy in action - everybody wins.

In my own business I was able to take this strategy a step further during the creation of one of my training programs. As

a core part of the training curriculum that all customers would go through I encouraged them to become an affiliate for my product. That is, to promote my product and receive a monetary commission every time a sale was made. Making this a core part of the training ensured a large percentage of my customers became salespeople for my business!

The product in question generated £156,000 in the first week of its release. I then stopped all marketing and advertising for the product but something amazing happened. Because a large number of customers then became affiliates and “salespeople” for the product, it took on a life of its own and went on to generate an additional £113,000 in the following 12 months without me doing any extra work, marketing or advertising whatsoever!

This is another clear example that you need to fully harness the power of referral business to maximise your profits. By setting out a clear rewards structure and only paying out commissions after a sale is made there is zero risk associated with this strategy. You simply set a target in your mind of the commission percentage you would be willing to give away as a reward and incentive to customers or other people to refer new business to you.

Team Up and Conquer!

Another highly effective way to encourage referral business for your enterprise, rather than constantly being under pressure to fill your customer pipeline yourself, is to establish relationships with other business owners. These are sometimes referred to as strategic partnerships and alliances. Many of the *struggling* entrepreneurs I come into contact with are operating their businesses with an “I can take on the world on my own” type attitude. They

believe they can thrive and survive in isolation without the need for a complex and hard to maintain network of contacts and associates. In all my years of business experience I can safely say that developing a network within your industry is one of the most important, yet underestimated and underused strategies available to entrepreneurs to rapidly grow their business.

It doesn't matter whether you are operating on the Internet, whether you're a hotelier or whether you're in the construction business. You *must* develop a powerful network of strategic partnerships and alliances with other business owners to create greater stability and increased profits for your enterprise. Not only will these strategic alliances open you up to new business ideas, free advice and be an ongoing support mechanism for you but, created in the right way, they will also prove to be an invaluable source of new business and new customers.

If you operate a hotel, for example, and you want to extend your client base and attract lots of new customers without having to set aside a huge advertising budget to do so, then strategic alliances in your local area provide a lucrative avenue for you to explore. You could visit the owners of each of the tourist attractions in your area one by one and ask to review their services so that you can be better-informed to make recommendations to the people staying at your hotel who are looking for things to do during their stay.

In return, you can invite the tourist attraction owners to your hotel so they can see how you operate and when they receive bookings from their clients they then may wish to recommend your accommodation. Setting up strategic alliances in this way helps all the parties involved.

The tourists coming into the area will be assured of enjoying the best tourist attractions combined with the best accommodation. Both you, as the hotel owner, and the owner of the tourist attraction will enjoy the benefits of a new influx of customers. If you are able to build several of these strategic alliances you can start to tap into the greater power of the network which far exceeds its ability to generate new customers for you.

You could start a regular networking meeting with each of the strategic alliance partners. You could launch brainstorming sessions where all members help one another to overcome business challenges. You could even combine funds together for marketing and advertising efforts or host jointly-sponsored events. You can even explore the possibility of pooling resources together if you operate in similar industries or you could combine your budget planning to take advantage of bulk purchases with certain items.

The principle you need to keep at the centre of developing your strategic alliances and nurturing them once they have been established is to *give first and receive second* the more you can do to help the other business partners in your alliance, the more they will do, in turn, to assist you. To break the chicken and egg cycle of this, the action has to start somewhere so make sure it starts with *you*. You could offer to host the meetings or you could refer business to the potential strategic partner before suggesting to them any type of relationship. Many entrepreneurs will be closed minded to the possibilities that exist to work with other business owners. Be patient in your approach and always go the extra mile to help the entrepreneurs you are trying to develop a relationship with.

There is strength in numbers and the list of opportunities that await you once your network is in place is vast indeed. Aside from

sending business back to your partners you could also encourage them even further by giving them rewards, financial compensation or even discounts if they personally wish to use your product or service. As with every type of relationship in life, the key is to work hard at creating it, work hard at nurturing it and work hard to grow it every single day. Inviting fellow business owners over for a free lunch to catch up with them and discuss general business matters is an excellent way to keep in constant communication with your strategic partners and keep them informed of the latest goings-on in your business.

Fantastic Follow-up!

Following up like this and keeping open lines of communication is essential not just for your strategic partnerships but also in the relationships you seek to develop with your prospects and customers. Nowadays, people are exposed to tens of thousands of marketing messages every single day so it's no surprise that they are starting to become immune to the constant barrage of offers and communications. The challenge you face is to be *persistent* and *different*. You need to be persistent enough with your messages so that they finally get through to the prospect and create the desired result of having them become customer. You need to be different to others in your approach so that your marketing communications stand out from the crowd, get noticed and stay at the forefront of the customer's mind.

This is no small feat. Whilst the average entrepreneur may stop after sending out one or two marketing messages to a potential customer, the smart entrepreneur doesn't stop there. They get into the habit of sending out multiple marketing messages to

each potential customer to ensure the greatest response rate and stick factor of their message.

I'm not advocating bombarding prospects with unsolicited communications or beating them into submission with the same message repeated again and again. The core principle here is to develop a well rounded selection of messages and themes that you can use to create a long sequence of interesting, thought-provoking and customer-converting marketing messages. Each marketing message is like a building block that must neatly fit on top of the previous message. No one building block is exactly the same. So every time you communicate with the prospect you must provide them with new and different information. This way you increase your chances of pressing their trigger buttons that will convert them from being a prospect into a becoming a customer.

Whilst you may personally feel that, for example, your list of testimonials is your most powerful marketing message, many of your prospects will disagree. Beating them over the head with these testimonials time after time may in fact do more damage than good and you might be better off sending them an entirely different subset of marketing messages. One message may talk about your track record. The next message could mention new initiatives you have in place. The next message might include elements of your personal story and background. The next message might shine the spotlight on members of your staff. The next message could talk about the awards and accreditations your business has received. The next message could focus on a case study from your enterprise. The next message could address the primary problems and concerns the prospect is facing in your industry. The next message might reveal the role your business plays in the community.

It's your job as an entrepreneur to take your prospects on a journey. You need to present to them with a well-rounded view of your organisation, the environment in which it operates, the nature of the marketplace and competition, the problems facing prospects in this marketplace, the possible solutions available to them, the benefits of using your product versus anybody else's and ultimately, *why* they need to do business with you.

The more times you can follow up with a prospect the more likely it is that they will end up being your customer. But it doesn't stop there. You need to adopt this philosophy of multiple follow-ups in all areas of your business. This approach can be adapted for your customer model also. Once a prospect buys something from you and finally becomes your customer this is not the end of the journey, it is the beginning. It's your mission to then educate the customer further and encourage them to buy more products and services from you. How do you do this? Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up.

To demonstrate to you how important following up is and its effectiveness in generating very loyal, lifetime customers for you here's a short story...

From Freebie Seeker to First Rate Customer

For one of my businesses I had a follow-up sequence that lasted several months. It included sending the prospects free reports, free audios, free gifts, case studies and in-depth white papers pertinent to the prospect's interests and desires. During the break time at one of my sold-out events (this one was in Seattle, USA) a member of the audience approached me, smiling.

The gentleman revealed he had been a prospect of mine for several months and had been diligently digesting all the information I'd sent him for free. He'd travelled all the way across America to attend my event and see me speak. He told me how much he enjoyed reading all the materials I'd sent him and that he felt like he really knew me as a friend as a result of all the communications. It is testament to the power of following-up that this person had travelled thousands of miles and spent a substantial amount to attend my event. But it doesn't stop there...

He also signed up to join my personal coaching program. He'd gone from being a non-paying prospect to a customer of several of my products including my prestige programme all as a result of the follow-up sequence that I'd sent him. The most exciting part is that this follow-up sequence, once you've created it, can be used again and again for all your prospects. You just need to create it once and then every prospect that you come into contact with can receive the sequence and be converted into a customer.

The other thing to remember, when creating your follow-up sequence, is that you need to provide not only a variety of information but also a variety of communication *methods*. People respond to different types of communications. Some prospects operate on a more visual level so would respond well to a video message or postcard you send them through the post. Others may have an auditory bias in which case sending you will want to send them a CD or phone message. Yet another group of prospects might have a more analytical approach to their buying decisions and therefore be more inclined to receive large amounts of facts and figures to mull over. For these guys you would want to send a detailed report or dossier.

The key is to keep your prospects on their toes. The moment they get the sense that they've "seen it all before" then you've lost. Keep things new and fresh by changing not only *what you say* in your marketing messages but *also how you send those messages* to the prospect. You have so many exciting and easy-to-use avenues open to you as an entrepreneur that it's really down to you to use them all. E-mail, websites, audios, videos, voicemail broadcasts, live phone calls, direct mail pieces, free gifts etc. The list goes on and on!

You will now have a clear idea about the breadth of sales weapons you have at your disposal and hopefully a clear strategy outlining which ones you're going to adopt for your business. As with any entrepreneurial exercise, I highly recommend that you fully implement *one* of the tactics first before moving on to adopt a second. If you want to generate more sales and attract more customers than almost all other entrepreneurs then you would be well-advised to implement as many of the aforementioned sales weapons as you can into your business marketing strategy. But do so *one at a time*.

Now it's time to explore how you can beef up, add steroids to and generally multiply your marketing efforts to attract even more customers with very little extra effort or resources. This means it's time for you to discover...

2.3 HOW TO POWER UP YOUR ATTRACTOR BEAMS

The following section will give you a unique insight into some of the secret sales tactics I've developed and applied in my multi-million pound businesses. All these strategies provide a clever twist on an already effective method to return even greater results for your business.

As the title of this section suggests, each of these tactics will help you to attract more customers or “Power up your attractor beams”! When used in combination with the sales triggers and the sales weapons that we’ve already outlined the following strategies take on a life of their own. What once used to be a simple way of marketing your message turns into an irresistible, almost hypnotic customer communication that even the most cynical prospect can’t help but be attracted to.

The first of these power ups is *risk reversal*. As the name suggests, risk reversal is all about minimising the perceived risk that the customer is taking when they do business with you or, ideally, totally reversing or removing this risk from the transaction entirely. It takes a slight shift in your focus to put yourself in the shoes of your customer and realise that when they are making a decision to buy from you, regardless of the product, they are taking some risks.

They are risking their financial outlay. They are risking the time taken to research and complete the purchase. They are risking their credibility by purchasing the item. On a deeper level, you might argue that they are even risking failure. One of the risks that customers feel most vehemently is the risk of *making a mistake*. It’s inherent in human nature to always want to be right and feel like we’ve made good decisions. Even if these decisions are not made or discussed in the public arena, we still give ourselves negative internal feedback if we make a bad decision.

As an entrepreneur you want to help customers overcome these fears and minimise the potential perceived risk that they are taking by doing business with you. If you can somehow assure

them that they are taking the right decision, that their money will be spent wisely, that their time will not be wasted and they will not regret their decision or feel that they have made a mistake then more customers will buy from you. Offering the best price and the best service does nothing to alleviate these fears or minimise the risks and this is why you need to bring risk reversal comes into play.

You'll Like This – I Guarantee It!

The most common form of risk reversal is a money back guarantee. “If such and such does not occur then you can get your money back.” There are many examples of this in just about every type of business and industry you care to think of. Some restaurants will give you your money back if you don't enjoy the meal. Some hoteliers will let you stay the night free if you don't get a good night's sleep. Some educational programs enable you to take the course and get your money back if you're not satisfied.

Entrepreneurs who fully embrace this concept and develop their own money back guarantee or risk reversal strategy will be richly rewarded for doing so. A few short years ago having such a money back guarantee was enough to set you apart from the competition but they are becoming more common. As with everything, the further you can take this strategy, the greater your rewards. Whilst many companies stop at a 30 day money back guarantee others are now raising the bar and offering 12 month guarantees, lifetime guarantees and even “double your money” guarantees where if the customer is not happy they not only get their original investment back but also an additional financial compensation as well!

One of the early businesses I founded was a consultancy service. We were providing marketing advice to local businesses in return for an annual retainer. With our track record, and proven ability to massively increase sales over a short period of time, it was clear to us that customers using our service would receive increased profits that paid for their original investment many times over. Providing that the businesses implemented the advice we gave them, they were sure to add a sizeable percentage increase to their bottom line every year. What we failed to realise during the early days, is that our proven track record and case studies were not sufficient to attract the high volume of customers we'd set ourselves the target of reaching in our ambitious plans.

So we introduced a risk reversal, money back guarantee. We linked the service we were providing to a measurable performance indicator that both the customer and us could easily track and monitor. We guaranteed the customers that they would increase their business by a set percentage over a certain period of time. If this increase in business did not take place the customer could request a full 100% money back guarantee. At first, even with the knowledge that our service worked every single time, implementing this money back guarantee still made us all a little nervous!

Very few entrepreneurs have the balls to put their neck on the line and get paid on results. But we did. And we were richly rewarded for doing so. We were very clear with our money back guarantee that there were no quibbles, no questions and no hard feelings. We didn't want to get into lengthy, time-consuming and negative arguments with customers about the performance indicators. Although we had linked the guarantee to a certain set of

metrics that both sides could easily measure, we were really leaving the door open for the customers to be able to walk away and get their money back if they were unhappy for *any* reason. Don't worry - this *sounds* a lot scarier than it actually is!

What we found is that implementing the guarantee helped us focus even more on creating a customer-centric business. Every decision we made then had the potential to impact each of our customers and their decision to either stick with the program or bail out and receive their money back. The results we witnessed during the first 12 months of implementing this risk reversal guarantee strategy were quite remarkable...

Despite our best efforts there *were* two customers who took us up on the money back guarantee. However, these were “problem customers” who would argue with the advice we presented them with and failed on numerous occasions to implement the recommendations we were making which were proven to work. But as I mentioned earlier, we didn't wish to split hairs so we went our separate ways. So did losing these two customers and spending the time working with them for free adversely affect our business?

No it did not. We attracted *three times* as many customers in the first 12 months of using a money back guarantee than we had during the previous 12 months without a guarantee in place. It wasn't the only new strategy to be implemented but it was certainly the most profound and profit-generating one. Implementing the risk reversal strategy grew our business so quickly we could hardly keep up with the demand!

So how can *you* implement a risk reversal strategy in your business?

Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is!

There really are no exceptions - this can be done in every industry and every sector. If you're holding a physical event you can provide a money back guarantee that covers customers for the first half of the event to encourage them to attend. Customers pay the attendance fee and if they're not thoroughly satisfied with the event at the halfway stage they could come up to the stage, get their money back and walk away. Would people do this? Yes! Some people probably would! But the point here is that far more people would attend the event in the first place once you implement the money back guarantee. This more than offsets any customer losses and "refund fallout" that you might experience. As we discussed at length earlier in this book, the type of customers who walk away from the great value that you're providing are *not* type of customers you want in your business anyway!

Entrepreneurs can become protective about their products and services and this makes them reluctant to risk providing these products and services free of charge should the customer decide they do not wish to pay for them. This could be a confidence issue, a trust issue or a scarcity-mentality for the entrepreneur in question. The fact is, if you stand by your product and truly believe it delivers great value and helps the customer in some way, then *why wouldn't you* be prepared to put your money where your mouth is and offer people the option of a money back guarantee?

Sometimes this can be as simple as merely restating the legal standpoint of consumers in a more palatable and appealing way. For example, many purchases in the UK are already covered by a statutory cooling off period or guarantee period after which, as long as the product is returned to its original state, the consumer

can request their money back. You can ride on the coattails of this by drawing attention to the law and emphasising it, rather than hiding from the details of the guarantee. Even if you're producing products and services which cannot be returned there are still ways to reverse or minimise the perceived risk faced by the customer when they decide to do business with you.

You could offer them money off a similar purchase. You could offer vouchers for subsequent sales. You could offer an alternative product or service for the same value. There are many ways to skin the "risk reversal cat". Over the years, the businesses I've been involved with have offered many different risk reversal guarantees including:

- "1-year money back" guarantee
- "30-day money back" guarantee
- "We'll work with you for free until you succeed" guarantee
- "Double your money back" guarantee

Having developed your risk reversal strategy and communicated it throughout your business internally the next step is to repeat the process externally. You need to make a song and dance about your guarantee. It needs to become an integral part of your marketing message. You can use it to set yourself apart from the competition. It can even become part of your tagline such as the famous example of Domino's pizza:

*"Fresh hot pizza delivered to your door
in 30 min or it's free."*

Many entrepreneurs have embraced the power of the risk reversal strategy so well that their guarantee has become part of their actual brand. Whether or not you take it to this extent doesn't matter at the outset. What matters is that you use a risk reversal strategy to make it more enticing for customers to do business with you. You can start by writing down a list of all the potential risks and fears that your customers feel before they make their buying decision.

For the purposes of this exercise, let's imagine that you're a wedding photographer. Here is a list of concerns and perceived risks that wedding photography clients might be feeling prior to making a buying decision:

- I'm worried this photographer isn't any good
- I'm worried I won't like the photographs
- I'm worried there will be extra costs
- I'm worried that you the photographer won't truly capture the essence of my special day
- I'm worried that I'll be overcharged

How could you craft a risk reversal strategy that tackles some of these issues? Of course, as a photographer you have hard costs which cannot be avoided – the cost of your time for being present on the wedding day, the costs of the equipment and the costs of producing the photographs. But wouldn't it be better for you to take the risk away from the customer and put it on *your* shoulders to demonstrate your confidence in your own service and show the customer that they are making the right decision by buying from you rather than somebody else?

Before crafting any guarantee you must obviously be certain in your own mind of the service levels and quality levels that you can deliver on. The last thing you want to do is over commit yourself and leave the guarantee open to abuse. Once you have a clear set of targets that you know you can meet every time, then you can start to factor these into your guarantee.

Assuming you've done all your "due diligence" in this regard then your 100% money back guarantee for a wedding photography business might go something like this...

"Although we ask for a small deposit up front from you, if you find a better deal, a more qualified photographer or a photographer with more satisfied customers than us, you can cancel our service prior to your wedding and we'll give you your deposit back in full plus £100 for your inconvenience.

We absolutely and totally guarantee there will be no extra costs. The simple quote we provide you with after our first consultation is the final price you pay. Any increases in our costs, materials, supplier rates etc. will be covered 100% by us.

If you are unhappy with any of the photographs for any reason we will work with you to replace these photographs on your wedding day. All your wedding photos will be available for your personal review at 3 PM on the day giving us plenty of time before your evening reception to re-shoot any additional frames of your choosing."

This represents a very comprehensive risk reversal strategy for a wedding photographer. It seeks to minimise, and where possible – eliminate, any risks and fears that the potential customer has about doing business with the photographer. It may, as an entrepreneur, send shivers down your spine that a business would

put their neck on the line in this way. But provided each of these guarantee elements can be backed up and has been created in reference to a stable track record of performance then there really is a very low risk for the business. Any examples of customers getting their money back will be more than offset by the dramatic upsurge in business.

This strategy of removing all the risk from the customer's buying decision can be applied for any product, any service and in any market. It's down to you to get creative and start implementing it. I've already shown you the rapid and dramatic effect it had on one of my businesses so now it's your turn.

Why Don't You Use a Big Reason Why?

Using a risk reversal strategy is a great example of giving customers a very *powerful reason why* they should do business with you. The principle of providing customers with *big reasons why* can be applied throughout your business to increase your profits. It's surprising just how many entrepreneurs don't fully seize upon this simple method to attract more customers, communicate more effectively with their customers and retain those customers more easily.

If you've ever been around small children then you'll know that one of their favourite things to say is:

"Why?"

They ask this question all the time. Why is the sea blue? Why does it get dark night? Why do I have to go to school? Why does daddy put his head in his hands when I ask all these questions? You get the picture...

Whilst it's not voiced or aired in the same way, your customers still possess this attribute of curiosity in your business. The sad thing is that many business owners are not catering to this fact. They are making too many assumptions about what their customers know or don't know about their business. You may recall earlier in this book, when we discussed scarcity, that we saw that providing the customers with the *reason why* the product is scarce is a key success factor for the strategy. But it goes much deeper than this...

Everything you do in your business should have a reason behind it otherwise you're nothing more than headless chicken running around without a clear direction. You may not wish to divulge every single reason and thought process behind each of your business strategies to your customer, but you should at least *consider* your reasons behind each of your decisions and decide on a case by case basis whether to share these reasons with your customers.

Let's take the classic example of having a sale. Many business owners start their sale-planning by deciding which products they are going to discount, how long the sale might last, how much profit they expect to make or how they're going to advertise the sale. A more advanced entrepreneur, on the other hand, starts this exercise by developing a *powerful reason why* that they can communicate to the customer.

How To Sell Good Naked

Customers like to know what's going on in your business and *why* you are doing certain things. When they feel armed with "insider" information they feel more powerful and in control of their own

buying decisions. If you keep customers in the dark they may perceive this as an attempt on your behalf to pull the wool over their eyes. You want to involve your customers every step of the way in your business. If you have some stock that you need to get rid in order to make way for a new product launch – *tell your customers!* They will applaud you for your honesty and feel better connected to the marketing messages that you present them with.

Operating in this way will enable your customers to have a better understanding of the business processes behind the decisions you make. This in turn will create a sense of trust and openness between you and your customers. For example, if you're attempting to get customers on your monthly recurring payment program then you would be well-advised to introduce a free trial after which their payments begin automatically. When explaining the reasons behind the free trial, however, the big mistake would be to say that you are offering it because you are so generous, or that you're giving it them for free to show that you really care.

Whilst there could be an element of truth to these potential reasons, your best option is to be *totally upfront* and explain that you are offering your customers a free trial in the hope that they will enjoy your product so much that they will continue to buy from you when the payments kick in. This level of openness and transparency will feel like a breath of fresh air for your customers. It is another step on your journey towards developing a totally customer-focused business. As you are doubtless starting to realise, all of the strategies that we're outlining in this book require you to develop an ever closer relationship with your customers and an ever greater degree of openness, transparency and communication.

Banks would have done well to heed this advice when they started making their changeover from paper bank statements to electronic bank statements. Their so-called *reason why* behind this move was that it was “greener for the environment and easier for the customer”. Whilst nobody can argue that reducing paper and postage will indirectly have benefited the environment, I beg to differ with anybody who says that logging on to an online banking system is easier than opening an envelope!

But the banks missed a real opportunity here to build a high degree of trust with their customers which would have generated even more profits for them than the cost savings of eradicating paper statements. We all know that the *real* reason the banks moved away from paper statements towards online statements is to save money, but by trying to ride on the back of the green movement and attempting to convince us that the move towards online statements was in *our* best interests rather than theirs, they lost our trust rather than gained it. The alternative approach would have been to come right out and say:

“We are getting rid of paper statements because they’re costing us too much money. Instead we are moving over to online statements because this is cheaper for us. Whilst checking your statements online is not as easy for you as opening an envelope, we are sure you will appreciate the reduced banking costs that we will be able to pass on to you as a result of eradicating paper and postage.”

I am, of course, presenting this in a rather utopian view. It’s hard to imagine any bank ever releasing such a communication – particularly the part about passing on cost savings rather than

keeping them in their own pockets! But hopefully you can understand the sentiment and the *reason why* I used this example. Many entrepreneurs seek to use the *reason why method* in their marketing and customer communications but they forget the most critical component – the truth!

During the release of one of my products I used one of the scarcity strategies outlined earlier in this book. I only made a certain limited number of copies of the product available to the public. But I didn't leave it there. It wasn't just a case of saying:

"There are only 100 copies of this product available."

I actually explained, in great detail, *why* this was the case. I communicated directly with the customers to explain that I had no choice but to limit the number of people who could be accepted into the program because the product involved a high degree of personal and direct access to me which limited its scalability. If I hadn't limited the number of people in the program, the quality of service that I would have been able to provide would have suffered. Presenting the *big reason why* in this way was a simple but effective strategy to engender trust with the customers and also encourage them to buy the product. Being fully aware of the mechanics behind the machine meant that the customers had a full understanding of not just the scarcity itself but also of the *reason* behind the scarcity.

Using a powerful *reason why* isn't just something you should reserve for selling to customers either. It's something you should

use in all communications with your customers. If you have to give them bad news about an order, or if your quality temporarily takes a dive or if customer service is found wanting then you need to provide your customers with a powerful *reason why* every time. As with the other strategies, this will help you shape your business into a well-oiled machine that always puts the customer first whilst building a trust-dependent and transparent platform.

Operating in this way enables you, as the entrepreneur, to engage with your customer on a level playing field. You are not holding anything back or withholding information. You are revealing your cards at all times. Not all customers will like this approach and your attempts to reveal some of the reasons behind your business decisions and actions will of course occasionally lead to negative consequences when things go wrong. But on balance this is a far better situation to be in than the alternative. Most businesses operate with an “Us versus Them” mentality where the business is constantly trying to outsmart the customer. But what if you were different? What if your business sought to level the playing field? What if you decided to work *with* the customers and not against them?

This is what the *big reason why* is all about and you can use it in all areas of your business for employees as well as customers. Many negative business owners believe that giving customers too much information is a bad thing. They feel that the information owner has all the power in the relationship and therefore they need to keep their cards close to their chest and only reveal to the customer what is entirely necessary. My argument, based on many years of in-the-trenches experience, is that *almost all* information about your business is necessary for customers to know.

We Don't Need No Education!

You may not realise it, but as an entrepreneur you are in the *education* business. Unbeknownst to you, one of the hats that you were destined to wear since from the moment your business started is that of a teacher. From the first point of contact with the prospect onwards you are in the business of educating that person about your enterprise, your offer, your product, your service and yourself. This never ends. You must constantly be aware of and act upon the need to educate your prospects and customers about your business because knowledge is *buying* power...

Think back a moment to any recent potential purchase that you shied away from at the last minute. You might think the non-purchase decision was down to the price or to circumstances but deeper analysis will reveal that it was probably down to lack of information. If you had received more information about the seller's background, their personality, their trustworthiness or their track record you might have bought their product after all. If you'd received more information about what the business was trying to achieve, their role in the community or how they'd treated past customers you might have become their latest customer. If you'd received information about the company's accreditations, awards, media coverage and blue-chip clients then you may have decided to purchase from them.

Having an open channel of communication with your customer doesn't mean sending them new offers every single day. It means *wooing* them. They need to get to know *you* as well as your business. Too many entrepreneurs get caught up in the notion that customers are obsessed with the business as an entity or the

product itself. But people don't buy from *objects* or *things* they buy from other *people*. Let me give you an example...

It's All In The Jeans...

If you think that the product is all-important or the company brand behind the product is what really counts then this story will open your eyes. I needed a new pair of jeans so I headed to the high street and into a well-known globally-branded jeans supplier. I found a pair of jeans I really liked and took them over to the counter to pay for them. So at this point I was happy with the company and I was happy with the product. But what happened next clearly illustrates that it is *the people* that are most important and not the products.

The person behind the counter was extremely difficult to deal with. They left me waiting, unfairly served somebody else before me and left me feeling I'd made a bad decision walking into the shop. The result? I put the jeans down and walked out of the shop without buying anything. So the product can be right, the brand can be right and the company can be right but if the *person* selling the items is wrong the whole thing falls down. What you need to remember is...

People Buy From People

Your job as an entrepreneur is as much about selling *yourself* as it is about selling your product and service. This is why entrepreneurs who wish to hide behind the scenes are often those who struggle most in their business. Whether you are the owner of a group of solicitors, a dental practice, a hotel, a consultancy

business, a biscuit factory or any other type of enterprise – it's who you are *as a person* and the way in which you portray yourself to your prospects and customers that has a direct and lasting impact on their decision to buy from you. You should not underestimate this.

This means that every step of your marketing strategy needs to embrace the notion of educating your customers. And this customer education needs to focus not just on your product and company but also on you as an individual. The better your customers get to know you, the more they will trust you and therefore, the more they will want to do business with you. If you hide behind-the-scenes or try to remain a nameless individual behind the corporate shield you will be losing out on the ability to attract extremely high volumes of customers into your business.

Start embracing this initiative by communicating with your customers personally. It might not be possible, due to volume, for you to reach out to everybody one by one but each person you *are* able to establish contact with will be profoundly and positively affected by the experience.

Despite my own exceptionally busy schedule, work commitments and worldwide travelling I always find the time to speak to some of my customers in person on the phone when I can. The result is always the same – they are both surprised and delighted to hear from me personally. They often make remarks about how I am the first mentor they have ever encountered who has personally reached out to them. Can you imagine the level of trust and loyalty that this encourages in my customers? When you start to balance this against the minimal investment of time on your part to make this happen it becomes clear that investing yourself

personally in the ongoing education and communication with your customers is not just a “nice to have” but rather an *essential* success factor for your business.

How to Turn Words into Profits

Another important ingredient in the customer attraction recipe is copywriting. That is, your use of words in your marketing efforts. It may not have occurred to you before, but when you boil down every marketing communication to its most basic form, that form is *words*. Whether it’s a newspaper advertisement, a radio advertisement, a promotional e-mail, a sales call, a leaflet or even a face-to-face meeting – the very words that you use have a direct and lasting impact on the customer’s impression of you and their willingness to open their wallet.

Knowing not only which words to use but also the sequence in which these words should appear and the circumstances best suited to each application of words can have a sink or swim impact on your business. It’s no coincidence that the best salespeople and best marketers on this planet also have the best understanding and grasp of words. The subject of copywriting merits an entire book in its own right so with the limited space available to us here, I’m only able to scratch the surface. As such, the best jumping off point for you to understand the importance of words and fully grasp the best way in which to use them, is to discuss headlines.

Headlines are those large, bold and thought-provoking statements that attract the customers to your marketing message in the first place. Whilst you may feel that using headlines is purely for journalists or scriptwriters the reality is that headlines need to

form a critical central role in every piece of communication you put out to your customers.

In any form of advertising that you seek to undertake, it is the *headline* that will attract the most attention and cause the success or failure of your campaign. Over the years I've written sales materials that have generated several million pounds and I've run countless conversion tests to ascertain which components encourage people to buy more than others. The one single component of any marketing message that has the biggest impact is the headline.

Making a minor change to the headline can have *major* results. Through years of laborious testing and tweaking I now know that even something as simple as changing the sequence in which words appear in headline can sometimes double or triple the response rate. The next time you start an advertising or marketing campaign ensure that you devote as long as possible to the creation of different headline variations. The subject matter of the advertisements is still important of course, but it is the headline which will make or break your campaign.

Now that we've explored some essential strategies to finding and attracting your ideal customers it's time that we turned our attention to retention. This means it's ready for you to move onto...

STEP 3

Keeping Customers

“This is not the end.
It is not even the beginning of the end.
But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

— Winston Churchill

3.1 A CUSTOMER IS FOR LIFE

The famous “this is not the end” quote from Winston Churchill refers to the British victory over the German Afrika Korps at the Second Battle of El Alamein in Egypt and it’s very pertinent to your mission of attracting customers.

In the first two parts of this book we’ve looked at how to *find* your ideal customers and also how to *attract* them. Finding customers and attracting customers are just two of the “battles” but now the “war” really starts – *keeping* those customers. Now that they’ve come into your business and demonstrated they have the need, desire and funds required to be a potential long-term customer they are an even more in-demand asset that you must guard at all costs.

A customer is the most valuable asset your business can have. You’ve invested a lot of time, money and resources to convert somebody into being a customer and alongside the lifetime value of the customer (in terms of future purchases), you must also take into account the acquisition cost of this customer. You have had to spend a lot of time and effort educating the customer on all manner of issues:

- The state of their current circumstances
- The fact they needed to make a buying decision
- Where your product and company fit into the marketplace
- The value that your business brings to the table

All these things take time. Unscrupulous competitors out there are always looking to make a quick buck and find lucrative

shortcuts. They don't come much quicker or more lucrative than poaching customers someone else has spent hard time attracting. You've done all the hard work so the last thing you want to happen is to have your competitors steal these customers away from you.

In this section we will explore how to *retain* your ideal customers. We'll look at how to fully engage them with your business so they remain loyal to your product for as long as possible and ideally *for life*. In the current climate, where changing providers on a regular basis is now par for the course rather than the exception to the rule, the ability to retain customers is more challenging than ever.

There is a myth in the business world that attracting customers into business is the hard part. The belief is that once you have a regular pipeline of new customers flooding into your business everything will be okay. Whilst nobody can argue that this is preferable to a business where the only thing coming into your office is tumbleweeds, the act of attracting a new customer, is, as Winston Churchill would say - not the end but rather the beginning.

The trouble is that entrepreneurs are obsessed with and fascinated by "the new". Anything new immediately grabs our attention. New technology, new ideas, new people, new books, new opportunities and of course, *new customers*. We have indoctrinated ourselves to believe that, as entrepreneurs, if something isn't new and fresh it must by default be old and stale. This brings with it a dangerous inference that the status quo or a continuation of present circumstances is something to be avoided. What you need to remember is that it is far easier to keep existing customers than it is to go out into the marketplace and attract new ones.

Diamond Customers Are Forever

As you'll doubtless be aware, attracting a new customer into your business has a very high cost of acquisition and there is little merit in crossing the street or heading across town for new business if you already have existing customers and potential sales right in front of you. The phrase "lifetime customer value" is bandied around a lot in business and marketing books. I'm sure you've encountered it yourself before. You may even have considered calculating the lifetime value of your own average customer, but from my experience, very few entrepreneurs make the leap from *analysing* this data into the actually *using* it as a basis for improvement.

What strategies could you implement that would double or triple the lifetime value of every customer in your business? How can you ensure that your customers stick with you rather than leave for a competitor? These are the types of questions we'll be answering in this section.

By ensuring that you implement the "Finding" and "Attracting" stages of customer acquisition well enough, you will be ahead of the game. Your business will find it much easier to retain these customers over time. Much of this is down to the fact that you will have aligned yourself and your business's message with customers who are ideally suited to receive it. You will be communicating in the right way and using the right language with the right customers. Doing this will certainly make your life easier when it comes to keeping those customers in your business but having powerful "finding" and "attracting" methods is not sufficient to cause reliable retention of customers.

“There’s a Hole in My Bucket...”

Many entrepreneurs operate their business not realising that their “bucket” has a hole in it. They are so busy focusing on what is going into the bucket (i.e. new customers) that they fail to notice the leaks and the hole at the bottom of the bucket (i.e. customers *abandoning* their business). Due to the fact that every business needs a specific amount of “water” in their bucket to survive, wouldn’t it be better, in the first instance, to ensure that the bucket was leak-free *before* investing a great deal of your time and resources into pouring more water into it?

What is really tragic is that there are an ever-increasing number of entrepreneurs who are fully aware of their leaking bucket and yet they still focus their efforts on attracting new customers as opposed to ensuring their existing customers remain in their business. Thinking about this in terms of the bucket analogy makes this decision seem totally ridiculous and yet, this is the decision they are consciously taking. To almost ignore, avoid and neglect their existing customers (where all the money is) in favour of attracting the new “shiny” customers. Experts can argue about the reason for this negligence – maybe it’s the need for adrenaline that new customers and sales provide, perhaps there’s a misperception that it’s easier to get new customers than it is to squeeze out more sales from existing customers or perhaps it’s some entrepreneurs’ inability to focus on one thing for a prolonged period of time.

Like a man who has been shot in the arm with an arrow, we shouldn’t bother ourselves with the question of *how* the arrow came to be there but rather pull the arrow out and *treat the wound*. With this aim in mind let’s get into the nitty-gritty of

the entire purpose of keeping customers and then let's reveal the most effective strategies for doing so.

What Does "Keeping Customers" Actually Mean?

The mantra of "keeping customers" is not new in business – in fact we have become so accustomed to hearing it, that it's likely many entrepreneurs have forgotten the true purpose of its meaning. You don't just want to *keep* customers in your business for the sake of keeping them there. Nor is this about keeping customers in your business to avoid them giving profits to your competitors (although this is a pleasant by-product!).

The whole objective here is to keep your customers in the mode of being customers i.e. *keep them buying things from you*. Your mission, once you have attracted a customer and sold them the initial product, is to sell to them again and again and again. This needs to be your primary focus. You don't want to expend all your energy and effort on keeping customers just for the sake of it – you need to keep them in your business so that they can keep being a customer and *keep spending money with you*.

One of the main myths surrounding customer retention is that "just doing a good job" is sufficient to encourage your customers to stick around. Whilst this might have been the case 20 years ago, this is now nothing short of a recipe for disaster. The consumer landscape is changing all the time and the invention of the Internet, social media and higher levels of access to information have led to a huge shift in power in all business marketplaces.

This shift in power has, in turn, led to new rules of customer communication and customer service. Whilst it's not the be all and end all, ensuring you have the best customer service possible

will of course, go a long way to improving your customer retention rate. So let's explore the 7 new rules of customer service for the 21st-century...

7 New Rules of Customer Service for the 21st Century

Old Rule: Be on time.

New Rule #1: Be early.

This first rule sets the tone for the entire collection of new rules of customer service in the 21st-century. Being on time is no longer enough - you need to be *early*. Whether this is ensuring that your deliveries are early, that you meet expectations earlier than expected or that you provide customers with results sooner than they'd hoped the driving force is the same - today's customers demand satisfaction *yesterday*. As the pace of people's lives increases more and more they expect the pace of business to increase along with it. If you don't speed up you'll get left behind. If a customer places an order they expect that product within 48 hours, if it takes over 10 days they'll complain and probably won't buy from you again. Add to this the fact that they'll tell everybody else about your inability to deliver quickly using social networks, feedback mechanisms and word-of-mouth and it quickly becomes clear that businesses need to operate a "Be quick or be dead" policy!

Old Rule: Under promise and over deliver

New Rule #2: Big promises over-delivered

It used to be a maxim of business that you needed to under promise and then over deliver. The idea behind this outdated principle is

that you don't raise the expectations of customers too high. You then seek to give them a "nice surprise" by exceeding these low expectations that you engineered at the outset of the relationship. Back in the day of less-demanding customers this approach had some merit but times have changed. Dramatically...

Over-delivering in your business is no longer an advanced goal or secret of the super successful – it is a business *essential* that separates surviving businesses from bankrupt businesses. But what about the actual promises you make? These need to be bigger, bolder and brasher than ever before. You're competing for an ever smaller slice of the attention "pie". Customers are being bombarded with tens of thousands of marketing messages every single day so if you *under promise* you go *under the radar*. This doesn't mean you should overpromise you do need to raise your game. You must make *big* promises that you can not only meet but that you can exceed.

Old Rule: 9 to 5, Mon to Fri

New Rule #3: 24/7, 365

As entrepreneurs we've long known that businesses do not operate solely from 9-to-5, Monday through Friday. They are living, breathing animals which never sleep. Whilst you may have long *known* this fact, it's now time to fully *embrace* this principle, communicate it to your customers and create systems that turn it into a reality. Customers are busy people. They don't want to waste their time calling you during the week. They want to reach out to you in their "dead time" – when they're driving home from work at 7pm, when they have some time to kill on a Saturday afternoon or whenever they get the urge!

Does this mean you need to man a 24-hour support centre for your business? In some cases it might not be a bad idea. You should, at a minimum, at least provide your customers with several communication options for them to be able to reach you at a time that suits *them*, rather than you. It used to be the case that getting a response to an initial enquiry within 24 hours was enough to make your customers want to jump with glee. If you make a 21st-century customer wait 24 hours before responding to them they may want to jump off a cliff! Rapid response is the order of the day.

Old Rule: Business controls customer

New Rule #4: Customer controls business

Part of the attraction of running a business for many entrepreneurs used to be the sense of control that came along with the territory. As an entrepreneur you yearn for that feeling of being in control of your own finances, being in control of your own destiny and ultimately controlling the direction of your business “baby”. This has all changed. As an entrepreneur in modern times you no longer fully control your business - rather, it is controlled by your customers. This shift in power has been both swift and dramatic. Customers now have more power than ever before. They have the power to switch providers in a matter of seconds. They have the power to research the entire marketplace in just a few minutes. And they have the power to share their positive experiences or negative feedback with their entire network of friends and colleagues in just the click of a mouse.

When you compare this to days gone by, when many businesses had the luxury of operating in a “bubble” and the customer didn’t have the aforementioned powers, it is clear to see that those

business owners enjoyed a greater level of control. They could increase their prices without hesitation knowing that the customer had no way of researching all the competitors in the marketplace, had no ability to start liaising with hundreds of other buyers in the marketplace or any practical method of being able to reach out to all their contacts and gauge feedback about how the offer compared with others out there.

So yes – customers now control your business. This is why it's become even more important for you to attract the *ideal* customers to your business in the first place. You don't want to be controlled by tyrannical maniacs!

Old Rule: Serve inert who customers preferring inaction

New Rule #5: Serve actively-researching customers who have itchy feet and always demand the newest and the best

In days gone by, customers were like employees – they stayed in one place for very long periods of time. Alongside a lack of financial motivation for shifting suppliers – customers in days gone by did not have the *means* to conduct the necessary research to find a better supplier. Nowadays the opposite is true. The deadly combo of increasing competition, availability of information and technology-driven solutions for conducting research has seen consumers turn from sedentary animals into predatory beasts.

But it goes further than this. It wasn't that long ago that "shopping around" was viewed in a rather negative light. It was something done by "penny-pinching" people or those who had too much time on their hands and not enough money. As the years have gone by however, shopping around and price comparison have become an accepted way of life for the masses. The "price

comparison phenomenon”, fuelled inevitably by the power of the Internet, has led to a consumer uprising on an unprecedented scale. Customers no longer stay happy for long. They are always seeking newer, faster, cheaper and better. With so many “new and improved” alternatives available to customers at a simple click of a button, who can blame them?

Rather than shy away from this fact or bury your head in the sand, you need to embrace this phenomenon head-on. Many businesses are doing just that. Take a look at supermarkets – many of the products on their shelves now show not just the supermarket’s own prices for that product but also the prices of other competitors! Switched on entrepreneurs are seeking to shortcut the customer’s desire to compare prices by doing the research for them. Of course, the research conducted by the business owners is a lot more *selective* but at least they are being proactive and doing something about this trend. It’s the other entrepreneurs who just sit idly by naïvely believing that their customers are not being touted by competitors who will suffer most. Your customers are hungry for new things, for improved things and for shiny things – if they don’t get their “new fix” from you, they’ll go elsewhere. You have been warned!

Old Rule: Information is in the hands of business owners

New Rule #6: Information is in the hands of customers

Business owners used to hold all the cards, but this is no longer the case. Whilst it is true that customers and consumers now have a seemingly infinite amount of information at their fingertips, as well as an army of researching colleagues to call upon, the modern-day entrepreneur realises that they too need to become better informed. You need to know what it is your customers

know. You need to know what they are researching. You need to have as detailed a grasp of the competitor landscape as your customer inevitably will have.

It is only by doing this that you can fully understand the world in which your customer exists. If you go around blinkered, feeling that your business is the only business that your customers are interacting with, then you won't retain that customer for very long.

Old Rule: Your business model shapes which technology you adopt

New Rule #7: Technology shapes which business model you adopted

Business and technology have had an interesting relationship over the years. The old way of business was to create a strategy or business model for attracting and keeping customers and then ascertain if there were any technological solutions that might make this task easier. Technology was, to a large extent, looked upon as an afterthought or at best - an accelerator - to assist the roll out of an existing business model.

In the 21st-century times have moved on. There are entire businesses whose existence and success is purely down to a specific technology that was adopted in the first place. Technology is no longer viewed as a "helper" or an seldom-used "tool" but rather, technology is now viewed by businesses as an enabler or even the driving force behind an entire business model. Thousands of entrepreneurs have made their millions by tapping into the power of the Internet, as an example. Technology has created the business model not the other way around.

Having a website and attracting new customers online is no longer a "nice to have" or the reserve of the multinationals. It is

now a critical “must have” component for every successful business. The Internet is not a fad like many people thought it would be. But it hasn’t replaced other more traditional media channels. The fact remains that without a well-marketed, well-constructed and well-strategized online presence most businesses will struggle to survive beyond the next five years.

The 21st century customer

Exploring the seven new rules of customer service in the 21st-century also enables us to paint a very clear picture of the *21st-century customer*. This new breed of customer is sending shivers down the spines of unprepared entrepreneurs the world over. Getting to know who they are and how they operate however, is your starting point to both understanding and attracting this new breed of animal.

The 21st-century customer could be described as being fairly ruthless. They don’t take prisoners. If they are dissatisfied with a product or service they will speak out and often in a very public way. Unlike customers of old, 21st-century customers are not set in their ways or willing to accept circumstances just because they are “satisfactory”. Instead they are deal-conscious individuals with a high degree of autonomy; they are Internet savvy, research ready and always desperate to hunt out the best deal.

In today’s business world many purchase decisions have a social element behind them. Customers are seeking the input of friends, family, colleagues and even strangers through the use of forums and review sites to shape their decision-making. There is also a big move towards a more thrift-conscious buyer. Customers remain brand aware and, on the whole, continue to

prefer named and branded goods but seek, where possible, the most cost-effective ways of satisfying their needs. The 21st-century customer understands the way businesses operate and they are often wise to your marketing ploys and tactics. Embracing a policy of transparency and openness therefore reaps great rewards when dealing with 21st-century customers!

With their fingers constantly on the pulse 24-7, 21st-century customers base many of their buying decisions on social proof. Whether this be checking out ratings for a particular product on Amazon, logging onto their Facebook account to see what their network is saying about a particular service or even researching a company on Internet forums, today's customer is always armed with the right information and enjoys free and wide access to transparent research sources.

Smart businesses will embrace this new move of social decision-making into their marketing mix rather than shying away from it. The clever entrepreneur will establish their own online presence including (but not limited to) a Facebook account, a Twitter account, a website and an online mailing list.

Although you are primarily an entrepreneur, you are also a customer. Like me, I'm sure you can relate to these new trends as a customer yourself and how your own buying decisions are currently being made in the "new economy".

New Purchase Process for a New Economy

Let me tell you a story about a recent purchase I made. I needed a simple frost protection device that fits around an outside tap to prevent it from freezing during the winter. Sixty seconds research quickly revealed to me a number of alternatives all around £5

mark. Despite this being a very small value purchase I, like many other customers, was determined to buy the “right” product so I could avoid that bad feeling of thinking I’d somehow made an error in judgement.

After approximately three minutes, I had at my fingertips countless customer reviews, in-depth product analyses and personal stories from other users of all the various products in the marketplace. This was all readily available for me to see making product comparison and price comparison a total cakewalk. In the space of just a few minutes I’d gone from total novice to product expert and had at my disposal several key information elements that would shape my buying decision:

- Effectiveness of product
- Price
- Number of positive reviews
- Brand-name
- Shipping charges
- Delivery time

This incredible availability of information – freely obtainable to all customers – reveals everything to would-be purchasers and creates an entirely level playing field in the marketplace. Businesses seeking to overcharge for a similar product, seeking to charge extra for shipping where others provided it for free or those simply delivering a substandard product will all be “outed” in the public arena. Value for money and product quality will win through.

Many entrepreneurs view this new landscape from behind the sofa as if it is something to be fearful of. Whilst the 21st-century customer and their access to mind-boggling amounts of information definitely requires in-depth changes to your business model, it should be remembered that this trend enables great businesses, great products and great entrepreneurs to quickly rise to the top. Get things right and your customers will start to doing your marketing for you!

With a clear knowledge of how the 21st-century customer thinks and operates you can begin to build out and then optimise your “customer pipeline” accordingly.

What the Heck is a Customer Pipeline?!

You may not realize it, but you already have a customer pipeline in your business. Your Customer Pipeline is the accumulative experience of every contact your customers receive from your business and every interaction they have with you, your product or your business.

In a lot of cases entrepreneurs don't have the foresight to map out their customer pipeline in advance. When this occurs, the pipeline simply reflects the unplanned and unorganised nature of the entrepreneur behind the business. The pipeline will have several weak points that will cause customers to leak out of the business. There will be no sense of unity or continuity in the communication and marketing messages that the business broadcasts to the customer. The customer is likely to feel unwanted, ignored or even mistreated by the business as there will be no formal structure in place to encourage a feeling of belonging, worthiness and togetherness.

It's not sufficient to deliver value in every communication with your customers – you must also strategically plan the sequence, the timing and the delivery mechanism of each one of these communications well in advance. This means designing your customer pipeline *before* your customer comes into your business. This is similar to having a pre-prepared script or list of instructions that are acted upon at certain times and under certain circumstances. Without having this in place you are doing nothing more than “winging it”. Your Customer Pipeline needs to be a well-oiled machine that is clearly defined at every step of the way.

- What happens the moment your customer has their initial contact with you?
- What process kicks in your customer reaches out to your customer service?
- What happens when the customer has been with your business for a one-month period?
- What happens when the customer wishes to lodge a complaint?
- When and how do you communicate with your customer to sell them the next product in your customer pipeline?

These are all questions you need answers to in your business. Each interaction your business has with your customer must strengthen the bond and relationship you have and encourage them further down the pipeline rather than reversing them out of it! Your mission is to encourage every customer to progress right through the pipeline from one product purchase on to the next

product purchase. The first item that a customer buys from you is merely the beginning of your Customer Pipeline – what you sell after this point, how you communicate with your customers and how you encourage them and entice them to move through your pipeline to buy further offers and generate more sales is the backbone of your business.

Too many entrepreneurs become obsessed with the initial “front-end” sale and spend so much of their time on maximising the result of these front-end sales that they neglect their entire “back end” i.e. the other 95% of their Customer Pipeline, which happens to be where all the money is!

Here’s how a typical Customer Pipeline might look. We’ll use a chocolate-seller as an example...

A Typical Customer Pipeline (for a Chocolate Supplier)

1. Customer buys a small bar of chocolate via mail order from a magazine advertisement
2. Follow-up marketing begins to “upsell” the customer into a monthly chocolate tasting club
3. All monthly taster club members are invited to upgrade to Platinum Membership to receive extra chocolate and special discounts
4. An “Annual Chocolate Ball” is held at a prestigious London venue where members can rub shoulders with the rich and famous whilst enjoying the best chocolate in the world
5. A round-the-world chocolate tasting extravaganza is offered whereby customers get to visit cocoa plantations, see how chocolate is made and have an entire cocoa plantation planted in their name

At first, you might think that the creation of these different levels of the Customer Pipeline is somewhat random and haphazard. But let's just uncover the pricing structure behind each of these items to get to the core of this matter:

1st product: £5 (chocolate bar)

2nd product: £120 (annual chocolate tasting membership)

3rd product: £200 (annual chocolate tasting Platinum membership)

4th product: £1000 (Chocolate Ball event)

5th product: £7000 (Chocolate World Tour and Named Plantation)

The idea of the Customer Pipeline is that you introduce customers to your most affordable products first to “hook them” into your business. You then encourage and entice them to migrate and ascend through the different levels of your pipeline to get more value and better experiences from your business. You wouldn't start out by selling the £7000 round the world experience right out of the gate. But at the same time, you wouldn't just sell customers a £5 chocolate bar and leave it at that. You need the front-end products (the cheap ones) to attract people into your back-end (the “high ticket” items).

The backend of your business is where the real money is made. Foolish entrepreneurs waste their time trying to make their millions selling front-end products. It never works. You need a fully-fledged, diverse and all-encompassing back-end to cater to all the whims and desires of your customers. It then becomes your mission to move as many customers through as many levels of your pipeline as you can.

Just to emphasize – this is not done on a capitalistic exploitation basis where you’re just “ramming” people through the pipeline trying to “squeeze” cash out of them at every step of the way. It is all about *value*. If you can’t develop ways in your business to deliver highly valuable products or services then your customer pipeline will be stunted and your profitability will be limited as a result. But one thing is certain – there will always be a group of your customers who want MORE than what you are delivering. There will always be a group of your customers who will buy whatever you decide to offer them. So put your thinking hat on – create ways you can give even more value to the offers and deals you put in front of your customers. Don’t leave them wanting more – give it to them!

Once you have established a complete Customer Pipeline with various levels of product offerings at numerous price points you can really begin to put your marketing on steroids. What you’re now able to do is develop specific marketing plans and marketing messages for your customers that are dependent on which particular section of the Customer Pipeline they happen to be at. So rather than a “one size fits all” generic plan for all customers you can now tailor your approach to each individual customer and where they are in your pipeline.

For example, you can create a plan for the customer who is just entering the pipeline. This plan might involve taking your customer from the point of that first sale through to the next sale in your pipeline. What is needed to get them to that point? How can you help inspire and excite them to move to the next product in your pipeline? What education methods and messages could you use to extol the virtues of your second offer? The plan you develop for a

customer who has already progressed further down your pipeline would obviously need a different approach. They may already be aware of your business' background, awards and accreditations so perhaps using a case study of this particular product in question would be more pertinent in this case.

At the end of the day, a happy customer is a *buying* customer. By constantly trying to sell and move your customers through your pipeline you will be communicating with them on a regular basis and also be receiving feedback from them at all stages. This enables you to keep a close eye on your progress and the effectiveness of your marketing messages and methods. With a clear understanding of how the 21st Century Customer thinks, acts and buys as well as how your business strategy must reflect this, it's time to turn your attention to a critical component in retaining customers that can turn disinterested customers into raving fans. It's time to...

3.2 COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE!

Correct communication with your customer is both an art and a science. Knowing what to say to your customers to ensure that they remain part of your business and when to initiate these communications is not necessarily something that can be taught but rather something that needs to be experienced first-hand. Nevertheless, in the following section we will explore numerous strategies available to you as an entrepreneur that will enable you to build a better relationship with each of your customers and encourage more of them to stay with you for longer.

One of the key challenges you face as a business owner is to explain to your customers just how important they are to you. The

customer-business relationship can be compared to a marriage. Without clear lines of communication in both directions and regular open forums, where both sides get to air their views and opinions, the relationship can often sour or stagnate. As a business owner, you need to provide easy platforms and simple methods for your customers to reach out to you as well as developing your own outbound communication strategies for reaching out to them.

Whilst many businesses are all too keen to communicate with their customers regarding sales opportunities and new product offers, when it comes down to simply keeping customers informed or making them feel wanted it can be an entirely different story. The communication you have with your customer should not be restricted solely to marketing exercises that seek to add profits to your bottom line. Rather, you should review your relationship with your customer as something that needs to be nurtured on an ongoing basis and not solely for the exploitation of profit. There are many other reasons that developing a powerful relationship with your customer is worth doing and we'll explore these as well.

An ignored customer won't stay around for long – even if their sense of being ignored is purely perceived. Whilst many entrepreneurs are fearful about communicating in the wrong way with their customers it's actually a *failure* to communicate at all that presents the biggest danger to most business owners. Nobody likes being ignored and customers are no different – they want to be heard, they want to feel like their voice makes a difference and they want to be informed when changes are made in your business that will directly affect them. Unattended minor feelings of discontent can quickly grow into major problems that will ultimately lead to the customer taking their business elsewhere.

Fable of the Failed Communication

As a clear example about the dangers of not communicating correctly with your customers let me tell you a short story. I'd purchased a monthly software service to assist the growth of one of my Internet businesses. Despite not using it every single month, I paid out every 30 days for the service because it was a very useful tool that enabled my staff to complete an otherwise long task in a relatively short period of time. One of the main factors that attracted me to this product was its availability around the clock. Whenever my staff needed to access the product and use it they were able to do so at a moment's notice. We only used the product six or seven months out of the year but paying for the privilege of having use of the product whenever we wanted it was sufficient reason for continuing to pay on a monthly basis.

So you can imagine my disappointment and surprise when, faced with a tight deadline, one of my staff members attempted to access the service only to find that our access had been removed! After much head scratching regarding usernames and passwords we came to the conclusion that there must have been an error on the part of the service provider. We contacted the provider explaining our tight deadline and the fact we needed access to the service quickly in order to meet a deadline.

Their response was to inform us that unfortunately our previous month's payment had not gone through. For some reason the latest credit card payment they had attempted to take from us had failed. It later transpired that the credit card in question had expired and been replaced by a new one. Unfortunately, much to our disappointment and the loss in profits for the supplier, they had failed to communicate to us that the payment

had not been processed for the previous month. This simple lack of communication meant the supplier had tried to process the monthly payment on an out of date credit card and not informed us about it. The payment had failed and therefore the supplier decided to block our access to the service.

Let's consider the ways this could have been handled differently. The least advanced solution (though still an improvement on the reality!) would have been for the supplier to send out a simple communication after the credit card payment had failed that would have prompted us to enter new credit card information and keep our access to the service. Better still would have been some form of communication *prior* to the credit card expiring. This could have been triggered automatically so that two weeks before the credit card was due to expire, the supplier could have sent out a communication stating that our credit card details needed to be updated. Either of these solutions would have averted the problems we encountered and the lost business for the supplier.

But rather than implement any of these simple communication strategies, the supplier chose to block our account and wait until we communicated with *them*. This impacted on our business directly and had the knock-on effect that extra effort and resources needed to be employed to meet our deadline.

Eating into Profits...

The key to keeping customers happy and keeping them in your business is to create open channels of communication. The easier you can make it for your customers to reach out to you the better. There are many different ways you can achieve this. I ate out at a restaurant recently that invited feedback via text message! Rather

than report your praise or dissatisfaction about the meal to the employees present in this particular branch of the restaurant chain, you could actually send the owners of the entire chain a direct communication via text message.

By doing this the business behind the initiative was able to receive direct feedback from their customers “on the floor” rather than receive a potentially edited and “sanitised” view from their own employees. As a customer in the restaurant it certainly gave me a sense of control and a feeling of being valued. They wanted to hear from *me*. They wanted to know how *my* meal had been and what *my* thoughts were. Talk about making your customers feel special – but did their implementation of this strategy attain the same dizzy heights as the concept behind it?

As it happened, the meal was below par. Some of it was cold, some of it was wrong and some of it was plain inedible! So I took the business up on their invitation and sent them a text message giving them my feedback. Always on the lookout for new marketing initiatives and customer retention strategies I was intrigued as to how this business would communicate with me *after* I sent them the message.

Unfortunately, despite the various possible outcomes I had in my own mind about how they would respond, they proved me entirely wrong by not responding at all. As a result, I never returned to the restaurant.

This clearly illustrates that whilst you can go part way to establishing an open channel of communication it must remain a two-way path at all times. You must ensure that every customer communication is reciprocated with a response from your business. The opposite is also true – whenever you send your customers a

message, whether this is a sales message or otherwise - you should provide your customers with a way of replying to you about this message. You should never engage in one way communication where the customer is either forced to listen to what you have to say without the opportunity of response or a situation whereby the customer finds that their heartfelt message to you ends up in a “black hole” without any feedback from your business.

So what *should* this business have done after I sent them my feedback via text message? Think about it - they had various opportunities to win me back as a customer and maybe even turn me into a raving fan of their company if they had communicated with me in the right way. As it turns out, they didn't communicate with me at all!

One option they could have implemented is to set up an automated text message reply that stated:

*“Thank you for your feedback,
we appreciate you taking the time to let us know
how you feel. Somebody will be contacting
you shortly about your message.”*

Even a communication from the business that ended the cycle and just conveyed a simple thank you would have been better than no response at all. Or perhaps they could have called me up and offered me a discount for a future meal or a rebate on the items I was dissatisfied with. They could have stored my feedback into a central database and then also contacted the specific restaurant directly, there and then, giving the restaurant staff the

power to reimburse my meal. They could have sent me a simple text message that included a special code to get £10 off the value of my meal – all of this could have been done instantly.

But rather than *any* of these messages I was left wondering when they would communicate with me, how they would do so and what their message would say. But their message never came. This business' attempt to open up a line of communication with their customers, while laudable from one aspect, remains lamentable on another because they failed to act on the feedback they received. Rather than seizing the opportunity to keep a customer on-board, keep them happy and make them feel wanted – their one way communication “black hole” created the opposite effect. Having taken the time to send a text message and give my feedback I quit the relationship feeling ignored, undervalued and somewhat cheated. All of this could have been avoided with a simple return communication from the business.

You might feel that this analysis is too in-depth and that a single meal is no great concern. But if you consider that I may have continued to eat in the restaurant once a month for the next five years then this constitutes 60 meals' worth of business walking out of the door! With a price tag of £40 on a meal for two this means the business waved goodbye to £2400 in lost revenue from me by not having a two-way customer communication system in place. I'm guessing I'm not the only person who left their business after experiencing that their feedback fell on deaf ears. You can see how a lack of communication strategy or a poorly-implemented one can have a profound and dangerous impact on your profits!

The Blinkered Bubble Syndrome

The other important factor when creating your customer communications is to keep your messages consistent. If you say one thing on your website you should say the same thing in your brochure and say the same thing in your customer service department. Yet how many times have we seen examples of this not taking place? In businesses that have an extremely poor level of communication or no clear strategy for how to communicate with their customers you will sometimes experience an even worse example of miscommunication – the so-called “blinker bubble” syndrome.

You can relate to this scenario I’m sure – you have a problem with your mobile phone provider, for example. If you call their support line you are presented with, in the first instance, a robot. After navigating your way through a seemingly endless barrage of numerical options (none of which are relevant to your circumstances) you opt to “press zero” and speak to a human being.

You then laboriously explain your predicament, how the business has messed up and you then continue to ask the person on the other end of the line what they’re going to do to resolve your problem. The typical response (from an individual working for a business with a *poor* communication strategy) is to transfer you to somebody else with the classic heart-sinking line:

*“Sorry but I can’t help you.
This is not my department.”*

You remain on hold for another eternity and are then connected to the next individual. You repeat your sorry tale once

again whilst barely resisting the urge to remove the hairs from your head one clump at a time. You know what happens next don't you?

*"Oh I can't help you with this it's not my department.
Let me transfer your to Department A."*

The *best* case scenario at this point is that the individual transfers you to a third and new person who you then have to tell your story to again. However, this rarely happens – most of the time you get passed back to the original person you spoke to or even yet another new person from the original department.

So why does this happen? Why do many seemingly professional organisations, huge blue-chip corporations and multi-million pound businesses fail to deliver on what is a relatively straightforward and simple customer service issue?

They fail because they're suffering from the "blinker bubble" syndrome. Every individual in their company exists in a blinkered bubble – they are blinkered to any other information, experience or knowledge beyond their own narrow and specific area of responsibility. Alongside the damaging lack of customer communication, companies like this are clearly failing to communicate at all, even with their own employees! When employees don't talk to one another or share information this clearly backfires on to the customers' experience as is demonstrated by the aforementioned painful story above.

By enabling two-way and clear communication to pass between all members of staff and all customers these simple yet frustrating problems can be resolved easily. *Some* businesses have

made moves to try and rectify these issues. You may have experienced such a call yourself. The story starts out in the same way - you phone up the business with a particular problem, you speak to the first individual but they're not able to help you. You get that sinking feeling in your stomach again...

But on this occasion, the first individual offers to *personally* hand you over to the *relevant* person in the *relevant* department. They even put you on hold whilst they explain all the details of your "story" to the relevant person in that department. Whilst this first individual clearly cannot help you directly you are already feeling valued and listened to by the business. This first individual, despite lacking the relevant authority or technical know-how, is clearly demonstrating a willingness to assist you and to solve your problem.

When you speak to the next individual in the business you don't have to explain your story again – the first individual has already done this on your behalf. Whilst still time-consuming this is certainly a vast improvement on how most businesses operate their customer service departments. Think about how *you* can implement two-way communication channels in your own business to enable customers to reach out to you as well as you reach out to them.

Importance of the Feedback Loop

It's essential that you implement an all-important feedback loop in your own business. You should ask for feedback from your customer at various points throughout your customer pipeline and not just when they first come into contact with you. You don't want to fall into the trap of asking for feedback on a seem-

ingly random basis. If you jar customers out of their smooth Customer Pipeline experience and interrupt them by asking them for feedback at the wrong time or in the wrong way you risk undermining all the hard work you've put in to attract them to your business in the first place.

You need to ensure that the customer feedback method you select creates a smooth and seamless experience as the customer's progress methodically through your customer pipeline. There are, of course, better times to ask for feedback than others. A great time to ask for feedback is when a customer first joins your business. You can also ask for feedback after they have received your product or service. You could even implement a "surprise gift" strategy whereby you contact the customer a week or two after they buy the product to offer them a surprise free gift and also gauge their feedback.

The key is to make your feedback loop an *intrinsic* part of the business rather than clumsily bolting it on an afterthought. The smoother you can make the customer's entire experience, including their ability to feedback to and interact with you, the happier they will be and the longer they will remain with you. Asking for feedback must also, of course, go hand-in-hand with delivering a first-rate customer service and product. There's nothing worse than receiving a customer satisfaction survey out of the blue as the first communication from a business. It makes you feel, as a customer, that the business is only sending out a survey for their own benefit rather than for yours.

You need to ensure that the way you communicate your feedback strategy clearly outlines the benefit and potential benefits that the customer stands to gain by providing you with their

feedback. This could be as simple as giving them a free gift for their time, providing them with a free bonus or discount voucher if they give you feedback and stating that you will personally review all feedback and change your business for the better on the basis of the information you receive.

Question Time...

Surveys and questionnaires are a great way to gauge feedback and monitor your performance with your customers. Done in the right way they provide a powerful mechanism to truly understand how your customers feel about your business. You might wish to ask your customers to rate your product or service, the level of customer service they've received, or any number of other metrics you wish to monitor.

Alongside the closed questions that will give you a lot of hard data on which to monitor and ideally improve your business, you should also provide customers with an opportunity to tell you how they rate your business and what they would like to change. A simple blank box at the end of the questionnaire fulfils this purpose. When you're dealing with large volumes of responses, sifting through such information can prove time-consuming but the rewards are vast.

No amount of yes/no questions or ratings can paint a truly accurate picture of your customer's perception of your business. To get a totally accurate picture you must "climb inside the minds" of your customers and the easiest way to do this is to get them to speak their mind in their own words by telling you how they feel.

Whenever I need to gauge the opinion of customers about one of my businesses I use a simple survey. It enables me to reach

out to them very quickly, not take too much of their time and get almost instant results. I don't just send out the survey and ask them to sacrifice their personal time to help you grow my business. The survey is always linked in some way to a new initiative I may be considering or linked to an existing product or service. By doing this I'm able to give each survey respondent some type of bonus, free gift or discount in return for them completing the survey. This means my customers treat these surveys with open arms and excitement rather than with a closed mind and resentment.

How to Get Customers to Creating Your Product (and Then Sell it to Themselves!)

Whilst surveys and questionnaires are obviously a great way to monitor the performance of your business their usefulness does not stop there. On multiple occasions I've used surveys and questionnaires as powerful product-creation tools. For example, by asking my customers about their ideas and desires related to a specific topic I'm then able to create a product or service that is perfectly matched to their needs. In this case, these surveys are not being utilised to gather feedback from customers about an *existing* product but rather as a research tool to help me ascertain the best strategy for developing a *new* product.

You need to realise that interacting with customers shouldn't end at asking for product feedback or customer service issues – it goes much deeper than that. If you start to use feedback mechanisms and communication methods in the right way you can actually begin to involve your customers throughout every stage of a new product creation. This high degree of interaction

and communication during the pre-production phase of a new product gives the customer a very powerful sense of ownership of the ideas behind the product and of the product itself. Rather than operating behind closed doors and creating your product or service in isolation and then revealing it to your customers, in the hope that it meets their expectations and desires, you can instead enlist the customers' services to actually design, shape and create the product itself. Let me explain...

I've launched several products in my own businesses in exactly this way. The starting point was to issue a questionnaire to all my existing customers and prospects asking them how I could best serve their needs and wants. This enabled me to attain an overall picture of the type of products and services I might provide and get a snapshot of what my customers desired most. Once in possession of the snapshot I could then feedback the initial questionnaire results to all the customers and prospects to demonstrate that they were not alone in their thoughts and also to list the top three most-desired items or outcomes that all customers wanted.

I then announced to all the customers and prospects that I would be creating a new product to help them solve the problems that they outlined for me in the questionnaire. But it didn't stop there, because I enlisted their help and input even further. During the process of selecting the product name I put the final choice down to the public vote. My customers chose their preferred product name from a series of options. I used the same process to let my customers choose the logo and branding for the product – the customers even chose the colours of the product that they wanted to buy once I'd created it! I even requested their

feedback and input on the type of elements they wanted to see inside the product.

If the extent of your customer communication thus far has been an occasional phone call or anonymous letter then you might view my approach as otherworldly, downright scary or even impossible. But the fact is that it made creating the product a lot *easier* because the customers shaped almost every decision I needed to make and guided me towards creating the “perfect” product for them. As I’ve already mentioned, communication is of course a two-way street so whenever I asked for feedback or ideas from people I was sure to reciprocate not only by giving respondents a free gift of some kind but also by sharing the results of the questionnaire with all my customers and prospects.

This whole exercise tackled several issues simultaneously. Alongside the clear advantage of being able to create a product based solely on the desires of the customers I was also able to leverage social proof. As the creation of my product started to gather pace the interest level amongst my customers and prospects increased at the same time. My marketing had become an *event*. This was no longer the case of a business releasing a product to its own fanfare and then expecting the customers to be onside and understand why the product was so great. Because of the communication strategies I’d set up, the customers had created the product themselves and as a result they had already *sold themselves* on the product and were now witnessing high volumes of other prospects and customers becoming involved in the product creation process. This generated a very public desire for the product and clear proof, in the numbers of people involved in the pre-production phase, that this product would be in high demand when it was finally released.

If you thought that surveys and questionnaires were boring hopefully you have now seen the light! Involving your customers in every part of your business is a truly empowering experience. You no longer have to operate on your own trying to second-guess what they want. You can ask them what they want, enlist their services to create it and then give it to them. This is marketing at its most powerful. It doesn't take a genius to see that customers being treated in this way will remain far more loyal to you than customers who have ignored or unheard opinions and feedback.

By ensuring that my customers were a core and intrinsic part of the new product not only did I ensure the product's success once it hit the shelves but I also fostered a deeper relationship with every customer and nurtured a greater loyalty amongst those customers for my business. They got to know my business better, they got to know me better, I got to know them better and everybody was happy!

How to Capture Cash-Creating Case Studies and Testimonials

Alongside your ongoing communication methods with your customer you can also engage in one-off communication campaigns to attain specific information from your customers. The product creation story I've just outlined is one clear example of this. Another powerful way to tap into your customers is to ask them to provide testimonials or case studies about your business. This is becoming more common but I'm still surprised by the number of entrepreneurs I encounter who have yet to gather a collection of testimonials about their product, service or business. Contrary to popular belief, customers are often delighted to be asked for

their opinion about your business. Inviting them to provide a testimonial or case study about their experiences of working with you is an act of trust and makes them feel wanted, listened to and valued.

The key to successfully gathering a collection of testimonials is to be *persistent*. Not everybody will be open to the idea of giving a testimonial so you will need to adopt the “ask and you shall receive” philosophy. You may need to ask ten people in order to receive one testimonial. But don’t let this put you off. Each testimonial you receive can generate huge amounts of new business for you. Don’t be afraid to offer incentives for customers who do provide you with testimonials or case studies either.

It would, of course, be highly unethical to bribe customers into providing you with positive testimonials but you can offer a small value reward or free gift in return for those customers who do take the time to give you feedback of *any* kind. You don’t need to specify that this feedback must be positive in order to receive the reward – you would give the reward to anybody who takes time out of their day to provide you with a few words on their experiences of engaging with your business.

It can also prove helpful to steer your customers in the right direction before they give you a testimonial or case study. Work out in your own mind the particular components that you feel will most influence the new prospects who are considering doing business with you. You can then steer customers in the right direction towards these components and ask them to provide you with examples or proof about how your business has helped them in these particular areas. You are not putting words in their mouth by any means - you’re simply helping them to focus in

on the most important factors that will influence potential new customers.

The more information you can get from each testimonial the better. You may not end up using every single word of the testimonial in all cases but it's better to have too much glowing praise than not enough! You also want the testimonial to come across as highly personal so, where possible, attain the permission of the customer to use their full name, geographical location and even a photograph if they're happy to provide one. Once you've started to grow a collection of powerful case studies and testimonials you need to ensure that you fully leverage these to the best of your ability.

Your best testimonials should be used in *all* elements of your marketing – in your e-mail footers, on your website, in your office, on your letterheads and in as many places as possible where both existing customers and potential customers will see them. It's important to realize that testimonials and case studies are highly effective at both attracting new customers *and* keeping existing ones. People like to know they've made the right decision - feeding back to them that other customers in their position are delighted with your service gives them this peace of mind.

It's Time to Get Personal...

When you are communicating with your customers, whether this is done via surveys, questionnaires, phone calls or other methods, you need to ensure that you are accurately capturing the personal information of each individual who responds to you. Being able to personalise your marketing messages and communications will give you a distinct advantage in the marketplace. But you can only

do this if you have personal information about each of your customers with which to customise the messages. In order to get to know your customers you must start keeping personal notes about every customer you have. Depending on the size and scale of your operation you may be able to keep a record of each customer's birthday, the number of children they have, where they live, what their hobbies and interests are and what they bought from you in the past. Even larger businesses can implement this strategy with a simple data collection and database management system.

By interacting with your customers using some of the strategies we've discussed, you will quickly be able to ascertain what your customers' pain points are i.e. what triggered them to buy from you in the first place? Starting to gather this information is critical to your overall success in business. This can be done manually on a small scale or automated, to a certain extent, for larger businesses.

Take the example of Amazon. If you've ever shopped on Amazon you will know that every return visit to the site presents you with a series of recommendations based on your previous buying habits. Amazon is taking your personal information, in this case – details of what you have bought in the past, and they then feed this back to you in the form of recommended purchases for the future. This is incredibly smart and adds countless millions to Amazon's bottom line. But this isn't just something that Amazon can do – you can replicate this principle in your own business. The only thing stopping you is having the right information about your customers.

Once you have the right information you can begin customising your marketing messages. This could be something as simple as putting a person's first name in an e-mail or a direct mail

piece, tailoring a phone call to the information you have about the customer or even sending your customer a surprise free gift based on their previous purchasing behaviour. Amazon's concept of personalised recommendations is now viewed as the industry standard and many others are following suit. Apple's iTunes platform, for example, now has its own music recommendation tool called Genius which operates in the same way. It pays attention to your music buying habits and listening habits then makes recommendations to you for future subsequent purchases that are aligned to your musical preferences.

Now you've seen some examples of how other businesses implement their communication strategies to retain customers let's explore some other ways in which you can keep customers doing business with you for even longer as we take a look at...

3.3 STICKY STRATEGIES

As the name suggests, this section will help you develop strategies for your business that really help customers stick with you. We've already looked at how the way in which you communicate with your customers can help you retain them for longer, but what we'll now explore are some new ways of actually *conducting* business that will ensure your customers stick around for longer periods of time.

It's all very well looking at how to repackage an existing product or how to present a particular service in such a way as to make it irresistible over the long term but it can often be even more effective to develop a product that requires the long-term involvement of your customers in the first place.

Setting up a recurring program, or what is sometimes referred to as a residual income program, enables you to do just that. By providing a service, or access to a product, on a monthly basis you can create a greater “stickiness” and ability to retain customers. As consumers in our own right we are all familiar with these types of programs or services although we often take them for granted. We hand over the money month after month to the appropriate business owners in return for them providing us with a monthly service or access to a product. This could be a monthly mobile phone contract, a standing order for electricity or a subscription to a wine club.

Can you imagine seeing 50, 100, 500 or even 1000 new sales coming into your business at the start of every single month? How secure would that make you feel knowing that you had guaranteed money coming in every month, without fail? This is exactly what you can achieve if you introduce your own recurring payment program. By creating something of value that is delivered every single month you are able to charge a premium for giving people access to this service. As long as you give good service and the customers derive some benefit from it they will continue to pay you on a monthly basis. While this business model doesn't give you the incentive of a large lump sum payment in advance of delivering goods or services, it does give you peace of mind knowing that you're always going to receive an influx of revenue every month. Of course, it's not sufficient merely to get people into your recurring program and hope for the best. This is not a totally “fire and forget” system where you do the work one time and the rest of the income generation is hands-free. You will need to devote time and energy to both attracting new customers

into your recurring program and also ensuring their satisfaction levels are maintained in order to keep them there.

One of the most exciting factors for entrepreneurs who launch their own recurring payment program is the stability it brings to your business. A recurring payment program enables you to build up a more stable cash flow and a more predictable level of customer generation too. Many entrepreneurs run their business on a hand to mouth basis - customer attraction is done on a sporadic rather than calculated level. This means that one month you could be suffering a famine whilst the next month could be a feast! With a recurring payment program this problem is eradicated - you can easily calculate, well in advance, exactly how much revenue you will generate over the next month.

This in turn makes budgeting far easier and also means you can manage projects more effectively and balance your staff requirements with greater ease. The reason that very few business owners choose to adopt their own recurring payment program is not down to lack of awareness or understanding but rather an inability to grasp how the model can be applied to their specific business.

With that in mind let's explore some potential ideas that will get your creative juices flowing about how you could implement your own recurring payment program.

Ideas for Lucrative Recurring Payment Programs

- Workout of the Month Club
- iPhone App of the Month Club
- Craft of the Month Club
- Vitamin Sample of the Month Club

- Template of the Month Club
- Interview of the Month Club
- Candle of the Month Club
- DVD of the Month Club
- Newsletter
- Directory that customers pay to access
- Tips and strategies of the month

You can see from this simple list of examples that there really is no limit to what you could create and sell on a monthly basis. Almost all services can be broken down into some form of monthly delivery. Even if you provide a more bespoke, one-off type of service there will still be a way to transform this into a monthly recurring program. You also need to remember that this recurring program doesn't have to *replace* your existing business model – it can simply be *added* as an extra arm to your existing enterprise.

If you're a lawyer, for example, you may feel that your business is not suited to a recurring model. You primarily charge customers on an hourly basis as and when they need your services. Your customer has a specific need at a specific time and they come to you for the solution. So how could a recurring payment program be relevant in this case?

Whilst you certainly wouldn't wish to sacrifice your high-value clients or the large one-off contracts for work that you receive you could "widen your net" of clientele to attract even more customers using a monthly payment program. You could offer different levels of service that people pay for every single month and provide them with different deliverables depending on the cost.

Your basic program may enable them to send you one or two e-mails every single month and get a response to their legal questions. The next level of service may provide them with telephone access to you over a very limited amount of time each month. The higher level still may give them the privilege of meeting with you in person a maximum of six times throughout the year. Of course, you would need to be careful to ensure that you didn't over commit yourself, give your time away too cheaply or promise things you could not deliver.

How to Start Selling Information (Rather Than Trading Time for Money)

One of the easiest ways to introduce a recurring payment program into your business is to sell *information*. Trading time for money or selling a physical product to your customers may not always be a relevant recurring payment option for your business. In this case why not explore the possibility of capturing the specialist knowledge you have developed about your business. If you're a plumber you could sell a training program aimed at DIY enthusiasts or would-be plumbers. If you're a florist you could sell a training program about home flower arranging, this needn't compete with the product you are offering because your customers would be required to buy your product in order to complete the steps that you outline in the training. The beauty of it is that you only have to create this program *one time* and you can then sell it over and over again. You would no longer be trading time for money.

One way of encouraging customers to join your continuity program so they pay you on a recurring basis every single month

is to present them with the alternative option of *not* doing so. Take the example of a graphic design service I encountered recently. Graphic design is not one of my skills by any stretch of the imagination so when I need a graphic design element created for a new product or project I always turn to an expert.

This entails having to communicate my vision to the designer in great detail as well as having to convey my expectations and desires for the finished artwork. After several iterations and edits, not to mention all the communication back and forth with the designer, the final product is eventually created. This takes a lot of time, resources and effort from both parties. As a result, I find this entire process a little frustrating and the amount of time required for the designer to create final image obviously impacts accordingly on the overall cost.

Compare this to the online service I found recently where you can actually use some of your own images, help shape the overall design, select from ready-made professionally created design components and then have the final image completed and perfected by a design expert. Not only does this make the design process a lot easier (because you don't need to communicate complex concepts to a designer) it also makes the entire process a lot quicker, a lot cheaper and a lot more fun! It's no surprise then, that the inventors of the service make it available on a monthly recurring payment basis.

You are still able to buy a single graphic design from this company on a one-off basis rather than have to subscribe to their monthly service. But they've priced this offer in a very intelligent way - by the time you have purchased two graphic designs on a one-off basis you could have instead purchased an entire month's

worth of their service. By doing this they clearly illustrate the great value that their monthly service offers and at the same time they still remain open to customers who prefer to do business with them on an ad hoc basis.

As you can see, developing your own continuity program, where you get paid by customers month after month, is not restricted to one particular industry or one type of business model. It can be applied to physical products, service industries and information-selling businesses too. It's your mission to think of ways in which *you* can begin to charge your customers every month. Is there an add-on service that you can provide to deliver even more value to your customers than you currently already do? Perhaps you could split down a large lump sum payment for your product into smaller monthly amounts to make your offer more palatable to the customers and to create more cash flow in your business?

Boost Your Business With “Micro Cash”

Another option that is becoming increasingly popular for entrepreneurs looking to develop a recurring payment program is to engage in “micro continuity”. This is similar to the aforementioned approach except the type of products delivered and the prices charged are on a much smaller scale. An example of a micro continuity program is an informational service where you receive access to a database of knowledge or technical know-how for a couple of pounds per month. The idea behind a micro continuity program is that the time and effort required by the business owner for the upkeep of the program is relatively minimal and as a result the cost for a customer to access the service is fairly minimal also.

Having a micro continuity program also helps combat one of the inherent problems with continuity programs. One of the risks you face as an entrepreneur utilising a recurring income program is that customers cancel their payments. The big benefit of a micro continuity program is that the payments are so small many consumers remain on board and don't think too much or question too intensely their continuation in the program. When reviewing their credit card statements customers are far less likely to raise their eyebrows over a £1 or £2 charge as opposed to a recurring monthly payment of £200 or £300. By the same token however, businesses that do operate a micro continuity program are constantly chasing new business because the small price requires an extremely high volume of customers to generate a significant return for their business.

Pay Now, Buy Later?!

Another way that you can encourage customers to stick with your business for longer is to use pre-orders and advanced selling. The simple concept behind these techniques is that you get "buy in" from your customers *before* they receive a product or service. Unlike a recurring payment program or a micro continuity program, using pre-orders and advanced selling enables you to receive a large lump sum payment upfront. Whilst, in cash flow terms, this may not be as reliable and predictable as a continuity program, it can produce steady streams of revenue for your business providing you have the right systems in place.

Like anything in business - if you try to make unannounced wholesale changes then your customers are likely to resist. If you have an existing payment system already in place for a signifi-

cant period of time then you may find that trying to change this over to a “pay upfront” model meets with a high degree of reluctance from your customers. This doesn’t mean it’s impossible but sometimes it can be more advantageous to introduce an upfront payment strategy on a new product or service rather than existing one.

When asking your customers to pay for something before they receive it the sales challenge you face is even greater than usual. It’s of paramount importance that you clearly *incentivise* customers to make their purchase in advance. Perhaps you can offer a discount which they get to “lock in” at a special rate by buying in advance. Or perhaps you could give them access to the product itself before it is available to the public at large? You may decide that when the product is released to the public it will be sold as an annual package for £100 a month (£1200 for the year) but for those customers who pay you for an entire year in advance you will give them the product for just £1000 giving them a £200 discount. This locks in a large amount of revenue for your business in advance enabling you to budget more easily as the year progresses.

If the product or service you’re providing requires ongoing development, regular staff costs or continual production costs then the money you receive in advance from the customers can also be put towards these outlays. Although using this payment-in-advance discount strategy could be viewed as “lost profit” due to the saving you are giving the customer, the opposite case can be argued. Wouldn’t you rather have £1000 in your bank account as opposed to the *possibility* of receiving 12 instalments of £100 over the next year? Whilst your customers may *say* they

are willing and able to pay you every month for the next year the *reality* may turn out differently. Providing them with an advance purchase discount means you can take the vast majority of the money upfront and not have to worry about receiving each of the monthly payments.

Operating in this way means you are guaranteed to have better customer retention and more involvement with those customers because they've paid for something in advance and will now be expecting it to be delivered as the year progresses. Whilst this does put a greater onus and weight of responsibility on your shoulders this is a good thing. It will encourage you to continue fostering a closer relationship with your customers as well as incentivising them to progress further down your "Customer Pipeline" and buy more products and services from you.

The golden rule here is to offer greater value in your business across the board. If customers perceive an amount of risk by engaging with you, or the offer you make to them is not irresistible, they will be far less likely to want to part with the full investment in advance. Your request for upfront payment will be met with the dreaded "I'd prefer to suck it and see" response. The offers you present to your customers must be so irresistible that they cannot afford to walk away from the advance payment incentives you present them with.

By using many of the strategies we've already outlined in this book such as scarcity, social proof, authority, guarantees and bonuses you are now in a powerful and unique position - you have available at your disposal an incredible arsenal of tools and techniques to craft the most irresistible offers for your customers. You no longer have to settle for having your customers dictate their

payment terms to you. By over-delivering on value and using the sales strategies you've discovered in this book you will be able to engage with your customers on *your* terms rather than on theirs.

The Time to Act is NOW!

One of the critical factors in selling an advance payment program to your customers is to emphasise the time-limited nature of the offer. Rather than having an advance payment option available at all times you could restrict its availability based on the time of year. For example, many businesses experience a downturn in trade during January – hence the reason you see so many “January sales”. You could jump on this bandwagon too by presenting your customers with the opportunity to lock in a special year-long discount with your business by paying for your services in advance in January. You could set a hard deadline of a specific date and time in January after which the offer would no longer be available. Alongside demonstrating the value of your product, providing customers with a guarantee, educating them as to the big reasons why they need your product you can also turn your marketing for this advance payment program into an “event” - it will produce dramatic results for you.

You could have a countdown for your customers that counts down the days after which the offer is no longer available. You can even host a prelaunch party and invite your best customers and prospects to come along, enjoy free food and drink and hopefully take advantage of your annual advance payment plan. Any customers that do come on board and pay in advance for an entire year could then join your “VIP list”. You could develop a series of additional rewards, incentives and discounts that all VIP

members receive. This would create a real sense of belonging and ownership amongst your customers whilst simultaneously conveying a high level of exclusivity and scarcity.

As we discussed in the previous section, having a great offer or a great deal for customers is not enough - you must also communicate it to them in the right way. In many cases the packaging you wrap around the product is almost as important as the contents of the product itself. Think about how you could introduce your own advance payment program, what it might contain and the key benefits it provides the customer. Think about how you might launch the program, what you might charge for the program and how you can communicate it to your customers.

In an ideal world you might argue that the best business model would be a combination of a recurring payment program and a large lump sum payment and you'd be right! So why not adopt this business model for your enterprise? There really is nothing stopping you from doing this. As long as you have high-value products and services, utilise the sales strategies and customer acquisition techniques we've uncovered in this book and you continue to communicate openly and transparently with your customers the sky really is the limit.

Retaining Customers Using Radical "Refund Reducers"

Whether you're operating a continuity programme or providing your product in a more standard way you must do everything you can to minimise the number of customers that cancel their service or refund from you. We are fortunate to live in a society where we all, as consumers, have an ever-improving level of protection

from law, the government and independent consumer bodies. It's important to you as an entrepreneur, however, that you avoid being taken advantage of in this environment of consumer rights.

If people are genuinely dissatisfied with your service then they are of course well within their rights to demand their money back providing such action meets with your terms and conditions. However, this doesn't mean you should roll over and give out refunds left right and centre. Don't worry - I'm not suggesting that you *avoid* giving out refunds but rather that you do everything you can to keep those customers with your business using ethical and legitimate means.

What we're talking about here is "refund reducers". This is a collection of strategies that you can use to convince your customers to stick around rather than abandon ship. When you bear in mind how much money, time and effort you have spent to attract each customer to your business doesn't it make sense to invest almost as much energy in ensuring they remain with you? It surely does! Yet I'm constantly surprised at the number of entrepreneurs who let dissatisfied customers fall through their fingers and out of their business without a fight.

To be clear, we are not talking about asking customers to do something against their will. Nor does this involve outright refusal of a refund or cancellation. Rather, you need to use everything in your power to state the case clearly and concisely that your customer's best interests are to remain with your business. So let's dive into some of these techniques...

The first technique is relatively simple. It's *listening*. How many times have you phoned a customer service line in a state of extreme frustration or even anger only for the situation to be im-

mediately diffused by a friendly, helpful and attentive listener on the other end of the phone? Much of a customer's dissatisfaction, although originating from a very specific cause, can be exacerbated by their feeling of not being listened to. If the customer feels ignored or feels that their complaint is falling on deaf ears then their frustration level and willingness to leave your business will grow exponentially very rapidly.

It's your job to nip this in the bud. By listening to the danger signs and heading them off at the pass you can prevent simple customer complaints from escalating into full-blown cancellations and refund requests. Rather than hiding away from your customers in the hope that everything is going well, you need to put your head above the parapet and provide them with ways to tell you when things are *not* going well. Be brave and you will be rewarded for doing so.

If you find that despite your attempts to listen carefully to the customer and pay attention to the needs, they *still* wish to refund on your product or leave your business then you can begin to employ the tactic of incentives. Using incentives to encourage customers to remain with you, rather than refund your product or cancel your service, is sometimes referred to as using "ethical bribes". Done in the right way this can be a highly effective strategy to keep people on board. But done in the wrong way and you risk tipping the customer over the edge and encouraging them to leave your business even quicker than they were planning to!

You need to be fully transparent about the fact you are offering them an incentive in order to remain a customer of yours. Don't try to dress it up as something it isn't. If the customer contacts you

seeking to cancel a monthly service why not offer to give them an extra month for free? You could also use the incentive of a reduced payment plan or a payment holiday. Many “DVD of the month” clubs now use this policy in an attempt to prevent customers from leaving them. This way the customer gets to pause their payments and their access to the service temporarily until such time that they wish to restart it. Whilst there is admittedly a small chance that a refunding or cancelling customer may at some point return to your business, using this “pausing” strategy is a far more effective way to ensure you receive future payments from them.

You could also use a series of bonuses to encourage your customers to remain with you. The best way to ensure that your refund-reducing strategy is implemented effectively is to have a clear communication channel for your customers to air their grievances and then present your “ethical bribes” and incentives to keep them on board.

It can also help to re-emphasise the main benefits of your product and service alongside the corresponding “pain points” and frustrations of no longer being a customer. This is where you need to look back on how you crafted your offer in the first place - recall the trigger points that your customers had when making a buying decision and also what you feel are the most persuasive factors behind your offer. You are essentially re-selling your product to your customer anew. You need to remind them of *why* they purchased the product in the first place, what you have delivered to them so far and what they stand to gain by continuing their membership or access to your service plus what they stand to lose by leaving you.

People like to feel congruent and that they are living in a way

that is consistent with their beliefs. By reminding the customers of their reasons for buying from you in the first place you are also making them question their own integrity for wishing to reverse this decision. If they are seeking to cancel your product or service they are, by definition, admitting to themselves that they have made a mistake. It's your job to encourage them over to the other side of the fence where they will have no internal conflict and their immediate actions will continue to reflect the initial decision they made.

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Michael Cheney graduated from University with a degree in Business & German and went on to work for ExxonMobil – his first and *last* ever “job”. Quickly disillusioned with “9 to 5 cubicle hell”, and the limitations placed on his natural entrepreneurial spirit, Michael founded his own business consultancy and subsequently the Entrepreneurs’ Advice Bureau.

Michael has developed his own unique blueprint for creating rapid and dramatic profits that saw his business attain meteoric success in record time. He’s applied the blueprint many times over to generate **millions of pounds with his businesses**.

News of Michael’s success and his unique blueprint spread fast - he was invited to conduct television interviews, radio interviews and his businesses have been featured in countless publications worldwide including NBC television, The Times, The Independent, The Guardian and Reader’s Digest. He is also regularly invited to be keynote speaker at sold-out events across the globe. The world beat a path to Michael’s door desperate to know the secrets to his success and how he was rocketed from a day job to making millions of pounds in just a few short years.

Michael now has a loyal following of 100,000+ entrepreneurs and business owners who eagerly anticipate every communication and lesson he shares with them.

When he's not helping entrepreneurs grow their businesses Michael is a keen cyclist, enjoys playing the guitar and loves spending time in the great outdoors with his wife Laura and their dog Max. Michael is living proof that the entrepreneurial dream can be a reality for anyone - he works when he wants, takes several holidays a year and has attained financial freedom enabling him to focus on helping others, both in business and in his local community.

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- ✓ How to seize control of your business, hand-pick the customers you *want* and finally become the master of your own destiny

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Cheney is the millionaire Founder of the Entrepreneurs' Advice Bureau and creator of a unique blueprint for creating rapid and dramatic profits that he has personally used to make millions and now teaches to other entrepreneurs.

Michael and his businesses have been featured in countless publications worldwide including NBC television, The Times, The Independent, The Telegraph, Business 2.0, The Guardian and Reader's Digest. He is also regularly invited to be a keynote speaker at sold-out events across the globe and has a loyal following of over 100,000 entrepreneurs and business owners who eagerly anticipate every communication and lesson he shares with them. He can be contacted at EntrepreneursAdviceBureau.org

ISBN 978-1-4709-4057-7



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