

"Stop struggling with low visibility, and the high cost of weak advertising options."

Lessons Learned:

What Highly-Successful Small Business Owners Are Doing that You Can Do Too by Stacy Karacostas

I've talked to plenty of entrepreneurs who are just barely eking by right now. One of the most common complaints I hear from long-time business owners is "referrals alone are just not enough anymore."

What's really interesting is that most of them aren't doing anything different to market and grow their businesses, even though the marketplace has clearly changed.

On the other hand, I know other small business owners who've experienced unprecedented growth this year. I'm talking growth that would be considered stellar in a good economy. Even my own revenues have almost doubled again this year.

So, what are successful entrepreneurs doing differently? Based on my experience and observations here is a list of 9 things successful small business owner are doing that you can do too...

1) Forget about the state of the economy.

Pay attention to how it changes your prospect's buying behavior, but **do not let the gloom and doom get you down**. If you sell products or services that are truly helpful or useful, there will always be people willing to buy.

2) Offer something new.

If people are not buying what you're currently selling, but they used to, that's a sign something needs to change. **The knee jerk reaction is to simply cut prices. But that devalues what you offer.**

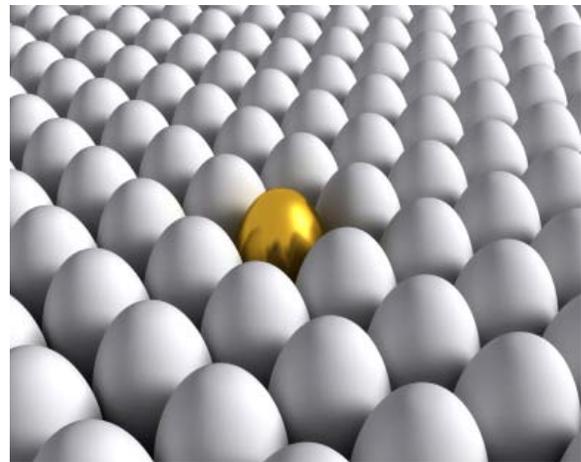
Instead try adding value by creating new packages out of products and services you already have. Or updating a current offering. Even better, bring something completely new to the table... Hold a workshop, write an ebook, sell a new product or product bundle, offer training programs, delve deeper into a specific aspect of what you already offer.

3) Stop guessing.

Find out what your prospects, clients and customers want then give it to them. Do this by surveying your people in person, by using a short, written evaluation, or **via email using a low-cost service like the Internet.**

4) Embrace technology.

The World Wide Web is no longer the Wild, Wild West, but there's still plenty of room to make your mark. And all the social networking tools make it super cheap to market your business effectively. So get out there and give it a go. You'll expand your reach, get your wisdom further out into the world, and maybe even discover it's fun.



Build your list get to all the Golden Eggs

5) Build your list.

Even before the Internet, business gurus said **"The money is in the list"**. In other words, you need a list of past and current customers, as well as a list of prospects, **that you keep in touch with**. That way get to know, like, trust and remember you.

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You can do this the old fashion way by collecting contact info over the phone or in your office or store, then sending out print materials. **Or, you can do it the modern way by having an awesome offer and sign up system on your Website, then staying in touch via email.** Or use a hybrid of the two.

6) Provide value.

The days of the pushy salesperson are going...going...gone. Nowadays people don't have extra cash burning a hole in their pocket. So they expect good value for their time AND money.

Focus less on selling your products and services and more on how you can be a helpful problem solver in all your marketing and you'll get better results.

7) Embrace mixed media marketing.

Silver bullets don't exist when it comes to marketing. Instead of focusing on one media or tactic, create a strategy and plan that uses as many as you can to reach your people.

For example, I send postcards, letters and gifts, write a weekly e-newsletter, host monthly teleseminars, post articles, audios and video online, write a [blog](#), go to live networking events and more.

8) Keep learning.

Times and technology are changing fast. It's up to you to stay on top of what's new and what's working now. **But you can't do that if you're always buried in your business.**

The Community Compass, Personal Marketing Assistant Program will help you identify your business strengths, weaknesses, and take advantage of all opportunities.

So read a new book, attend teleseminars (I host a free one each month, for example), and get yourself out to at least one non-industry specific conference each year. I attended two this year and they were so valuable I plan to go to at least that many—if not more—next year.

9) Stop doing it all yourself.

This is a biggie. The people I know who have successful, growing businesses and fulfilling lives have figured this out. And it's even truer in the Internet age.

Face it, you don't have time to become skilled at doing everything it takes to market, grow and run your business—especially online. Eventually you'll hit a wall, business growth will stop, and you'll be exhausted and burned out.

The solution? Even if you don't have the money to hire an employee you CAN afford a Virtual Assistant. Get one now and have them help you revamp your Website, set up and manage your blog or email newsletter, handle your social networking, automate your marketing and much more.

Practical Marketing Expert Stacy Karacostas specializes in taking the stress, struggle and confusion out of growing your small business. She's the author of "Putting Your Business on the Road to Success", "The Small Business Website Bible" and more than 200 articles on marketing, copywriting, sales and success.