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January, 2010



The Coach's Corner

"More Business... More Profits... Less Stress...!"

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Coach's Quote Of The Month:



Man cannot

Dear Mark,

Happy New Year! May 2010 be a lot better than the years before it!

One way we can make that wish a reality is to start thinking more about how to best position ourselves for the inevitable recovery and focus less on mere survival. This newsletter will provide you with some useful insights towards that end.

Take a moment to read this newsletter, check out our website and gain some understanding as to how Calaveras Business Coaching can re-energize you and your business, help move it forward, and make it fun again.

Mark van Stolk
Licensed Professional Business Coach

www.Calaveras-Coaching.com

Five Mistakes That Will Kill Your Business In A Slow Economy - Part 3 of 5

Lethal Mistake #3 - Using The "Slash & Burn" Method Of Expense Reduction

Yes, this is the time for you to carefully look at all of your expenses. The trick is to know more than just what to cut and what not to cut. You should prioritize your cuts. Almost by definition, entrepreneurs are optimistic that things will "get back to normal"... hopeful sooner than later. Try to think strategically about your budget reductions. You don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater by eliminating people or services that will take

discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.

--Andre Gide

Make 2010 Your Best Year Yet!

Join Calaveras' Strategic Plan Boot Camp (Planned start: 3rd week in January)

Kick-Off 2010 With a Plan!

Calaveras' "Strategic Plan Boot Camp" will involve about six non-competing business owners who meet two hours a week, for four weeks. The four sessions will cover:

Session 1: Identifying your "Vision" find out what "makes you tick", what is truly important to you and what you really want from life and your business. **WHAT YOU FIND OUT MAY SURPRISE YOU!**

Session 2: Assessing "Ground Zero" do a thorough self assessment of how well your business is performing now, based on "best practices" of

a lot of time, effort and/or money to replace when times get better. When that happens, you want to be positioned to benefit as soon as possible. So what does that leave that you can cut?

1) PAYROLL - Most likely, one of your biggest expenses is payroll - that makes it a big target. Unfortunately, we are talking about people here; and we know the last thing you want to do is lay off your employees. That holds especially true when they are doing all you ask of them. In addition, when business picks up again, the costs for rehiring and retraining for those positions will be a significant part of your re-growing process cost. An alternative may be to adjust working hours or shifts. You may have read about the State of California closing some services, like the Department of Motor Vehicles, for one day each week - reducing pay proportionately. The state employees didn't like it, but it certainly was better than getting laid-off, right?

2) "LUXURIES" - Expenses for such things as staff meetings, travel, employee incentives, customer appreciation programs etc. We believe these things are important, but not critical. This is a time when everyone, including your employees, sales reps, vendors and customers all understand cutting these non-essentials.

3) INVENTORY CONTROL - Quantity discounts are usually a great strategy. These days however, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush... big time. And the bird I'm referring to is CASH. Yes, most supplies can be purchased at a lower price when bought in bulk, but excess inventory is not something most business can afford to finance right now. Remember the old "just in time" system? Now is a good time to revisit that strategy if you can.

4) CONVENIENCES - Are you paying for an expensive copier or other office equipment that can be eliminated by a few trips to the local FedEx Kinko's or other copy center. Perhaps your small office printers can handle your day-to-day copy needs and you only need the "big copy machine" for special projects. While I'm on the subject of office expenses, do you know about Office Depot's Small Business Advantage Program"? They offer really big discounts on hundreds of items to small business owners. This benefit can be accessed through your local chamber of commerce. Have you developed the habit of using expensive delivery or courier services that can be adjusted with a little explaining to your customers? Are you using hotels or conference centers for meetings that can be handled in-house or with teleconferencing?

5) USE TECHNOLOGY - Technology is simple to use and

successful companies. THIS WILL BE A REAL EYE OPENER!

**Session 3:
Defining the
"Planning Path"**

How do I get there from here? SET TARGETS AND GOALS!

**Session 4:
Committing to
"Action Steps"**

what steps to initiate in 2010 to put your plan in place to reach your "Vision". *PLANNING HAS NO VALUE WITHOUT ACTION!*

Call Coach Mark at (901) 753- 3753 for details.

really inexpensive these days. I know of several businesses that are saving thousands of dollars with technology as simple as "Skype", which is a free internet telephone and video service. (www.skype.com) and allows face-to-face conversations and may help eliminate the need for travel.

6) OUTSOURCING - Some expenses that are traditionally kept in-house could be outsourced at lower cost - overhead expenses such as bookkeeping, accounting, payroll, HR, benefits management - can you think of others?

Now that you are in the right state of mind - take some time to think about all of your expenses and ask your accountant or business coach for help. I bet you'll come up with quite a few areas to trim cost without detracting from your core product/service quality or letting go of your valuable employees.

7) MEASURE RESULTS - As previously stated, marketing/advertising that is producing results needs to be maintained or increased. But with some marketing, it's not clear how much response you are getting. If you have direct marketing campaigns such as direct mail or print advertising, adding special "with this ad" promotions makes it possible to track returns. But other marketing strategies such as radio, billboard or TV ads which cannot always be measured,... CUT! We always teach that brand awareness is important, but right now, we are a bit more concerned with SURVIVAL! Focus on marketing strategies that you KNOW will produce results

If - after all this - you still have marketing or advertising strategies and you are not sure whether they are producing returns or not...

You are suffering from Lethal Mistake #4...

Which we will discuss next month.

Article by: Mark van Stolk - Licensed Professional Business Coach, Calaveras Business Coaching, LLC.

**Workshop: "Plan For Success in 2010"
at "TalkShoppe"**

Wednesday 1/13/2010 at 9-10am

Only 5% of small businesses have an **active business plan**. History shows that fewer than 20% of small businesses survive to see their 5th anniversary. However, more than 80% of businesses successful enough to celebrate 5 years in business had an active planning process in place.

The usual kind of plan that you make to get funding from banks doesn't do the trick! **Do YOU know what does work?**

Learn how to be among the survivors! Come listen to Coach Mark's presentation on **the right kind of Business Plan** on **Wednesday, January 13th from 9:00-10:00** at the Better Business Bureau [Click here for map](#)

"Talkshoppe" is a weekly networking and educational event, organized by First Tennessee Bank at the BBB offices.

For more information [Click Here](#)



**Save
\$50**

The first two people to sign up for the "Strategic Plan Bootcamp" will save \$50 off the \$395 price.

If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. However, where you "get" will most certainly not be where you would have wanted to go.

Start 2010 with:

1. a better insight into where you really want to end up in life,
2. a clearer understanding of what is keeping you from getting there,
3. a plan to get started on reaching your goals,
4. motivation to get started on implementation.

Call Coach Mark van Stolk at 901-753-3753 for additional information.

Offer Good for first two participants to sign up!

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