

**SMALL BUSINESS SOLUTIONS**  
**THE NEW YORK ENTERPRISE**  
**REPORT**<sup>®</sup>

JANUARY 2009  
NYREPORT.COM  
\$6.95

**The Best Damn  
Readers'  
Tips...  
Period!**

**Annual  
Success Guide  
Inside**

**SETH GODIN:** Traditional  
Marketing is Dead

**ALAN PATRICOFF:** What  
Makes a Good Idea a  
Great Company

# SUCCESS GUIDE

**While in the midst of difficult economic times, it can be hard to find opportunities for your business – but they are out there. Take direction from some who have discovered ways to find success – our readers.**

Sure, times are tough. But there are businesses that thrived in 2008. To kick off the new year, we've asked your peers about their routes to success. Among the many ideas we received, we selected the best of the best to share with you in the areas of sales, marketing, human resources and more. Maybe some of the following tips can help you improve your own business – but they are out there. Take direction from some who have discovered ways to find success – our readers.



## My best sales tip is . . .

Not letting up despite your ups and downs in mood, circumstance or results. Set a minimum threshold for the number of calls/contacts you'll make per week, and hit or exceed that threshold every week. Include follow-ups with people whom you couldn't reach earlier and those who said, "Call back in two weeks." Persistence and consistency will pay off in the long haul.

—Chuck Graziano, president, *The Alternative Board*, Bergen County, N.J.

Know your prospective client, know the competitive landscape in which they operate and start each sales meeting with questions that will elicit needs that your firm can address.

—RuthAnne Dreisbach, president, *Dreisbach Design, Inc.*, New York City

Don't be afraid to ask for the order or to discuss the cost or price of the investment.

—Calvin Beatty, managing principal, *Soundview Partners, LLC*, Iselin, N.J.

At a time when everyone is worried about the cost of products and services, I advise NOT to slash prices. This only makes your original price appear to have been too high.

—Alan Siege, owner, *Small Business Management Consulting*, Park Slope, Brooklyn

Be a resource for your prospect or client. If you don't have the right product or fit, find someone who does. If you can help a prospect or client with a particular need, even one that may be outside of your normal course of business, that prospect or client will come to rely on you for other help. By being a resource, you are opening the door for other phone calls and discussions, and developing a closer relationship as a result. Over time, you may develop some business from the relationship.

—Martha Stark, senior vice president, *Signature Bank*, New York City and Garden City, N.Y.

Be smart, not greedy. Don't try to retire off one client. Instead, build a foundation on which you'll achieve your net revenue objectives.

—Sean C. O'Rourke, principal, *Syzygy 3, Inc.*, New York City

Do specific things to be at your personal best — specifically, keep yourself in a positive space so you can recognize the opportunities hidden in this downturn economy and go after them.

—Norma V. Rosenberg, CEO coach and business advisor, *NVR Consulting*, New York City

Be sure to respect the client's time. Google and research clients and prospects before you visit them. Listen intensively to what they tell you, then speak to their needs. Let the client see that you are an expert in their business.

—Dinaldo Khanii, president, *Leisure Management Inc.*, Riverdale, N.Y.

## My sure-fire sales close is . . .

Flexibility in product — we offer the client the ability to do a sample or taste test. Then we get our clients' feedback without taking on a big commitment. Clients are usually willing to choose us because of that.

—Fran Biderman-Gross, CEO and founder, *Advantages*, Queens, N.Y.

I tend to tell prospects that it is OK if they don't want our service — almost like I take the offer away. As a result, they usually ask me to buy my service.

—Jennifer Walzer, CEO, *Backup My Info!*, New York City

I set expectations immediately and I take the pressure off the interaction by telling prospects that I'm taking off my sales hat and we're having a conversation, not a sales meeting. I want to know about them and let them know about me. I tell them that at the end of the meeting, I'll ask them if they'd like to discuss moving forward and that it's OK to say no. My candor builds a relationship and disarms prospects. If they've been properly pre-qualified I usually close the sale.

—Deb Dib, CEO brand and career strategist, *Executive Power Brand*, Metro New York

Hand-deliver all contract agreements to review service deliverables, terms and conditions, and pricing. Leave that meeting with a set date and time for a follow-up conversation to close.

—Chris Zawacki, partner, *Greenhouse IT*, New York City

## My best marketing tip is . . .

Be real; check that your own brand really reflects who you are and reflects your energy, attitudes, intention, desire, enthusiasm and passion.

—Mary van de Wiel, founder, brand analyst, New York City

In a slow economy you have to continue marketing more than ever, but you don't need to reinvent the wheel. Go back to the days when you were just starting your business and you didn't have a big marketing budget. What did you do then to get your business to this point?

—Nicole McCullum, founder, *Captivate Designs*, New York City

Tell customers how busy you are and how other companies are using your product or service to get new business or make their problems go away. This makes potential customers feel like they need you as well.

—Andrea Wagner, president, *Wagner Web Designs, Inc.*, Yorktown Heights, N.Y.

Know the key publications and websites read by your prospective clients and advertise in them. Also, target your own newsletters to the industry where you anticipate having the most clients and provide thought leadership in any articles you write.

—RuthAnne Dreisbach, president, *Dreisbach Design, Inc.*, New York City

## My killer interview question is . . .

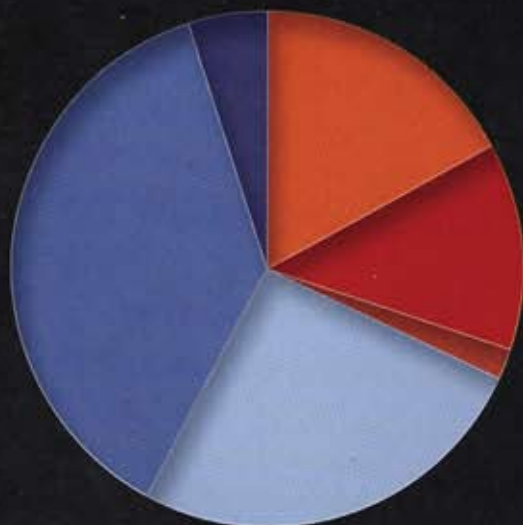
Opening question: "After our initial phone conversation and your subsequent review of our website, what is your understanding of our current open position and how is your past work experience relevant?" Closing question: "We're interviewing a number of candidates for this position; please give me a couple of compelling reasons to hire you." The answers to both questions should align.

—Chris Zawacki, partner, Greenhouse IT, New York City

"What was your most brilliant failure?" The person answering the question needs to describe a situation or an event and provide context or background. What they choose to describe and how they describe it can provide you with information about a person's mental model, including their attitude about risk and their ability to learn from experience. What do they consider a "failure"? Ideally, they will have had an experience with a "brilliant failure" that they were able to learn from and channel into success. If they get that "deer in the headlights" look on their face, I know to take a pass.

—Maria C. Seddio, president, CorpTalk LLC, Westfield, N.J.

## Which of the following options best describes your definition of success?



"Tell me your life story in 90 seconds. Ready, go." The answer allows me to assess organizational skills, poise, salesmanship, etc.

—David Deutsch, president, David N. Deutsch & Company LLC, New York City

## My best tip for motivating and retaining employees is . . .

Build your employee compensation plan around incentives. Employees who clearly see what's in it for them when the company is successful will be much more motivated to go the extra mile.

—Chuck Graziano, president, The Alternative Board Bergen County, N.J.

Create a nurturing environment so that employees feel they have a stake in the success of the company. One of the things we do to create a nurturing environment is offer 100% free training in any discipline our employees wish to explore and free certification exams for technical disciplines. We also do a lot of "fun stuff" like converting our conference room to a game room after hours for videogame competitions, including cooperative games like Rock Band and competitive combat games like Call of Duty. Every Wednesday, we have "Super Wednesdays," a night of dinner, drinks and general team building and training.

—John Kirsch, director of business development, Valiant Technology, New York City

Give employees the freedom to speak out about how things get done. Adopt their ideas when it makes sense and give them public recognition when their ideas make a positive difference. This feeds the desire for others in the company to get creative.

—Dawn M. Fotopulos, principal, Small Business How 2, New York City

Create visibility at every level. Employees at every level should know their responsibilities are critical pieces to the puzzle of the success that the company strives for. When you have an employee who changes his mentality from "employee" to "owner," it shows that he knows that what he is doing counts, and the accountability that comes with that is immeasurable.

—Deidre Siegel, president and CEO, PEAR Staffing, Woodbury, N.Y.

## The employee whose success surprised me the most was . . .

When a key employee's job was eliminated due to organizational changes we made, he was given the opportunity to create his own job in the new environment. He just took the bull by the horns and taught himself what he needed to learn and is delivering amazing results on projects he gets involved with. Just as this employee had been productive, creative and a positive impact to our bottom line before the restructuring, he also demonstrated loyalty to the organization and to me as an owner. Loyalty is a two-way street — when you hire the right person, if the job goes away, the person need not. I learned to trust my gut that I had in fact made a great hire seven years ago, and even though this young man didn't have the résumé

we need now, he has the attitude, the ability and the desire to learn and was as excited about working to grow the business as any of us.

—Mardy Sitzer, president, Bumblebee Design & Marketing LLC, New York City

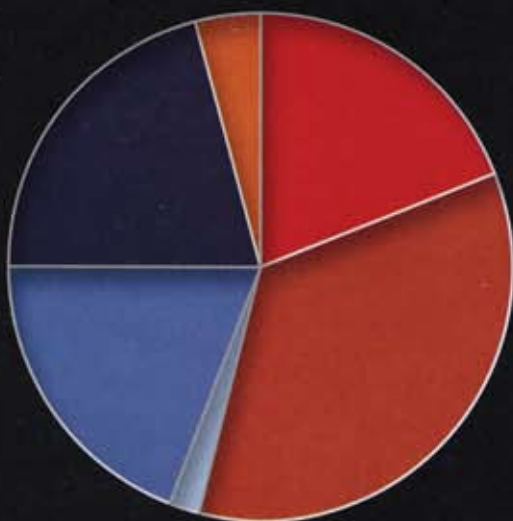
We had a young technician who was good at what he did and great with the clients but terrible with upper management and authority in general. This employee had issues that he had to work out. He was self-destructive, but he finally grew up and took control of himself and eventually his job. We fought, then we talked and worked on the conflict. He realized how good he was at interacting with clients and how much he enjoyed doing that type of work. He became a shining star in the firm and quickly rose above his peers. Today he's the head of our most successful group, running a team of his own. Investing the time and energy into this "trouble" employee really paid off.

—Jeffrey Deeken, head of operations, Mightier Ltd., New York City

I participated in a contest hosted by *USA Today*. The contestant who won followed me around to see a day in the life of an entrepreneur. He then interned here for two years. He has since been hired and now manages the interns, among many things.

—David Schnurman, president, Lawline.com, New York City

## What gives you an edge over the competition?



19% Innovation

35% Customer service

2% Pricing

19% Flexibility

21% Industry knowledge

4% Green business practices

## The technology that helped me increase revenue or decrease costs was...

Since we went virtual, we have saved on overhead that really wasn't critical to our operation. Voice Over Internet Protocol (a service that converts voice into a digital signal that travels over the Internet), IM (which allows employees to chat in real time online), virtual servers and online project tracking have actually helped us to be more productive and more collaborative on all our projects.

—Mardy Sitzer, president, Bumblebee Design & Marketing LLC, New York City

Hiring a virtual assistant freed me up to build the business. For the past year, being allergic to overhead, I've operated virtually. While I still have a part time bookkeeper, I miss the convenience of having staff assistants and interns to keep administrative and marketing projects moving along. Outsourcing and delegating essential back-office projects allows me to manage my time, freeing me up for client work and new business development. I've hired a VA to assist me in technology-related tasks because he can do them faster and more easily than I can. One project, for example, is merging several data entry points into one database (my Palm, Now Contact database and business card cache collected over the past 2 years).

—Anna Lieber, CEO and president, Lieber Brewster, Inc., New York City

My BlackBerry has freed me from having to constantly check e-mail at my computer. I am able to delegate to other staff members and get jobs done faster, before I get back to the office.

—Andrea Wagner, president, Wagner Web Designs, Inc., Yorktown Heights, N.Y.

We implemented the use of Authorize for processing credit cards versus old-school terminals. The program associated with it not only reduced our collection (AR) time but allows us to charge many cards at one time, all while verifying and expediting the approval process. In other words, it saves us 75% of the time we used to spend getting approvals on credit cards before we charge them.

—Lenny Servedio, general manager, Metropolitan Exposition Services, Inc., Moonachie, N.J.

I use LinkedIn as an invaluable means of networking, and this has increased revenue because I was able to gain new clientele.

—Wendy Oliveras, founder and CEO, Oliveras & Company, Inc., Jersey City, N.J.

Being able to work remotely with my assistants, through our networked system and daily electronic communication, about ongoing tasks has enabled me to focus more time on prospects and clients, and this has significantly increased my revenues.

—Norma V. Rosenberg, CEO coach and business advisor, NVR Consulting, New York City

## The smartest decision I made in 2008 was . . .

I eliminated services that were cumbersome and no longer profitable and focused on what our core business really is about. When we started 15 years ago, the ratio of print media to Web was the reverse of what it is today. We provided a lot of production services to accommodate direct mail and other print and fulfillment requirements for our clients. As things began to move toward more digital and less print, it no longer paid for us to maintain the equipment and staff to support production, which was eroding our profitability. As the numbers began to tell the story, we had to cut and move on. Interestingly enough, the cuts made room for us to grow faster in the other departments.

—Mardy Sitzer, president, *Bumblebee Design & Marketing LLC, New York City*

I refocused the company's marketing strategy when the financial services sector began to falter. My business makes women's custom suits, so I switched from targeting clients by industry sector and profession to targeting by body type, such as petite and tall.

—Dawn Verbrigghe, founder and CEO, *Moi-Même Attire, New York City*

I changed the focus of my business to concentrate on what I know best — representing employees in litigation against their employers. Initially, my company was going to function as a legal and HR department, offering various services that I knew little about such as payroll, health care administration, etc. But by concentrating on what I do best, consulting businesses on how to avoid the risk of an employee lawsuit from the perspective of an employee's attorney, I have obtained more clients and the business is thriving.

—Matthew R. Grabell, CEO, *Employee Relations Solutions, Inc. Hackensack, N.J.*

I leveraged my current corporate event planning services into a new market segment within my industry — social events such as weddings. I increased awareness of the company and its new market segment through a multi-pronged marketing approach including writing articles, direct mail, expanded networking, a brand-new website and Web-based newsletters.

—Sandra Placide, president, *Illumination Marketing + Events, LLC., New York City*

I decided to not compete on price and I named my price with confidence, rather than being scared that my price may be too high and I may lose the customer.

—Nicole McCullum, founder, *Captivate Designs, New York City*

I've maintained and enhanced marketing efforts during the downturn. I've continued running and participating in business and legal networking groups, making presentations at public speaking opportunities, serving on not-for-profit boards of direc-

tors and other activities. I've also done a little bit of advertising, taken a few people out for a meal and generally tried to invest wisely rather than having a knee-jerk reaction of pulling back on the funds. In my practice, as in many businesses, there is a relatively lengthy period between the marketing effort and the result. My marketing efforts typically take months or years to come to fruition. Therefore, if I allow them to abate during a downturn, I know I'll suffer the repercussions of the decrease in marketing efforts for quite a while to come.

—David Abeshouse, principal, *Law Office of David Abeshouse, Uniondale, N.Y.*

I gave up a lot of control of certain areas of my business. In the beginning of 2008, I finally realized that I needed to get out of the day-to-day technology operations of our business and let my engineers make decisions. By providing them with an overall direction and letting them handle all of the decisions to get us there, we were able to accomplish amazing things. I also had more time to work on my business vs. working in the business. It was a very scary move to go from being involved in every aspect of the business to just ensuring that your key team is focused and happy; but by doing so, they grew, I grew and our company ultimately grew in the process. 2008 was a record year!

—Jennifer Walzer, CEO, *Backup My Info!, New York City*

It's important during these economic times to decide what extent you want to be affected. We created true equilibrium between sales and operations. We reviewed what our profit rates were and made individual segment decisions on what operations we could afford to reduce in order to maintain affordability for our current customers while potentially gaining new ones. By streamlining operations by the traditional means of changing some labor from full- to part-time and consolidating some responsibilities, we found that we have more appropriate balance between sales and operations. The result is that during these economic times, we have so far been able to maintain at least the same profit levels as before, even if our sale-for-sale margins are a little lower.

—Dinaldo Khanii, president, *Leisure Management Inc., Riverdale, N.Y.*

I redirected the sales team from large projects to small ones. I knew competition for large projects would get too intense this year, resulting in the profits from each project decreasing and the amount of projects we received diminishing. There is less competition for small projects and that equates to more projects with slightly higher profit margins. You will have to run around more in order to get the projects as well as manage them, but there are always trade-offs.

—Brian Rothschild, president, *Envirochrome, New York City*

I made certain that "just-not-cutting-it" personnel cuts were made earlier in the year. "Hire slow, fire fast" has never been as important as it is right now. In this economy we can't afford sloth.

—David Deutsch, president, *David N. Deutsch & Company LLC, New York City*