



Small Business Monthly

The Source for Business Owners SEPTEMBER 2021

STL's Most Innovative Companies

Prospecting Using The Phone

Meet The Top Small Companies In St. Louis

FULL SPEED AHEAD

Get Inspired By The
Top Small Companies
In St. Louis

FUTURE
50
AWARDS



*Andrew Tessmer (left) and
Rick Duree, owners
of BeerSauce Shop,
one of the area's
top small businesses*

You're Invited:

One Day...A Lifetime of Change-

ST. LOUIS BUSINESS EXPO, Oct. 26, 2021

BOOTHS AVAILABLE Reserve your space 314.569.0076

www.stlexpo.com

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 12** Most Innovative Companies
- 14** Best Engineering Firms
- 16** Best Architectural Firms
- 17** Future 50 Awards

DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

- 4** Publisher's Letter
- 5** Sales Moves
- 5** Ask The Banker
- 6** Entrepreneur's Toolbox
- 6** Mastering LinkedIn
- 7** Focus On HR
- 7** No Sweat Public Speaking
- 8** High-Voltage Marketing
- 8** CultureCentric Leadership
- 9** Futureology
- 9** Financial Fitness
- 10** Technology Trends
- 11** Marketing Works
- 11** Focus On IP
- 29** Legal Matters
- 30** Value Proposition
- 30** The Extraordinary Workplace
- 31** Time With The Boss

RON AMELN, *president*
314-569-0076, ext. 100
ron@sbmon.com

PAT COATES, *vice president*
314-569-0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

**ADVERTISING OR
EDITORIAL INQUIRIES**
314-569-0076
info@sbmon.com

PHOTOGRAPHY
BILL SAWALICH, *Barlow Productions*
314-994-9990
info@barlowpro.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
\$21.50 for 12 issues.
Online: <http://store.sbmon.com>
Pat Coates
314-569-0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

OUR EDITORIAL FOCUS

Our country was founded by visionaries who believed in free enterprise through individual determination. We support that spirit and hold that the future of our area lies in the growth and development of small businesses and the efforts of entrepreneurs. We are dedicated to supporting and promoting that growth.

St. Louis Small Business Monthly is St. Louis' locally owned business publication, bringing business tips, strategies and analysis to the presidents, CEOs, owners and top executives of 16,000 businesses in the St. Louis Metropolitan region. SBM, founded in 1988, publishes every month and also provides information at www.SBMon.com and through a variety of business-related forums and events.

ST. LOUIS SMALL BUSINESS INC.

2451 Executive Dr., Suite 109
St. Charles, MO 63303
314-569-0076/314-432-7016 fax
www.sbmon.com www.stlouisbusinessexpo.com info@sbmon.com

© St. Louis Small Business Monthly 2021. All rights reserved.

FOUNDED BY

Katie Muchnick & Bill Schneider 1988
Judy Meador
Owner & Publisher 1991-2007

**Landon Hobson,
Cosmos Corporation**



Archford is hiring professionals in Wealth Management & Accounting!

We are seeking "A" players with cutting-edge talent & a passion to help others to join our growing team!

Invest in your career and your future. **Apply today:** ArchfordCapital.com/careers

Swansea, Ill. | Edwardsville, Ill. | St. Louis, Mo.

***We are honored
to be included as one of the
Future 50 Award Winners***

Each client we serve is a vital component of our success. We appreciate their continued support and trust in our team.

**ABELES
AND
HOFFMAN
P.C.**

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
AND BUSINESS CONSULTANTS

9666 Olive Blvd., Suite 625
St. Louis, MO 63132
(314) 991-4770
www.ahcpa.com

INTEGRITY. INSIGHT. SOLUTIONS.



"I'm never looking to hit home runs, if I can just hit singles year after year, that's great."

Kelly Kenter
Sitelines Inc.

CARROLLTON BANK

www.carrolltonbanking.com

© 2021, Carrollton Bank Member FDIC

Honoring 50 Fast Moving Businesses

These Businesses Have Done The Hard Things To Become Successful

I was sad to see the Olympic games end last month. It is always great watching these elite athletes go before an audience of the world and practice their crafts. It always looks so effortless to me. To watch Caeleb Dressel and Katie Ledecky swim or Sunisa Lee perform her gymnastics routines was truly inspirational.

They all make it look so effortless and easy. When we see them win their competitions and stand on the highest platform and watch their anthems, we don't really see the true story.

What we never see are the 5 a.m. wakeup calls to train each day. What we don't see are the four hours a day, six days a week of continuous swimming. What we don't see are the friends and family these athletes are giving up for months on end as they travel thousands of miles to train. What we don't see are injuries, self-doubt, the childhoods put on hold, etc., to be the best in the world. These are the real reasons these athletes are standing on the podium.

Business owners have a lot in common with these athletes.

According to Bloomberg, eight out of 10 entrepreneurs who start a business fail within the first 18 months. A whopping 80% crash and burn. Owning a business is not easy.

This month we are honored to feature our latest class of the Future50, 50 of the up-and-coming businesses in the St. Louis area. We are proud to introduce them to you, and we know you'll be hearing more from them in the future.

As you read through their stories (pages 17-28) you might also get a sense that this honor and their success have come easily. Don't make that mistake. Just like Olympic athletes,

these entrepreneurs have had to do the hard, difficult things to earn success.

Over the years...

- They've made the calls they were afraid to make.
- They've gotten up earlier than they wanted to.
- They've given more than they've received in return right away.
- They've led when no one else was following yet.
- They've made mistakes and looked like idiots.
- They've tried and failed and tried again.
- They've had to be kind to people who were cruel to them.
- They've risked their finances and financial future.
- They've had to keep moving forward when they had no idea what was in front of them.
- They've missed family events because their best client needed help.

Those are just a few of the hard things these outstanding owners have done. To succeed, they've had to do these hard things. The things no one else was willing to do. Just like the Olympic athletes.

We are honoring them this month not only for their success and for their future success — we are honoring them for the discipline, focus and perseverance that it took to become a success.

At the end of the day, that is really what it is all about. It's not about Caeleb Dressel's 50 seconds in the pool during the Olympics. It is really about the years of training and dedication he put into getting there. If he had not put in the work, he wouldn't have even been at the Olympics.

Congratulations to all of our outstanding award winners. ■

Ron

Our team of local lenders know that
there's nothing
small about your Business.

Call Jackie today to discuss your
big plans for your small business.



Lending Options for
Real Estate | Commercial | Industrial

Jackie Gates
jackie.gates@royalbanksnet.com
(314)212-1549



Investing in our
Communities,
One Business at a Time.
(314) 212-1500
www.royalbanksofmo.com

Economic Recovery Is Here!



We can help you buy a business,
sell a business, or start a new business.

Call 314.726.1000 to speak with an M&A or business advisory attorney.



DANNA MCKITTRICK, P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Voted 2021 Best Law Firm

314.726.1000

dannamckittrick.com

The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements.

Prospecting Using The Phone



When you need to pick up the phone to make a prospecting call, do you feel dread? Or determination?

The phone has not gone out of style. It's still a great tool for prospecting and really connecting with people. I'd like to share nine strategies to use the phone and see sales results.

1. Use it.

That's right, you can't be good at something you never practice. One of the biggest differences I find between those who have success with the phone and those who don't is that the latter simply aren't using it.

The telephone is like a muscle, and you've got to use it enough to strengthen it and get into a repetition.

2. It's all about the first five seconds.

The first five seconds of your phone call is going to determine whether or not that prospect will engage with you.

When you sit there and waste time by saying, "Oh, how was your weekend? How is the weather there?", those questions aren't fooling anyone. You're telling them you're a salesperson and you're trying to bug them. You may think you're softening them up, but in actuality you're turning them off.

Don't use opening lines. Instead, use the first five seconds to engage the prospect. How? Keep reading.

3. Engage the prospect.

Make the call all about them. You've got to engage them with a question or statement that is relevant and pertinent to them.

Ask yourself, "Am I bringing something of value to this prospect?"

Aim to bring new insight to your prospecting calls. That means doing your homework and, at times, educating yourself in a specific area.

4. It's not about you.

Making your call about them goes hand in hand with taking yourself out of the

picture. You are not the star of the show on this call.

When you start the call by touting your own successes (e.g., "Oh, we've done this, and we've done that"), the conversation becomes too much about you.

Of course, sharing your successes is fine, but not in the first 15 or 20 seconds of the phone call. You must set yourself up to earn the right to share those kinds of statements. Avoid coming right out of the chute and sharing that information.

5. Use voicemail.

Careful! Don't use voicemail to give them enough information to make a decision without you. Use voicemail to create interest.

Now, are they going to call you back? They're not going to call you back, you know that. But what you're doing is leaving a significant nugget of information so that the next time you connect with them, they may just take your call.

6. Be prepared with three questions and two statements.

If you want to engage a prospect on your next prospecting phone call, try a series of questions. That means you've prepared at least three questions and two statements you can share. Be sure that all questions and statements are engaging and pertinent to the prospect.

What does this kind of preparation accomplish? It helps give you confidence that you will be able to carry on a conversation with them. If you only have a defined script and that's all you're working from, you're going to run out of things to add to the conversation. In addition, you're never going to develop confidence.

You may have a script that captures ideas and prompts, but it's all about having a genuine conversation and listening to their needs.

7. Your personality.

Your personality must come through during that phone call. I'm not saying you need to be off-the-chart exuberant, but

use your unique personality. I show my personality each week through YouTube videos, sharing via this blog, and other social media. It's helping you to stay engaged with me.

8. Follow up.

You've got to have a follow-up process because you know it isn't going to happen with one phone call. It isn't going to happen with one voicemail or one email.

Prospecting using the phone includes having a follow-up process: a regular sequence that you can replicate. You build out a cadence, find your flow and stick to it.

9. Don't stop.

Let's not kid ourselves. You can have hours, days, even weeks where phone calls aren't going anywhere, but don't stop. Don't give up because you can also have periods where you're having incredible success on the phone.

I feel that I've saved the best point for last. This is so important.

I see a lot of salespeople throw in the towel. They make a couple of phone calls and then stop. They either call a person once or twice and fail to reach them, or the first call doesn't go spectacularly. As a result, these salespeople decide, "The prospect must not be interested." No, don't stop!

Or they may call a hundred people on their prospecting list, but not get the results they want, so they stop. Either way, don't check out. Keep it going. I challenge you to apply these strategies to your calls this week. Set some goals for how many calls you want to make today or before Friday. Write your goal down, keep these tips in mind, and take your prospecting game to the next level. ■

Mark Hunter, of *The Sales Hunter* sales motivation blog, is the author of "High-Profit Prospecting: Powerful Strategies to Find the Best Leads and Drive Breakthrough Sales Results."

ASK THE BANKER

Presented by:



Should I Choose A SBA Loan Or Conventional Loan?

There may be some circumstances in the life cycle of a business when a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan will be the best opportunity to obtain credit. For instance, a start-up business without a proven track record of operations may find its only access to credit would be with a SBA loan. Some companies may need a SBA loan because they have inadequate collateral for a traditional conventional loan. Generally, a SBA loan will have higher fees and interest rates reflecting the perceived additional risk in the credit. A borrower may find the paperwork and closing requirements a little more cumbersome with a SBA loan; however, the benefits of having access to credit that may not otherwise be available should mitigate this challenge. Whichever loan fits your company best, it is important to remember that the ability to service and repay the debt from the cash flow of the business is the key to obtaining these loans. This is why a business plan with well thought out projections and assumptions is so important.

How can I improve my business' cash flow?

A business that has a budget laid out in their business plan and frequently compares the actual operating results to their projections will be able to identify ways to improve their cash flows. One suggestion I have is staying on top of your receivables. Send out invoices quickly and perhaps offer discounts to pay sooner. I would also suggest the same with your payables and stretch them if you can, or determine if discounts are available for early payment. Make sure to analyze your pricing compared to your competition at least quarterly and determine if prices can be adjusted to either increase sales or improve margins. Inventory should be reviewed to see if certain products are moving faster than others. Consider discounts on items that are not moving quickly to improve the inventory turn. ■



Answers provided by Patrick Higgins, Vice President, Commercial Lending at Simmons Bank. He can be reached at 314.569.7253 or pat.higgins@simmonsbank.com. The views in this article are those of Patrick Higgins individually and do not reflect those of Simmons Bank.

THANK YOU!

To our Employees and Clients for helping us earn the Future50 Award in 2021

Mid Rivers Insurance is an Independent Insurance Agency

Representing a single company limits eligibility, coverage, and price. Because of this, we formed Mid Rivers Insurance as an independent insurance agency, representing many top-rated insurance companies.

Representing several insurance companies gives our agents, and our customers, more choices and peace of mind when insuring their cars, homes, businesses, and other property they might have.



636.442.4040

midriversinsurance.com

FUTURE
50
AWARDS

MASTERING LINKEDIN

BY KATHY BERNARD

Close The Deal Through A Video Chat Sent Through LinkedIn Messaging



If you've ever started a great conversation with a prospect through LinkedIn messaging, you'll love LinkedIn's new video meeting link feature that will let you take such a message to the next level.

Through the new feature available on desktop or mobile, you can instantly generate a free video meeting link either directly on LinkedIn or through Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

To create and share a video meeting link through a LinkedIn message:

- Click the Messaging icon at the top of your LinkedIn homepage.

- Click on an existing conversation or start a new conversation.

- Click the Video meeting icon at the top of the messaging window. From the pop-up, select Send instant meeting link to start an immediate session, or Schedule meeting for later.

- Select LinkedIn, Microsoft Teams or Zoom to create a video meeting link. If you select Zoom or Microsoft Teams, sign into their site or create an account. Once you're linked to a third-party app, you shouldn't have to sign into that site again for future messages.

- If you select Schedule meeting for later, select the date, duration and time zone you want.

While group meetings will be added later in LinkedIn, you can only host an individual meeting with one other member right now. But even if it's just video chatting with one person, this new tool might just be the best way to close the deal with your new prospect on LinkedIn! ■

Kathy Bernard (kathy@wiseru.com), CEO of WiserU.com, is a St. Louis-based LinkedIn expert/trainer who equips businesses to maximize LinkedIn for sales, marketing, or fundraising.

ENTREPRENEUR'S TOOLBOX

BY JAMES CANADA



Company Culture and the Importance of Teamwork

In our previous segment on Results-Based Performance, The Performance Standards we've discussed — those based on the five Mega-Processes (People, Knowledge, Sales, Service, and Culture) — define performance at the most senior levels. For instance, "Senior Manager" means managers with four or five years of experience. Our highest expectations are usually reserved for the most senior people, but we also hope that Performance Standards will push less-tenured people to new levels of achievement. As we continually establish performance expectations, our definitions and benchmarks will solidify. For now, they are based on our best-educated assumptions.

Of the five Mega-Processes, none is more important than Culture. But it also is the only one that doesn't have quantifiable measures. Instead, Culture is comprised of several elements, some of which cross into the other Mega-Processes. For instance:

- **Service and Knowledge** — Individuals at the Consultant level must achieve a rating of "meets expectations" or above in the Mega-Processes of Service and Knowledge in their annual performance reviews.

- **Discipline** — Culture cannot be maximized if management is unable to follow and enforce company methodologies and policies. Senior Managers, Managers, and Consultants will be required to complete 40 hours of CPE training each year.

- **Personal Development** — A positive cul-

ture is contingent on individuals maximizing their potential and realizing their goals. Employees at the Consultant level must hit the personal and professional development goals from their annual Performance Planning Document.

- **Client Relationships** — A company's internal culture is only as good as its external or client-facing culture. Each person at the Consultant level will be expected to score a 4 or higher on client satisfaction surveys.

- **Leadership** — Culture comes from the top down. Senior Managers and Managers will be expected to mentor one staff member and manage staff relationships in a manner that achieves a "meets requirements" in a 360-degree review process.

Teamwork is also a critical part of culture. Consultants work in revenue teams, pursuit teams and engagement teams. They collaborate with colleagues throughout the firm and even with clients. The Performance Standards will consider the attributes necessary to be a team player — and compensation not only will reflect individual performance, but also the success of the team as a whole.

■

James H. Canada is managing partner/CEO for Alliance Technologies LLC, ITEN mentor and author of "Corporate to Entrepreneur: Strategies for Success." Contact Jim at james.canada@alliancetechnologiesllc.com, 636-734-2337 or www.alliancetechnologiesllc.com.

Supercharge your Online Presence & Boost Revenue in 2022

Beanstalk

314-736-4430 beanstalkwebsolutions.com

Come see us at Booth #206 at the St. Louis Business Expo

Tuesday, October 26



Having A Hard Time Hiring And Retaining Talent? Flexibility Might Be the Key

As employers, many of us find ourselves asking, “What’s Next?” Whether we have a team of 5, 50 or 500, we are challenged by the indelible mark of COVID-19 as we rebuild our businesses and our workforces. Major shifts on how, when and where work gets done, challenge us to rethink the old, comfortable normal and reinvent our workplaces and policies.

Let’s start with this simple fact: if your thinking has shifted to “now what?” it means your business has survived. You have pivoted, you have adapted, you have continued to fulfill the needs of your customers and communities. As we move from survival mode to building our next normal, we find ourselves facing a whole new set of challenges, including an incredibly tight labor market, and shifting expectations around the work environment.

Even as the economy has come roaring back, many small businesses are struggling to find and retain talent. This point was punctuated as I drove by my local pizza place and saw a help wanted sign for \$17 per hour. While compensation has always been a key driver in hiring and retention, it is certainly not the only factor on which we can compete for talent. As business owners and leaders, there are now once-in-a-career opportunities to transform the workplace to be more fun, more flexible, more collaborative, more meaningful, and ultimately more productive.

The pandemic has pulled back the curtain on work/life balance in a way that demands rethinking if we hope to hire and retain a strong team in this post-pandemic world. Women were among the hardest hit, with 1.8 million fewer women in the labor force today than before the pandemic. Offering flexibility could be a key factor in luring talent back into the workforce and helping your company differentiate in the tight labor market.

Flexible work can take on many forms, but it starts with the basics. You must first



understand the needs of your customers and ensure you are meeting them to keep your business running. Establish your core business hours and determine when it is essential to have your team together. Listen to your employees. Hear what they are saying that would help create engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Now, get creative about the best ways to get work done.

■ Can you offer full-time remote work or a hybrid solution between work at home and in the office? This has been a big win for many of our teams that are not customer facing.

■ Can you establish guardrails around meetings times? One of our teams, primarily made up of single or working parents of young children, agreed to not schedule meetings before 9 am or after 4pm to allow them the flexibility they needed to juggle school drop off and pick up.

■ Does the work have to be completed

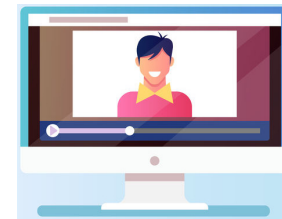
within the structure of a “normal” work day? Can you create new options? For the early riser or the late-night genius can their work be done outside of the 9-5 confines? Allowing people to get their work done in concert with the actual schedule of their lives can create great balance.

■ We’ve also seen some of our leaders come up with creative solutions in terms of hiring, and paying, workers for 4 days per week to accommodate for greater work/life balance. In addition, we have hybrid teams of full-time staff and contractors, where the team can capitalize on talent as needed and contractors obtain the flexibility needed in their lives.

Now is a unique opportunity to reset the way work gets done. Embrace it. We can reshape our businesses and rebuild our workforces for the future. ■

Julie Tuggle-Nguyen is EVP of Human Resources, Midwest BankCentre

Virtual Video Meeting Tip: BackGrounds!



We are all participating in virtual video meetings these days and **BACKGROUNDS Matter!** The **First Thing** people look at when joining online meetings is your **face**. The **Second Thing** is your **BACKGROUND**.

Attendees notice and ponder pictures, trophies and books on shelves. “Who’s in the picture?” “Who won that trophy and for what activity?” “What are the titles of those books?” These items distract your viewers. I have been on video meetings where people are sitting directly in front of a window. The sun is shining so brightly on them that I can hardly see them. Others sit below their ceiling fans. It looks like a helicopter is going to land! Others appear to have lamps growing out of their heads.

Here’s a Fact about Presentations:

- You cannot multitask.
- If people are looking at your background, they are not looking at you.

That’s Important because:

- Non-Verbal Communication surpasses Verbal Communication. People believe what they see. The audience should be looking at YOU!

The best example I can give for this fact comes from cable news channels.

They all do it. Have you seen a ticker tape streaming across the bottom of the screen? If you are reading that ticker tape, you have no idea what the newscaster is talking about. To prove my point, as soon as the commercial comes on, the ticker tape is gone. Advertisers would never pay for you not to see and hear their ads.

For video backgrounds think plain and simple: Zen-like. **The best background is the one nobody notices!**

Use these tips when attending your next virtual meeting and I guarantee it will be absolutely positively, **NO SWEAT!**

Till next time. Fred Miller, **NO SWEAT** Public Speaking! ■



Fred Miller (fred@NoSweatPublicSpeaking.com) is a Speaker, International Coach and Author. Businesses and individuals hire him to improve their public speaking and presentation skills.



Don't Be Afraid Of Failure

I'm always intrigued when underperforming businesses become so scared of failure that they avoid taking any chances at all – only to discover that they've become a dreary model for mediocrity rather than the efficient, productive organizations they set out to be.

What their leaders sometimes fail to see is that failure – even repeated failure – when used intelligently can frequently yield an invaluable opportunity for the type of leadership that inspires engaged workforces that create and execute successful platforms.

Notably many of the world's most successful entrepreneurs encountered significant setbacks early in their careers. They faced jeers from competitors, criticism from colleagues, failed ideas, and rank-and-file hostility, yet remained unfazed.

Truly “successful” leaders and entrepreneurs recognize that setbacks are opportunities for growth and improvement. Such leaders foster in their people the belief that success is a mindset founded on the conviction that they will achieve their objectives largely as a consequence of mistakes they make along the way. The business world regularly credits those teams that, when confronted with multiple difficulties or outright company failures, learned from their errors, matured from their misfortunes and battled even harder to achieve their goals.

Having as much trust in their followers as they have in their own visions is essential for leaders. My counsel to any leader is to strive for greatness while recognizing, even anticipating, the possibility of failure. Learn from mistakes; remain positive and appreciative; and continue to push and inspire your team to greater success. If you do so on a continuous basis, you will develop a culture in which people desire to work because they are certain they will eventually – and unquestionably – succeed. ■

Jonathan Jones (Jonathan.jones@vistagechair.com or 314-608-0783) is a CEO peer group chair/coach for Vistage International.



Client-Attracting Lessons From A Legendary Headline

Here are two headlines, one a winner, the other a dud.

Headline #1: “The Man Who Simplified English”

Headline #2: “Do You Make These Mistakes in English?”

The winning ad ran for decades atop an advertisement for a book called “How to Master Good English in 15 Minutes a Day.” The book was written by Sherwood Cody (the man who simplified English). According to the ad, Cody developed a new and simpler way to learn grammar.

The ad with the winning headline sold mountains of books.

The other headline was tested against the winner. But it generated half as many sales as the winner so it landed in the trash bin.

Which is which? Which headline generated twice as many sales as the other?

The answer: “Do You Make These Mistakes in English.”

A copywriter named Max Sackheim wrote that headline and ad copy. It was one of the most successful direct response advertisements ever. And it reveals lessons that can help you write better client-attracting copy.

Why was one headline so much better than the other?

Because “The Man Who Simplified English” screams “Look at me!” It's all about Sherwin Cody. The winning headline was about the prospect.

The great adman and copywriter John Caples dissects the competing headlines in his book “Making Ads Pay – Timeless Tips for Successful Copywriting.”

Caples says the “The Man Who Simplified English” is written “...from the wrong angle.”

Caples calls this “manufacturer's copy” because it emphasizes the manufacturer, the seller.



“The manufacturer is simply saying, ‘Look at me! Look at what I did! Look at what a great guy I am,’ Caples writes.

Caples calls the winning headline “self-interest copy” because it reflects the prospect's interest.

It speaks directly to the prospect and implies valuable information will follow.

Your copy will captivate prospects if it reflects their story.

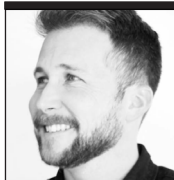
Small business marketers often get this wrong. They create content that screams “Look at me!” instead of copy that stars the prospect.

The best marketing shines the spotlight

on the prospect. It reflects their experience. It crafts a story they can relate to. It invites them to say, “Yeah! That's me.”

When prospects relate to your headlines and stories, you captivate them. They itch to know what happens next. They read on. They're more likely to buy. ■

Tom Ruwitch is the CSO (Chief Story Officer) at Story Power Marketing and the author of a free eBook, “Hall of Fame Advertisements Reveal: 5 Storytelling Secrets to Captivate Prospects and Inspire Them to Buy,” ~ available for immediate download at StoryPowerMarketing.com/5secrets.



Stop Making Sense. Look! Choo-Choo!

It's hot out, and I'm standing just feet from the Norfolk Southern St. Louis line. Even though it is not in view, you can already hear far off horns of an approaching diesel engine. My domicile is close to the line, and since I have been working from my house more often over the past 18 months, I have become familiar with this sound about 11 times each day.

On any given day, for at least one of those 11 times, I find myself standing where I am now — right next to the line. It is not because I have ever had an affinity for trains. In fact, for most of my life, I found freight trains to be an annoyance.

The reason I am standing among the thistles on July-hot rocks is because of the pleading of the toddler with whom I dwell. This same heat-generating toddler is presently on my shoulders. Atticus (two-years-old) is fascinated with the “choo-choo.” When he hears something that even sounds remotely like a train, no matter where we are, he wants to get as close as possible. He wants to feel it rumble. The quality of his noise lexicon changes as the different cars pass. Some hiss. Some rattle. Some whoosh.

Every train is joy. Every train is chocolate-chip, triple-dip ice cream. It is magical. Every. Single. Time.

This level of excitement conflicts with my western educated adult brain. I have curated a taxonomy for joyful things and serious things. I have separated my body from my mind. My categorizations make it easier to optimize, to find patterns, and to rationalize.

But as the great world spins ever-increasing complexities, I have been forced into being more teachable. Within me, there is an unlearning taking place. There is something here (standing next to the railroad tracks) that makes sense at a deeper level of integration than I have ever experienced. It so happens that I am being shown this meaning through the behavior of a human with far fewer moons.

(I must admit I am cynical of the mo-



tivations of those who use their children as the basis for business bromides. The insight can usually be reduced to either, “Gully, kids say the darnedest things” to “Look at what a super-parent I can be!” Thankfully, I do not suffer either of those particular delusions. Not generally and, at least, not in this column.)

I did want to share this moment with you, because I think it may be something for more than just me.

We often think back on childhood with a kind of fondness. There is awe around every corner. We become flush with a nostalgia. Many of us begin to only select the memories that will prop up our “it was the best of times” thesis.

However, it is also true that, for a child, the world can be tyrannical and terrifying — both in its form and its behavior. Nothing is your size. Nothing makes sense. Things are bright, loud, and full of random restrictions.

Those conditions likely sound familiar. I think it is how a lot of us are feeling right now. Just when we think we have

accommodated, we find a new reason for (seemingly righteous) anxiety.

As an antidote to this anxiety, I offer a compelling mindset. It runs to the big, scary thing and not from it. It has to do with embracing the uncertainty and being curious of its contour and shape. It is getting as close as you can and loving fullness of even the things that, at first, frighten us. This mindset takes comfort in realizing that you have faced the unprecedented before. You have been surrounded by a world that does not make sense. And you made it.

Today, here is what I am offering to myself, and, by extension, you:

“Stop making sense. Stop optimizing. Stop forcing order. Do not give into the siren song of crackpot realism. You really don't know. It's all right. No one does. LOOK! CHOOO-CHOOOOO!” ■

Jeremy Nulik (jeremy@bigwidesky.com) is evangelist prime at bigwidesky, a human business consultancy, in St. Louis, Mo.

Steady Improvements Fuel Successful Growth Strategies

While there may be situations that call for drastic measures, it's rare that a single strategic move will be enough to erase unfavorable market developments, operational challenges or other issues. In most cases, a series of subtle changes, backed by a well-thought-out plan, are the key to improving your company's growth trajectory.

Start by Understanding the Issues

An important early step is conducting an assessment to understand where your organization is today and the necessary steps to improve its performance. A variety of tools are available to help your stakeholders understand the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. While the most effective tool will vary according to the specific situation, each framework is designed to provide insights to help management identify the appropriate actions to take in response.

Planning the Implementation

The response or implementation plan needs to be practical. As action items are evaluated, it's important to understand whether the organization can carry out those steps easily, or whether you will need to enhance your processes or systems to do so. Similarly, it is important not to develop a growth strategy within organizational silos.

Phased Approach

It's important to implement in well-defined phases — such as 30, 60 and 90 days. Each phase should be viewed as a proof-of-value test in which the company can evaluate its effects before moving on to a new phase.

Data Challenges

Management and functional leaders need to agree on the metrics that support not only the growth strategy, but also your organization's performance going forward. And if current processes and tools can't provide that information, it may be prudent to consider updating processes with robotic process automation (RPA) or integrated, cloud-based solutions that can provide real-time data.

An Ongoing Effort

Focusing on today and tomorrow should be a consistent process in which understanding short-term operating wins and losses is balanced with looking at the marketplace and customer needs. With this mindset, you can develop, implement and maintain a growth strategy that serves your company and its stakeholders effectively. ■

Karen Stern, CPA, (karen.stern@armaninoLLP.com), partner, Armanino, provides tax and accounting services for companies ranging from start-ups to \$20 million in revenue.

Prior to joining Armanino, Karen was a partner and practice leader for Brown Smith Wallace's Entrepreneurial Services Group.



Are You Ready For Teams And SharePoint? Part Two of Two

BY SCOTT M. LEWIS

There are many discussions these days when it comes to Office 365, SharePoint and Teams. Teams and SharePoint do play specific roles but different roles within the Office 365 environment. These differences may not be apparent to the average user, and be honest, most technical people sometimes don't understand how the two programs work together. With the growing popularity of Teams, I'm going to clear some of the confusion and outline how Microsoft has integrated Teams and SharePoint platforms and the improved roles they can play within your organization.

Last month we discussed some of the limitations. An additional limitation could be limitations on storage. Storage allocations will depend on which subscription plan you are on; for example, a business on a Business Basic plan is limited to 1TB of storage, plus 10GB per license purchased. However, you get 25TB per site or group on the Business Basic plan for teams' files. These limitations could mean that for historical or archival reasons, you don't want to use Teams and SharePoint for a long-term historical data archive process. Historical or Archival data should be offloaded to a local file storage system that can be backed up and managed on in-house resources.

There are some other limitations in teams and compatibility with different browsers, such as Firefox or Google Chrome. The ability to share content or give control to someone else or incoming video feeds could be limited based on how the user is connecting to the session. The Teams portal is considered the most effective if you are a presenter or speaker verse a web browser. However, Microsoft is trying to improve Teams; in May of 2020, they increased the number of active speakers from 4 to 9. The bottom line is that Teams is not perfect, but it is getting better with every release.

Now, the big question is, what do you need to do to prepare for an Office 365 migration? One of the first steps is to decide which part of Office 365 you will use, Office, Teams, Skype, or the VoIP solutions. Once you know which part of the Office 365 suite you will use, you can plan what infrastructure changes will be required to determine if a Hybrid migration is best or if a full Microsoft 365 migration is the right solution. As part of the initial planning processes, you will need to map your Active Directory, and this might already be done if you have already partially migrated email to Office 365. However, you will still need to map out the synchronization of Exchange and setup SharePoint and Teams

file structures and content to SharePoint Online. One of the most critical decisions is setting up user computers and mobile devices and validating the migration once it is complete.

Microsoft Office 365 has an Office 365 Deployment Readiness tool, an excellent tool for mapping out your complete migration. The Deployment Readiness tool is excellent if you don't have the technical expertise to map out your current active directory settings and your domain settings. The Deployment Readiness tool will point you in the right technical direction and help you configure your system and the Office 365 environment for your migration.

When setting up your SharePoint environment through the Administration Center, you will have to be prepared; some decisions may be difficult to change later and require you to redo your implementation. These configuration items include your global site collection settings, Internet, Intranet, and Extranet configurations if they apply, along with profile and One drive settings. The administration center can also manage the site and user permissions, the site's overall look, navigation, search, and social tagging. Take the time to consider all these items before you start your implementation; it will save you time, money, and headaches later.

When planning your end-user experience, make sure that you take your time and think through this process. Keep in mind that some users might access through a web browser, such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome, or even Apple Safari. While others will connect to the Office or Teams portal, they may have a whole different set of questions. Keep in mind if you are on a legacy Microsoft Office version or desktop, when you go to Office 365, you will be on the latest and greatest. The new versions of the software will create user confusion and maybe some negative feedback, so hold fast; they will learn it and get used to it.

As with anything, planning is critical, preparation is critical, documentation is critical. Hence, it is worth doing these things and ensuring that you have a smooth transition and create a positive experience. Microsoft has published many planning guides and information on migrating to Office 365 and how to prepare. You could opt-out to reading the guides and watch the videos if you prefer, but do one or the other, which will help your migration go smoothly.

You can imagine a long list of mistakes and pitfalls that directly impact the success and happiness of Office 365 migrations. These migrations can be difficult and com-

plicated, so having an idea of the common mistakes will help you avoid them when deciding to migrate. According to Migration Monster, here are some of the more common mistakes you can avoid:

■ As with any successful project, who you have lead is critical to the success of the project. Leadership will directly impact the outcome and the satisfaction of the project.

■ Audit your systems, knowing what you have and how it is currently configured will make the whole process easier to design. Most organizations that have been in business for an extended period will have a lot of information, email, and historical data? One of the best practices before a migration is started is establishing archiving and retention policies that dictate where and when archiving old data is required and how much of that data will move to the Office 365 and Teams environments. Did you know that 95% of saved data is never accessed? In preparation for an Office 365 migration, it is a great time to archive email, accounting data, saved files and folders, just general archiving, and clean up all your stored data. Taking the time to do this step will result in cost savings for the migration and because Microsoft, at some point, does charge you for the volume of data they are storing.

■ Involve a cross-section of your employees and departments. A migration to Office 365, Teams / SharePoint will not be seamless; it will affect all your employees' manner and workflow. Including them in the process will lower the surprising effect, get additional setup information and reduce the disgruntled employee with the new processes.

■ Planning, don't rush; make sure it is right. The importance of planning is often overlooked or not done thoroughly, resulting in a less than satisfied result with the project. Fixing it or doing it twice costs money and delays the benefits of why you wanted to migrate to Office 365 in the first place.

■ Training is critical, and don't make the mistake with the perception that people will figure it out. Some may, but the general user will struggle with the migration if there is not good training documentation available. In most cases, this will affect just about every part of their job, from getting and sending an email, finding documents, and attending meetings. One suggestion would be to identify what parts of Office 365 you will use and then find the free videos published by Microsoft and start sending these out to the users to start preparing for the transition. At least you have a video library that you can point people to when

the migration happens so they can do an easy refresher.

■ Test, Test, and then test your Migration. Testing will ensure that people can get to their email, files, and other resources needed after the test migration. It provides a window of opportunity to fix and refine work processes, and most importantly, make sure that your permissions and security are set up correctly.

■ Maintaining security and compliance is a big one; many mistakes you can make that are forgivable but exposing sensitive data are not one of them.

■ Why is it so slow? I thought it was going to be faster? Network Bandwidth, we have all heard the comments; the system was faster when it was in-house or in a Hybrid cloud. I have designed over a thousand hybrid systems, and they are great because they make up for insufficient bandwidth, internet congestion, large files, and other bandwidth-related issues. However, if you are going to go to a full cloud solution, make sure that you have your bandwidth in check because that will directly impact the end-user experience. Ensure that if at all possible, you are on a business fiber connection and have matched speeds, i.e., 100 by 100 or 200 by 200; this will help your user's happiness with the new environment. Also, it would help if you considered failover. If that Internet connection goes down, you'll need a secondary connection because you will be utterly dependent on your connection and the speed of your connection.

In my opinion, Microsoft Team's and SharePoint are the clear front runners for future online collaboration and workspace. However, there are many options, and it is essential to consider which option will be the right fit for your workspace and your business. ■

Scott Lewis is the President and CEO of Winning Technologies Group of Companies, including Liberty One Software. Scott has more than 36 years of experience in the technology industry and is a nationally recognized speaker and author on technology subjects. Scott has worked with hundreds of large and small businesses to empower them to use technology to improve work processes, increase productivity, and reduce costs. Scott has designed thousands of systems for large, medium, and small companies. Learn more about Winning Technologies at www.winningtech.com or call 877-379-8279. To learn more about Business Manager 365, visit www.businessmanager365.com.





It's Not How You Want to Sell. It's How Your Customers Want to Buy.

You've got a great product or service, developed a marketing message that reads like poetry, created an eye-catching logo and attention-getting packaging, done everything you can think of to spread the word . . . but you're just not seeing the results you were hoping for.

It's easy to get caught up in all the details of what makes your product exciting and special and become hyper-focused on your brand, but here's the thing: Nobody cares about your brand (yet). It's not how you want to sell; it's how your customers want to buy. Sometimes, it's important to take a step back and consider how you can reach your audience where and when it matters most – during the decision-making process of their customer buyer journeys. What is it they want to hear?

You've no doubt heard about the customer buyer journey, but it's surprising how few companies take the time to understand what truly motivates their customers and inspires them to take action. The customer buyer journey should be the foundation of your marketing program. During each stage of the buyer journey, your prospects (and customers) will need a different message to move them to the next step.

The journey is straightforward: Awareness > consideration > decision > success. You don't need to overthink this. Put yourself in their shoes – what do they care about at each step? Use key elements from your marketing plan to develop a messaging platform that gives customers and potential customers everything they need to know to make positive buying decisions during every step of their buying journeys.

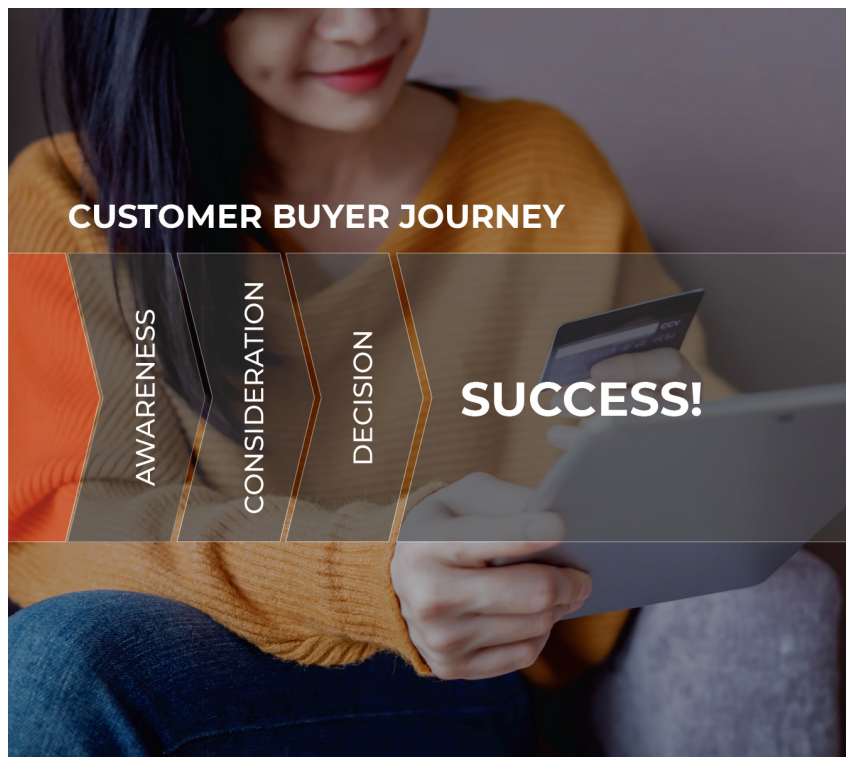
Part of your messag-

ing platform should include a content program (that may include blogs, email blasts, podcasts, social media, and more) that allows you to create campaigns to engage your audience, inspire them to action, and reinforce your brand message. Remember, every customer touchpoint is an opportunity to build brand satisfaction and loyalty.

Now that you're building some momentum take a quick step back, catch your breath, and make sure you are making the most of every dollar you are investing. Ask yourself, "Is every message we are creating designed to inspire buyers on their customer journeys?" And, "Is everything we are doing helping us to get to where we want to be?"

It's a lot to think about. But there's a lot to be gained. As a marketer, understanding the customer buyer journey is important and can be inspiring. Ultimately, it's a great way to set your course for success. ■

Dan Klein is the Managing Partner at Spoke Marketing. Spoke Marketing (www.spokemarketing.com) provides fully-integrated marketing and sales programs that define and activate the customer buyer journey.



Top 3 Intellectual Property Mistakes Made By Small Businesses

Launching a new business can be a scary task for even the most passionate entrepreneur. As can be maintaining a growing team and operations for more established small and family owned businesses. Both the hours and the to-do lists are long and arduous. Some mistakes are bound to happen. One of the most common mistakes small businesses make is failing to recognize the importance of intellectual property (IP) to the success of the company. Here are some of the most frequent missteps that small business make, and how they can be avoided.

Lack of Overall IP Strategy

Companies often have detailed business, marketing and funding plans, but may not develop an IP strategy to protect arguably the most valuable aspect of their business. A solid IP strategy should include a listing of assets the business currently has, a plan for when and how to protect those assets, and a plan for how to protect the business in IP litigation.

One action that is often overlooked by small businesses is to research their existing competition. Research isn't just critical to discovering similar technology or offerings already available to the public when trying to protect your own IP, but it is crucial for a small business to be confident they are not infringing upon another's IP rights. An IP attorney can conduct clearance searches or advise a business on potential infringement issues.

DIY Approach to IP

Most small businesses are cost conscience, especially at the outset. It can be tempting for these businesses to perform their own research, however, fortifying these rights requires appropriate guidance from a qualified IP professional. General knowledge of IP may point a business owner in the right direction, but it won't be able to answer the detailed questions of their specific business or exactly what aspects can be protected under the law.

A consultation with an IP attorney assists in laying the foundation of any IP rights the business will seek to secure, and will arm the business with the knowledge they need to establish an IP strategy.

Improper Documentation

Often the key to getting a small business off the ground can be finding the right investors and the highest quality suppliers. However, identifying such vendors may require disclosing certain features of a product, which can be fatal to IP rights. When meeting with third parties, it is essential that a proper non-disclosure agreement (NDA) be in place to protect a business's IP rights.

Other concerns include having employment contracts with terms that obligate the employee to keep confidential the proprietary information of the business, both during and after employment. Additionally, proper employee assignment documents should be used to transfer the IP rights from the employee to the business itself.

Standard NDA, employment and assignment forms are a good starting point, but companies should seek the assistance of an IP attorney to tailor these documents to the specific business.

Being proactive and meeting with a qualified IP attorney to determine a business's IP assets and develop a plan of action is essential. In so doing, a business can gain significant value from the IP assets it creates and can protect itself from potential exposure to third-party infringement. It is a worthwhile expenditure to retain IP counsel to ensure you are taking appropriate action at the appropriate time. The success of your business depends on it. ■

Jim Heinen, Jr., is partner and leader of Armstrong Teasdale's Intellectual Property practice group. In his legal practice, Jim focuses on the preparation and prosecution of U.S. and foreign patent applications for those in a broad range of diverse technologies. He can be reached at jheinen@atllp.com and 314.259.4753.

Jacob Mueller is a patent attorney in the firm's Intellectual Property practice group. Registered to practice before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, his main focus is on the preparation and prosecution of patent applications in the aerospace and mechanical arts. In 2021, he was recognized as a finalist for Best IP Attorney by St. Louis Small Business Monthly. He can be reached at jmueller@atllp.com and 314.552.6618.



Most Innovative Companies

Want to get your business to the next level? Innovation is the key. The following were voted to have the Most Innovative Companies in St. Louis. *Make sure you check out the Awards page at www.sbmon.com to stay up to date with other Best in Business nominations for 2021.*

COMPANY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	
Abstrakt Marketing Group	314.526.0381 abstraktmg.com	● 701 N. 1st St., #101 St. Louis, MO 63102
ATB Technologies	314.878.4166 atb-tech.com	● 14567 N. Outer 40 Rd., #525 Chesterfield, MO 63017
Atomicdust	314.241.2866 atomicdust.com	● 3021 Locust St. St. Louis, MO 63103
Beanstalk Web Solutions	314.736.4430 beanstalkwebsolutions.com	● 54 Moody Ave. St. Louis, MO 63119
BioRankings	314.633.1821 biorankings.com	● 4041 Forest Park Ave. St. Louis, MO 63108
Blayzer Digital Marketing Group	314.446.3393 blayzer.com	● 1901 Locust St. St. Louis, MO 63103
CEdge Software Consultants	314.254.7551 cedgecorp.com	● 1232 Washington Ave. St. Louis, MO 63103
Cerfified Nets	314.292.6260 certified-nets.com	● 1353 Baur Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132
Clix	314.222.2582 clix.co	● 9338 Olive Blvd., #200 Olivette, MO 63132
CSI Telecommunications	636.534.6600 csi-stl.com	● 184 Chesterfield Industrial Blvd. Chesterfield, MO 63005
Gray Design Group	314.646.0400 graydesigngroup.com	● 9 Sunnen Dr., #110 St. Louis, MO 63143
Intact Genomics, Inc.	314.942.3655 intactgenomics.com	● 1100 Corporate Square Dr. St. Louis, MO 63132
Leverage	636.489.0198 leveragestl.com	● 205 Chesterfield Industrial Blvd. Chesterfield, MO 63005
LinkedSelling	314.499.8892 linkedselling.com	● 1819 Lynch St. St. Louis, MO 63118
NetGain Technologies	314.968.2237 netgainit.com	● 11004 Manchester Rd. St. Louis, MO 63122
Q-Net Security	qnetsecurity.com	● 9666 Olive Blvd., #750 St. Louis, MO 63132
SLAM! Agency	314.925.7552 slamagency.com	● 1601 Tower Grove Ave. St. Louis, MO 63110
Seafoam Media	314.200.5515 seafoammedia.com	● 2732 Sutton Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63143
SG Labs, LLC	618.205.6488 sg-labs.com	● 2 Terminal Dr., #14a East Alton, IL 62024
Tech Electronics	314.645.6200 techelectronics.com	● 6437 Manchester Ave. St. Louis, MO 63139
Technology Group Solutions	314.451.1400 tgs-mtc.com	● 17209 Chesterfield Airport Rd., #310 Chesterfield, MO 63005
Technology Partners	877.636.1331 technologypartners.net	● 707 Spirit 40 Park, #120 Chesterfield, MO 63005
Timmermann Group	314.588.1735 wearetg.com	● 3001 Locust St., FL2 St. Louis, MO 63103
Unidev (Unified Development, Inc.)	636.532.4424 unidev.com	● 16690 Swingley Ridge Rd., #260 Chesterfield, MO 63017
Vivial	636.939.1500 vivial.net	● 13500 Riverport Dr., #110 Maryland Heights, MO 63043

NAMED ONE OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE COMPANIES IN STL

CSI Telecommunications, Inc. has provided phone system solutions for over 45 years in the St. Louis area.

Update your outdated phone system with the CSI VOIP CLOUD, an all-in-one solution, combining voice, video, messaging and collaboration for the modern workforce.



636.534.6600 / sales@csi-stl.com / www.csi-stl.com

*Contact us for a free consultation
and we offer no upfront cost new VOIP solutions.*

TOP FUTURE 50 COMPANY

THANK YOU
for trusting
us to design
vibrant, engaging
spaces that set your
business apart!



+ architecture + interior design + planning

www.graydesigngroup.com

GRAY DESIGN GROUP

SMALL BUSINESSES NEED BIG SOLUTIONS

Custom Software & Digital Marketing Solutions
Serving St. Louis Since 1990

unidev®

The Biggest Business Event of the Year

ACCELERATE YOUR BUSINESS

ST. LOUIS BUSINESS EXPO & Business Growth Conference

**B2B EXHIBITS • NETWORKING
FREE SEMINARS • SPECIAL EVENTS
SPEED NETWORKING**

October 26, 2021 • 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
St. Charles Convention Center



stlexpo.com



Best Architectural Firms

Want to hit a home run when it comes to finding your next building? The following were voted the Best Architectural Firms in St. Louis. Make sure you check out the Awards page at www.sbmon.com to stay up to date with other Best in Business nominations for 2021.

COMPANY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	
Arcturis	314.206.7100 arcturis.com	• 701 Market St. St. Louis, MO 63101
CannonDesign	314.241.6250 cannondesign.com	• 1100 Clark Ave. St. Louis, MO 63102
Chiodini Architects	314.725.5588 chiodini.com	• 1401 S. Brentwood Blvd., #575 Brentwood, MO 63144
Christner, Inc.	314.725.2927 christnerinc.com	• 168 North Meramec, #400 St. Louis, MO 63105
CORE10 Architecture	314.726.4858 core10arch.com	• 4501 Lindell Blvd., #1A St. Louis, MO 63108
Cohen Architecture Company	314.614.9500 cohenarch.com	• 1435 S. 18th St., #144 St. Louis, MO 63104
Fox Architects	314.621.4343 fox-arch.com	• 1 Memorial Drive, #1800 St. Louis, MO 63102
HDA Architects	636.449.1175 hdai.com	• 16150 Main Circle Dr., #100 Chesterfield, MO 63017
Hellmuth + Bicknese Architects, LLC	314.531.9901 hellmuth-bicknese.com	• 7211 Manchester Rd. Maplewood, MO 63143
Killeen Studio Architects	314.771.0883 killeenstudio.com	• 3015 Salena St., #203 St. Louis, MO 63118
KWK Architects	314.942.8810 kwkarchitects.com	• 103 W. Lockwood Ave. St. Louis, MO 63119
M+H Architects	314.878.3500 mha.us.com	• 2150 Schuetz Rd., #200 St. Louis, MO 63146
Oculus, Inc.	314.367.6100 oculusinc.com	• 1 South Memorial Dr., #1500 St. Louis, MO 63102
Rangwala Architects	314.863.6661 rangwalaarchitects.com	• 201 S. Central Ave., #203 Clayton, MO 63015
V Three Studios	888.895.2842 vthreestudios.com	• 2717 Sutton Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63143
Wolfe Architecture & Design	314.960.0099 wolfead.com	• 7412 Manchester Rd. St. Louis, MO 63143
COMPANY NAME	CONTACT INFORMATION	
ABNA	314.454.0222 abnacorp.com	• 4140 Lindell Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63108
CDG Engineers, Inc.	314.781.7770 cdgengineers.com	• 1 Campbell Plaza #3a St. Louis, MO 63139
Civil Design, Inc.	314.863.5570 civildesigninc.com	• 5220 Oakland Ave. St. Louis, MO 63110
Cochran Engineering	636.332.4574 cochraneng.com	• 8 E. Main St. Wentzville, MO 63385
Code Consultants	314.991.2633 codeconsultants.com	• 2043 Woodland Pkwy., #300 St. Louis, MO 63145
EFK Moen LLC	314.394.3100 efkmoen.com	• 13523 Barrett Parkway Dr., #250 St. Louis, MO 63021
G & W Engineering	314.469.3737 gandwengineering.com	• 138 Weldon Pkwy Maryland Heights, MO 63043
HMG Engineers	618.526.9611 hmgengineers.com	• 9360 Holy Cross Ln. Breese, IL 62230
Horner & Shifrin, Inc.	314.531.4321 hornershifrin.com	• 401 S. 18th St., #400 St. Louis, MO 63103
McClure Engineering	314.645.6232 mcclureeng.com	• 1000 Clark Ave. St. Louis, MO 63102
Oates Associates	314.588.8381 oatesassociates.com	• 720 Olive, #700 St. Louis, MO 63101
Penta Engineering Group	314.878.0123 penta.net	• 10123 Corporate Square Dr. St. Louis, MO 63132

Best Engineering Firms

The following were voted the Best Engineering Firms in St. Louis. Make sure you check out the Awards page at www.sbmon.com to stay up to date with other Best in Business nominations for 2021.

Let's take advantage of tax reform. Call us today.

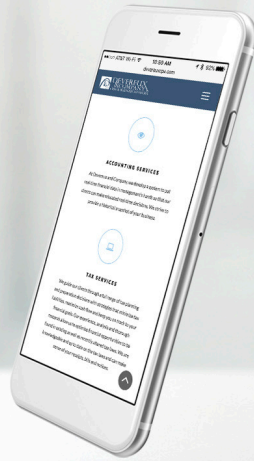
Specializing in:
Individual and Business Taxes
Auditing
Business Consulting
Software Integration

Our clients are our priority, so we provide professional services at a reasonable cost with experience and a friendly touch.

Your satisfaction is our success.



307 N. Main Street | St. Charles, MO 63301
314.209.7777 devereuxcpa.com



The Biggest Business Event of the Year

**ST. LOUIS
BUSINESS EXPO**
Oct. 26/11am-5pm
stlexpo.com



Commerce Bank



Takashima Record Bar

VOTED
**BEST
ST. LOUIS
ARCHITECTURE
FIRMS**
FOR SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR
THANKS TO OUR INCREDIBLE TEAM



Grove Lofts

V THREE STUDIOS LLC
architecture + interiors

www.vthreestudios.com
888.895.2842

Commercial • Corporate • Education • Hospitality • Residential

WE ARE THERE WHEN YOU NEED US MOST

WE CAN HELP WITH COVID
RELATED FINANCIAL
CHALLENGES



314.966.2727
connectwithus@stcpa.com

SCHMERSAHL TRELOAR, CPA's
trusted advisors

AWARDS/GIFTS/PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS



Awards • Promotional Products Personalized Gifts • Signs

Showrooms: Kirkwood, Fenton & Online
SBA's 2019 Veteran-Owned Business of the Year for Eastern MO

314-966-8800
 ArchEngraving.com
 facebook.com/archengraving



hostirian

Done For You -
Website Design
& Ad Management

We completely design and manage your website & online advertising.



Why Trust Us...

Businesses both large and small trust us to help take their business to the next level by removing the hassle of website, security and advertising management.

Running the game is tough enough. I don't have time to fool with a website. So I put it all in their hands.

Sarah Cox
The Green Group, Saline

Making it hostirian for web hosting services is the best technology decision our nonprofit has made.

Laurie Briggs
Intercept



www.hostirian.com | info@hostirian.com | 314-216-2040

Protect your company with
**DARK WEB MONITORING
&
PROACTIVE THREAT
HUNTING**



NTP
CYBER SECURITY
INTELLIGENCE

Proactively Manage
& Minimize Risk!
24/7 Monitoring &
Rapid Response Team!

NTP offers a broad range of solutions to help your organization monitor, defend, and respond to today's continually evolving cyber threats.

636-458-4995 • NTPCyberSecurity.com



FUTURE FOR THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS

is on the path toward a resilient economy.

Goals of the Equitable Economic Development Strategic Framework

- Grow the city's population by 30,000 people by 2030
- Exceed the national growth rate in jobs and payrolls among our key industries
- Close the wage and employment gaps for ethnic minorities
- Achieve sustainable long-term tax revenue growth for the city.
- Supporting neighborhood development and businesses



Neal Richardson, Executive Director
 1520 Market Street, Suite 2000, St. Louis, MO 63103
 Office: 314.657.3700 / Fax: 314.613.7011 stlouis-mo.gov/slsc
 Mayor Tishaura O. Jones

FUTURE 50 AWARDS

FUTURE 50 AWARDS

The Hardest Working People in Small Business

*Get inspired by the Area's Top
Small Companies*



*Andrew Tessmer (left)
and Rick Duree,
owners of BeerSauce
Shop, one of the
area's top small
businesses*



Abeles and Hoffman

Ronald Abeles

Established in 1979, Abeles and Hoffman, P.C., provides value-added accounting and consulting services to clients throughout the Midwest. The firm offers accounting, audit, tax, estate planning, and business advisory services. The company has industry expertise in a number of areas, such as manufacturing, distribution, real estate and professional services. Growth for the firm has historically been in the 5%-7% range annually. However, due to internal expertise and expansion of its niches, the firm's growth has been approximately 10% both locally and nationally.

Accounting Career Consultants

Larry Weinberg

Accounting Career Consultants is a boutique accounting and financial recruiting and staffing firm. The company has been in business since 1985. 2021 revenue will be approximately 300% of 2012 revenue, when Larry Weinberg bought the company from his father, Mel Weinberg. The company has grown its staffing division by nearly 500% in the last two years.

Action Logistix

Josh Browell/
Barbara Bartelsmeyer

Action Logistix is an entrepreneurial warehouse staffing organization that excels in finding new, innovative approaches for staffing light industrial and warehouse positions. The company launched in July 2018. Today, the company has three locations (Bridgeton (HQ), Granite City and Godfrey, IL) and is on track to exceed \$6 million in sales for 2021.

All Volleyball

All Volleyball is a top volleyball retailer, providing volleyball uniforms, footwear and apparel since 1995. The company has grown to become a Midwest leader in all things volleyball, and in the last couple of years with the growth of its online store, All Volleyball is now one of the top suppliers in the United States of volleyball shoes, uniforms, volleyballs, apparel, novelties, equipment and more.

Archford

Jim Maher

Archford® is a private wealth management firm founded by James D. Maher. The firm is represented by 42 employees with more than 35 advanced degrees, professional designations, accreditations and certifications. Archford® provides innovative solutions to clients throughout their entire financial journey, including families, businesses and nonprofits. Their comprehensive suite of services includes wealth management, retirement planning, business consulting, accounting, data management and philanthropic services. This unique business model helps clients to save time, save money and make money.



ALLIANCE CORPORATE

JAMES CANADA/STEVE BROWN/JARED PENO

Q&A with James Canada

Industry: Technology Infrastructure / Product Development / Consulting

Website:

<https://Alliance-Corp.co>

<https://alliance-technologies.co>

<https://alliance-systems.co>

<https://alliance-advisors.co>

What have been the keys to success for the business?

At Alliance we believe in an underlying culture of empowerment and entrepreneurial spirit to grow our organization. This has helped us grow Alliance into three different divisions that can stand on their own yet still support each other with client needs. We offer best-in-class, tightly integrated solutions with efficient execution while keeping a keen eye on customer service. Our outlook is inspired and our passion is to serve a broader and diverse client base. Leadership is also one of the keys to our success, and we believe a leader attracts a following when his or her actions show evidence of tact, patience, fairness, firmness and generosity.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

We believe that a successful business must first start with an overall business strategy. My partners and I took several months to complete our strategic plan. We created a road map for our business journey. The plan enabled us to obtain start-up funds, develop a business model, establish a business culture and attract the right clients and employees. As part of the plan, we identified our Critical Success Factors, Values and Leadership Principles that remain the same today. We then stayed the course to implement and execute. There was no turning back, and there was no failure in our minds. Our passion was the drive that kept us going mixed with lots of humor to enjoy the ride.

What's the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

The smartest thing we have done in this past year is to recruit and form the Alliance Advisors team. We acquired several sole proprietor consulting firms and brought them into Alliance. This highly recognized group of professionals have added a variety of services, including CIO/ERP Solutions, Data Services Solutions, Talent Solutions (direct placement, staffing and outplacement), Operations Support, Financial Services as well as Education/Corporate Development. In addition, the Advisors team has formed Alliance University which provides Seminars, Briefings and Roundtables.



How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

The guiding values for Alliance have evolved around being a customer-driven business with a high sense of urgency. We provide high-quality, value-add, solution-oriented services that are systematically monitored to ensure continued quality improvement both internally and externally. Our employees develop strong individual relationships with key decision makers within our clientele to foster long-term partnerships and build continued confidence and use of our services. We promise our clients to have in place an ever-improving process, to listen to our customers, and to provide high-value services designed to meet and exceed their needs. Because of our customer-driven approach, we have built strong customer loyalty. Our client retention rate is 99.8% year over year for our nearly 750 clients, and our Help Desk rating has been 99.6% favorable. Our approach has led to constant growth mainly through client referrals without having a formal sales team. We believe this approach and our results makes us unique.

ARTIFOX

DAN MIRTH/SARAH MIRTH



Q&A with Sarah Mirth, founder of Artifox

Industry: Manufacturing
Website: www.theartifox.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

Our commitment to high quality, sustainable products is at the forefront of our brand. We only work with trusted manufacturing partners who are the best at their craft while continuing to stay hands-on throughout the entire development process — start to finish. We started Artifox because we were seeking a unique approach to furniture and accessories in our everyday spaces. As designers and architects ourselves, we take pride in creating a meaningful connection between the artifact and its user that will last a lifetime.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

The short answer is — roll up your sleeves and get to work. As the leader of a growing company, take the time to understand every aspect of your business, from operations to marketing. That way you can jump in and help your team optimize any area of the business from an insider's perspective. It's not always easy but it's well worth it!

What's the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

During the recent pandemic, we experienced a surge of orders and struggled to keep up with demand. Customers were concerned by industry delays and uneasy about what to expect. Our solution was to be fully transparent with them through more frequent communication. We shared details about our manufacturing process, including shipping delays and production challenges. The response was overwhelmingly positive. The ability to continue selling with increasing lead times through global supply chain issues was a direct result of honest communication with our incredible customer base.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

Artifox was born from our own personal need for a desk that was both aesthetically pleasing and that fostered a more functional and efficient work environment. We are dedicated to designing and locally manufacturing products using only the best materials for people who care deeply about their work and space. Our pursuit is to create an experience we can take pride in, from a user-friendly online ordering process to detailed packaging. We strive to make thoughtful choices that will positively impact every community every day.

BEERSAUCE SHOP

ANDREW TESSMER/RICK DUREE



Industry: Experiential Retail:
Craft Beer/Whiskey and Artisan
Sauce/BBQ
website: www.BeerSauceShop.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

BeerSauce Shop has developed a unique model: a fun, engaging experiential flavor room. We have expanded quickly. The parent company is only four years old, and we have a fifth store opening this fall. We have a broad compatible product mix: craft beer, artisan sauces/rubs, craft whiskey, artisan bbq menu, craft beer bar

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

Work smarter. Save on your marketing budget by communicating directly and actively with interesting, engaging posts on social media with your community. Also, pivot when needed. For example, we added the BBQ menu

when we found out that food would help overall sales as well as sauce tasting on the sauce bar.

What's the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

We started franchising. This was our goal from inception. We got the business in a place where we felt we could duplicate it successfully, so we focused like a laser on franchising and getting all our knowledge into documents that new franchisees could easily follow with similar success.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

Shop, Taste, Learn: We make it an experience. From our knowledgeable and engaging staff to our weekly events (Beer School, BBQ School, Whiskey School led by industry professionals) and daily tasting bars (Sauce Bar and Beer Bar), we've created a one-of-a-kind experience.

BowPoint

Buyside M&A | Deal Flow

FUTURE
50

TOP COMPANIES IN ST. LOUIS

THANK YOU TO OUR CUSTOMERS, THOSE WHO VOTED FOR US AND TO OUR WONDERFUL EMPLOYEES, FOR MAKING BOWPOINT A **FUTURE 50 AWARD WINNER**. WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

BOWPOINT.COM PROPRIETARY DEAL FLOW ORIGATION EXPERTS

Unlimited
Water Processing, Inc.



Unlimited Year Round Refreshment Where You Work!

- Variety of Styles
- Premium Drinking Water or Spring Water
- Cold or Hot/Cold Dispensers
- Water by the Case
- Cups
- Coffee Service

314-227-4602 www.unlimitedwater.net

6891 Hazelwood Ave. - Berkeley, MO 63134



Subscribe To **SBM**.
Only \$21.50 Per Year
sbm-store.com



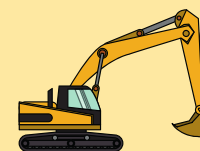
ARE YOU READY TO EXPAND YOUR BUSINESS?



**Our Small Business Specialist's
are here for you!**

Call us for equipment & expansion loans!

- NEW EQUIPMENT LOANS
- LINES OF CREDIT
- SBA LOANS



**Come in and let us help you
grow your company today!**

Mike: 636-893-1644

Rick: 636-893-1654

Justin: 636-893-1645

Jim: 636-893-1661



199 Clarson Rd
Ellisville MO,
63011

www.MeramecValleyBank.com
636-230-3500

35 Marshal Rd
Valley Park MO,
63088



No More HR Nightmares.

✓ **simply.com**



Beanstalk Web Solutions

Tim Hebel

Beanstalk Web Solutions is a St. Louis-based web design and digital marketing agency that pairs websites with metrics-based digital marketing. Beanstalk has had double digit growth every year since our founding in 2013. From 2019 to 2020, revenue grew 42.1%. The company is projecting 54% revenue growth in 2021. Beanstalk is very unique in the St. Louis area for a number of reasons. Many agencies in the marketing / web space specialize in many, many different service areas and they often end up just being “OK” at each. Beanstalk has chosen to hyper-focus on web design/development and digital marketing strategy & implementation. The company does not do traditional marketing, video, branding, etc. This makes it incredibly talented at the services that it does focus on and because of this, many other local agencies partner with the companies on their projects to cover their weak spots.



Blind Ambition

Pam Sikes

Blind Ambition offers sales and installation of custom window treatments, including blinds, shutters and shades. The company handles both residential and commercial work and has grown every year since opening. The company doubled its sales for the first four years; in Years 5 and 6, they experienced a 60% sales increase. Blind Ambition has partnered with several area builders, allowing their homeowners to incorporate window treatments into home mortgages. Blind Ambition also has partnered with home-automation/low-voltage companies, as their motorized window treatments integrate with many home-automation panels.

BoardPaq

Randy Schilling

BoardPaq is a Board of Directors solution that centralizes all the documents and information that your board needs to have more effective, engaged members in a paperless boardroom. In addition to its website, BoardPaq is now available on the iOS App Store and the Windows App Store, which helps member communication and collaboration before, during and after meetings. The company's offices are located in Historic Downtown St. Charles.

Botz, Deal & Company, P.C.

Dale Brown

Raymond Botz started the firm in St. Charles in 1969 as a sole practitioner. From 1969 to the present, Botz, Deal and Company, P.C., has grown from a sole practitioner to a staff of 35 professionals, support staff and IT division. Today, the company is a full-service CPA firm and offers a complete range of auditing, accounting, tax planning, compliance, and consulting services. Their clientele includes an extensive listing of governmental and not-for-profit entities as well as prominent, for-profit organizations in a wide variety of industries.

BIOTECH X-RAY

PAM SIKES

Industry: Portable Diagnostic Imaging (X-ray, Ultrasound, Echo, EKG)
Website: biotechxray.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

Over the past 27 years, we have consciously reinvested profits back into the business with the goal of providing the best patient care, per our motto—the patient first people. This requires right-sized staffing that embraces our mission while using the best equipment available. We nurtured relationships with neighboring industry colleagues and expanded our footprint by acquisition as they were ready to exit. This has allowed us to serve large regional providers of skilled healthcare as well as assisted and independent living facilities.

In addition, our staff is responsive to client concerns. We push quality at every level and learn from our mistakes.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

Do what you do well. Manage your growth. Know your clients well and take care of them.

What's the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

We kept our business development and account service reps fully employed, even when they could not make live customer visits. This commitment allowed us to continue pro-

viding quality service and growing our business during Covid, both organically and by acquisition. We worked hard to right-size our staff during the ups and downs of Covid.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

We do our very best to do what we say we will do—under-promise and over-deliver. We make sure that our employees understand our mission and know that it's our true desire to deliver the kind of service and care that we would want for our own parents and grandparents. Lastly, in addition to our technical staff, we have a strong team of account reps that are available to our clients 24x7.



Behr, McCarter, Potter, Neely & Hyde PC

Behr, McCarter, Potter, Neely & Hyde, P.C., is a group of experienced and distinguished lawyers who are committed to their clients. Behr McCarter was founded on the premise that clients deserve attorneys who are especially skilled, experienced, and dedicated. Primarily trial attorneys, Behr McCarter has been designated as a Top Law Firm in St. Louis by US News & World Report ®.

BowPoint

Berlin Haugen

BowPoint is a St. Louis-based buy-side mergers and acquisitions intermediary that specializes in providing outsourced corporate development services focused on M&A deal origination for middle market private equity groups and billionaire family offices. The staff is comprised of a group of experts in executing targeted acquisition searches for private equity backed portfolio companies seeking to grow through strategic add-on acquisitions, and the company can locate and originate new platform acquisitions for middle market private equity groups.



CEDGE SOFTWARE CONSULTANTS

SEKHAR PRABHAKAR

Industry: Information technology

Website: www.cedgcorp.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

An understanding that a business must contribute organically to the community where it exists in order to be successful. We have made great efforts to create an ecosystem of education and community development in STEM fields — creating a better base to grow qualified candidates locally for a business as well as for our customers to thrive over time. Having an understanding that we live in a part of the country that has difficulty attracting technology talent and that we need to work harder to attract and retain talent.



What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

Have a strategic game plan that allows the business to continually focus on both short-term and long-term goals/objectives. It is very important that you share your experiences and challenges so the path of success as a new entrepreneur gets better. Going back to what I stated earlier, having a consistent culture that exudes integrity, honesty and professionalism will pay huge dividends for any business.

What's the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

Our achievement last year was establishing an office in India to increase our efficiencies and position ourselves well to continually enhance our software development capabilities. We also decided to convert our LLC to a

C Corp to offer stock options to the best talent and plan for going public. To help with this effort, I included leaders like Jerry Kent and Scott McNealy to our advisory board. These two leaders have had tremendous success with their own companies. For these reasons, we are confident that we can accomplish the goal of becoming a C Corp.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

Our business encompasses federal, commercial, and non-profit sectors. We are refocusing on emerging technologies, as those give us an early edge to explore possibilities for introducing differentiating products and services to our customers that help us compete in the market. True success for our customers means success for our company.

Digital Strike Targeted Marketing

Christopher Westmeyer

Founded in 2010, Digital Strike Targeted Marketing is a full-service, online marketing agency. Services include search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), social media marketing (SMM), local search marketing, online reputation management, and conversion optimization.

Digital Social Media

Josh Sample

Drive Social Media is a full-service digital agency. The company has more than 160 employees in three U.S. cities, with an additional city (Atlanta) to be added at the end of 2021. Founder Josh Sample and his employees differentiate the firm by proving the efficacy and dollar-driving power of their work. Their results have allowed Drive to grow exponentially since its 2012 founding.



Captiva Marketing, LLC

Mark Forst/Bill Brasser

Captiva Marketing is a full-service digital marketing firm, with in-house capabilities to do everything from developing strategy to measuring results. The firm currently has 48 employees. Since Captiva Marketing launched in 2002, its focus on generating quality leads in a cost-effective manner has helped the company develop long-term relationships with a large number of clients. The company has developed expertise in every aspect of SEO and digital advertising.

Chhabra Enterprises

Indu Chhabra

Chhabra Enterprises buys, sells and refurbishes Smart devices (iOS as well as Android), iPads, tablets, Galaxy phones, iPhones, and other electronic devices B2B and B2C. The company serves school districts, federal and state government as well as corporate America. The business has thrived because of its loyal customers.

ej4

Ryan Eudy

ej4 is a leading provider of online video training solutions. Since 2004, ej4's unique microlearning videos combine instructional design with adult learning theories and are delivered via contemporary video design. The company was recently named as a Top 20 Online Learning Library company by Training Industry, a leading research and information resource for corporate learning leaders.

FEFA, LLC

Andrew Stringer

FEFA is a St. Louis-based network of FinTech services. Rooted in mathematics, the network provides financial planning services utilizing 26 professionals of various backgrounds, including asset management, tax, property and casualty insurance, and both life and health insurance. FEFA employs cutting-edge technology and marketing teams based solely in the greater St. Louis area.

Flat World Supply Chain

Jeff Rothermich/Kirk Ferrell

Flat World Supply Chain is a logistics company that offers supply chain management and technology solutions. The company was founded in 2006 by Jeff Rothermich and Kirk Ferrell, and provides truckload brokerage, less-than-truckload management, and expedited shipping services, as well as project management and warehousing and installation services. Its supply chain solutions include less-than-truckload, truckload, expedited, return goods management, and international services. The company also provides hospitality logistic services, such as project management, warehousing and installation, and transportation management. Flat World Supply Chain solutions are specifically designed to increase productivity, create efficiency, record and report results, and save money.

GadellNet

Nick Smarelli/Joe Gadell

GadellNet is an outsourced IT support firm based in St. Louis and Indianapolis. The company provides small-business IT support, help desk support, and cyber security. GadellNet was founded in St. Louis in 2003 and has since grown to locations across the Midwest.

Gateway Fiber

Heath Sellenriek

Gateway Fiber provides “fiber-to-the-home” internet service, meaning the fiber-optic cable runs all the way to a customer’s home or business, drastically improving reliability and speed. Before Gateway’s launch, much of the region was limited to legacy cable or DSL internet, which is prone to slower service and network interruptions. Gateway Fiber offers a connection guaranteeing increased speeds and reliability. Gateway Fiber offers 1 Gig broadband, simple flat rate pricing, symmetrical speeds, no data caps, no contracts and no installation fees. The company currently serves Troy, Moscow Mills, Winfield, Old Monroe and Hawk Point, with construction underway in Warrenton, Wright City and Wentzville.

Gateway Multifamily Group

Raj Tut

Gateway Multifamily operates a group of management and real estate holding companies. The group acquires, repositions and manages multifamily assets in select markets across the Midwest. Raj Tut founded the company more than five years ago. Gateway Multifamily owns 750+ rental units totaling approximately 585,322 square feet on 53 acres at 11 different properties – valued at more than \$55 million. Although multifamily is still its focus, in recent years the company has expanded to include retail, office and self-storage properties to continue transforming the renting experience for a broader clientele and to create better rental spaces for tenants of all types to live, work, play and store their belongings.

Gemini Consulting & Services

Sreedhar Patibandia

Gemini Consulting & Services is a leading IT & ITeS, consulting and outsourcing solutions provider. The company

ASPIRE SOFTWARE

MARK TIPTON

Industry: Software

Website:
www.YourAspire.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

It begins with our company mission to make a real difference in the lives of our clients, which in our case are landscape contractors. From there it really goes to our core values of innovation, driving success, putting others first, and finishing strong. We’re naturally curious and try new things without fear of failure. We find solutions that drive value to our clients. We sincerely care about the success of others. And we do what we say we’re going to do. Consistently hitting the mark on all these behaviors has been the primary driver of our success.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

You need to have a clear vision of why your business exists. It needs to be more than just making profits. Profits are just a measuring stick of success, a means to an end. Your business needs to have a greater purpose around which everyone in the business can rally. In addition to your shared vision, some practical principles apply. Don’t try to be everything to everybody; define a market that you can dominate. Dig deep into what drives value for your customers. And build a great team around you that can help you deliver that value to your customers.

What’s the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

The smartest thing we did last year

was not panicking when the pandemic lockdowns began. We took appropriate measures in case

the pandemic was going to materially impact our business. But we didn’t panic. We knew our long-term prospects were still bright and we just needed to safely steer through uncharted times. In the end, our customers’ services — landscaping and snow and ice removal — were deemed essential services by almost every state in the country. As a result, the pandemic didn’t materially affect our business. In fact, we had a record year.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

Aspire is unique in our industry. Our business management system eliminates hidden costs and risks that business owners often fail to realize are happening when they use multiple disintegrated systems to run their businesses. With our integrated system, they gain new insights into how they sell their work, do their work, and bill their work — all in real time. As a result, owners, managers and staff can make better and more timely decisions that lead to increased sales and profits. And when you add our industry expertise, from implementation to ongoing support, nobody else can match what we offer.



develops and implements next-generation technology for enterprises to accelerate and scale their respective digital trans-

formation journeys. Customer empowerment is foundational to its technological solutions.



We are honored to be
recognized as a 2021
Small Business Monthly
Future 50 Award Winner

We greatly appreciate working with & providing specialized construction
services to our amazing customers in the Metro St. Louis Area and beyond!



Elite Orthopedic
Patient Lobby



Brown Hay + Stephens
Office Lobby



CitiPlace
Cafeteria

We truly value the trust we have built with them. We look forward
to creating new relationships with future customers who are
looking for a great building experience!

Office | Retail | Industrial | Medical | Pharmaceutical
Institutional | Manufacturing | Restaurant | Corporate

www.strykerconstruction.net



HEALTHIER
meetings



What's new?

St. Charles is excited to be one of
the only convention centers in the
mid-west to have an air ionization
technology that neutralizes 99.9%
of Covid-19. Visit our website for
the full press release about
AtmosAir Solutions Technology.

Why SCCC?

- 154,000 sq. ft. of flexible space
- Physical distance room sets available
- Attached hotel
- In-house audio visual & decorating
- Customized in-house catering
- Complimentary wi-fi
- Hospital quality air

SAINT CHARLES
CONVENTION CENTER

SPECTRA

CALL TODAY
636.669.3000

ONE CONVENTION CENTER PLAZA | ST. CHARLES, MO 63303 | STCHARLESCONVENTIONCENTER.COM

Tired of Unreliable IT Support?

You deserve a partner who confronts issues head-on and
answers the call when problems arise.

When you partner with Anderson Technologies, you:

- ✦ Get a team that **solves your problem** the first time you call without
delay or excuses.
- ✦ Can trust your Client Success Manager to **set clear expectations** and
act with your business goals in mind.
- ✦ Avoid downtime, data loss, and other unpleasant surprises with
proactive monitoring and a reliable disaster recovery plan.



ANDERSON
TECHNOLOGIES

Expect More From Your IT Partner. Call or Email For a Free IT Consultation!

314.394.3001 | info@andersontech.com

COSMOS CORPORATION

LONDON HOBSON

Industry: Consumer Products

Website: <https://cosmoscorp.com/>

What have been the keys to success for the business?

The culture we intentionally foster daily at Cosmos enables us to succeed by ensuring we have business alignment and work toward the same purpose. In turn, that commitment allows us to meaningfully differentiate ourselves from the competition by thoroughly understanding customer needs, providing innovative solutions and moving nimbly to provide speed to market – all of which drive sales when our products make it into a consumer’s actual or online shopping cart.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

My best advice to other leaders for how to find business success comes down to people. Get the right people in the right roles with the right structure in place so that everyone is aligned and working together effectively, rather than having to navigate barriers to success. It’s also imperative that you build and maintain a strong culture where silos don’t exist. Be intentional, identify your team’s core values, then enlist every member of the team to help each other rally around those values daily.

What’s the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

We spent time thinking about the structure we need to continue to succeed and grow, and getting the right people into the right roles by developing employees and bringing in new talent where needed. We’ve also ensured that we are giving leaders and teams what they need to succeed, including processes, tools, a unified vision, and a culture that enables business alignment. But the smartest thing is making sure we have the right people!

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

We aim to be the category captain in our industry, the go-to partner to our distribution and retail customers. That means we know where we play and what consumers need and want, and we can quickly bring our know-how and innovation to offer the right solutions.



HARNESS DICKEY

BRYAN WHEELLOCK



Industry: Legal

Website: www.hdp.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

Business is all about people. We succeed because we have smart people who truly partner with our clients, take a real interest in the business, and provide advice –not just identify alternatives.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

Do what your clients need, not just what they think they need. Their success is your success.

What’s the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

We gave our people the time and space to adapt to the pandemic in the way that best suited their needs as well as the needs of our clients.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

We strive to provide custom service and resist commoditization. We want to be our clients’ partners, and we want them to be our partner, helping us to adapt and improve.



Subscribe To SBM.
Only \$21.50 Per Year
sbm-store.com

Geniecast, LLC

Keith Alper

Geniecast, LLC, has become one of the nation's leading virtual event content and production companies. The company helps businesses and organizations create state-of-the-art virtual experiences. In 2020, Geniecast doubled its employee count and grew 150%.

Gray Design Group

Lorrie Kramer

Founded in 1982, Gray Design Group is one of the leading multi-disciplined architectural and interior design firms in the Midwest. With 39 years of experience, the Saint Louis-based firm specializes in creating commercial, hospitality, industrial, multi-family and senior living environments. Gray Design Group's award-winning, sustainable work has received both national and regional acclaim. This Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) certified firm has 40 employees and is responsible for planning four million square feet of diverse commercial spaces annually.

Mid Rivers Insurance Group

Michael Jamison

Mid Rivers Insurance is an independent insurance brokerage primarily focusing on home, auto, business and life insurance. The business was formed in 2014 and currently have 3 locations with 9 employees: In addition to Missouri, it has a growing presence throughout the Midwest. The business grew from zero in revenue to over \$12 million in annual premiums despite limited start-up capital. This growth has allowed the business to expand to the Kirksville, MO and Jefferson City, MO markets in recent years.

Wipfli

Doug Mueller

Founded in 1983, Mueller Prost is a full-service CPA firm that provides tax, audit and assurance and business advisory services to more than 4,300 clients in 47 states.

The firm's services are focused on closely held businesses and organizations in the healthcare, manufacturing and distribution, nonprofit, real estate and construction industries. Mueller Prost recently joined Wipfli, one of the top 20 accounting and consulting firms in the United States.



Sapper Consulting

Jeff Winters

Sapper Consulting provides industry-leading email marketing solutions nationwide. The company was recently acquired by Abstrakt Marketing Group. Based in St. Louis, Abstrakt Marketing Group is a business growth agency serving more than 800 clients nationwide. With 350+ employees, Abstrakt has grown rapidly since its founding in 2009. Abstrakt is a full-service lead generation company, offering both inbound and outbound solutions for their client partners.

shredsforslessdirect.com

Travis Pazurek

ShedsForLessDirect.com was founded in 2006 and is operated by Sheds Direct Stores, LLC, based in O'Fallon, Missouri. The company is a factory-direct reseller offering storage sheds, buildings, barns, garages, greenhouses, carports, playgrounds and other outdoor equipment. All of the company's products are sold with free, nationwide shipping.

HESS MEAT MACHINES

RACHEL HERREN

Industry: commercial food machine supplier and service specialist

Website: <https://hessmm.com/>

What have been the keys to success for the business?

Excellent customer service is not just a key to success for our company. It is an integral part of our history and DNA. We believe that to be true partners to our customers, we must listen more than talk and always view everything through the customer's eyes. Just like my grandfather did when he founded the company more than 70 years ago, we focus on building relationships, not just selling equipment – and because of that focus, we're able to serve as true consultants. We know that our customers are trusting us with one of the most vital components of their business, so everything starts with a conversation. Before we sell a piece of equipment, we work to understand exactly what challenges brought them to us. That way we can consider everything from budget to training capacity to current processes in our recommendation. Likewise, our relationship with a customer never ends at the point of sale; we provide them with expert training, emergency and preventative maintenance services, supplies shipped directly to their door, and everything else they need to ensure the long life of their machines. It's this focus on partnership and service that first made Hess synonymous with innovation in our industry, and it's what has allowed us to see a 48% growth in supplies and sales over the last five years.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

My best advice would be to surround yourself with the right people, and always avoid complacency. Innovation thrives on a broad range of ideas, so making sure you have a team that is both experienced and open to new ways of doing things is key to always finding better solutions for your



clients. Serving your customers means being able to consistently adapt to their needs, and that requires being willing to make changes – whether it's a new service offering, extended hours, or a switch in sales software. It also means recognizing when you can't do something internally and finding reliable outside partners to work with.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

From the moment of our founding, we have placed the customer's needs and experience at the center of every interaction and sale. Rather than just selling high-quality equipment, we act as full-service partners and consultants by selling supplies, advising the best solutions for cost and labor savings, being available for 24/7 emergency maintenance, offering preventative maintenance plans, hosting resources and information on our website, providing equipment history software, and offering financing options for purchases. Many Hess customers have been with us for multiple generations – a testament to the fact that everyone on our team is committed to serving as trusted advisors and allies who will always guide them to the right decisions for their business.

Stars Design Group

Bret Schnitker

SDG is a global apparel design and manufacturing company leading the fashion industry by combining talent and technology to create innovative solutions for brand partners. Established in 1993, Stars Design Group is headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, and utilizes a global network of 67 hand-selected, socially compliant factories in 14 countries for manufacturing.

Stryker Construction

Gary Wood

Stryker Construction specializes in commercial “tenant finish” construction. The company performs interior renovations in a variety of environments, including office, retail, industrial, institutional, medical, pharmaceutical, corporate, food services and manufacturing. Its focus on delivering a superior product is written into its core values and instilled in every Stryker employee.

Swipesum

Michael Seaman/Stephen Seaman



Founded in 2016 and based in St. Louis, MO, SwipeSum is a software-enabled service that finds any business the best payments solution at the best rate, at no cost to them. By eliminating most fees associated with accepting payments or turning them into a lucrative revenue stream, SwipeSum is any business’s “fractional Chief Payments Officer.” Clients include Fair.com, Zenreach, Chuck E. Cheese, Crossfit, and hundreds more.

TDK Technologies

David Kocs/Kristin Tucker

TDK Technologies, LLC, is a Women’s Business Enterprise (WBE) established in 2001, located in the St. Louis metropolitan area. TDK Technologies provides information technology consulting and custom software development for businesses through either staff augmentation or outsourced project solution delivery.

The Clix Group

Jason Hylan

Clix is a full-service digital marketing agency that serves as clients’ outsourced online marketing department. The company drives relevant traffic to websites, converts that traffic into inquiries, and helps you turn those inquiries into customers.

ThrottleNet

George Rosenthal

ThrottleNet has been providing IT support and cybersecurity services to clients of all sizes and industry types since 1999. The organization is locally owned and operated and employs 40 full-time staff, most of whom provide IT support and maintain solutions that ThrottleNet provides their clients. Since its early beginnings in 1999, the company has grown from just a few customers to 200+. As one of the top Managed Service Providers in St. Louis, ThrottleNet has enjoyed double-digit revenue growth year over year for most of the past decade. In the previous 12 months, the organization has added six new team members to address the needs of a remote workforce driven by the pandemic.



HIRELEVEL

TERESA KATUBIG

Industry: Staffing & HR Solutions
Website: www.HireLevel.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

The ability to be transparent and realistic with our customers and to make sure we are recruiting and consulting for them as we would for our internal team. Our team is dedicated, diligent and passionate about “helping” our candidates and clients. We have recently recommitted our focus to our mission, specifically “Changing Lives.” Keeping these two words at the forefront is driving our success with both retention of our team and retention of our employees for our clients.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

I take pride in surrounding myself with a strong team and providing them the autonomy and environment to do their jobs well. I am committed to working more strategically and to teaching, leading, and empowering all team members to support (but challenge) each other and our processes. One of our key beliefs is to “Own Your Impact.” If my leadership team and I aren’t teaching something to someone else every day and constantly learning, what have we done to ensure the future growth of our business? You grow from the inside out!

What’s the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

We did not miss a beat in the face of Covid. We recognized our team as essential and critical to supporting our clients, who are also critical infrastructure with essential personnel. We immediately implemented an action plan to keep our team safe and working, while supporting their families (e.g., helping them to navigate childcare restrictions with schools and daycares closed or virtual). With extra flexibility and boundary-less technology, we



shared labor across our entire organization. The result was putting over 9,000 people to work during 2020 – in a time of global pandemic – to provide essential employers with the support they needed.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

We are a recruitment-to-retirement partner that strives to be a total, one-source solution and advisor for our clients. There are not many competitors who can deliver on the same promise. From recruitment, applicant tracking, and onboarding to payroll services, human resources, benefits administration and offboarding, we manage the entire employee experience. We also expand this support to our clients through HR Consulting, whether they want to completely outsource or they are building on their resources and training to improve their internal team. In order to be a total partner, HireLevel invests in continuous training and certifications of our team to remain the subject matter expert.

Traube Tents & Structures

Deryck Dietz

Established as a family-owned company in 1938 and built on a reputation for providing exceptional personal service, Traube Tents and Structures has evolved to become a leading authority in the deployment of multiuse engineered fabric enclosures, buildings, tents and clear-span structures.

VelociData

Barry Rudolph

VelociData was formed in 2012 to bring its innovative streaming compute technology to the enterprise market. Proven in financial markets throughout the world and backed by more than 40 U.S. patents, VelociData's products are the first of their kind in the marketplace. With the ability to capture, refine and deliver massive amounts of data while in motion, the technology can open up game-changing approaches to revealing insight and driving actions. While its products were tested in the banking and financial services industry, from 2016 VelociData began to see that its technologies and expertise enabled communications services providers to gain visibility into their entire network. This allowed them to get to an answer either for the first time or faster than previously possible. Today, VelociData brings its differentiated offerings to the market to help hyper-scale communications services providers.

Wayne Contracting

Brad Burns

Wayne Contracting is an organization that collaborates with partners in the retail, hospitality and commercial markets to bring projects from concept to execution.



The company's diverse service offering enables it to aid partners on a wide array of projects from site surveys, merchandising and large volume roll-outs up through large scale interior construction and remodels. The company has grown from \$107,000 in 2014 to \$3 million. Wayne Contracting has continually seen consistent growth year over year, well over 100% of annual revenues from the prior year.

Woods Basement Systems

Rick Woods/Anna Lee Woods

Woods Basement Systems, Inc., is a basement and foundation contractor. The company specializes in basement waterproofing, crawl space, basement finishing, ThermalDry Elite Plank Flooring, foundation repair and radon gas mitigation.

Wisper Internet

Nathan Stooke

Wisper is a wireless internet service provider in rural areas. Wisper started as a single office in 2003 and has grown to several remote offices across Illinois and Missouri. The company currently has 190 employees, and customers across Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma.



INSPIRANZA DESIGNS

DIANE LAWRENCE/DAWN POCHKEK

Industry:
Jewelry/
E-Commerce
Website: www.inspiranzadesigns.com

What have been the keys to success for the business?

When God closes a door, He always opens a window! Looking back over the years, it's clear that a significant key to our success was the ability to change as the market dictates. We started Inspiranza Designs in 2005 as a home party business. Unfortunately, that model all but vanished during the recession that hit the United States a few years after we opened our doors. We were in free-fall by the end of 2009. People changed their spending habits, and home parties dried up. We had to adjust by changing our business plan from home party to e-commerce.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

We recommend that you never lock products into a price that you cannot deliver due to unforeseen cost increases. We previously created product catalogs that contained our jewelry, and the catalog was live for an entire year. Silver prices fluctuate daily, and being locked into the same price for a year during the recession created a loss that took five years to correct. Our move to e-commerce eliminated the need for catalogs and put us in real-time control that mirrors the fine-metal market price.



What's the smartest thing your company did in the past year?

When we started Inspiranza Designs, we performed every aspect of business that's necessary to run the daily functions of a business. However, with the growth of Inspiranza, we needed to relinquish control of some key areas to focus on the future direction and development of our company. We did that by inviting our employees to express their areas of interest and equipped them to grow their knowledge base. Doing so not only has created more satisfaction for our employees, but also has freed up valuable time for us to pull back and see the complete picture.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

We do something exciting more than 300 times per year: We offer The Daily Deal so our customers can come back every day (except Sunday) and find an exciting new reveal at a discounted price. Our customers are the best, and we love serving them in this way.

Does Business Interruption Insurance Cover COVID-19 Losses?

Business interruption coverage is like most insurance for small businesses – we pay for it with the hope we never need it. The coverage is intended to protect against revenue lost after a business experiences a covered peril, or event which results in a temporary closure. Often this involves a casualty event like a fire or flood, or the inability to operate due to loss of utilities or information systems.

However, businesses across the country have filed claims with their insurers seeking business interruption coverage for COVID-related losses. This is a theory that, fortunately, most businesses have never had to claim in the past. Some claims have found their way to the courts for determination. The issue often boils down to whether there is physical loss or damage to the policyholder's business location to trigger business interruption coverage. Some policies include coverage for communicable diseases as well.

While most business interruption coverage lawsuits have not concluded, some recent decisions by federal courts in Missouri have been favorable for businesses seeking coverage. This is due in part to ambiguities in the policies and the lack of prior court decisions involving business interruption claims based on a pandemic. In many ways, these are uncharted waters for the litigants and the courts.

In two recent cases, courts ruled that the lawsuits could proceed against the insurer because the businesses adequately alleged that they suffered a physical loss from the COVID-19 pandemic. These courts denied motions to dismiss filed by the insurance companies early in the litigation. The judge reasoned that the businesses alleged a causal relationship between the physical substance of COVID-19 and their alleged losses.

A judge in another case denied an insurer's motion to dismiss a business interruption claim by a dental office. The court reasoned that the dental office plausibly alleged that COVID-19 had physically occupied and contaminated their dental clinics and thereby deprived them of their use of those clinics by rendering them unusable. The court also noted that the business's decision to suspend their clinic operations due to the pandemic and its continuing threat to health and safety did not negate their claim that COVID-19 was the cause of that suspension.

Whether these businesses can now prove a loss that triggers the coverage is yet to be determined, though the courts' initial rulings were favorable to them.

Not all courts have sided with the business though. One ruled that an insurer was entitled to dismissal of the insured's claims based on express policy exclusions. There, the insurance policy included a provision excluding coverage for "pollution and contamination," which the court found to encompass viruses, including COVID-19. The insured has appealed this decision, which remains pending.

As these and other cases proceed through the courts, businesses will have more guidance about the viability of business interruption claims. Many policies require timely claims be filed however, so business owners considering claims should seek advice from their insurance brokers, attorneys, or other advisors sooner rather than later. ■

Jeffrey R. Schmitt is a litigation attorney with Danna McKittrick, P.C. He represents businesses and individuals in commercial litigation matters including banking and finance, real estate, condo and homeowners associations, professional liability defense, title disputes, transportation, and pension and retirement plans. Jeff can be reached at 314.889.7189 or jschmitt@dmfirm.com.

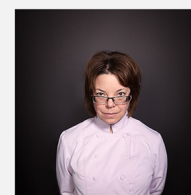
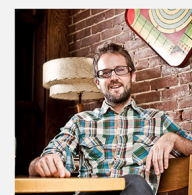


Quality Breeding & Batters For Fish and Chicken



For more information or recipe ideas:
www.andysseasoning.com

barlow PRODUCTIONS



PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO FOR BUSINESS.

314.994.9990 info@barlowpro.com www.barlowpro.com



Are You a Transactional or a Transformational Leader?

“Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it’s amazing what they can accomplish.”

-Sam Walton

A prospect of mine asked me if I was familiar with Transformational Leadership. Our model IS a transformational leadership model. As such, it is based on purpose, values and vision. It is designed so that people within an organization buy into and deliver the vision of the organization as well as the visions of one another. When we help an organization set outcomes, we invite employees to help deliver the outcomes together. Transformational leaders build strong, trustworthy relationships. Here are important ways we do this:

1. Focus on developing leadership in every employee so the entire workforce is not only building trust, but also operating from the full distribution of concepts and tools. As a result, our employees develop emotional intelligence, social interest, personal responsibility, healthy teamwork, and intrinsic motivation. Trustworthiness is foundational to our responsibility-based culture model. It’s not enough that traditional, titled leaders are developed to be transformational. There must be equal time, money and education given to all staff. That’s why we place an emphasis on systems, vertical team development (CEO to front-line staff) and capacity building, and the ability of individuals, organizations or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably as a collective.

2. Focus on leader/follower agility. We purposely set up activities in our process to increase flexibility in all people so each can confidently shift from leading to following and vice-versa, all while consciously supporting each other in either role.

3. Integrate Alfred Adler’s psychology model. The reason Adler’s model is still under-recognized is that understanding his work would significantly shift the use of power from our current win/lose dynamics into radically shared power, inclusion and equity. That’s why the authors of *The Courage to Be Disliked* wrote that Adler was at least 100 years ahead of his time. Adler had the most cogent understanding of what encourages or diminishes a healthy sense of belonging and significance in people and made the

connection between the impacts of this concept on internal and external struggles. With this knowledge, people are able to recognize how they contribute to—and how they either move further into and towards—inferiority complex or away from it. With it, people are able to read the map of specific behaviors because they see the private logic and values of each person despite their trips into fear and limitation.

Understanding Adler’s individual psychology model and the important concept of social interest (awareness about how our actions cause consequences for others) shifts the priorities in group dynamics from power-over and power-under to power-within for ALL. Adler effectively disrupts the win/lose **transactional** way of treating one another and leads to **transformational** leadership development in everyone. Some version of Adler’s philosophies are aligned with the best in culture evolution today.

4. Use a digital platform and an implementation framework. You need such a framework to support full distribution of concepts, tools and practices when transitioning to and sustaining a healthy culture.

5. Promote systems integration using a digital intranet structure so long-term sustainability of the model—and all practices and tools in it—are easy for clients to reference and use no matter where they are situated.

You are a business leader. Make sure you understand the importance of shifting away from a transactional way of leading people and how to move towards a transformational one instead. Such awareness makes all the difference in your results. ■

Judy Ryan (judy@LifeworkSystems.com), human systems specialist, is owner of LifeWork Systems. Join her in her mission to create a world in which all people love their lives. She can also be reached at 314-239-4727.

People hire LifeWork Systems because we help businesses become agile and manage their priority system: their human system. I hope this article helps you make sense of what’s most crucial to your evolving organization!



Building Business Value

Improving Your Asset And Building A Company Everyone Wants To Buy

How do you build the business that everyone wants to buy?

Simply look at your business through the eyes of a prospective buyer! You MUST view your business from that perspective or you will struggle to sell the business and have a successful exit to your retirement and your Life Beyond Business.™

If you are old enough to remember Famous-Barr in downtown St. Louis, I want to remind you of that feeling when you walked by the store display windows. When we were kids, a family outing to look at all the fabulous Christmas displays was a tradition. All the Christmas trees, lights, decorations, tinsel, fake snow...and all the toys! Toys of all kinds were displayed, many in action. It’s what dreams were made of!

Think of what it would be like if your business were in that store window – sparkling, cleaned up and polished, blinking lights and all ... something everyone wanted for their own. It doesn’t have to be a dream; you have the power to make that dream a reality.

To build defensible value that will result in a salable business, **you need to look at the business through the eyes of a buyer.**

RISK is the primary focus of all buyers. At the end of the day, buyers want their risk level to be as low as possible. How do they achieve this? By pushing more risk to the seller.

Think about that “tug of war” game we’ve all played at some point in our lives. The objective is to manage the position of the flag that marks the middle. If most of the rope ends up on your side, you win!

Tug of war is inherent in all business transactions. When selling your business, the objective is to keep the flag in the middle. Playing the game to a tie that balances the benefits to both seller and buyer is the objective.

What elements are most important to the buyer when considering the risk to purchase your business?

Cash flow. Can the buyer be confident that the business’s cash flow will provide for their needs and lifestyle, repay the purchase price within a reasonable time,

and grow in value to create the future nest egg the buyer will need for their next phase of life?

Is what they see, what they get?

■ **Are the financials believable?** Are they organized to tell the accurate story of the business? Is the buyer assured that the numbers represent the true financial position?

■ **Business operations and corporate hygiene.** To minimize risk, a buyer who is investigating the purchase of a business must be able to visualize themselves successfully operating the company. Does the business have a detailed operations playbook identifying every position with detailed procedures? Are employees trained to the playbook and held accountable? Are HR policies documented?

■ **Is past performance indicative of future expectations?** Are the historical financials recorded and presented logically, reflecting the true performance of the business? Historical performance is critical in quantifying risk for the buyer. What is the business’s trajectory? Is it growing steadily? Declining? Maintaining status quo? Has there been a recent increase or decrease in revenue that does not conform to historical norms? If so, why?

The prospective buyer must have confidence in these critical areas to proceed with the acquisition process. If the current owner either fails to demonstrate — or loses — credibility during the process, chances are very low that they will sell and achieve their exit objectives.

In the upcoming months, I will highlight three tips for owners who are preparing their businesses for sale. (And EVERY owner should be preparing their business for eventual sale!) By understanding these tips, following the relevant recommendations, and viewing the process from a buyer’s shoes, you WILL create a business that buyers desire. ■

Dave Driscoll is president of Metro Business Advisors, a business brokerage, valuation and exit planning firm helping owners of companies with revenue up to \$20 million sell their most valuable asset. Reach Dave at DDriscoll@MetroBusinessAdvisors.com or 314-303-5600. For more information, visit www.MetroBusinessAdvisors.com.



TIME WITH THE BOSS

Rob Goren

Delta Dental of Missouri

Website: www.deltadentalmo.com



What have been the keys to success for the business?

Delivering elite service with a distinctive, positive customer experience for our 2.1 million covered members and 3,000+ Missouri-based clients is critical to our ongoing success. As the state's dental benefits leader, we put our customers and distributors first. Nurturing those relationships helps us meet their evolving needs. We ensure access to affordable, quality dental care through the state's and nation's largest proprietary dentist networks. We also provide DeltaVision® benefit plans to groups for members to access vital vision care. As a non-profit organization, we invest in our communities year-round to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of Missourians.

What is your best advice for other business owners to find success in business?

Lead from the heart. Do what's right. Trust your instincts. Surround yourself with smart, innovative professionals and business partners. Stay inquisitive and informed. Listen. Get to know everyone you serve. Build productive relationships with them that stand the test of time. Treat them well. Earn their trust. Act on their insights. Deliver exceptional value for your customers. Be consistent. Set the standard. Stay agile. Stay humble. Never stop improving. Embrace change. Live and breathe your purpose and your values. Make life better for everyone you serve.

What's the smartest thing your com-

pany did in the past year?

We built strength. The pandemic forced businesses to rethink how they lead their teams and deliver for customers, so we seized the opportunity to reimagine historical approaches, enhancing the ways we interact with customers and distributors. It worked. Our team was highly engaged in this strength-building model, which also fortified our culture and mission-based approach to the marketplace. Throughout the pandemic, our workforce delivered uninterrupted service remotely to our stakeholders. We also created programs to provide much-needed aid to those impacted, including for our employees, and for clients and participating network dentists to ensure continuity of care for our members.

How do you differentiate your business from others in your industry?

Bottom line—we deliver exceptional value for our customers. Our customized dental plans, in tandem with the state's strongest networks, provide the best value for our clients and distributors. Our distributors can have complete confidence in us as a benefits provider. We back what we deliver with excellent service and support. Our non-profit status sets us apart from competitors. We advance our vital social mission to improve oral health in the communities we serve by funding oral health initiatives, community outreach events and charitable causes that teach people about dental health and give free care to those in need. ■



LAUGH!

**People Driving With Masks On..
Standing 6.002' Apart..
Offensive Pancake Syrup..
4,864 New Genders....**

**Come on! You've had enough.
And, so have your customers.**

Let Todd add some **humor** to your sales materials, and your customers will thank you. Because, when your customers laugh, you'll be laughing to the bank.



**When Times Are Tough,
The Tough Get Todd.** *TODD SCHOWALTER PRODUCTIONS*

(314) 809-2263 • www.gettodd.com

ST. LOUIS BUSINESS EXPO & BUSINESS GROWTH CONFERENCE

October 26, 2021 11am-5pm
St. Charles Convention Center

Exhibit Booths
Available

Contact: Pat Coates
314.569.0076, ext. 109
pat@sbmon.com

www.stlexpo.com

877-379-8279 | WINNINGTECH.COM



ARE YOUR EMPLOYEES WORKING FROM HOME?

Winning Technologies has all of the tools and expertise necessary for making sure your employees are successful and productive – wherever they are.

From innovative phone solutions to cloud hosting of your business software, we are prepared to help take your business to the next level. Put your trust in the remote workforce experts.

- Hosted Voice Solutions
- ERP Cloud Hosting
- Proactive System Monitoring
- Data Backup
- Disaster Recovery
- Virtualization
- Cloud Computing
- Cyber Security
- Virtual Private Networks

Give us a call at **877-379-8279**
or visit WinningTech.com

