



MINDIRITIES &

SUCCESS

**Education Reform Continues
to Top The List of Issues
Facing The Nation Today**

Summer 2021

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When Impatience Can Lead to Business Success... Or Failure

By Susan Friesen

How the Gurus Are Setting You Up for Failure in Your Business (If You Let Them)

I am the impatient type of person. The moment I decide on what needs to be done, I want it done NOW!

Not tomorrow.

Not next week (heaven forbid!)

Ideally, it should have been done yesterday if I had things my way.

I'm sure I drive my team batty with my unrealistic expectations, but you

know what? It's a big reason why we are still thriving after 18 years.

You see, my impatience is to your benefit when it comes to our level of customer service.

The moment we receive a request, my expectation is that whoever is responsible for fulfilling it, should do it as soon as possible.

This fast-turnaround service has earned us a reputation for being dependable and trustworthy.

I dare say not a lot of agencies like us have that same reputation.

It blows my mind when I hear stories from clients who come to us saying their web person has ghosted them or takes over 2 weeks to get a quick website update done.

Is this a way to run a business?

Heck no!

Customer service is one of the biggest areas of focus every business should pay careful attention to. Without it, clients aren't given much reason to be loyal, and they will quickly move on to find someone else who can provide them with a better experience.

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But there's another angle to being impatient that a lot of entrepreneurs fall victim to that is even more important.

And that's their impatience to succeed.

They don't want to do the hard work like coming up with a business plan. Or a marketing plan for that matter.

They don't want to do their due diligence in exploring if their idea will actually have a market to sell to.

They don't want to set up their books so they know their numbers. Budget? What is that??

The list goes on. That's boring stuff they don't want to have to deal with.

What they DO want to do is create.

Create a program that thousands of people will buy online so they can

relax on the beach and reap the rewards without any effort. (Which is what the gurus promise.)

Write a book so they can become an instant best-selling author and keynote speaker, making thousands of dollars with each speaking gig. (Which is what the gurus promise.)

Build an Instagram account with 6-figure followers so they can become an influencer and make millions from amazing endorsement deals. (Which is what the gurus promise.)

These are just a few of the visions that entrepreneurs come to me with, but with no business plan to make this actually happen!

They want to skip all of the steps that are required to create a successful, sustainable business, because that isn't fun or creative.

To your business success,

Susan

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- See our: How Great Customer Service Gets You Business Referrals. Learn how to earn business referrals by putting the client first with good customer service from web development and digital marketing agency.

- See our: Why Business Plans are a Must-Have. You've heard about the importance of business plans but do you know why they are so essential? My guest Pamela Chatry shares valuable business plan insights.

- See our: Why Short Business Plans are Viable Options for Entrepreneurs. Complex businesses require complex business plans, but a simple business plan is better than no plan. Read more by guest author Pamela Chatry.

- See our: Simplifying & Demystifying the Business Plan. Creating a business plan doesn't have to be scary or overwhelming. My guest Pamela Chatry covers the important components that go into a business plan.

Susan Friesen, founder of the award-winning web development and digital marketing firm eVision Media, is a Web Specialist, Business & Marketing Consultant, and Social Media Advisor. She works with entrepreneurs who struggle with having the lack of knowledge, skill and support needed to create their online business presence.

As a result of working with Susan and her team, clients feel confident and relieved knowing their online marketing is in trustworthy and caring hands so they can focus on building their business with peace of mind at having a perfect support system in place to guide them every step of the way.

I get it. We all want to fast-track our success. We can all be impatient, especially when it comes to making money!

So if you're guilty at all of skipping a step or two with your business fundamentals, it's not too late. Stop what you're doing, get help if you need it, and work on those fundamentals before you go any further in the creative mode.

Your business will thank you for it for years to come.

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9 Ways to Brand Your Small Business

By Jon Allo

Essentially, a brand is how your audience and customers think of your business and what it represents to them. It's a feeling more than a logo or name.

Knowing this means you need to really think about how you leave your audience feeling when they think of your brand.

1. Define Your Brand

To define your brand, figure out what your mission is, what benefits you

offer your audience, what features are important to your audience, what type of customers you want to attract, and what qualities you want your audience to associate with you when they think of you. Take the time to write a mission statement which includes what you do, who you do it for, why you do it, and how you do it.

2. Choose Colors, Fonts, and Images

What types of colors, fonts, and images are you going to use? It will depend on the industry your company

represents, what the audience likes, and the feelings these things evoke.

3. Create a Logo

It's usually best to hire a professional to create a logo. A logo is a legal representation of your business and you cannot use stock photos, known taglines, or sometimes even certain fonts in a logo. By hiring a professional that is trusted, they can take your mission statement, audience information, and other information to help you create just the right logo that

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invokes the feelings you want your audience to have.

4. Develop a Tagline

A tagline is a very short, memorable and catchy statement that explains your brand to anyone who first comes across you. Remember that you must create something original for your business that encapsulates your business.

5. Integrate Branding across Channels

Whether online or offline, your branding should stay the same. Whether it's a tagline, the way you answer the phone, how you sign off on your email messages, or how your users use your website, social media, and more, make sure it all goes together and promotes the same

message - regardless of where your audience finds you and engages with you.

6. Don't Forget Your Brand Voice

It's important to ensure that whether you publish a blog post, book, video, podcast, webinar or something else, the voice matches throughout. Is your brand conventional, traditional, modern, irreverent, or something else?

7. Create Templates

So that you can teach your entire staff or contractors about your branding, you can develop materials and templates to help anyone you hire. A writing guide, branding guide, art templates, presentation templates, and more will help you ensure that your branding is matched across all channels.

8. Deliver on Your Promises

It's imperative that you live up to the branding you have created for yourself. If you promise 100%, no question asked returns, do it. If you say it, you must do it, or you will not be trusted to live up to your branding - and word gets around fast these days.

9. Be Consistent

One of the keys to all aspects of business - including branding your small business - is consistency. Be consistent about your branding efforts across all online and offline channels. Whether you run a paid ad or produce free content, the branding is essential to ensure that you become a memorable business within your industry.

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What Is Your Post-Coronavirus Countermove?

By Terry McKenna

The Chinese word for Crisis is composed of two characters signifying Danger and Opportunity. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic of 2020 has forced us into a new and unknown future; the New Normal. What will you choose: Danger or Opportunity? What is your post Coronavirus Countermove? The time to Reboot and Prepare your organization is now!

We've all experienced the Danger side of the Crisis Pendulum: lost sales, financial instability, uncertainty, need to reestablish our business footing, new employee, and

customer safety first conscious mindsets; Uncertainty, Anxiety, Stress. But perhaps the Opportunity side of Crisis Pendulum, is better: an opportunity to outflank and outmaneuver your competition who may be caught flatfooted, in a retrenchment, cost reduction mode, and slow to respond. When the competition retreats, that is the precise time to double-down; an opportunity to gain ground and leapfrog; an opportunity to Attack!

There is no going back to the pre-Coronavirus economy and "business as usual" because those days are clearly over. Thinking otherwise would be a mistake. It's a new world for consumers,

businesses, and brands. The New Reality is in front of us. We need to: Stabilize, Analyze, and Focus. Before we rush into the New Normal, we should first slow down and re-evaluate. We are compelled to change, improve, and find more creative ways to operate our organizations. We need to quit playing defense and start playing offense. But that requires planning!

1. Reevaluate your Strategy:

Strategy is about winning. To play merely to participate is self-defeating - it's a recipe for mediocrity. Winning is what matters and is the ultimate

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criterion of a successful strategy. Leaders who choose to Play vs Win wind up settling for average industry results at best.

Great organizations Choose to win rather than simply compete. Strategy is a way to win and nothing less; a battleplan for winning. Strategy refers to the ways in which an organization's competitive advantage will be achieved. These include the activities the organization undertakes to gain a sustainable advantage over the competition. A lack of strategy has a clear and obvious result: it will kill you! Maybe not right away, but eventually organizations without winning strategies die. The essence of strategy requires you to make tradeoffs - to choose what not to do. Therefore, the essence of execution is truly not doing it. Your choices should be based on Strategic Fit with your: business model, system of activities, competencies, and capabilities that

you can confidently, and consistently deliver to your targeted customers.

Above all, your strategy should be based on differentiation. Sameness is the Danger Zone. Differentiation creates a Competitive Advantage, and competitive advantage provides the only protection an organization can have. Competing to be the best feeds on imitation. Competing to be unique thrives on innovation. How is your organization different from your competition? What can you do better than your competition?

2. Alignment:

Lack of Alignment is the #1 reason organizations don't perform at a higher level and produce greater results. Achieving alignment between an organization and its strategy is essential for success. Without alignment, even the world's best strategy will fail. Why? Because alignment is the link between

strategy and execution. Organizational alignment occurs when an organization is aligned with the organization's strategy, so that the organization's business model, systems, activities, and talent, all support its strategy. The tighter the alignment, the more effectively the strategy will be executed. The tighter the alignment, the better the performance.

Ultimately, no strategy can be better than the people who must implement and execute it. Performance standards and expectations, right people, in the right jobs, trained to perform, held accountable, properly led, and recognized and rewarded for results. Rigorous execution, meticulous attention to detail, with structure and discipline. Alignment! Be sure of this - if you don't get the metrics right, none of the required behaviors are likely to follow. Your Metrics should reflect Behaviors that are Measurable. You can't improve what you can't measure.

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Vision, Commitment and Leadership In Education

By Jeff C. Palmer

Many educators, policymakers, Republicans and Democrats are now talking reasonably about the future of education. It is important to prescribe what should be done. The belief is that the federal government could provide the answers. Driven by the spirit of reform at the state and local level that has changed the focus of education from inputs to outputs, there is now an educational bottom line. Education seems to be the only sector of the economy that is not competing for top talent. Almost every state has created some sort of alternative route to teacher certification - though many

jurisdictions make limited use of them.

The focus on education policy must be changed to progress on student achievement, not process and micromanagement. Hailing an important change in the terms of debate, accountability, flexibility and choice are now part of the mainstream education discussion. The fact that policymakers are debating education on those terms is reason for optimism. What's truly amazing is that it took us this long as a nation to collectively realize that student academic progress and a public education system that remains fully accountable to everyone for ensuring

that progress are just plain good ideas. There's nothing magical or controversial in demanding tough academic performance.

We urge colleges to mandate more history studies and parents to send their children only to universities that have substantial history requirements. The knowledge of U.S. history is the "civic glue" that gives a diverse America a singular purpose. Ignorance of the past, unfortunately, is all too commonplace today - and not just among youngsters who know more about their favorite video games characters than the presidents on

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Mount Rushmore or teens who couldn't begin to explain the significance of Gettysburg Address. The problem extends even to institutions whose very mission is to provide higher education.

History is essential to full and informed participation in civic life and to the larger vibrancy of the American experiment, and without knowledge of it, bedrock principles like liberty, justice and equality will be forgotten. According to a new survey, 79 percent of seniors at elite colleges and universities could not answer basic high-school level questions about U.S. history.

The presidential election of 2020 will be remembered for many things, surely, but perhaps what should most immediately concern all Americans is just how little we understood the political process. Americans came to grips with their need to figure out just what happens when they vote, what counts and what doesn't, what an Electoral College is, and why the popular vote isn't what they thought it was cracked up to be. The relative political illiteracy of the American people should come as no surprise, particularly to educators who daily confront good, earnest hardworking students who can't tell them who sits on the nation's Supreme Court, let alone who sits in the state House. And it shouldn't come as a surprise to members of Congress.

The students who took the test were ignorant of the history of America's most familiar leaders, of basic constitutional principles and of defining moments in our past. An unbelievable 40 percent apparently needed a lifeline or two to even pinpoint the timeframe of the Civil War as being within the 50-year period 1850-1900.

The events of the last few years - the impeachment and trial of a president - have provided compelling evidence of the resiliency and vibrancy of our constitutional republic. Those events also remind each of us just how much might be at stake should the American people lose touch with the principles and practices that help to mold and sustain the republic.

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Education Reform Continues To Top The List Of Issues Facing The Nation Today

By Megan Wilson

Education reform continues to top the list of issues facing the nation today. Americans are better informed than ever about school performance and its implications for our future, and many feel a sense of urgency about improving their children's education. This urgency is leading to a shift in focus for education policy at all levels - federal, state and local. Many states and localities are enacting policies that put the needs of children and parents over systems, focus on improving student achievement rather than on processes and procedure and policies that empower communities,

enterprising school leaders and teachers.

A tide of freedom, innovation and accountability is sweeping the education landscape in our states. This has been reflected in the adoption of high academic standards with rigorous assessments to measure student performance, increasing educational choices through strong and autonomous charter schools and reducing regulations that impede the progress of creative and enterprising teachers and school leaders.

However, the federal government has not caught up with the changes occurring at

the state and local level. Washington remains far too focused on micromanagement through thousands of pages of regulations attached to hundreds of programs. Simple compliance with ever-increasing procedural controls, inputs and processes has become an end in itself with little consideration given to results.

The federal government has a legitimate role to play in recognizing national priorities in education. But that is not to say that every federally expressed priority must have a

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corresponding federal program. For example, a national priority to improve elementary school reading scores might produce innumerable local strategies to accomplish that goal. Prudence suggests that federal funds should go to the states and their local school districts so they can decide how best to employ those funds. The people closest to the children being served should decide how best to meet their needs.

We have an enormous opportunity and responsibility to improve public education and allow federal education policy to deepen and sustain the reform energies that abound in the states.

Title I came into being as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and remains the centerpiece of the federal role in public education. Part of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society legislation, its

intent was noble: to provide supplemental services to improve the academic performance of poor and disadvantaged children and reduce the performance gap between rich and poor.

It is well documented that the academic achievement of disadvantaged students has not been significantly improved and the performance gap between rich and poor has not been reduced. This pattern of failure can be traced to some important flaws that were part of the program's original design or that crept in through the subsequent program reauthorizations.

First, among these flaws are funding formulas that elevate the wants of educational systems above the needs of children. Because Title I dollars are aimed at school systems rather than individual children, some eligible students currently receive no funding or services at all. Many others receive very little money and few services

because they live in states with low per-pupil spending. Title I funding formulas also encourage concentrating poor students in the same schools in order to make the schools eligible to receive funds.

Funding formulas must be changed to assure that every single disadvantaged child receives assistance. Rather than funding school systems, dollars should accrue to the

benefit of the student. Title I should be an entitlement for disadvantaged children.

Title I also focuses on inputs, bureaucratic process and paperwork rather than accountability for results. The program demands only that money be spent in directed categories and that mandated processes be correctly followed. There is no need to demonstrate results in improving student achievement and there are no consequences for failure to do so.

This must change. States and localities should be freed from inflexible, burdensome regulations. A more effective approach is to set performance priorities and give state, local and school leaders the freedom and flexibility to make decisions on how to accomplish them. In exchange for this flexibility, state and local officials should be held accountable for improving the academic performance of children.

Affected districts are also eligible to receive special implementation grants that can be used to purchase new instructional materials and technology; establish after-school, summer and weekend programs; develop curriculum; or provide professional development training for teachers. The goal is to give failing districts new tools, new resources, new ideas and enough time to turn things around. But if the schools continue to flounder, provisions in the law authorize the state to get more directly involved.

Finally, much of federal education policy fails to recognize the critical importance of involving and empowering parents. Educators know that parental involvement is vital to educational success, particularly among disadvantaged students. Yet

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we have created a system that makes it very difficult for parents to get reliable, understandable information about school performance. What is even more troubling is that when parents get useful information, often they cannot act on behalf of their children.

For example, parents unhappy with the education a child is receiving cannot transfer that child to another school - traditional public, charter or private - and expect federal dollars to follow. Parents are also prohibited from using funds generated by their child for other services such as tutoring from private providers.

Research and common sense tell us that the more educational authority is returned to parents, the more engaged they will become. Once the funds are targeted to individual students, and state and local officials are given freedom and flexibility in

designing programs that address their needs, dollars should follow them to the school or educational provider of their choice, within limits set by each individual state. If parents are happy with a child's school and progress, their Title I dollars remain. If they are not, they should be free to choose another public school, including a charter school. States could also offer such options as tutoring by approved providers.

For schools that don't measure up, there are consequences as well as assistance available for improving. State money allocated for the education of that child follows.

We place the needs of children over those of the system. But it is important to remember that scholarships are only one part of a comprehensive accountability package. Clear and measurable expectations, understandable information to parents

about school performance, remediation and assistance to low performing schools and choices for students in schools that do not improve are other components of the package.

Parents should be allowed to decide what type of education their children receive. If states and local districts choose to use federal funds to empower parents of targeted children to attend charter schools, receive tutoring, or take advantage of private school choice, so be it. It is a logical extension of local control. Indeed, it is the truest form of local control.

State education reforms begin with high standards and expectations. They identify clear indicators for measuring progress toward desired results and are flexible with regards to the means for accomplishing the results.

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