

Monthly Update | February 2019

Welcome to our monthly business newsletter designed to help you concentrate on working more “ON” your business, rather than “IN” it. Please remember our skills and experience can provide you with help and support, give you a strong shoulder to lean on and someone on your side, to bounce ideas off.

Best wishes

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Managing in Uncertain Times

Due to Brexit, 2019 looks set to be a year filled with uncertainty for businesses.

The future is always unknown but this year some particularly choppy waters due to market uncertainty and global political turmoil will need to be navigated and managed.

Focus on what you can control

As a leader you can always control your response, attitude, behaviour, actions and words. You can choose to be proactive and inquisitive rather than paralysed. In times of uncertainty, the best leaders and managers step up and embrace their authority. When times are uncertain, your team wants you to lead the way. Bring your team with you on the journey, ask them for their opinion, include them in your planning conversations and challenge them to come up with new solutions.

Cash is king

In uncertain times, the old adage that “cash is king” carries even more weight. Cash is the lifeblood of your business and poor cash flow management kills businesses during tough economic times. Market volatility also creates opportunities. If you have cash or credit available to you take advantage of these opportunities when they present themselves, you may be able to move quickly and move your business forward. As such, good cash flow management can allow you to cash in.



Embrace change and adapt

As your particular market changes, there will be opportunities for you to adapt. For example, if your customers have less budget to spend on buying products and services in your sector, it might be an opportunity for you to introduce a lower priced “value offering.” You could even go one step further and change your pricing model. For example, you could move customers to monthly retainers rather than charging a one-off annual fee.

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Diversify

If you depend on one big customer to keep your business going, you should consider how to diversify your customer base. Sometimes even giant businesses fail during tough times. If your biggest customer goes out of business, you don't want to be collateral damage. Just like in investing, the key is to have a diversified portfolio. Now could be a good time to look at trying to win some new customers in order to make your business more resilient.

Things to stop doing in 2019

Many of us will have made a new year's resolution for 2019. Perhaps we want to learn a new language, get in shape or spend more time with our family. The start of a new year is also a good time to decide what you're not going to do in the office this year.

Stop trying to get your inbox to zero

The entire concept of getting your inbox to zero unread messages assumes that email is your top priority and therefore you should strive to do it perfectly.



Email is only a tool. Your top priority should be creating and executing your business objectives, looking after your customers and growing profitability.

When it comes to managing your email, you should scan through your inbox a few times a day, pick out the priority emails and deal with those as soon as you have time to do so. It can be helpful to schedule "email time" in the morning and afternoon in order to keep your day free to deal with your meetings and other priorities.

Stop fighting your internal clock

Some people are early birds and others are night owls. Rather than fight with your body, work with it. If you are more productive in the morning, get up early and start work. Equally, if you are a night owl, then start late and finish late. You don't need to be seen to stay late and work all night in the office. If you want to be really successful, focus on getting things done rather than being seen to work long hours.

Stop managing and start leading

Managers focus on doing things right. That has its place in any business. However, if you want to be a business leader, then stop managing and start leading. Leaders focus on doing the right things, and then involve the managers in order to ensure those things are done properly.

Stop snacking on unhealthy things in the office

Snacking on sugary treats will give you sugar highs and lows throughout the day and won't do much for your health. Replace cakes and sugary biscuits with fruit, nuts and healthy snacks like yoghurt.

If you can reduce your sugar intake you can kiss goodbye to the "3 o'clock slump." Remember - a healthy body goes hand in hand with a healthy mind. Healthy minds tend to be the most successful and productive minds.

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Does money really motivate employees?

We all work to get paid but is money alone enough to motivate your employees?

Regardless of the type of business you run, you need to pay your employees fairly and in line with your competitors. If you don't pay your people in line with the market, it can act as a de-motivator. However, once your pay scales are in line with industry norms, money alone isn't really enough to keep your employees performing at a high level.

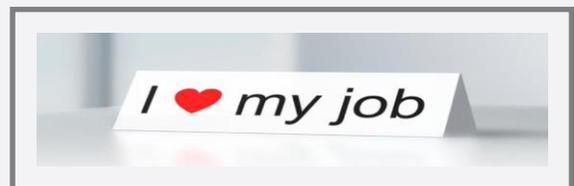
Paying in line with the market tends to achieve a rather neutral position, where there is no dissatisfaction among your employees but this does not translate into them being more motivated.

Various studies have shown that employees place a high value on freedom. They value flexible working, the opportunity to work from home when they want to and they want to work for businesses that invest in the technology that allows them to do this.



Business is not just 9 to 5 anymore - it's 24/7. So why should your employees be tied to a 9 to 5 work day? Businesses can benefit from this flexibility - projects led by agile workers tend to be completed

quicker. Progress doesn't just happen between 9am and 5pm. When the pressure is on, your flexible employees will stay late and get the job done. Conversely when things are quiet, they want the flexibility to go to the gym or do the school run. Modern professionals may well choose to work for an employer that has embraced agile working over and above a business that pays a little bit higher than market rate but doesn't offer flexible working.



Assuming your company's pay is in line with the market, your employees will be focused on job satisfaction. Again, various research studies have shown that high performing employees are motivated by purpose. They want to understand how their work contributes to the overall success of the business.

They also want to get involved in projects and take responsibility for delivering their objectives. If you give people the opportunity to work on meaningful projects in a way that makes them feel they are contributing to the success of the business, they will be more motivated. As far as recruitment is concerned, we are in the midst of a war for talent. The best people will stay with the businesses that offer them job satisfaction.

So, does money really motivate employees? Yes and no. There is an expectation that they should be paid in line with the market. Beyond that, they will focus on job satisfaction, flexibility and how engaged they feel with the whole ethos of the company.