

## Business Bullet ~ Make Your Business Stronger, Replace Old Habits with Something New

To keep your business profitable, you need to be proactive. If you think you are proactive, answer these questions honestly:  
...What did you say the last time someone suggested a way to change your business procedures?

...What about all those times people suggest new products or services you could sell?

...Were your first words, "It won't work," or "We can't do that" or "It will cost too much"? If so, the first thing new thing you need to try is dumping the "We can't because..." attitude. What other new things should you try? That depends, of course, on what you're doing - or not doing - now. But here are a few suggestions:

- Try a marketing method you've never tried before.
- Attend an industry conference - even if it costs a lot.
- Sign yourself up for a marketing or management seminar.
- Test market a new product or new service.
- Learn how to market online if you haven't done so before.

As entrepreneurs, our businesses' success is intimately linked to the behaviors we subconsciously adopt. We frequently become comfortable in our daily routines without realizing that some of our habits can harm the profitability of our businesses. These involuntary and automatic responses to stimuli affect our can-do attitudes and determine what we'll be able to accomplish each day.

Whether it's ignoring voice mails, being disorganized or not listening to your colleagues, your personal habits can take away from your business's forward flow. To reach your full potential, you must continually examine ways to adjust your harmful habits and remember to connect your actions with outcomes that have real and lasting value.

Habits are actions that are simply not thought through. You have the ability to modify these behaviors by paying attention to your minor actions and how they affect your business's daily operations. Learn to look for cues and patterns that can help you identify your bad habits.

**1. Become conscious of your automatic actions.** Changing your behavior is hard work. To make effective decisions based on experience rather than routine, you have to identify the actions you execute subconsciously. Create a list of habits you perform automatically during a given **business** day. Do you sleep in, telling yourself you'll make up the time? Do you allow easy-to-accomplish, lower-priority items to get in the way of more important tasks?

**2. Be realistic about the consequences of your bad habits.** Counterproductive habits can produce unnoticed negative impacts. By recognizing the repercussions of a bad habit on your business and on your customers, you can create a powerful, personal motive to change. Examine your list of habits and identify the payoff and trade-off associated with each one. Think broadly. If you continually ignore the financial nuances of your business, how does that affect your bottom line? If the trade-off associated with a habit negatively affects your everyday success, then commit yourself to changing the habit.

**3. Strengthen your resolve to stop automatic behaviors.** Your subconscious operates in automatic mode. Use your will-power to catch yourself when you're engaging in negative routine behaviors - stop immediately, then take decisive action. Use your knowledge and experience to analyze the situation and create a forward-moving, action-step response. This reminds you to always be conscious of the actions you're taking.

**4. Focus on the benefits of changing a bad habit.** To successfully change a habit, you have to find the motivation to readjust your mind-set. Clearly define and keep track of the benefits associated with changing your routine. Reinforce your new behavior by rewarding any small success that aids the development of your business. And always forgive yourself if you experience a setback.

As with any new undertaking, resistance will set in as you begin to **work** at adjusting your habits. Be patient with yourself but steadfast in your resolve. Focus on the long-term payoffs of shifting your routines, and continually reinforce behaviors that improve your productivity and the **health** of your business.

How much effect will being open to new ideas have on your business? Well, no two businesses are the same, but I can tell you that many of the things that have made businesses that we have dealt with grow continually were things we weren't sure would work until we tried them.

