

Case Study:

How One Company Thrives in 'Bad' Times

Plus, 6 Steps to Ensure You Do Too!



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Whether we call ourselves conservative or liberal, pretty much all business owners have one thing in common: We don't let our politics affect our businesses. This is a standard rule — but not everyone lives by it. In fact, I'm friends with one group of super-conservative Republican entrepreneurs who purposefully give the standard the middle finger.

Marketing gets political.

These guys sell a product that is a big hit with conservative people. And over the years, they've discovered that it actually **BENEFITS** their business to change their marketing based on politics.

Why? Well, when a Republican is in office, their product doesn't do very well. But when a *Democrat* is in office, they sell like crazy! Suddenly, their social media starts going like gangbusters and their direct mail produces results. It's like clockwork: Their right- and ultra-right-wing clientele are engaged because they're out there on every conservative website and TV station getting fired up about the Democrats.

When my friends picked up on this trend, they decided to capitalize on it. Now, they have an entire system and process in place. When a Republican is in charge, they dial back their marketing, and when a Democrat is in the White House, they ramp it up! They've been doing this for more than two decades with huge success.

This company shows us that getting strategic with your marketing can help you thrive in "bad" times. While marketing based on politics may not be the right move for you, you can and should make similar pivots based on the economy.

When you pivot, you win.

It's normal to make changes and adjust your marketing to match economic trends — because the economy affects your business, just like politics affects my friends'

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businesses! Right now, everyone agrees that if we're not in a full-on recession, we're *at least* stuck in a slow economy, so you should think about adjusting your marketing copy and tactics.

The sooner you take action on this, the better. I do it, and I swear it's one reason Newsletter Pro tends to grow more and do better in bad economic times, when we remind people that it's a heck of a lot easier to sell to past and existing customers who know, like, and trust you than it is to win over new ones. We also remind business owners that when you keep those same customers happy, you get more referrals! Our product does great in good times too, of course, but we see a large influx of business when the economy slows down.

Making similar pivots can help you remove fear from your business, become as recession-proof as possible, and ensure you're ready to grow, strike, and dominate as soon as the market gets better. But before you start adjusting your marketing with the times, you need to make sure your business has a solid foundation.



6 Steps to a Solid Foundation

When money is cheap, customers are abundant, and when we all have a bunch of money in our pockets, we can get away with being sloppy. Every one of us is guilty of letting the basics slide at one point, even though it's a horrible business practice. You can't change the past. But if you clean up your act and nail down these six basics, you'll set yourself up for success in the future.

- 1. Invest in customer relationship management (CRM) software and fill it with customer data.** My team surveyed our customers two years ago and found that only 35% of them have an active CRM system. I was shocked! This is an absolute must.
- 2. Meet your current clients where they are.** You need to know where your customers are so you don't waste time or money on marketing where they aren't. If you're not sure which channels are the best for your demographic, do some research. Check your email open rates. Survey your clients. Read the studies. Fun

fact: Many people assume print marketing sucks for millennials and Gen Z — until they look at the research. Out of all demographics, 20-somethings are the largest consumer of print catalogs, and they spend approximately 50% more time browsing them on average than they do browsing websites. It's no wonder print is part of almost every business's foundation.

- 3. Nurture your clients with information that provides value.** Don't just spam your clients with your latest offer and call it a day. To keep them long-term, you need to nurture them with usable, entertaining, beneficial content through your newsletter and other marketing channels. Solve their problems! Make them laugh! Remember, your clients have unlimited choices about who they do business with. Why would they go with the person who is always trying to sell them something?
- 4. Deliver everything you promise — and a little bit more.** I don't care if a client has bought from you 100 times. You still need to impress them! Your existing customers are money, so treat them at least as well as you treat your prospects, and follow up to show them you care.
- 5. Simplify your products and processes.** In slow times, business owners look around and think, "What I really need to fill this revenue gap is three new startups, two new products, and seven new product lines." Stop! This just spreads your team thin and produces half-assed work. You can get away with that in a good economy, but in a bad economy, you might as well tie a rock around your neck and drop it off a bridge.
- 6. Create and document company systems.** Systems make your life easier in every area of business. When you create a system to address a problem and hand that system off to your team, they can tackle it quickly and free up valuable time and resources.

There's no time to waste.

I'm not saying that your business will definitely go under in a recession if you don't do these six things. It might not! But you'll make your life a lot harder. Would it have been better if you'd done all of this six months ago, a year ago, or 10 years ago? Heck yes! But it's not too late as long as you act fast.

Take steps now to recession-proof your business and get ready to dominate as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Maybe, like my friends from the beginning of this article, your opportunity will come with the next election. Maybe it will come from one of your competitors going under because they didn't prepare when they should have. Either way, you need to be ready to seize it. If you put all of these pieces in place, you'll be the top dog in your market when the economy turns around!

- Shaun

3 QUESTIONS To Lead You To Success

How to Generate and Assess Ideas



Good ideas are priceless, and no business will succeed without them. But inspiration doesn't always strike spontaneously. Coming up with unique and valuable concepts is hard work — and consistently doing so is even more challenging.

Fortunately, author and professor Robin Landa has a solution. She outlines it most fully in her book "The New Art of Ideas: Unlock Your Creative Potential," but the basics are pretty simple. To generate great ideas, she says you must ask yourself three essential questions.

What is the goal?

New ideas must have a purpose, so start by determining what yours is. According to Landa, you should avoid getting lost in the weeds by selecting one goal at a time and focusing on your most pressing goal first. Maybe your goal is to roll out a successful new product, increase employee retention, or convince your customers to refer their friends. Or perhaps you're thinking bigger and aiming to revolutionize your industry. A clear understanding of what you hope to accomplish will inspire valuable ideas to help you meet your goal.

What is the gap?

Businesses often find success by providing a missing piece to a puzzle. No matter what industry you work in, gaps or areas are undoubtedly left untapped and unexplored. Consider what your customers need that no one else has provided. Are there unsolved problems that require a solution or a demographic the current market has yet to serve? Further, have there been other efforts to address that gap — and if so, why did they fail? Once you determine the missing piece, you've found the beginning of an idea.

What is the gain?

Landa argues that having a money-making idea isn't enough — you should also aim to have one that will benefit humanity. Not all goals are worthy; some can be actively harmful to mental or physical health, the environment, or even the fabric of our society. Stop and ask yourself how your idea will add value. Your concept doesn't need to change the world, but it should respond to a desire, address a pain point, provide a service, or solve a problem. It's the ultimate test to determine whether your idea is constructive or likely to fall flat.

When you're struggling to generate new ideas, considering your goal and working through each of the three questions will help you move past a creative block. But you don't necessarily need to start at the top of the list — if the gap or gain occurs to you first, don't fight it. The remaining questions will help you hone your concept into one that's effective and ready to present to others. After considering the Three G's, you can feel confident your resulting idea has value.



The Confusion Behind Branding

It's Time to Give Branding a Rebrand

The idea of branding has become muddled over the past few years. In decades past, the term was clear: It referred to a specific business entity's name, design, slogan, and other features setting the business apart from its competitors. Now, this term has been thrown around so much that it's almost lost all meaning. Many companies and organizations claim they can help your business with branding, but can they really?

In today's climate, branding doesn't mean just one thing. It encompasses a whole slew of components: brand strategy, brand research, brand positioning, brand identity, brand experience, and more. Those public relations companies or advertising firms that say they do branding or are in the branding business only focus on a few components of the all-encompassing idea of branding. They usually focus on brand strategy and, in some cases, brand research. But the other parts of branding can only truly come from within your own business.

Even major businesses have differing views on what branding actually means. Some believe branding is how businesses establish customer relationships through customized offers and customer retention efforts, while others think it involves mass communication. If you talk to enough companies, you'll hear branding used to describe everything from a standard within an organization to a way to bring change to the world. It has become so confusing that data analytics and brand consulting companies struggle to determine the actual value of a brand. For example, in 2021, Kantar valued the top 100 global brands at \$7.1 trillion, whereas Intrabrand only valued them at \$2.6 trillion. That's a massive difference!

Let's break it down so it's easy to understand exactly what businesses mean when they say they're in the branding game. Advertising firms are in the business of creating advertisements. Is this branding? Not necessarily. They can strengthen a brand, but advertisements target short-term results. "We have this deal going on — come in before it's too late," or "You need to check out this brand-new product." Similarly, public relations companies create good news about specific organizations or help organizations avoid negative press. This can strengthen the brand but does not necessarily count as branding.

Branding proper puts the focus on long-term gains. It creates an image in a consumer's mind of what that business is doing and what

to expect when they do business with an organization. McDonald's is the perfect example of the successful use of branding. When you go to McDonald's, you know exactly what to expect. You know how long your wait will be, what customer service will look like, and how your food will taste. That's the brand. Sure, the golden arches in their logo and the catchy jingle accompanying their commercials are part of their branding, but it's not the focal point. Those only get people in the door, but experience within the business creates a long-term relationship with the customer.

While future response sounds like the perfect solution to help businesses create a plan for the future, many worry that business leaders won't take to the idea. Why would they pass up on immediate gains to combat something that might or might not happen in the future? At the end of the day, businesses operate to make money. Immediate gains are great, but the better option is apparent when you can make 10 times as much through a future response strategy.

Branding is different from what it used to be, and those who do not adjust to a future response ideology will soon be left in the dust. Times are changing, and businesses are doing more to protect future profits. Will you follow suit?



Since branding focuses on long-term gains and creating future demands, some experts have started referring to branding as future response. By giving branding a rebrand, we change more than just a name; it's a more precise definition that helps business leaders better track their progress toward their brand goals.

Future response allows business leaders to devise plans that put them in the best position to tackle future challenges. As we head closer to a recession, future response will help business leaders know where to invest their resources. They'll better understand how to sell more products at a higher price while also figuring out how to prevent losing customers to competitors. Future response can't help businesses solve all problems, but you can figure out nearly everything long-term by devising a future response strategy.

Want to Increase Employee Productivity and Retention?

Add Financial Education to Your Benefits!

The topic of employee benefits has been a hot-button issue as of late, with a desire for increased work-life balance, retirement options, mental health assistance, and paid time off. In fact, 66% of employees say they're waiting to review their company's new benefit initiatives before deciding to stay or look for another job, according to a Workhuman survey.

And while many of the expected benefits employees seek revolve around health, wellness, and long-term planning, the desire for financial education programs is quickly gaining popularity. However, many employers are hesitant to adopt new benefits due to the increased cost of offering the service — financial education included. But it turns out that providing benefits that help employees improve their financial literacy offers employers a significant return on investment.

What are the advantages of offering financial education services?

By helping employees better understand their finances, and how to navigate a financial landscape, they can make better decisions in their personal lives. This, in turn, allows them to focus more on work while there and improves their overall productivity.

Financial education also creates a stress-free work environment; when employees have an understanding of dangerous versus safe financial situations, they feel more confident. And when factors like increased employee focus, productivity, and confidence are combined, companies can reap incredible benefits such as reduced absenteeism, better retention, and greater employee loyalty.

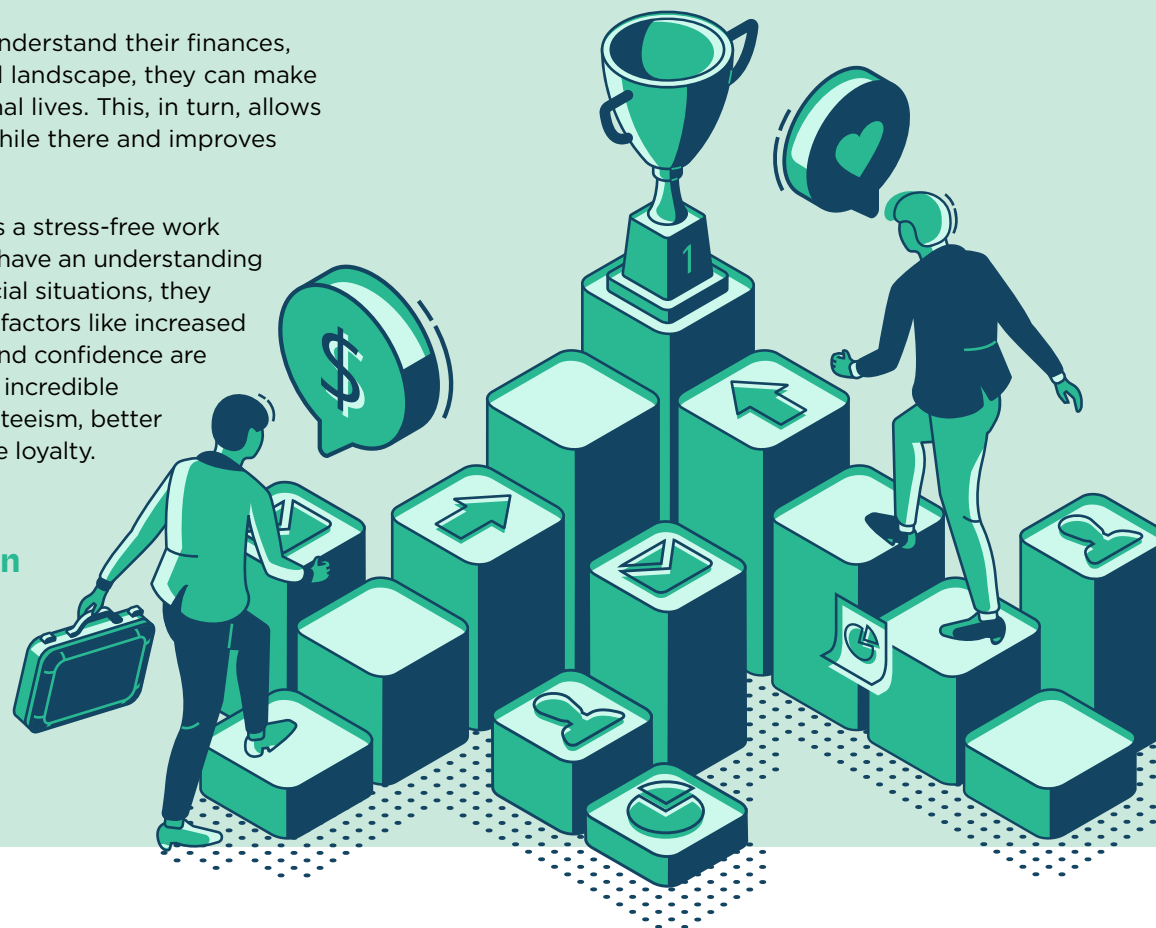
Should your business offer financial education benefits?

As with any business decision, the possibility of adding any new benefit likely comes down to cost. But if you can

afford to add financial services to your benefits package, it's a good idea to do so. This is because financial stress is an issue that affects more than the individual; it infects your company as a whole. It's a roadblock to productivity that slowly seeps into the workplace's daily interactions between both co-workers and clients.

And if your business has an issue with employee churn or attracting new job candidates, financial education services are an attractive benefit that shows current employees you care about them outside of the office and indicates to potential applicants that your business prioritizes its workforce.

So, yes, adding financial education services to your employee benefits package may increase costs upfront, but the benefits it will produce can drive your profits and productivity far into the future!



Revolutionize Your Project Management Efficiency

With Help From ProofHub

Project management software has become a must-use for many organizations and businesses. Many programs are available and often share the same functions, leaving you wondering which option is best for your business. One software that's definitely worth looking into is ProofHub.

ProofHub is a cloud-based project management software that offers businesses a comprehensive platform to manage their teams, projects, and clients.

One of the best features of ProofHub is improved collaboration: The software provides a workspace that allows team members to work together on projects, share files, and communicate in real time. The available communication tools can enhance participation and reduce the back-and-forth emails that team members commonly experience. When team members message each other through ProofHub, they'll receive notifications that prompt quicker responses.

ProofHub will truly streamline your project management efforts. Their file management system allows businesses to share files securely with team members and clients. Business leaders will quickly notice a comprehensive overview of each project and can check in on timelines, milestones, and task dependencies. With ProofHub, businesses can finish all tasks on time and keep their teams working efficiently.

What sets ProofHub apart from its competitors is its affordability. Many other project management software options require you to pay additional fees for more users, projects, and storage. ProofHub offers two packages to fit your needs. Their essential package costs \$45 a month (when billed annually) and allows your business to work on 40 different projects with unlimited users and 15 GB of storage. Their ultimate control package costs \$89 a month (when billed annually) and provides unlimited projects and users with 100 GB of storage. There's no contract and no commitment. Give ProofHub a try, and you'll quickly learn why it consistently earns high ratings.

How to Start 'Spring-Cleaning' at Your Business

Spring provides an excellent opportunity to improve personally and professionally. It's also the perfect time to cut the fat in your business and look for ways to optimize outdated systems.

Here are four ways to begin "spring-cleaning" at your business.



Listen to feedback.

One of the quickest and easiest ways to identify outdated processes or systems at your business is to ask your employees and clients. Take note of what they find frustrating and work to improve it.

Look at the data.

The data you collect will also give you a good idea of where the sticking points are in your business. If something isn't getting the results you want, it's time to shift gears.



Consult the experts.

Other people in your industry can be great resources for discovering ways to boost your business. Try following some thought leaders in your niche on social media, or pick up their latest book.

Look for the leak.

Once you know the general areas lacking within your business, it's time to identify specific leaks. Sometimes plugging them can be easier than you think.





How To Increase Open Rates on Emails for Business

Do you want an easy and affordable way to connect with your audience and showcase your company's products, services, or discounts? Then you should try your hand at email marketing. Some may argue that email marketing is dead, but they are wrong. According to HubSpot, 64% of small businesses still use emails to reach their customers, and 73% of consumers prefer that businesses communicate through email. However, with these numbers showing the value of this kind of correspondence, business owners may be wondering how to increase open rates on emails.

Emailing can be a highly effective form of marketing, but to increase your open rates and highlight your services, you must incorporate these five elements into your email marketing campaign.

Personalizing Your Emails

Using an email automation platform can make it easy to get into a routine. But don't forget to utilize personalization tactics so you can effectively connect with your consumers. Your subscribers should feel like your VIPs and not like they're just another email address in your database. A great way to convey the feeling of being known and acknowledged is to address your customers by name. Simply using their name will help you create stronger bonds with them from the very beginning.

But it doesn't end there — you must send out timely and relevant content that your subscribers can't resist. Send promotional emails on their birthdays or implement dynamic marketing that will resonate with your recipients.

However, as you begin to develop ideas on how to increase open rates on emails, remember to make your subject line eye-catching. Strategies further in this list can help you learn more about how to avoid spam filters and create a subject line that will boost your open rates on emails.

Incorporating Segmentation

The more you segment the people who can view your emails, the better results you'll see. You can divide people by age, gender, marital status, location, or the products they're interested in. Incorporating this strategy will help your audience get more value from your emails when they are specific and relevant to your consumers.



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