



Get Your Business Recession-Ready and Outperform Your Competition

Use These 3 Tips (They've Worked for Me!)

When I want to know what's about to happen in the economy, I always look at the tech sector. Tech companies in Silicon Valley are a leading indicator of marketing conditions — like canaries in the coal mine — because they're valued on sales, not profits. When they start to spend and hire, I know things are going to be good in the economy ... and when they start to lay people off, it's a sure sign a recession is coming.

That's happening right now. Silicon Valley is cutting employees and slashing spending right and left, and people like me who watch for these leading indicators are already predicting a recession in the next 12 months — which probably means it will happen in six! You'd better brace yourself because we're about to pay the price for those low interest rates.

Inflation and the economy are already negatively impacting your clients' lives and budgets, and *they will keep doing it*. There's no government bailout coming this time. That's why you need to start preparing for a recession right now; when we're in the middle of it, it's too late.

I've already started taking steps to make sure Newsletter Pro will make it through the recession and actually grow in the process. You absolutely NEED to take action NOW to do the same thing! Use these three tips to make sure the recession has a minimal impact on your business and you're ready to grab market share from other companies that didn't think ahead.

Tip No. 1

Gather more customer data.

Your data-building strategy is of the utmost importance right now. When the recession hits, you need to be able to reach your customers and leads, and the more contact points you have, the better. Do you have every client's name, email, cellphone or office phone number, and social media handles? Are you inviting them to your clients-only Facebook group? Are you reaching out proactively to connect on LinkedIn? The more channels you gather to reach your customers, the better you'll do at staying top of mind, building that relationship, and generating referrals and repeat business in the bad times.

Tip No. 2

Go above and beyond to provide value.

When people start picking the winners and losers on the list of who they'll do business with, you'll make it to the winner's camp by providing value far above and beyond what they'd expect from a normal company. The best way to do this is NOT by offering free services or discounts. That gets expensive, and you'll train your customers to expect freebies forever! Instead, you need to provide value with *relevant, educational content* dispersed through various media channels. I recommend doing this in a bunch of different formats. Send print and digital newsletters. Post on social media. Share videos on YouTube. Blog on your website. Blast out your own podcast!

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The more ways and more often you can reach people with content that adds value to their lives, the better your relationship will be. I call this the “one to many” connection, and it’s easy to do. Take an article from your newsletter, then make a few tweaks and read it on a video. It’s not rocket science, and you’ll get a lot of mileage out of your content.

To really impress your network, think about ways you can provide value *beyond* what you do as a company. For example, Newsletter Pro’s bread and butter is generating referrals. But we also share tips on generating leads, because we know our clients want to know that, too. Extras like that make a great impression. We’ve used this strategy successfully in the past to get through a down economy.

Tip No. 3

Shore up the foundational components of your business.

Are you funneling your customer data into a customer relationship management (CRM) system? Do you have a solid marketing plan that includes communicating with your clients regularly online and offline? Do you have a killer customer service and sales process in place? If not, now is the time to fill those gaps.

If you’re unsure about which foundational items you need to work on, schedule a call with a Pro! My team is happy to talk about newsletters, but we can also talk about your other marketing efforts, go over your overall strategy, and point out where the holes are.

Here’s what these 3 things do for you.

All of these strategies strengthen your relationships with your current customers, which is absolutely key to weathering the storm of a recession. When the economy tanks, people will start tightening their budgets, and they’ll make decisions about what to cut based on logic AND emotion. They’ll also start clipping coupons and looking around for better deals.

If you’re just a faceless provider, it will be easy for your customers to run to someone with lower prices. But if you build a relationship with them — if you get to know them through their data, provide awesome value, communicate regularly, and share stories about yourself and your family — you’ll avoid the instant cut! Your customers will get those coupons and they’ll think, “Well, that deal is great, but Business Owner Bob does a really good job, and I like him. He’s my friend! So, thanks, but no thanks.”

“Six months from now, when everybody else is running around saying the sky is falling and they’re going out of business, you’ll have systems and processes in place. You’ll be ready to spring forward and grab that market share from people who didn’t start today.”

Start being proactive NOW!

Here’s the thing: That leading indicator in the tech sector didn’t just pop up last night. Whispers about a recession are going around, and by the time it’s all over the news, it will be way too late. You MUST start acting NOW to recession-proof your business and get ready to outperform your competition.

Most business owners wait until they’re in an emergency to take action — and when they wake up, their customers are leaving, their money is going down the drain, they have to cut staff, and they’re losing market share like crazy to people who were more prepared than they were. Don’t let that be you.

Be proactive. Be smart. Use the tips I gave you, and you’ll have time to work the kinks out of your marketing before you start losing customers and having problems. Six months from now, when everybody else is running around saying the sky is falling and they’re going out of business, you’ll have systems and processes in place. You’ll be ready to spring forward and grab that market share from people who didn’t start today.

It’s time to put that extra money sitting in your bank account to use. Firm up your systems and processes. Build stronger relationships with your customers. Double-check your foundation. If you do all of that now, then when the storm comes, you’ll be the pig living in the brick house — not the straw house. Believe me, lots of pigs are living in straw houses right now ... and they’re about to come tumbling down.

-Shaun

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” -Colossians 3:23

My Competitor Is Doing What?!

How to Breed Success Through Best Practices

Every business owner wants their business to be successful, but what are you doing to make success a reality? Are you jumping from one trend to the next with hopes that one of your adjustments will help boost business for that quarter? If so, you may be making some decisions that will actually impede your company’s continued success. Instead, you should try to determine the best practices by comparing your business to some of the most successful players in your industry.

Best practices are a set of guidelines, ideas, or beliefs that represent the most efficient course of action to accomplish your business goals. In order to determine the best practices for your company, you should study successful businesses within and outside of your industry so you can fully understand what they’re doing. When done correctly, you can determine what areas of your business need improvement while also developing methods to improve them.

This can help you with immediate benefits including an increase in sales, reduced costs, more efficient use of technology, and much more. Not only will your overall business see improvements but different departments will also benefit when best practices are utilized. Below you will find how best practices can improve three important areas of any business.

Management

In order for your management team to be as productive as possible, you need to introduce some best practices including the demonstration of leadership by example, the ability to communicate a clear and effective strategy, and the setting of challenging yet realistic goals. An efficient way to monitor progress is by establishing key performance indicators and tracking them. This will allow you to track sales volume, customer satisfaction, and more while comparing it to your competitors. Through sound communication policies and other

best practices, your management team will be more effective in leading your team than ever before.

Hiring And People Management

It’s difficult for your business to see success if you can’t attract and retain talented individuals. Best practices relating to people management include involving employees in the development of the company, rewarding achievement, and offering employee development and training opportunities. You can’t run a successful business without a strong team behind you, so it’s important that you find ways to develop and appreciate your employees. If you don’t, they will find somewhere else to work.

Sales And Marketing

What does your marketing strategy look like? Do you have a website? No matter the size of your business, you should have a marketing strategy and website in place. When you have social media accounts and a website that the public can access, you are boosting your reach, which can help you compete with large competitors. Additionally, you can utilize other best sales and marketing practices like newsletters, regular emails, and more to connect with your customers. Newsletters specifically are a great way to connect with your audience on a more personal level and give them a greater insight into your business, which helps boost customer relations and loyalty.

When used properly, best practices can help improve every aspect of your business. If you want to see more growth, figure out what your successful competitors are doing and find ways to implement their methods into your own business practices.



Nerf Gun Wars at the Office Are A Good Thing!

5 Reasons To Let Your Team Play

If you stopped by the Newsletter Pro office on a Friday afternoon in 2019, you might have stepped into the middle of a Nerf gun war. Coworkers battled across the common area and dove for cover behind their cubicles. Nerf darts flew like sparks. It was mayhem!

These days, our team is largely remote, but we still play together. (Our company-wide Zoom Jeopardy games are legendary.) Why? Well, because play has proven benefits for both employees *and* businesses. Here are just five reasons you might want to consider utilizing a Nerf arsenal, starting an annual March Madness bracket, or purchasing a giant chess set for your office.

- 1. Play promotes creativity.** Playing stimulates our imaginations, and that effect lingers when employees go back to work. One study found that bringing improv theater into the office, for example, led to “higher scores of workplace playfulness, individual creativity, and group creativity” among participants. With more creative firepower on your team, you’ll wow your clients and accelerate the growth of your business.
- 2. Play staves off stress and burnout.** According to the Huffington Post, “research shows that play can decrease absenteeism, stress, and health care costs.” When workers play on the clock, they take fewer “mental health days” and are happier with their jobs — increasing retention and your bottom line.
- 3. Coworkers who play together stay together.** Play forges bonds between coworkers, boosting employee retention. It also promotes teamwork after the games are over. “A playful environment is an environment where people collaborate,” PlayCore Senior Vice President Tom Norquist told GameTime. “It’s an environment where people get along. They remember what they learned as a child in play and they have empathy, so they understand other people’s ideas and they don’t shut them down.”
- 4. Playful people adapt quickly to change.** Playing will put some of your employees out of their comfort zones — and that’s a good thing! Getting creative and trying new things increases adaptability, so the more your team plays, the more willing they’ll be to tackle the changes essential to growing your business.
- 5. Play attracts young, motivated employees.** Gen Z and millennial workers are demanding more fun and flexibility in the workplace. To attract and keep younger talent, use play to break up the boring 9–5 work day that has become “so 1990.”

So, what are you waiting for? Go grab that Nerf gun!

Create An Empathetic, Practical Marketing Campaign

5 Marketing Strategies Customers Won't Ignore



Although 2023 is on its way, the impact of the pandemic hasn't completely disappeared. For many pandemic-weary consumers, COVID-19 has changed their lives forever. From closing businesses to remote work, many consumers are now struggling from inflation or are simply unable to do the activities they love (due to falling out of healthier habits during lockdown).

Since 2020, consumer perspectives and desires have changed greatly. How do you respond to this ever-changing market? There are a few strategies that'll help you recognize your customers' changing mindsets while offering practical solutions.

No. 1: Check on your customers.

The pandemic has exhausted and confused a lot of people. While your customers may be resilient, they may not be super patient, and you'll need to assess their needs. What do they really want from your business right now? What kind of frustrations do they keep running into?

This is a great time to build a message around practical solutions that will resonate with consumers. A report from Interactive Advertising Bureau found that four times as many consumers prefer efficiency in ads versus those who value campaigns that are “fun.” Emphasize tangible value in your services and products while also adapting to the swings in the public mood.

No. 2: Update your analytics and insight methods.

Google is delaying the phaseout of third-party cookies to 2023, but for marketers, the end of cookies looms ahead heavier than ever. Your old tools for tracking consumers and targeting ads will probably not work nearly as well, now that Google Chrome won't support cookies. It's time to talk to IT or a knowledge management software company about how you'll track consumer behavior in the upcoming year.

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'Free Time' Will Make You Love Your Job Again

There's nothing worse than pursuing your passion only to regret it. If you're in this position — or dread being in it — we think Jenny Blake may have some truly valuable advice for you.

Entrepreneurship starts with a motivating vision. Business owners will often pour their whole body and soul into making their vision a reality, leaving no time to take care of themselves or enjoy their lives. Suffice it to say, falling a little too deep into the hustle can eat away at your soul — but “Free Time: Lose the Busywork, Love Your Business,” written by Jenny Blake, is all about reclaiming your love for your work, while creating spare time for yourself.

It's no secret that many business owners struggle to pass on their responsibilities to others, leading to catastrophic workloads. Instead of working within their flow, they battle the friction of everyday busywork that you don't want to do. As a result, they don't do your best work when it matters most.

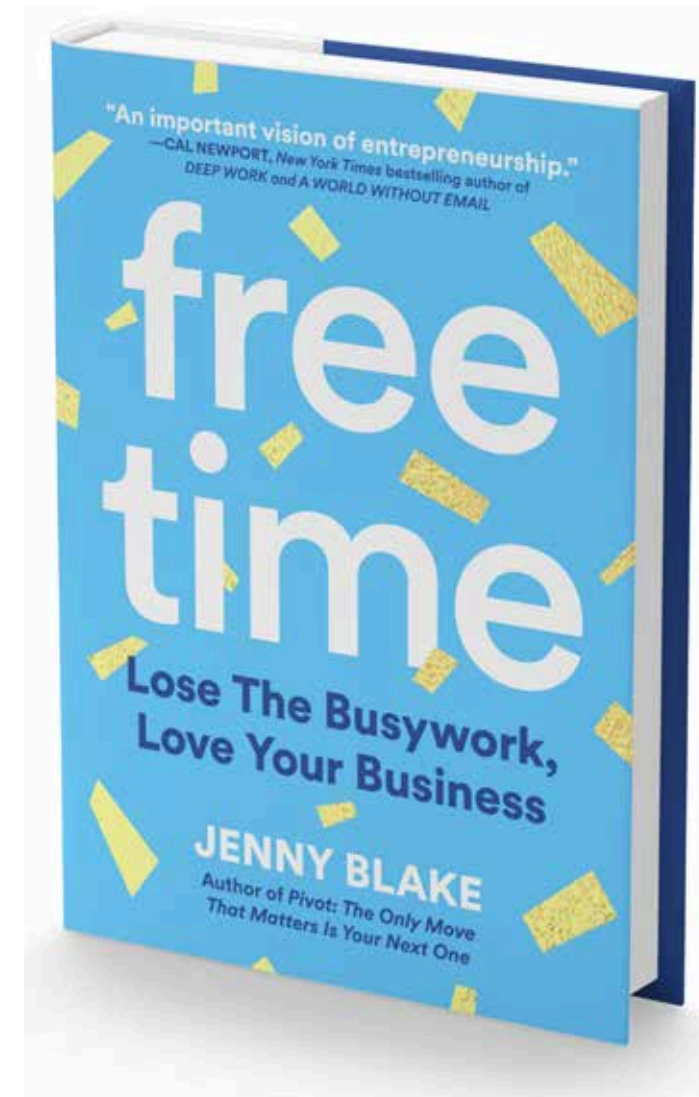
But how do entrepreneurs give up busywork while still keeping a business afloat? Jenny Blake's answer is simple: “Let it be easy; let it be fun.”

Blake argues that, actually, your time is worth *more* than money. When the going gets tough and frustrating and leads to dead ends, she asks herself: “How can we earn twice as much in half the time, with ease and joy, while serving the highest good?” Then, she works through a process called “Align, Design, and Assign,” which helps her align tasks to be well-calibrated to her company's needs, design them to be easier for her team to process, and assigns the right person for the task(s).

Each stage of the “Align, Design, and Assign” process is more profound than you'd expect. In the first part, “Align,” she describes one of her core principles: “Each time you repeat a task, take one step toward automating it.” Rather than rushing through an annoying task, you can make little time investments to ensure that it's possible to automate in the future. In short, at some point, you may never have to do the task again.

In “Design,” she describes how to master the time management of the tasks at hand. She addresses how to establish and measure your “ideal outcomes” and shares some of her most relatable concepts for business owners with burnout, such as her “deep work” windows.

Lastly, the final stage named “Assign” tackles one of the biggest challenges for entrepreneurs: passing work on to



others. Nobody wants to be the “chief everything officer,” as Blake puts it. She describes how to build a “delightfully tiny team” and covers many other useful techniques to maximize time efficiency, such as building a task management system.

If you're an overworked small-business owner, ‘Free Time’ is sure to help ease your burdens. Don't let the world sit on your shoulders — with a little help, you'll be able to work hard and enjoy much more free time, too.

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”

—Luke 16:10

No. 3: Embrace short-form videos.

TV once took the advertising world by storm — but now, social media has blown past TV in popularity. A smartphone screen gets in front of the consumer much more often than a TV does. If you want a chance at getting new leads or strengthening your consumer relationships, creating short videos for social media is a perfect way to engage people.

No. 4: Leverage micro influencer marketing.

In late 2020, we began to see many celebrities and influencers engage with brand partnerships. Whether it's an A-list celebrity or a niche influencer, you can benefit in big ways by getting local influencers to talk about your product or service. Focused, yet small audiences will drum up strong ROI, and micro-influencers comprised 91% of engagement across all sponsored posts in 2021.



According to Kantar's Global Knowledge Manager Polly Wyn Jones, "The celebrity culture has expanded with influencer marketing, an industry that continues to evolve exponentially. This is of course different because the influencer owns the content creation of the ad."

No. 5: Creative campaigns convey soul-searching.

Everybody does a little regular soul-searching, and now a creative campaign can too. Since traditional tracking tools are disappearing, like cookies, some marketers are turning to other tactical and creative techniques. For example, from Target to Hulu, many have repositioned their marketing approach to focus more on brand value, creating fresh and effective campaigns that resonate through simple concepts, like community and joy.

Why is focusing on a brand's core value, rather than being targeted, actually working? Michael Kalli, managing director at Ello Media, told Marketing Dive, "Being aggressively targeted won't give the best response. No one wants to feel like they're being sold to, even though realistically, we know we are."

At the end of the day, modern marketing trends suggest that the best marketing strategy is a gentler approach. Kalli says, "Customers want to see empathetic, human communication from brands — which slowly over time builds trust. A softer marketing approach that focuses on human centricity is the only way forward."

If you're planning your next marketing campaign for 2023, don't forget to keep these newest marketing trends and strategies in mind. They can help you assemble a practical, empathetic, and powerful marketing campaign that'll resonate with consumers all year long and beyond.

Buying Peanuts And Cracker Jills

How Cracker Jack Showed Love For Women's Sports

Ever since its launch in 1896 at Chicago World's Fair, Cracker Jack has long been associated with baseball. Most of its sales come from sports venues, solidifying its place as a baseball game staple. Even while stadiums introduce adventurous or healthy food into ballparks, Cracker Jack sales have always remained stable.

If you're going to a ballgame this fall, however, instead of Cracker Jacks, you just might find Cracker Jills — for a good cause.

For the first time ever, the brand's limited edition Cracker Jill packaging has introduced a new, feminine variation of the iconic Cracker Jack mascot. There are five new bags altogether, designed by Monica Ahanonu, of Cracker Jill in all shades and sizes. According to Tina Mahal, the vice president of marketing at Frito-Lay

North America, the change is meant to celebrate and honor a new shift in the sports landscape.

"What we started to notice is that in the world of sports, the rules have really started to change," Mahal told Marketing Dive in an interview. "And so there's this massive transformation taking place. Throughout sports, girls and women are really changing the face of the game."

As niche viewing options expand (such as ad-supported streaming), women's sports has grown significantly in recent years. Despite the increased viewership, though, there are still many barriers ahead for women's sports, including lack of exposure and unequal pay. To show their support, each Cracker Jill bag features a woman wearing the iconic Cracker Jack sailor uniform, with Bingo the dog at their feet. In addition, the brand has given a \$200,000 donation to the Women's Sports Foundation.

This campaign is about more than baseball, though, according to Mahal. "It really is celebrating women who are athletes, executives, women who now have this seat at the table within sports, and that is really what Cracker Jill is meant to do."

The Frito-Lay marketing team even collaborated with award-winning musician Normani to create a remix of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," which celebrates inspirational women. Thanks to effective packaging and its unique place in sports culture, Cracker Jill shows genuine and exciting solidarity for many consumers and sports fans alike.

Quotes to Grow On

"I hope I can be the autumn leaf, who looked at the sky and lived. And when it was time to leave, gracefully it knew life was a gift."

—Dodinsky

"The best way to predict the future is to create it!"

—Peter Drucker

Find Us on Social!



Resource of the Month

People knew about DocuSign before the pandemic, but after March 2020, everyone knew DocuSign. It was the first platform that governments and businesses across the U.S. relied on to get signatures, despite closed offices and social distancing.

However, it's clear that the first, biggest e-signature platform isn't necessarily the best one. HelloSign, a DropBox company, provides a totally different experience from DocuSign — and has even improved it in notable ways.

Easier UI and User Experience

When signing important documents and making important business transactions, nobody wants to feel frustrated by the mere experience of signing paperwork. HelloSign makes it easy for you, your team, and your customers to use.

Get Documents Signed Faster, Easier HelloSign, The 'Dark Horse' Of the DocuSign Market

For example, the HelloSign app allows users to sign documents easily, even when they aren't home at the computer. Also, over 22 languages can also be accessed through the platform, allowing you to more easily attain signatures from people of all backgrounds.

It's functional and intuitive, and you'll be grateful for how clear it is to navigate!

E-Signature Costs Scale With Your Business

Many entrepreneurs complain about DocuSign's unreasonable price leaps and lack of payment flexibility. However, HelloSign puts a higher value on your enterprise scalability and will work alongside you to provide the most reasonable, transparent prices in the industry.

Worried about making the transition to a new e-signature platform? HelloSign is integrated with all the tools you already use, including Dropbox, Google Apps, Salesforce, Slack, Oracle CPQ, and HubSpot CRM. With a little time spent setting up and learning, you and your team will be ready to go in no time.

All of these features, and many more small perks (like great customer service), are why we chose to feature HelloSign as this month's Small Business Resource of the Month. We're big fans, and we hope you become a fan too!



The Future of Personal Care Products?

By Humankind's Goal to Eliminate Single-Use Plastics in the Bathroom



The world is obsessed with plastic. According to PlasticOceans.org, the world produces an estimated 380 million tons of plastic every year — 10 tons of which find its way into our oceans annually. That's equal to more than one garbage truck per minute. These statistics should be surprising, but unfortunately aren't when you take a step back and realize how much plastic we use in our homes daily.

Take the bathroom, for example. Within each of our bathrooms, you're likely to find plastic containers full of soap, shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, mouthwash, and more. Your shower curtain is probably made of plastic and your toothbrush too. Even the packaging that your toothbrush came in was probably plastic! Thankfully, there are some companies trying to eliminate single-use plastics in the bathroom, and leading the pack is By Humankind.

By Humankind's founder, Brian Bushell, first discovered the damaging effects that plastic has on the ocean during a trip to Thailand in 2017. He went out diving for the first time expecting to see the beauty of the ocean but was instead greeted by mounds upon mounds of trash. He couldn't believe how many

plastic containers were submerged in the water. When he returned to his hotel room, he looked in his own bathroom to discover that he was contributing to the environmental hazard. After doing more research and discovering a third of all single-use plastic products in landfills were personal care products, he partnered with Joshua Goodman and founded By Humankind to tackle the issue head-on.

So far, By Humankind has developed three unique products. The first thing they created was a deodorant made from natural ingredients. While the first order comes in a plastic container, it is not meant to be single-use. All subsequent orders of deodorant will come with the product in a paper pod that fits perfectly into the original packaging so the same plastic container can be used time and time again. Their other products include mouthwash, which comes in tablet form and can be dissolved in water, as well as shampoo, which comes in a bar rather than a plastic bottle.

One way that By Humankind hopes to encourage people to make the switch is by offering aesthetically pleasing designs. While that's not a concern for their shampoo or mouthwash (although the bright and vibrant colors are quite beautiful), it's more applicable for their deodorant container, as it will stay on the counter or shelf for years. By Humankind chose a minimalistic design that allows their product to blend right in with the rest of your bathroom.

You may think it would be easier to recycle plastic products rather than buy something new that costs a bit more, but recycling is, unfortunately, not as effective as we would hope. First and foremost, only a small fraction of the population regularly recycles their plastic products, but what's even more concerning is that only 10% of items placed in a recycling bin actually get recycled due to food or chemical contamination. The need for multi-use plastic has never been higher.

By Humankind is just one company tackling the single-use plastic issue. There are other companies across various industries with the same goal in mind. Hopefully, these companies' efforts will help curb the effect that single-use plastic has on our environment.

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