

ANDREW LOCK: HELP! MY BUSINESS SUCKS



Andrew Lock is a maverick marketer and the presenter of a popular weekly WebTV show that helps small-business owners to get more done and have more fun (www.helpmybusiness.com). Originally from Surrey, he now resides in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Do you have a MAP?

YOU'RE BUSY. Very busy. There are always distractions that demand your attention, so it's easy to get diverted away from your goals. You need a MAP. Not a road map, but a MAP. MAP stands for "massive action plan", and it's one of the most important keys to business success.

The process of running a business is a bit like running a marathon. If you start out sprinting, you'll get so worn out that you don't finish. That's pointless. Similarly, in

business it's much better to take action consistently, doing something every day to advance towards the finish line of your goals.

Without action, nothing will happen. You'll stay still, and after a while you may even go backwards in your business.

Don't underestimate the value of action. It's more important than skills, qualifications or any other factor in business. Action makes everything else happen. Without it, you don't even have a business.

To create a good MAP, you may have to get tough with yourself. Discipline yourself during working days to ensure that you get things done. Schedule a start and end time for all appointments—otherwise, what's to stop them from running on far beyond what you'd intended? If you frequently get irritated with how little you've accomplished during a day, get an accountability partner to help you. Start each day with the predetermined action that will make the most difference in your business. Don't start with mundane, busy tasks like checking email and so on; instead, begin by bringing in some money.

Decide today what your MAP will be for this week, this month and this year. ☑



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Is e-mail taking over your life?

"AS SOON AS I clear my in box, a new batch arrives; consequently, I spend my time reacting to every new message but not being proactive. Does this sound familiar?" asks Costco member Carole Spiers, an authority on corporate stress, who offers employee counselling, stress management classes and other services to promote employee wellbeing through her business, Carole Spiers Group (www.carolespiersgroup.co.uk).

Email is a phenomenal tool for efficient communication. It takes you from one side of the world to the other in an instant, but it needs to be managed effectively. Otherwise, you're tethered to the BlackBerry, iPhone, iPad, Android or any other device that can get you online, and you spend your waking hours reading, replying, copying and deleting email, instead of working.

Here are five tips Spiers finds useful in managing email.

Bin it. Use your in box for actions that you need to take immediately. Get rid of the rest. Old emails just take up space.

Get sorted. After acting on your emails, put them in labelled folders for quick access. Tidy email folders are a lot easier to handle when you open your in box.

Flag it. Flag important emails so you can see at a glance exactly what needs to be tackled immediately.

Go off-line. When you're trying to concentrate, go off-line. Curiosity may well get the better of you if you can still hear that ping telling you an email has arrived—and then it is hard to remember what you were doing before it arrived.

Less is more. Keep your emails short and to the point. The less you write, the more likely you'll get a reply. Write in bullet points and the chances are your responses will be in the same format. If you're just after a chat, use the phone. ☑

Smart online marketing strategies

MANY BUSINESSES today are moving from phone books and local print advertising to online marketing. But there's more to a smart online marketing strategy than simply getting your business listing on a search engine, advises Costco member Lori Chavez, vice pre-sident of marketing for Local Corporation (www.localcorporation.com/advertisewithus).

To help customers find your business, she suggests taking an integrated marketing approach with these components:

Social media.

Though social media networks are popular with shoppers, don't take shortcuts to rapidly build a following. Better to build your online presence and grow organically than to use a traffic-building service, which may increase your Twitter followers, but

not necessarily customers. Businesses should be focused on quality content that's updated frequently and relevant to followers, not quantity.

Mobile. Consumers are increasingly using mobile devices to research products they buy. To break through the clutter, develop a mobile version of your website that's easy to use with one-touch functionality.

Daily deals. By 2013, the number of adults using mobile coupons and deals could nearly double.

Consider adding a daily deals program to your integrated marketing efforts to capture more new customers and increase awareness of your business in your local community. ☑



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