

Better Business Focus

October 2022

Expert inspiration for a Better Business



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Better Business Focus is the essential key for business owners and managers. It achieves that by focusing on the way in which successful businesses compete and manage their organisations. It focuses on how people are recruited, coached and developed; on how marketing and selling is undertaken in professional markets as well as in markets with intense competition; on how technology and the Internet is reshaping the face of domestic and home business; and on how people are being equipped with new skills and techniques. In short, it offers expert inspiration for a better business.

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Thom Dennis

Is passive aggression the perfect office crime?

Passive-aggressive behaviour could be described as the ‘perfect office crime’ because these toxic acts are partially hidden and it can be difficult to prove someone is being passive-aggressive, even though their behaviour can be insidious and destructive. It is important to address because not only does passive aggression affect the direct victims but also often the team, indeed the culture of the organisation as a whole.

What Is Passive Aggression?

To be passive-aggressive is to indirectly express negative behaviour, rather than openly addressing issues; to show a form of hostility whilst avoiding direct confrontation, and to exert control indirectly. It is a covert act that, whilst it can be a result of anger, low self-esteem, sadness or anxiety which unconsciously leaks out, it can equally often be a conscious way to exert some form of control and is a form of bullying.

Identifying passive aggression can be tricky because of the subtleties and nuances, but it can also be very obvious in some cases. Think backhanded compliments, unsolicited advice, being patronised or given the silent treatment, intentionally being late or avoiding completion of tasks, subtle digs, talking behind another’s back, sarcasm, denial, mocking facial expressions or remarks, negative body language, microaggressions, whispering and then changing the subject, ghosting, showing contempt by rolling of eyes etc, or knowingly commenting on something that makes someone feel uncomfortable.

The Effects On Business

The instigator of the behaviour may perform below their best and

fail to collaborate and may sabotage a project, deliberately or otherwise which can affect the entire group. Colleagues may hesitate to work with them, and the team may feel undermined. Handling passive aggression can be challenging, exhausting, confusing, frustrating, and lead to emotional distrust. It can erode morale and contribute to mental health issues at work affecting self-worth and leading to loss of talent. There may be actual issues that need addressing but these get lost with the toxic behaviour. For example, the passive aggressor may have been the recipient of similar behaviour or may be feeling marginalised and is trying to exert control over the situation.

How To Handle Passive-Aggressive People At Work.

1. **Put the focus on what they said or did.** Such as asking them “Can you repeat what you just said” or “You are saying it’s fine, but you look angry”? You might not be able to make them admit what they are doing but it does show you won’t accept it and that you have boundaries and are prepared to call their behaviour out.
2. **Don’t let ego get in the way.** Don’t be aggressive back but do gently ask them if there is a problem. Sometimes misunderstandings are at the heart of passive aggression so opening the door to honest communication may help. Perhaps try to build a bridge in the relationship, it is possible they may well feel threatened by you for some reason. Matching their behaviour will only escalate matters.
3. **Use your own emotional intelligence.** Look at the bigger picture. Often people don’t know why or even that they are being passive-aggressive so attempting to find a common ground between you is a good

starting place. It is never nice to be on the receiving end but sometimes it helps to work out why someone is being passive-aggressive and to establish the best way to communicate with them.

4. **Be clear about what behaviour is not acceptable at work** and what the protocols are and who workers can go to when issues arise. If you witness such behaviour then call it out – remember that passive aggression is a form of bullying.
5. **Have a workplace culture** which avoids punishing someone who disagrees with you and instead encourages respectful differences in opinions. Have good role models who encourage workmates to listen and who respond well and openly to feedback.

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About the Author

Thom Dennis is CEO of Serenity in Leadership. He is a facilitator, speaker, consultant, change agent and educator. For the last 29 years, he has led companies dedicated to coaching executives and teams through personal and organisational change, defining strategy, working through M&As and improving communication.

With Serenity in Leadership, Thom is focusing his depth and breadth of experience to help organisations move into the 20s and all the changes that are developing. He is intent on resolving issues of inclusion to help people whoever they are, whatever background they have come from, shine and thrive, and their organisations with them.

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The Marketing Eye

How do you really get engagement from your business social media posts?

Engagement is the golden ticket for visibility on social media, but how can you get more?

Engagement is the golden ticket for visibility on social media. Yes, it is correct that the algorithms for each platform are complex and consider many aspects of an account or post when deciding how many people to show it to, but engagement has a huge part to play on all platforms. If a post receives likes, shares and comments, it will always do better than one that doesn't have any interaction at all.

However, Business to Business content can be a little more tricky than consumer-targeted content, because, let's face it, we all have our "Work" voice and a different "At Home" voice, and the way we interact with businesses as our business or brand is fundamentally different.

Some might argue that LinkedIn doesn't reflect this sort of attitude anymore, however, it's still a very divided platform and plenty of profile owners have been accused of over-sharing or being called out for posting holiday snaps or "acting inappropriately" by more introverted characters. So, we need to be careful about how we post, when we post, and what we post in order to get the balance right.

Twitter and Facebook still have a part to play in B2B social media, and Instagram shouldn't be forgotten either, particularly if your target customer is a sole trader or small business owner. The following are worth taking into consideration when your marketing team crafts posts:

Consistency is key and repetition is not risky

Keeping up appearances on social media is not only good for showing that you're open for business but regular sharing is likely to be rewarded with a better overall profile ranking. As well as feeding the algorithm, regular posts will help your audience feel more in touch with your brand. You'll become familiar with them, a little like their favourite soap characters. They're more likely to interact with your posts if they understand your tone of voice and can feel confident they can match it and won't be ignored.

Posting daily doesn't mean that your marketing team needs to spend hours and hours creating posts and researching content. It's ok to repeat posts, particularly your best-performing posts. If you have a clever scheduling tool available you can retrieve old evergreen content, re-work it and cycle it through your accounts sporadically – so long as you tailor the words and #s to each platform.

Think about posts that didn't perform too well either. They could perhaps have been posted at the wrong time of day, meaning only a small proportion of your audience saw the content – in which case, let it have its fair share of visibility and post it again at the right time.

There will be key sales messages too that you need to share regularly, and it's ok to repeat these. You can automate and alternate the image that runs through with this content, again, if you have a clever scheduling tool.

User-generated content is the best type of content



Picture Source: "Social Media" by [magicatwork](#) is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Any time you ask your audience to contribute to the conversation on your social media accounts, you're encouraging user-generated content. This might simply look like asking people to nominate their favourite local shop by tagging them in, send praise to a friend or colleague, or share pictures of their workspace, pets, garden, or anything relevant to your audience.

As a spin-off from the content submitted, you can then create posts that resonate with the audience. If someone has shared a fantastic photo, share it with your entire audience (after checking permission with the person that submitted it) and you'll more than likely find that the likes and shares flood in as that person's friends get excited by their 15 minutes of fame.

Be human

Use language and personality online that you'd use in offline life too. Having a sense of humour, a sense of empathy and finding things in common with others is part of human nature. There's no harm in sharing the odd humorous post, relating to homeworking, work-life balance, being excited about seasonal changes, or showing kindness and empathy to life challenges or charitable causes. Just be aware

that political content can divide opinion, so be careful about what you share, and be wary of anything that could be offensive to minority groups including positive discrimination.

Anything that you can do to encourage community spirit and kindness is always going to work well and is even better if it's relevant to support your most local community. An example of this is using National days such as National Pet Day or National Kindness Day to send surprise gifts to someone nominated on your page or supporting campaigns such as improving local play spaces.

There are some large national charities that do all the above very well given their kind and caring nature, so charity pages are worth checking for inspiration no matter what your industry is. It's also good practice to have regular content inspiration creative meetings with your wider team or marketing agency on at least a quarterly basis.

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The Marketing Eye are a team of results-focused marketing professionals working together to bring blue-chip marketing skills and resources to financial services businesses in the UK. Their mission is to help its clients increase the value of their businesses by the application of consistent and effective marketing. They do this by using marketing automation and lead scoring to help their clients engage with an increasing number of prospects over time. Whether you want to outsource your marketing or focus on the delivery of a particular project, they can help shape your requirements and deliver the results.

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Sunil Bali

Beditate.....

The human body will self-correct at every opportunity:

- if we're too hot we sweat
- if we're too cold we shiver
- if we drink too much fluid our kidneys excrete it
- if eat too much sugar we produce more insulin

Research by Professor William Duggan shows that the human brain has the same self-correcting mechanism and given time and space will provide clarity and solutions for problems that leave everyday rationality flummoxed. When at its most creative the human brain produces a high level of alpha waves.

Duggan found that worrying blocks the production of alpha waves in the brain which produces beta waves instead, which are associated with stress, introspection and negative thought patterns.

One way to maximize creativity and the production of alpha waves is to *beditate*.

When you wake up in the morning, instead of running the same old mental patterns about the day ahead, just stop for a few moments, relax and dump your should's, would's and could's. Or as my friend Laurence Shorter says in his excellent book, *The Lazy Guru's Guide to Life*, "Stop, tune in, and let go."

And do the same just before you go to bed *stop and sync*.

It's amazing how much work you can get done when you're asleep or simply not thinking.

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About the Author

Sunil is a Performance Coach, Speaker and Author.

Ex-Head of Talent for Vodafone Group and Santander, and having run a £50m business, Sunil has been responsible for hiring over 50000 people and has had the pleasure of working with some great entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders.

Moving minds - Transforming performance

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John Niland

Why clients should not define your self-worth



Many professionals are driven by values of service. They do their utmost to satisfy clients, often being available at short notice and going beyond agreed scope of work. They form deep relationships with clients and value their role as trusted advisers.

However, I regularly come across professionals for whom this dependence on client feedback (or practice of over-servicing) starts to become unhealthy. Examples:

1 – When the client senses the dependence and exploits this to get **preferential rates** or service...often invoking “our long history together”. Even when the client is not exploitative, the professional often ends up **under-quoting** fees for their work.

2 – Some clients **resent** a professional who wants to grow and develop. They like you to stay exactly as you are: continuing to deliver the same service year after year. They may use a feedback moment (formal or informal) to convey this message to you.

3 – Even when it’s not exploited, the dependence on client testimonials and satisfaction is often symptomatic of a **professional’s low esteem** of their work, possibly also indicative of low self-worth. Hence, they seek constant validation from others.

4 – This latter vulnerability is often accompanied by a sense of **constant anxiety**, which fuels the behaviour of over-servicing clients. Ironically, this often undermines a “trusted adviser” relationship because it’s hard to trust someone who is constantly insecure.

Of course, client relationships are important, but healthy relationships are based on *partnership*, not *servitude*. This is particularly important in today’s volatile world, where it’s very easy to slip into servitude relationships in a desperate attempt to hold on to the revenue. Not only does this massively erode profits, but it also encourages even more discounting, dissatisfaction and unpaid bills. The real casualty is business development, which invariably suffers when all the energy goes into managing those difficult clients.

That’s why an accountant once said to me, “clients can keep you poor”. In twenty-two years of working with professionals, I’ve never heard a single one express the wish that they had stayed longer with a dysfunctional client. I’ve heard many say they wish they had called it a day many months earlier.

As a professional, your future depends on being ahead of your clients: not just “meeting requirements”. It’s worth remembering this as you think about your professional identity...

and your self-worth.

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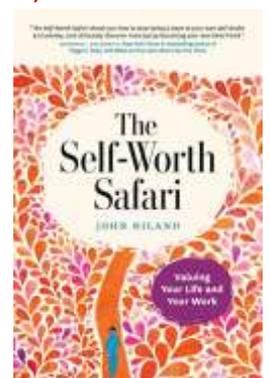
About the Author

John Niland is best-known as a conference speaker on doing higher value work and creating more opportunity via better conversations. His passion is energising people: boosting growth through higher energy levels, that in turn leads to better dialogue and business growth.

John is one of the co-founders of the European Forum of Independent Professionals, following twelve years of coaching >550 professionals to create more value in their work. Author of *The Courage to Ask* (together with Kate Daly), *Hidden Value* and *100 Tips to Find Time*.

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David Finkel

3 ways to tell if you have the wrong business coach



Business coaching is forever. Once you find the right partner in growth, you are unstoppable. Unfortunately for many business owners, you might have to work your way through a few business coaches until you find the right fit for your business and personality style. Over the last 25 years, I have coached thousands of business owners and heard it all.

Here are the top 3 reasons that an entrepreneur should break up with his or her current business coach and go in search of another one.

1. You Are Unable to Be Honest.

When you meet up for coaching sessions, it's human nature to want to put your best foot forward. You might say your plan is X, but your day-to-day actions say something different.

Do you tell your business coach that you missed the mark? Or do you sugarcoat it and tell her that all tasks were successful and your to-do list is complete?

If you feel unable to be honest about the true state of your business or financials with your coach, it might be time to re-evaluate the relationship and look elsewhere.

Gut Check: Before severing ties, think about why you are withholding information from your coach. Is it that you don't trust him or her? (You need to find another coach.) Or is it that you are afraid of what they might think or how they might judge you? (This should NOT be a concern for you because any capable coach cares about helping you achieve your business goals, and doesn't judge.) So if it's the latter (i.e. you're scared of what he or she might think) this is one for you to work on and just get over.

To get the most out of your business coaching sessions be honest and forthcoming. Share the good, the bad and the ugly so that they can get a more accurate picture of areas for improvement. This is how you get the most from your coach and the best results for yourself.

2. You Don't See Progress.

Working with a business coach allows you to get an outsider's perspective on your business and your own leadership growth. A good business coach will help you see your progress along the way and really feel your successes.

For instance, we make it a priority with our clients to spot and verbalize success and then teach them how to freeze the victory and really feel the impact of such an action.

Instead of:

"We finished out the quarter 25% above our projections, which is great, but next quarter I hope for 35%...."

We teach our clients to say:
"We finished out the quarter 25% above our projections."

This matters because if you don't give yourself permission to *feel* your progress, your team likely doesn't feel they have permission to feel successful either. This is not the kind of leader you want to be - someone who they can never please.

So you need to both be making progress through your coaching sessions and growing your ability to see and feel those successes. You then need to learn to transfer these feelings to your team so they can feel the same inspiration that you do.

Gut Check: Most business owners tend to be perfectionists. We are really hard on ourselves and internalize mistakes and failures. So, some of the responsibility for feeling progress does lie in your court. If you coach is taking the time to freeze your victories for you, you have to take the moment to focus on that feeling.

3. You Define Success Differently.

When it comes to business success there are generally two schools of thought.

First, the Time and Effort Economy where you get results by working harder. Want to accelerate your success? Put in more hours. Still not enough? Take business calls or respond to work texts and emails at nights and on weekends. Vacations? Sure, just make sure you bring your phone, tablet, or laptop with you so you can stay in touch with the office. In the Time and Effort Economy people get paid for hours, effort, and attitude. It's the nose-to-the-grindstone world of sweat, blood, and sacrifice.

The second school of thought has to do with value economy. This idea considers success not by logging hours, but by creating value for your company. You need time to create value, but a very different kind of time. You need blocks of your best, uninterrupted time to strategically focus on those things that you do for your company that create the most value. Low-value email and third-party requests? You'll get to them, but only after you've invested the best hours of your week into your highest value creation activities. The low-value stuff gets your remnant time, not your best time.

There is no one right way of course, but if you measure success by one method and your coach measures success by the second it is most likely a poor fit.

Gut Check: Before deciding on your definition of success, think back to why you sought out a business coach in the first place. Your reality and your end goal might vary drastically, and your business coach can offer insight as to why their method is best for your needs.

Finding the right business coach can really change the trajectory of your business. With a few gut checks, you should be able to find the right fit for our business and meet your goals. Good luck!

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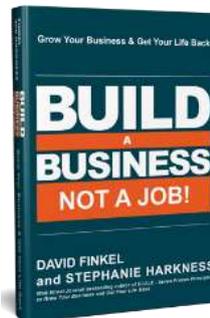
David Finkel is co-author of, *SCALE: 7 Proven Principles to Grow Your Business and Get Your Life Back* (written with Priceline.com co-founder Jeff Hoffman), and one of the nation's most respected business thinkers. A *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week* bestselling author of 11 business books, David's weekly business owner e-letter is read by 100,000 business owners around the world. David is the CEO of **Maui Mastermind**, one of the nation's premier business coaching companies. Over the past 20 years, David and the other Maui coaches have personally scaled and sold over \$2 billion of businesses.

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- The 8 essential building blocks upon which to scale your company
- 25 formats to package your business systems
- A powerful 1-page quarterly action plan format
- 6 time mastery strategies to free up a full day each week to build your business
- And much more ...

Typing Full Stops on Your iPhone

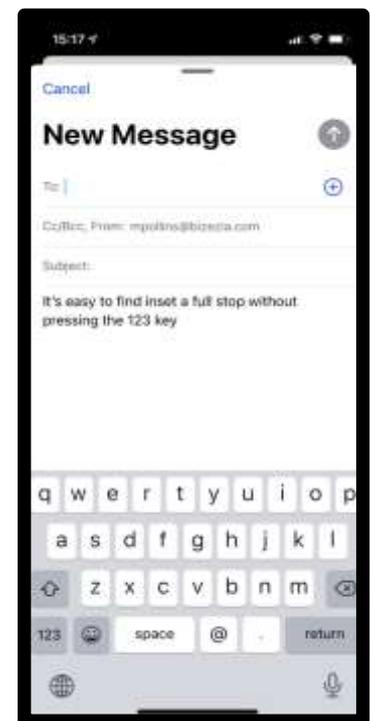
You don't need to tap the 123 key (the numeric key) to type a full stop.

You can save time with a shortcut using your iPhone keyboard. Full stops are at the end of almost every sentence, which means (normally) you have to keep tapping the numeric key button on the iPhone or iPad Numeric Keyboard. Fortunately, savvy people have found a shortcut using only the space bar. This is how it works:

1. Usually, you might tap the 123 key and then the full stop key.
2. Instead, type a sentence and quickly double tap the spacebar when it's time to insert a full stop.
3. Double tap immediately after typing the last word of the sentence; if you type the word and tap the space bar once, then decide to go back and double tap, the shortcut won't work.
4. A full stop will be inserted, and space will automatically be added, allowing you to keep typing or start a new paragraph.
5. It seems to work in any app on your iPhone or iPad.

Source:

<https://www.iphonelife.com/search/node/Period>





Janet Sernack

Five stops for overcoming procrastination

I often wonder how some people are great at overcoming procrastination, yet others delay, postpone, or avoid solving problems, and withdraw from making smart decisions, taking calculated risks, or taking intelligent actions?

- Why do they become paralysed and unable to take the actions necessary to solve some of their key problems and deliver their key goals?
- Why do they often resist making even the most necessary changes to support to enable the delivery of their solutions, desired outcomes, and goals?
- Why do so many also avoid taking personal responsibility and being accountable for achieving their desired outcomes and goals?

Despite knowing that there may be a range of negative consequences for procrastinating, involving a crippling, overwhelming, and paralysing combination of reactive responses? Which then typically impacts negatively on people's self-efficacy and self-belief, self-worth, and self-esteem and diminishes their motivation and immobilises their ability to take the necessary actions and as a result, spiral downwards? Making overcoming procrastination, a key **coaching** competency to develop, and master, to create an open space for **re-thinking for a new age**.

How do we, as coaches help client's in overcoming procrastination?

Why is this important?

It seems that procrastination is a challenge we and many of our coaching clients have faced at one point or another, where we struggle with being indecisive, delaying, ignoring, avoiding taking actions to initiate, progress, or complete tasks that may be important to us, and on issues that really matter to us, our teams, partners and organisations.

Ultimately leading to failures, inability to mitigate risks, or be creative and inventive and decreasing possibilities for innovation and increasing productivity and improving performance. Also potentially leading to feelings of loss, insecurity, inadequacy, frustration, disengagement, depression and in extreme cases, client, project failures and job losses, and even burnout!

Why do people procrastinate?

The need for security and self-protection is the key root causes of procrastination.

Procrastination is most often a self-protection strategy, a way of defending ourselves, rooted in fears that result in anxieties around feeling unsafe, vulnerable, and being judged or punished, especially in times of uncertainty, unpredictability, uncontrollability, and when feeling overwhelmed.

In most coaching contexts, procrastinating clients are likely to respond be risk-averse by:

- Being apprehensive and even withdrawing energetically from people as well as from the coaching conversation, coupled with a lack of commitment to the coaching process or towards achieving the agreed goal (lacking conviction and being worried about the future).
- Not showing up and spending a lot of time and energy zigzagging around and away from what they

feel is consuming them or making them feel threatened or uncomfortable (avoidance).

- Blaming external people and factors for not “allowing” them to participate or succeed (time, workload, culture, or environment).
- Denying that achieving the goal really matters, bringing up excuses, and reasonable reasons about why having the goal doesn't really matter to them, as well as a willingness to take risks (non-committal).
- Being fearful of the future, dreading what might be the range of possibly negative and overwhelming events and situations (pessimism).

What are the key signals of an effective procrastinator?

The first step in noticing the key signals is to tune into the client's effective avoidance default pattern as to what is really going on for them from a systemic perspective and paying deep attention to the range of signals outlined as follows:

Behaviour signals

- “Playing it safe” or “being nice” by being unwilling to challenge and be challenged.
- Resisting any change efforts, disengaging, and being reluctant to disclose and share authentically what is really going on for them.
- Unwillingness to take risks.
- Shying away from engaging with their partners, families, colleagues, group activities, and from having candid conversations.
- Being overly indecisive and non-committal.

Neurological state signals

- Increased anxiety and “attention deficit” syndrome.
- Low motivation and self-confidence.
- Diminished ability to self-regulate and self-control.
- Diminished self-efficacy and self-concept.

- Onslaught of the creeping doubts and the imposter syndrome.

Extrinsic or environmental signals occur when fearful of the perception of others.

- Performing poorly, making mistakes, or failing.
- Fearful of doing too well, or being too successful.
- Losing control, status, or role.
- Looking stupid, or being disapproved of.
- Avoids conflict situations.

Fear of success signals

Some of us are unconsciously afraid of success, because irrationally we secretly believe that we are not worthy of it and don't deserve it, and then self-sabotage our chances of success!

- Being shy, introverted, and uncomfortable in the spotlight.
- Being publicly successful brings social or emotional isolation.
- Alienating peers as a result of achievement.
- People may think you're self-promoting.
- Being perceived as a "tall poppy".
- Believing that success may not be all it's cracked up to be and that it might change you, but not for the better.

Fear of failure signals

Some people's motivation to avoid failure often exceeds their motivation to succeed, which can cause them to unconsciously sabotage their chances of success.

- Cognitive biases or irrational beliefs that act as filters distorting reality.
- Past pains felt from being vulnerable, abandoned, punished, blamed, or shamed in front of others, or being disapproved of, envied, rejected, or disliked by others.
- Fearful of looking "bad" or incompetent, in front of others.
- Feeling threatened, a sense of danger or potential punishment, causes them to move away (freeze, fight, take flight) from confronting dangerous, painful situations as threatening.

Overcoming procrastination tips – coaching clients.

The safe and compassionate coaching relationship

As most people find safety in procrastination at some point in time, to be an effective coach in these situations, it's important to be empathic and compassionate and "work with" as to where the client may be coming from in terms of underlying self-beliefs:

- "I don't want to get hurt".
- "I don't want to expose myself to risk".

As well as their thoughts about how others may see them including:

- Lacking confidence,
- Hesitant,
- Introverted.

Who may perceive themselves as:

- "I am nowhere near as good as I should be".
- "I am inadequate."

Then by paying deep attention, and being intentional in co-creating a safe coaching conversation and be:

- Gentle and non-threatening, and by building trust and rapport.
- Aware of being both too direct, fast, and too laid back.
- Providing gentle guidance, assurance, and lots of patience.
- Focussed on encouraging commitment and confidence towards setting and achieving the desired outcome.

Developing the coaching contract – the 5 key "A" steps to overcoming procrastination.

- 1. Attune** – Being deeply present to tune into "what really going on" by paying deep attention to the root causes and signals and by withholding judgement and co-creating a safe collective holding space.
- 2. Awareness** – Developing awareness and mutuality by taking a reflective stance to deeply listen and inquire to emerge the procrastination strategy or default pattern.
- 3. Acknowledge** – Acknowledging truthfully the client's current state, implications and consequences, benefits and drawbacks, and pulling them towards setting a desired future state.
- 4. Accept** – Supporting the client to accept the truth and taking

ownership of their procrastination strategy or default pattern and making a fundamental choice to shift and reframe it positively.

5. Act – Co-creating options and choices for setting the goal to initiate a gentle decision, a willingness to engage in risk-taking, and identify three key intelligent actions that lead to the desired future state. Getting commitment, calibrating, and increasing their level of confidence and conviction and willingness to be **comfortable with being uncomfortable**.

Ensuring that they take responsibility for completing the actions within an agreed time frame, and have measures in place for which they are accountable, whilst also offering support.

Breaking the procrastinating habit and overcoming procrastination.

Here are five key actions for ensuring that you and your coaching clients continue to break their self-defeating procrastination habits by:

- 1)** Looking at your excuses, reasonable reasons, and elaborate stories rationally, and become an "ace disputer" by challenging your perception of them, and even making fun of them
- 2)** Make a daily or weekly "to-do" list, and keep a score of your progress, by ticking items off once completed, rewarding yourself when done, being honest about what hasn't been done, and making a promise to yourself to do it (by when).
- 3)** Step up and take a stand for yourself, make your project a public endeavour rather than keeping it to yourself. Seek to gain the support of others and have them hold you accountable helps when you feel stymied.
- 4)** Like Nike "just do it" choose a domestic activity that you really dislike doing (like ironing) and commit to doing it for just 10 minutes a day, noticing that once you have started, it just seems to flow more easily.
- 5)** Manage your stress, worries, and anxieties through different techniques you can use to deal with them including deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, visualization, physical

exercise, relaxation tapes, humour, and music.

Ultimately coaching clients to overcome procrastination creates openings and thresholds for enabling them to learn and grow and become the best person, to themselves and others, they can possibly be and achieve the changes they wish to make in the world.

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About the Author:

Janet Sernack is the Founder & CEO of ImagineNation™ a niche Melbourne based innovation consulting company. That teaches trains and coaches people and teams to step over their business as usual thresholds and open them up to a new world of conscious, creative and commercial possibilities.

Janet has 30 years of experience consulting and leading culture development, change management, leadership and innovation education interventions to some of Australasia's and Israel's top 100 companies.

As a Fellow of the Institute of Mangers & Leaders, an ICF PCC executive coach, she is acknowledged as a global thought leader on the people side of innovation.

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Mike Shipulski

It's good to have experience, until the fundamentals change.

"If a cat sits on a hot stove, that cat won't sit on a hot stove again. That cat won't sit on a cold stove either. That cat just don't like stoves."
 Mark Twain

If you tried something ten years ago and it failed, it's possible that the underpinning technology has changed and it's time to give it another try.

If you've been successful doing the same thing over the last ten years, it's possible that the underpinning business model has changed and it's time to give a different one a try.

This article appeared on:
<http://www.shipulski.com/>

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About the Author:

Mike strives to define best practices and tools for *Product and Technology Development* and embed them into company culture. With that, practices and tools become a working part of how a company does business instead of ending up in a thick handbook that defines how things "should be done" which is read by no one. To Mike, behavior is most important.

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We use our previous experiences as context for decisions we make in the present. When we have a bad experience, the experience-context pair gets stored away in our memory so that we can avoid a similar bad outcome when a similar context arises. And when we have a good experience, or we're successful, that memory-context pair gets stored away for future reuse. This reuse approach saves time and energy and, most of the time keeps us safe. It's nature's way of helping us do more of what works and less of what doesn't.

The system works well when we correctly match the historical context with today's context and the system's fundamentals remain unchanged. There are two potential failure modes here. The first is when we mistakenly map the context of today's situation with a memory-context pair that does not apply. With this, we misapply our experience-based knowledge in a context that demands different knowledge and different decisions. The second (and more dangerous) failure mode is when we correctly identify the match between past and current contexts but the rules that underpin the context have changed. Here, we feel good that we know how things will turn out, and, at the same time, we're oblivious to the reality that our experience-based knowledge is out of date.



Barry Urquhart

Measures of success

Performance indicators abound. Some are objective and measurable. Others are subjective, emotive, and evocative.

Identifying, isolating, analysing, embracing, and implementing the limited number which can be appropriately accepted as key requires discipline and objectivity.

For start-up and established entities observable and measurable indicators can typically be grouped into three categories, being:

- Essential benchmarks
- Growth levers
- Power of customer-first

Appropriately determined and qualified benchmarks enable delegation of both authority and responsibility. Specific tolerance(variance) measures negate the need for ongoing micromanaging by senior executives. "Management By Exception" is a concept warmly applauded and typically embraced by people of all ranks. In such cases, leadership overviews and interventions are themselves exceptions.

At best, senior intrusions may centre on refining and redefining the benchmarks themselves, which are focused on individual rather than industry, groups and geographic clusters and performance records.

It is rare that all relevant competitors and substitutes have identified status, standings, and development stage presence.

AVOID THE MUNDANE

Essential benchmarks are distanced from typical month-on-month or year-on-year comparative analyses. Gross sales figures reveal little of meaning and substance. Sales increases can usually be accelerated and elevated by rampant price discounting. The real impact is on profits and sustainable financial viability.

Likewise, profits can be misleading. For example, a run-down in inventory levels and warehouse capacity can reflect immediately and extensively on short-term profits. Such instances project a false economy and skewed perspectives.

DYNAMIC REFLECTIVE, PROJECTIVE BENCHMARKS

Verifiable stock-turns, velocity, and complementary volume rates, along with sales/contract conversion ratios provide comprehensive overviews and insights on performance and "fit" in the marketplace.

Collectively, they can be and usually are catalysts for appropriate management strategic actions.

GROWTH LEVERS

The word and concept, *growth* is interesting. They can relate to absolute and relative measures or be vertical, horizontal, and multi-dimensional in nature. For some, *growth* can be, and is, applied to positive and the negative. Go figure.

Market share is not unidimensional. It can be quantified to an overall market, target segments, geographic spreads or, disturbingly reflect fragmentation – in its many guises.

Growth, advancement and spread can lead to exposure, vulnerability and both competitive and strategic sustainability.

Getting the right measure and balance is an art-form. Being *right* or *wrong* are binary and constant.

Identifying, isolating, analysing, formulating, and applying custom company/brand/product/service/applications contribute to competitive advantage. Benchmarks and levers will optimise performance, sustain viability and be fundamental in malleability.

Heightened sensitivity to the nature, applications, advantages, benefits and rewards of benchmarks, levers and corporate philosophies substantiates ongoing investment in such.

The true art is in the management and manipulation of chosen levers. Thus, the HOW and WHO outweighs the importance and effectiveness of WHAT.

CUSTOMER-FIRST

The terms "customer-driven" and "customer-first" have in recent times been overtaken and overwhelmed by new labels including *customer obsession* and *customer regency*.

Customers should always be first, second, last and absolute. They are the very reason for being for companies, products, applications, and brands.

Service excellence is founded on the principles of *never saying no to a customer*. An inability to satisfy and fulfil needs with one's own offering does not preclude the opportunity and reality of suggesting and recommending alternatives, substitutes or reassessment of perceived and real needs and wants.

Compromise is never an acceptable option.

A laudable statement, culture, declaration, promise, and positioning base were for one department store in the US,

Macys, a longer-term competitive advantage:

Satisfaction Guaranteed. Period.

There was simply no soft edge to those words and intent. Understanding, embracing, and applying the underlying brief of, and in such were integral to the recruitment and induction processes of all Macys people.

CONCLUDING WORDS

Winners are grinners. They are also magnets for customers, clients, and prospective team-members. Recruitment issues are typically quickly resolved. The absolute best know, share and declare their unique measures of success.

In times of turmoil, simple things are often the most effective in achieving cut-through.

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About the Author:

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director, Marketing Focus, Perth, is an inspiring speaker, author of Australia's top two selling books on customer service and an international consultant on dynamic innovation and creativity. Barry is author of six books, including the two largest selling publications on service excellence in Australasia.

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Andy Bounds

Six simple steps to a better communication

Very clever, brilliant people use checklists.

Surgeons use them. Pilots use them. So, it's perfectly fine if we want to use them too.

Here's a checklist of what you might want to use for your communications:

1. **What** – what do you want the other person to DO after your communication? (we usually put this at the end, as a call to action)
2. **Why** – why will they want to DO it? In other words, how will they benefit? (we usually put these benefits at the start, to engage them early)
3. **Which** – of all the topics we could include in our communication, which are the most essential ones?
4. **How** – what communication channel will we use? Verbal, email, document, Teams, presentation...?
5. **Who** – who is the person we want to influence? Ideally, we want to go to them directly, rather than through an intermediary
6. **When** – when's the best time to communicate this message to them? (quick hint: doing it at 4.59 pm on Friday afternoon – just so you can tick it off before the weekend – probably isn't what they want you to do)

If you like this checklist, great. Use it!

If not, consider creating your own.

But it's worth having one – especially for important communications. After all, people's usual 'checklists'...

I'll brain-dump everything I know; or

1. What slide/materials have I got, that I can re-use for this next communication?!

... aren't as likely to impress or influence anyone.

Action Point

1. Create your own Communication Checklist
2. Put it in a visible place, so you see it all the time (not in a sharefile you never open)
3. Use it!

For more hints and tips about what might go on your checklist, [there are always my online videos to help...](#)

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About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success.

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Sue Barrett

Sales Career? There's plenty to be proud of

Pride is a contentious subject especially when it is associated with the sales profession.

On one hand, Pride is defined as *a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of those with whom one is closely associated, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired.* Associated feelings like Satisfaction, Content, Fulfillment, Pleasure, Delight and Joy also spring to mind.

On the other hand, Pride, or the more accurate term Vainglory, describes excessive or ostentatious pride especially in one's achievements resulting in vanity and potentially arrogance, conceit, pomp, ostentation, egotism, narcissism, pride, vanity, ego trip and boastfulness.

We've all seen vainglory writ large when it comes to the general descriptors of salespeople in movies, books, tropes and the general zeitgeist. Just think Wolf of Wall Street or **the 600lb Sales Gorilla** holding your sales team hostage and you know what I mean.

However, most salespeople are not vainglorious. They are decent people who do good work in business and community. Proactive, knowledgeable, helpful, curious, open-minded, assertive and positive in their sales endeavours, many successful salespeople also display humility which is the antidote to vainglory. They know they are only as good as their last sale. Too often many salespeople don't celebrate their wins enough yet there's plenty to be proud of when it comes to having a successful sales career.

There's the pride in achieving one's sales budget, winning that new big client, resigning a record-breaking deal, breaking into new markets, winning market share, achieving a big bonus and so on.

Less obviously celebrated but which I think should feature much more prominently is the difference we, as salespeople, can make to other people's lives – personal and professional.

Salespeople bring new ideas, concepts and innovations to help people in business and/or life; we help people to navigate tricky situations, guide them and provide advice to give them confidence to make informed decisions and the necessary changes, we give our clients access to the products, services, tools, resources, processes, insights and knowledge they can use to make a difference. I can't speak for anyone else, but when we help our clients achieve things, I feel very proud of my part in that.

Making or exceeding sales budget is one thing, but making a real difference in someone's life, well, that makes me feel even better. Here's my case in point.

The other day we received an email from one of our clients that made us feel immensely proud. They are a small team of 10 working in software consulting; not everyone is directly responsible for sales but none the less I invited the whole team to attend the 1-day kick-off sales training workshop in person so they could understand the principles and processes of human-centred sales practices and how to foster healthy prosperous relationships and sell better faster.

While we still have 6 x 1-hour remote follow-up sessions scheduled every 2 weeks to deliver to help embed what they

have learnt, less than 18 hours post the workshop this email arrived in my inbox:

Hi Sue,

*S** sold 80-100hrs this morning with his customer.*

*R** has followed up 3 or 4 leads and booked a number of customer meet n greets (solution design).*

I sat in a meeting and did a WWW with a customer, got 3 opportunities out. Got another one in 30mins.

And it's before 11 am

A little confidence goes a long way eh.

*I'll need more delivery capacity....
Cheers,*

As I said before, **selling is a noble profession**, and we can be very proud of being salespeople.

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About the Author

Sue is the Founder & Managing Director of Barrett Consulting Group (est. 1995), incorporating Barrett, Sales Essentials, Mind Your Emotions, Sustainable Selling, Barrett Research, and Sell Like a Woman.

Sue has written and published 21 books and 500+ articles to date on the world of 21st Century selling including topics on sales philosophy/culture/ethics, sales leadership, sales coaching, sales training, selling skills, sales mindset and resilience, neuroscience in selling, etc. Sue works as a business adviser, sales coach & trainer, speaker, and facilitator.

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Paul Sloane

Status bias inhibits innovation



Status bias is the term used to describe the unfortunate fact that communications such as ideas, proposals and papers are often judged not on their merits but on the status of the originator.

Researchers at the University of Innsbruck in Austria carried out a study in which they sent out the same academic paper to three groups of reviewers. The first set of reviewers were told the paper was written by Vernon Smith, winner of the Nobel Memorial prize for Economic Studies. The second group were told the paper was written by Sabiou Inoua, a relatively unknown PhD student. The third group were not told who the author was. In fact, the paper had been authored by Smith and Inoua together.

Reviewers were asked to either recommend the paper for publication in an eminent journal or to reject the work. The results were striking. When they thought it was the work of the eminent Dr Smith, 23% voted to reject the paper. When they were told it was by Inoua, 65% voted against it. When the author was unknown 48% voted to reject. The latter can be considered as something of a baseline case. It was the same paper that was reviewed in all three cases, but Dr Smith's name gave him a significant boost in approval whereas Sabiou Inoua was penalised for being unknown.

Research by the Gender Index in the UK found that firms led by men attracted significantly more start-up funding than those headed by women. Other research showed that male-owned companies received on average seven times more funding than those owned by women. Many other studies confirm that men in business can have a higher perceived status than women.

Status factors can seriously affect the chance of an idea being accepted or rejected. Think for a moment about your organization. What are the chances that a good idea would be acted upon if it came from the CEO? Pretty good I expect.

What if it came from a department head? Still good. What if the very same idea was suggested at a team meeting by a junior accounts clerk? I suspect it might well be ignored.

We see similar factors at play when there is a brainstorming meeting with the big boss in the room – everyone defers to their ideas and people are reluctant to challenge.

If we want to find the best and most effective innovations, then ideas should be judged strictly on their merits and not on their sources. There are ways to do this. Idea management schemes can make ideas anonymous. A good facilitator in a brainstorming meeting can ensure that the

CEO's ideas are mixed with everyone else's before evaluation. Respect for authority and position can inhibit creativity and innovation. When it comes to ideas we need to lose the hierarchy and status.

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About the Author

Paul Sloane is an author and expert on lateral thinking in business. He has delivered hundreds of talks to executive audiences around the world. His talks are different because they challenge your thinking head-on. He is a skilled facilitator and course leader who helps top-level teams achieve breakthrough results in their meetings. He helps companies overcome the problems they have making innovation happen. He can improve creativity and lateral thinking for leaders with leadership and innovation master classes. This results in a more agile culture, more ideas and successful innovation.

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Urko Wood

Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way!

“Lead, follow, or get out of the way!”
(Getting out of the way is definitely not a good strategy).

It takes special vision and insight to lead but where and how do you get that?

If you want to lead your market(s), the “Jobs-to-Be-Done” (JTBD) innovation approach is a great vision-enhancing tool. It’s based on the insight that people “hire” products and services to get their functional, emotional, and social “jobs” done.

People hire drills to make holes. Doctors hire stethoscopes to listen to their patient’s heart and lungs. And your customers hire your products and/or services to get their functional, emotional, and social jobs done, too.

Do you know who your target customers are and what job(s) they’re trying to get done with your products and/or services? How they measure success? Where they struggle?

If not, your vision is impaired. You’re leaving money on the table. And you’re vulnerable to the competition.

Value migrates to satisfy the market’s important unsatisfied needs. You can take control of your destiny and lead your market by identifying those unmet needs – i.e., the market opportunities – and addressing them. Or you can let the competition lead and hope you will be successful as a “fast follower.” Most firms cannot succeed as the low-cost provider.

JTBD gives leaders game-changing insights to make good choices about “where to play” and “how to win.” Sometimes empathy and iterating are not enough.

Reveal needs. Create value. Drive growth.

This article originally appeared on [Reveal Growth Consultants](#)

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About the Author:

Urko founded Reveal in 2012 to help forward-thinking leaders clarify where to focus and what to do to drive innovation and growth using the jobs-to-be-done (JTBD) approach. JTBD has enabled over 400 of the Fortune 1000 to generate billions of dollars in new revenue and achieve dramatically better success rates than other approaches.

For nearly seven years prior to starting Reveal, Urko was a Strategy Advisor at Strategyn Consulting, the chief pioneer of the jobs-to-be-done innovation approach. Urko is a co-inventor of Strategyn’s patented method for creating a market growth strategy. Urko was voted #36 in the “[Top 40 Innovation Bloggers of 2020](#).”

He is also a contributing writer on innovation and growth strategy for The Business Journals, a certified Drexler/Sibbet Team Performance Facilitator, and has been a guest lecturer on innovation at Denison University, The Ohio State University Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurialism (OSU CIE), and Otterbein University’s MBA program.

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