

STRATEGY MATTERS



Harness the Power of Strategy
to Grow Your Sales & Profits

≈ By Robert Stover ≈

“If you are passionate about growing your business to
the next level, read Robert’s book”

Legal Mumbo Jumbo

Where I tell you you're responsible for your own actions and
my lawyers love plagiarists

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Introduction

A sneak-peek at what lies ahead...

I'm writing this report to share a few of the million-dollar, business-growth breakthroughs I've discovered over the years.

After all these years, I'm still stunned when I see a simple change in business strategy create a million-dollar breakthrough in the sales and profits of a business.

You just need one, simple, idea to create a breakthrough - -

Here's seven...

Inside this report you'll discover...

- **How two words created a 50% increase in sales – instantly**
- Why a shift in "approach" strategy multiplied sales of an \$1800 product by 300% in two weeks
- **A hidden source of million-dollar breakthroughs overlooked by many marketers**
- Why "naming the problem" is often the road to blowing a market wide open
- **The 5 "psychological stages" your prospect goes through before ever buying your products or services - if you don't know these, you are losing sales.**
- How providing "context" can explode response and sales
- **And a bunch more...**

I hope you find these Breakthrough Secrets as profitable as they have been for my clients.

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HIDDEN MILLIONS

The Overlooked Leverage Point That Generates Millions

The first breakthrough formula is strategic...

As we all know, great advertising can't save a bad strategy. When working with a client on their marketing strategy, I like to focus them on three major elements: Targets, Approaches and Propositions. What I like to call the T.A.P. formula. You're no doubt familiar with the importance of the target market or list and the proposition or offer. But what's the "Approach"?



One approach to generating customers may out-pull another variation by 300%

Your "approach" is simply the sequence of steps you design to move a prospect to a customer.

For example: a consulting company could take three distinct approaches to on-boarding clients:

- I. Generate leads through emails offering a special report or tele-seminar - have their rainmakers then call and close for business.
- II. Generate leads through email - then invite prospects to an executive breakfast for \$49. And then offer a free consultation at the end of the talk.

- III. Generate leads by using telemarketers to invite executives to a Webinar, then call back afterwards and try to close the business.

All three of those approaches are valid. But, one may out produce the others by 300% or more.

The problem is that each industry falls into a rut in it's approach. Either a budding entrepreneur leaves a business in the same industry and uses the same approach as the company he left. Or, an entrepreneur comes fresh to the industry, looks around at how all the competitors are approaching customers, clients and patients - then mimics that approach.

It's not uncommon to see the major players in an industry all using the same approach to customer acquisition.

Yet, some of the biggest breakthroughs I've created for clients have involved challenging industry conventions and crafting different approach strategies.

Case Study: How changing one companies approach strategy increased sales 300% in two weeks

A client in the real estate industry had the following approach to selling an \$1800 product to sales managers: Cold call and sell. Using that approach they were closing 1 out of 20 prospects over a 6 week time frame with many, many follow-up calls to get the sale made.

Time to change the approach...

Instead, we simply had the sales team call and say, "I've got a package of info here about how to increase your team's production – but it may not even make sense for you. Let me ask you a few questions..." They would then set an appointment 3 days out and send a package, including a video sampler, sales letter with inducement for immediate purchase and a list of topics covered in the training.

The next step in their new approach created magic...

They would then shoot a fax over to the prospect informing them that the package would be going out via express mail – and included a testimonial from a customer who created great results with the program. The next day another fax went out informing the prospect that his or her package had been shipped – and another killer testimonial. The third day, another fax would

arrive informing the prospect to keep an eye out for the package and a reminder of their appointment the following day.

Within two, short weeks sales jolted 300% on an \$1800 product. And the close ratio went from selling 1 in 20 to 4 in 20.

Okay, think that was a one time fluke? Let's take a look at two more examples of a shift in approach strategy creating stunning breakthroughs - in days.

Case Study: Company doubles sales with simple shift in approach

I worked with a company that sold remedial reading solutions to private schools.

Historically, when selling to schools, this company (and every other company in the industry) would approach the Administrator by calling on the school in person. Once the school administrator was sold on text books or a program, he or she would begin selling the most senior teachers and influential board members. Once they were persuaded a decision would be reached and a sale made.

Needless to say, the sales cycle for this company was horrendous.

In researching this process we discovered that most schools held a monthly teachers meeting. Often they would invite guest speakers into these meetings. My client had extensive knowledge in helping students with learning disabilities like dyslexia. It was a perfect entry.

We began approaching the school administrators not with a sales pitch, but rather with an offer to conduct a 45 minute session at the teachers meetings sharing their knowledge with teachers.

Before the end of the 45 minutes teachers were raising their hands and asking, "How can we get this program in our school?"

The sales cycle was cut from nine-plus months to about 2 weeks.

And in another section of this report, you'll learn another breakthrough formula that doubled the number of appointments they were able to set.

Case Study: How we took a service no one could sell and moved \$44,00 in a half hour - with a \$348 investment.

Not that long ago, teleconferences cost 60 cents a minute per attendee to conduct. Needless to say they were not as common as water like today.

I suggested to a client (who was an industry guru) that we create a \$2000 dollar per year, monthly tele-summit for his best clients. He loved the idea. His sales people loved it.

Unfortunately, even his best sales people couldn't sell his best clients on spending \$2000 a year to join a conference call with this guru.

It flopped.

But then I had the idea: Why not use the tele-conference to sell the teleconference?

We took 349 of his best clients and mailed them invitations to join the guru and a handful of other players in the industry for a free tele-summit. 132 joined (That's a 38% response if you're doing the math).

This guru was a guru for a reason: He could sell the socks off an eskimo. Within a half hour 22 people called - before the end of the call - and gave us their credit card number for \$2000.

We immediately began rolling this approach out and sold \$400,000 in tele-summits in 2 months.

The moral: One approach will outsell another approach by hundreds of percent. And some products or services that do poorly with one approach will turn into stars when you make a small, inexpensive strategic shift in your approach.

Name The Problem

Not getting the results you want? Maybe you haven't named the right problem.

The story of “The Emperor With No Clothes” endures because it sheds light on a truth about the human condition...

Sometimes, in both society and life, we need someone to stand up and call a problem a problem. And if you happen to be a growth minded entrepreneur - pointing out a problem and giving it a name can be worth millions.



Naming the right problem for your market can be create a million-dollar breakthrough

In the last section I told you how a remedial reading company changed its approach to private schools and created a dramatic breakthrough in their sales cycle. That case study has another twist in it.

When salespeople would call on private school administrators they would point out their expertise in working with “learning disabled students”. A common response by the administrators after hearing this was, “We don't have any of ‘those’ children.

The challenge was that learning disabilities were very common - but when administrators heard the term “learning disabilities” they didn't think “dyslexia”. They thought “developmentally disabled”.

Quite by accident one of the sales reps called out to an administrator who was walking away and said, “Are you sure you can’t use this program - it works wonders with “struggling students”. The school administrator stopped in her tracks and said, “What did you say?”

As we quickly discovered, the term “struggling student” brought to mind all the borderline children both teachers and parents lined up outside the administrator’s office to talk about.

Naming the problem correctly was like shouting “open sesame” when it came to setting appointments. This one two word phrase DOUBLED the teachers meetings scheduled immediately.

Let’s look at some well known examples of this strategy...

Millions in Body Odor

Today we are all familiar with the common phrase, B.O., as in, “Whew, Jim’s got B.O.”

What many don’t realize is that B.O. was a name that Life Buoy soap gave to a problem it solved. A problem not commonly talked about in public. Not only did they add a new phrase to our dictionary - they made millions by “naming the problem”.

And while we are on the topic of embarrassing personal hygiene issues, we can’t fail to mention the dreaded “Halitosis” problem that Listerine solved. Again, halitosis wasn’t a publicly acknowledged problem until Listerine gave it a name.

Then, in great irony, Scope came to the market and used Listerine’s own strategy against them with their “Medicine Breath” campaign. In this case, they “named the problem” associated with their competitors product.

Finally, until Whisk came to own a piece of the market with their “Ring around the collar” campaign, the problem hadn’t been commonly talked about - or marketed to.

As you can see, “naming the problem” doesn’t just create million-dollar breakthroughs - it creates billion-dollar breakthroughs.

What problem in the market or with a competitors product can you coin a unique name for?

It's Like...

Small changes can create Block-bluster Breakthroughs

A single red rose...

A spark in a dry forest...

Splitting an atom...

When you see small elements create big results, you can bet there are hidden forces and leverage at work. And that's the case with the next breakthrough formula.



Breakthrough magic can happen when small changes are applied to big levers...

Once upon a time I was working on a lead generation project for a client in the mortgage industry. We added a single, small phrase to their marketing that increased the number of leads and sales by 50%. And this small change worked like magic across media types.

What was this 50% miracle?

It was simply a metaphor.

Testing had shown, as you already know, that using specific amounts like “save \$400 to \$600 dollars a month” out pulled general claims like “save money”. On a whim I started playing with the numbers - “what does that really mean?”

I added up the savings over a year and came up with \$4000 to \$7000 a year in savings. “Hmmm.. that’s better, but what is that like...?” “Well, that’s like a \$4000 to \$7000 a year raise!”

Just adding the phrase, “That’s like getting a \$4000 to \$7000 a year raise” to direct mail and voice marketing messages created an instant 50% leap in leads and sales.

How can such a small change at (a supposedly ‘tactical’ aspect of copywriting) create such a large impact on sales?

The answer lies hidden in the prospects mind...

As owners and marketers, we see the product, we see the advertising, we see the sales letters, maybe a sales team or tele-marketers. . Simply put, we see all the parts of a promotion separately.

But, when the prospect sees a message, he or she sees the ProductMessageMedium all at once. Customers and prospects don’t see parts, they see Wholes.

So, from the customers perspective they weren’t buying a loan (the product) but getting \$400 bucks in monthly savings in one message - and a \$7000 a raise in the the winning message. in a very real sense, the choice of metaphor actually changed the product the prospects perceived they were buying.

A few words had the same effect on the company’s bottom-line as if they went back and spent months and tens-of-thousands of dollars creating an entirely different product or service offering.

The simple use of metaphor can be a real game changer on all the competitors in a given market. It instantly sets your offering apart – and above. It instantly makes your product more desirable to prospects.

Here’s another example from the life insurance field...

Poor life insurance salesman sell life insurance. Average life insurance agents sell protection of loved ones. But great life insurance salesman sell college educations for children, ways to stick it to the government and protect income from taxes, etc..

And the greatest life insurance of his time, Ben Feldman, sold money.

He would walk into a business owner and place a thousand dollar bill on the desk (this was back when they still made thousand dollar bills). Next to that he would place 2 pennies. The business owner would ask, “What’s this?”. Feldman would reply, “That’s what I’m offering you today. The opportunity to buy a thousand dollars for just 2 pennies”. Feldman used imagination to sell a different product than the rest of his competitors – and you can to.

Here’s some more examples of this game changer in play...

For millennium marketers have been selling face creams to women. But from the imagination of copywriter, Gary Halbert, came “The Amazing Face Lift In A Jar”. In a single metaphor he changed the game on the competitors – and from the customer’s perspective – offered an entirely different product.

For decades companies have been selling engine treatments for older cars. But along calls a product named zMax and changes the game with this metaphor, “Pour A New Engine Into Your Car!”. Hmm... do I want a doubled-distilled, teflon saturated engine goop, or, do I want to “Pour a new engine into my car”?

Important side note: Notice how in the two previous examples both products changed who their competition was? In the first instance the comparison was no longer other face creams, but plastic surgeons. In the second case the competitors are no longer other engine treatment products, but the cost of having a new engine put into the car.

How can you put this game changing, million-dollar, formula to work in your business?

It’s as simple as looking at your products benefits and asking, “Hmmm... What’s this like?”

It’s that simple.

Now, go change the game on your competitors.

A Sale Too Far

Misjudging the “distance” the prospect is from the sale costs business millions

Often, when teaching a child to swim, parents will get in the water, just past the edge of the pool... and encourage their child to jump. Generally, parents don't take their 3-year-old to the top of the high-dive, leave them there alone, then ask them to jump.

Yet, that is the equivalent to what many marketers do with their prospects.

Let me explain...



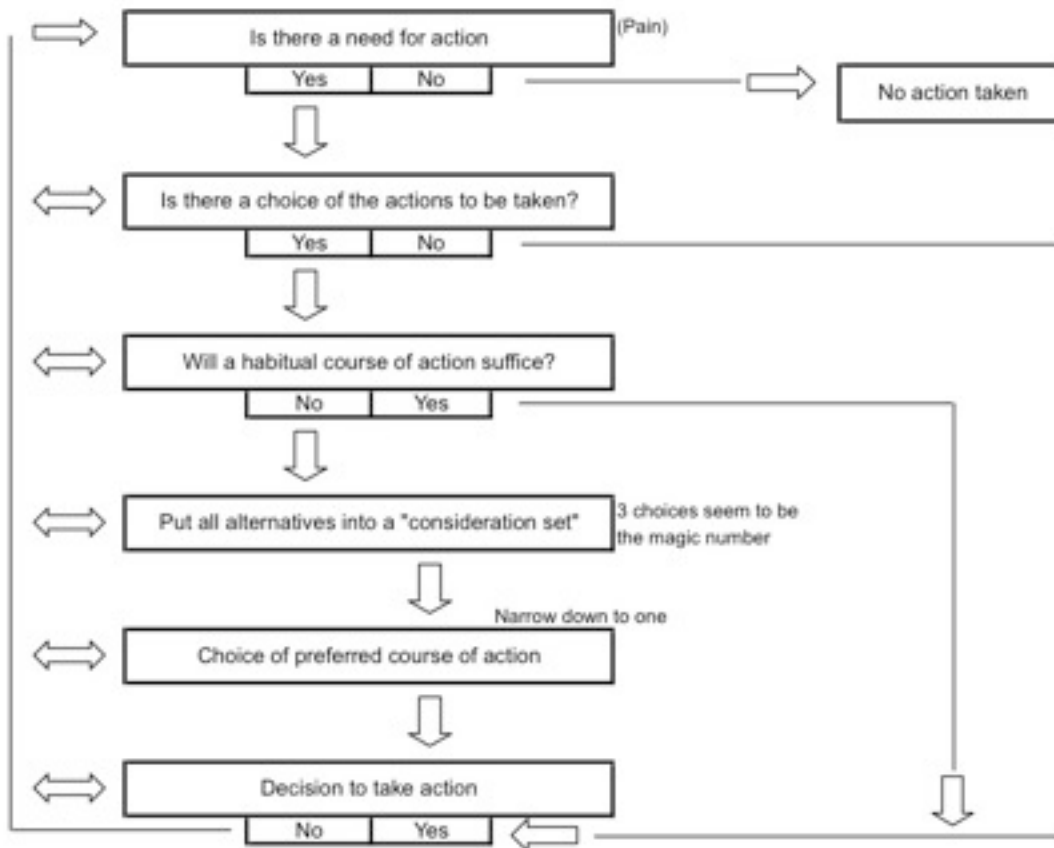
You can get the jump on competitors by targeting your message to different purchase stages

Prospects go through six distinct psychological processes or considerations before deciding to purchase. Millions in marketing cost are lost when the message that is created doesn't match the psychology of the market. Often companies will target the messaging at a stage 4 prospect when they are still back at stage two.

Psychological Stepping Stones to a Sale

So, let's take a look at the psychological stepping stones to a sale, then we'll look at how to choose the right one to target your marketing at (and show a few moves to take the sale from your competitors). This is usually a full day training I conduct for companies, but we'll try to compress some of the highlights into this section.

Here are the stages listed as questions that the prospect answers before moving to the next stage:



There it is, an internal flow chart of the mental processes your prospects go through to make a purchase.

Let's start at the beginning...

Stage One

In **stage one**, before ever lifting a finger to make a purchase, all prospects first ask themselves if there is any need for action at all. What's wrong with the status quo? Let's be honest, when do most people decide to visit the dentist? It's when they are in pain. The other driver of action is the promise of great gain. What would make a sane man load his family into a covered wagon and take a trek across the continent under constant threat of death from hostile forces and disease and famine and the elements? Two words...

Gold Rush!

I often observe sales reps and marketing messages trying to convince prospects to purchase their ACME 5000 SuperWidget when the prospects don't even have an awareness of pain or great gain. Throwing guarantees, price discounts, and premiums at a prospect who is comfortable with the status quo is like throwing pebbles at a battle ship.

Instead, marketing messages and sales pitches aimed at a content prospect need to be focused on educating and enlightening prospects to their pain and opportunities. They need to be "stirred up".

Stage Two

In **stage 2** we see the prospect realizes they need to take action, but they first consider if they really have any choice of action to take. If you are in the first floor of a burning building ...fire has engulfed the entrance...but there is an open window that's clear...you have no choice of action. You're going to take the window out.

If prospects have a long history with an existing supplier, switching cost would be in the hundreds of thousands, and the time lag to payoff is a year out - they are going to perceive they have no choice. They need to go with their current vendor.

Savvy marketers understand this and work their tails off to make sure their existing customers perceive "no choice" when the need arises for their products and services.

Stage Three

If you've done a good job in stage two, prospects will choose you in **stage 3**. Fortunately, there is no perfect solution and no perfect relationship. So in stage 3 the marketing battle begins. You try to convince prospects that they do indeed have a choice - and that the existing options are not satisfactory. On the other hand, the current vendor begins in earnest to persuade the prospect that they shouldn't "brand switch". "Just keep purchasing like you always have".

Stage Four

As we move into **stage 4**, we find where most marketing battles are taking place - and where most advertising dollars are invested. The prospect is shopping - but hasn't made up his or her mind. Everything is up for questioning at this stage. The prospect is examining the desired goals against the problems and payoffs with different product or service choices.

It is here we see companies battling it out to make their unique advantages more important to the prospects. This is when it is critical you have a great U.S.P. (unique selling proposition). What makes you better than your competitors?

Stage Five

After struggling to decide from among the many options, in **stage five** prospects finally narrow their choice down to ONE. They about to take action. If you are the company that has been chosen you want NO obstacles, questions or issues arising now. You want a slippery-slide to the purchase.

On the other hand, if you haven't been chosen at this point, all is not lost. The job of your marketing at this stage is to create doubt in the mind of the prospects and get them to go back to stage 4. Doubt is the enemy of a sale. Depending on your position with the prospect at this stage you want to prevent or create it.

Advertising messages and sales pitches at this stage contain messages that create hesitation and doubt...

“Buy no car...until you've seen the new Roadster at the car jam this weekend”

“Thinking of purchasing a Honda? Perhaps you should see what these folks who just drove the ACME-MOBILE had to say after test driving both.”

At last we come to stage 5. You've won or lost the sale at this stage. If you have won, your job is to provide such great service, products and results that the prospect perceives they have no choice when the next purchase opportunity arises. If you've lost, its time to get better at matching your messaging to the market stages - and produce a better results.

How to use in your marketing?

The first way to use this model of the prospects psychological states is to make sure you know who your targeting with what message.

Targeting the message to the right stage is easier for a salesperson sitting face-to-face with a prospect. But it is more difficult with your messaging. One approach is to decide that generically all your messaging will target stage 3 prospects. But I believe a better strategy is to segment your targets and send different groups the message relevant to their stage.

A common mistake companies with cutting edge products and services make is to target their messaging to Stage Three when in reality their customers are parked at Stage One. Don't underestimate the amount of education it takes to move a prospect from stage one to stage six. Leave a step out and you leave your prospects behind.

Here's a way to outflank your competitors...

In any given industry, companies fall into marketing to one of the stages predominantly. By choosing to target the stage before the industry marketing you can blow open new marketing and growth opportunities.

For example: the famous Wall Street Journal letter "Two Young Men" doesn't start the sell at the point of someone trying to decide between Baron's and Investors Business Daily, and the Wall Street Journal. It takes a step further back and starts the conversation by pondering the difference in life- success achieved by two men - and what could have made the difference. Then it leads prospects forward to the answer: The Wall Street Journal.

I had a client selling software. Initially the sale was made around the features and functions of the software. But, by stepping further back in the sales cycle and selling "Two Psychological Triggers that cause Instant Respect" we were able to accelerate sales. Later in the products life we discovered that selling "Referrals" was key - then we would lead them to the software as the solution.

In fact, recent research shows that if you intercept a prospect at the earlier stages, before competitors, you have a much higher probability of making the sale. You're there the whole way to walk the prospects through the decision matrix.

That's just a summary of the purchasing matrix. And knowing where your market is in relation to the sale - and experimenting with different messages aimed at different distances - is a critical skill for both business owner and marketer.

Joint Ventures

Need a couple million in a hurry? Try joint ventures...

One of the highest leverage, fastest payback moves you can make in your marketing is Joint Ventures (JV's). Ironically, this is one breakthrough-maker that doesn't need a lot of digital ink to explain. Fundamentally, they are simple...



Joint ventures are the fastest way to create a million dollar breakthrough...

Here's a JV in a nutshell. Someone who has influence over a list of your ideal prospects writes, phones, emails, direct mails, etc. their customers and strongly encourages them to purchase your product.

I used to put joint ventures together for Marketing Wizard, Jay Abraham. Just one of them generated \$1.2 million dollars in a weekend.

I've got another client who went from zero to \$5 million a year on the wings of joint ventures.

How do you find these million-dollar breakthrough opportunities?

Simple. Answer a single question, "Who else already has a relationship with a large number of my ideal customers?"

The challenge is persuading those who hold influence over tens-of-thousand or hundreds-of-thousands of customers to send out an endorsement message on your behalf.

Here's a few pointers to get the deals done...

1. Remember their biggest fear is endorsing a product, service or person that may hurt their hard-earned relationships with their customers. So, make sure your product or solution and offer are world-class.
2. Their second fear is getting paid. Be up front about your expenses and accounting. Make it transparent. You may need to offer them control of the purse strings. And it goes without saying - you should be generous. You're potentially leveraging a million dollar opportunity. There aren't a lot of great JV deals - so don't get greedy.
3. One word: Relationship. You should attempt to cultivate a personal relationship with the endorser based on trust and respect. Relationship can be the magic ingredient that gets the deal done.
4. Think about a multi-step approach vs going for the immediate sale. Often the endorser has an easier time endorsing a free piece of valuable information like a tele-conference, a free report or white paper or an educational webinar than outright going for the sale. First use your "bait" to capture the customer information - then approach them for the sale.

One word of caution...

I've seen a few businesses get off to a fast start using joint ventures and assume the easy money will keep coming.

The truth is that great joint-venture partners are rare. You can quickly burn through all the joint venture opportunities in your market place.

So, don't neglect the day-to-day work of building your business. Grab the joint venture opportunities when they show up, but keep building your business marketing systems so they are there for you when the JV's flame out.

Focus on the Customer

I shouldn't have to write this section, but...

This seems like it should be obvious to anyone in business. "Focus on the customer".

But, the number one change I make to businesses marketing messages is to redirect it away from the product, service or company – and back on to the customer and their interest.

But this problem goes further than crippling sales and marketing results. It cuts to the core of a companies ability to develop future product and service breakthroughs.



Sales down? New products not breaking records? Maybe its time to focus on the customer?

The customer should be in the dead center of your strategic, marketing and messaging focus - at least that's the way it's supposed to be. Yes, many businesses claim they are "customer centric" – but a peek under the rug of their thinking would expose that answer as more a platitude than a priority.

Yet, if you expect to take your company to the next level ...If you expect to compete against tough rivals ...If you want to establish industry dominance – then a Focus on the Customer must consume both your and your organizations thinking.

Ponder this...

There is only one reason your business exist –The Customer.

All of your current success and future growth will come from this...

All of your current success and future growth will come from the customer. Every product or service, every building and plant, every process, every investor, every employee and every vendor all the way up the value chain exist only to meet the needs of the customer.

When you're putting out fires in the business - it's so you can get back to serving the customer better. When you are trying to out think, out wit and out market your competitors - it is so you can serve the customers needs better. When you are innovating new products and services - it is so you can help customers solve more problems faster at a lower cost or with more convenience.

So, if a focus on the customer is the center of a business's existence, then why is it so hard to keep our focus on the customer?

Look, we're human. We are proud of what we do. We are proud of the products we make and the services we offer. Just getting those products made and those services delivered takes an incredible amount of our available focus.

Further, the product is tangible. The service has a tangible element to it. The buildings and plants and factories are tangible. And the people that make all of it run are certainly tangible. So, it's only natural that our thinking and focus be drawn to these concrete elements of our business.

The gravity of all this pulls our focus way from the customer.

In contrast, if you hold a thousand focus groups, you still may not have solved the riddle that is the mind of the customer. Yet, it's these inconsistent, disloyal, unfathomable customers that hold the key to our future business growth and ultimate success.

If you're thinking I'm overstating what should be obvious to anybody that's had a year of business school, then take a look at the marketing communications, press releases and websites of a couple dozen fortune 500 companies. Just read the first paragraph or two. Do they start off talking about their customer's needs and problems or do they start off talking about themselves?

Point made.

But, how can we get our focus back where it belongs; on the customer?

Here are a few quick ways...

Take a quick look at your marketing communications. If the first sentence or paragraph starts off talking about your company or it's products and services - send it back to the marketing department for a rewrite. Same goes for your Mission Statement. Especially your Mission Statement.

Next, pick one customer out of one segment. Now, just spend 5 minutes everyday at the beginning of your workday for a single week thinking about this customer. Do it before you start sorting through the morning's emails.

Finally, instead of asking sales or marketing what the needs, frustrations and challenges of the customers are, go to your production and service fulfillment people, your IT people, your plant or operations staff, your accounting department and ask them. That will give you a clear indicator of how customer focused your business really is.

If I seem a bit emphatic on this point...

It's because I've seen too many businesses end up on the rocks, broken - sometimes permanently - because they took their eyes off the lighthouse that is the customer.

This is a report about breakthrough strategies. You won't be able to use any of these strategies if you get this one wrong.

Go, call a customer just to chat. Ask what they like. Ask about what improvements they would like to see. But most importantly - ask them what they don't like... If you dare.

Time for Breakthroughs?

Many businesses don't enjoy breakthroughs because they never make the time for breakthroughs.

As business owners and managers it is easy to be drawn into the daily battle to meet impossible deadlines and slaying the daily dragon.

But, if we ever expect to create a blockbuster breakthrough, we need time to sit quietly and reflect on our work, on our customers and on the possibilities.



You need to get out of the fire and make time for breakthrough thinking!

Here's an example of one business owner and client that did just that...

One of my clients has built such a reputation for innovation that over 500 company leaders in the mortgage industry have made the trek to visit his operation and learn first hand his methods for creating a World Class company.

What is his secret to building a World Class company

So, what is his secret to building a World Class company that's the envy of an industry.

I believe that one of his secrets is that he makes space for creativity and breakthroughs in his business - literally.

If you were to enter his office, you'd see a doorway to the right. And if you walked through that door, you'd discover a private, inner sanctum that includes a library, large white-

board for brainstorming, recliner and writing table. In short: all the ingredients necessary for creativity and innovation.

While most entrepreneurs fit their "thinking-on-the-business-time" somewhere between a rushed shower and the rush to work, Tom has given it an important space in his very business.

I've often said that the most important asset of a business is the mind of the CEO. Yet, bombarded by the hour to hour demands of running a growing business, most growth focused entrepreneurs have denied themselves access to one of their greatest resources.

Do you have a regular scheduled appointment with creativity? A time set aside for reflection on your business and its direction? Do you have a place where you can seclude yourself from the cries for attention and focus uninterrupted on the larger strategic issues your company and industry are facing?

No?

Then perhaps you can take a lesson from Tom Ward, CEO of the Majestic Group and...

Make the Space for creativity...

Look, I want to put an explanation point on this...

Before you can take your company to the next level, you need to take your thinking to the next level.

Einstein said, "We can't solve our problems at the same level of thinking that created them."

And we can't grow our businesses or capture more market share or create more sales growth at the level of thinking that has gotten us, or is keeping us where we are now. Yet, how often do we seriously carve out time, uninterrupted time, and make the space for the type of next-level breakthrough thinking we need to grow our businesses and create marketing breakthroughs?

Rarely is the key to growth simply doing more of the what you are doing.

That means that we have to think and act differently.

And there is the rub.

Thinking differently means we have to challenge our assumptions about what creates success in our market; it means we need to rethink our products, our marketing, our approach to sales, and much more. Even more importantly, it means we need to ACT differently.

It's easy to say – hard to do.

After 20 years in business, I'm convinced that much of the best Breakthrough Thinking is born of a mindset. A core commitment to continuously raise the performance bar - combined with a flexible mindset that looks for opportunities, then rapidly experiments, adopts or abandons.

I've seen brilliant men and women fail. On the other hand, I've seen men and women of average intelligence win because they kept their minds open, they challenged industry-think, they tested, they adapted and then started the whole process over again.

The market is not static. Your thinking cannot be either.

Therefore it's imperative you actually MAKE time to think!

Take a look around. What have you or your organization done differently in the last 3-4 months? If the answer is, "Nothing", then I urge you to take a hard look at your market, your products, your services, your marketing, your sales processes and start asking yourself lots of questions.

Baby Steps!

Pursuit of just the “Big Breakthrough” can blind you to small, easy victories that are the stepping stones to great achievement.

I’ll admit it...

I’m addicted to big, blockbuster, out-of-the-park, over-night, breakthroughs.

So a lesson I had to learn was that blockbuster breakthroughs are great – but just as often you can create million-dollar breakthroughs in a series of baby steps, one building on the next, gaining momentum – and one day you look around and realize you’ve created a breakthrough.



Baby steps often lead to giant leaps...

Testing is a guiding light to higher profits

Before getting into the fine art of baby steps, we first need to look at a fundamental principle that runs through this entire report. Testing.

When we come to realize that we don’t know it all...and come to realize the incredible leverage in small changes...testing becomes a guiding light to higher profits.

When we implement baby steps improvements, we have to measure and test performance of one method against another. Otherwise all we are left with is opinion. And that isn’t a great foundation for million-dollar breakthroughs.

Here's how the principle of testing and baby steps worked together to create a \$10 million dollar breakthrough...

One of the nations largest banks was interested in refining their approach to upgrading customers to their platinum card.

Their cost to mail was 40 cents and they were getting a .093% response rate - just under 1 percent.

We began testing different mediums to reach their customers with the upgrade message. One that worked well was voice messaging. Not only did it work well, but it dropped their cost to reach a customer from 40 cents to .06 cents. When you are mailing tens-of-millions of pieces - that was a worthy breakthrough in itself. But, it gets better.

Through controlled A/B split testing, we worked with them on the messaging and discovered a stunner. The messages that contained a pet phrase that was in all their copy, "The more you spend, the more you save", REDUCED response rates by 50%. Could that be? We tested again. Yup. That phrase was a response killer. After getting it out of the messaging their response rates climbed to 1.23%.

So far, small, incremental test have added up to quite the breakthrough. But the best was yet to come...

We continued testing messages and continued inching response rates up. Then one day we tested a message that no one thought would work.

The current winning message was a cheerful "Congratulations...because of your exceptional credit history you qualify for our Platinum Card".

The new message was less cheerful and said, "We're calling to alert you that our credit department has authorized you to receive a platinum card."

What happened next, no one expected. Response shot up to 2.43%!

Combine that increase in response with the reduction in mail cost and this bank had a nice \$10 million dollar breakthrough on their hands...

...all because of their commitment to testing and baby steps.

Conclusion

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Why does one entrepreneur flounder and just get by for years on end, while another seems to thrive and grow year after year?

Luck?

Sometimes - but from my observations, it's born of a mindset...



No thinking...no ideas – No ideas...no breakthrough!

Some business owners are just plain more determined to create growth and strive for breakthroughs.

I think it comes from a belief that they can create breakthroughs...they can take their company to the next level...they can leave competitors and start-up challenges behind.

I hope, in part, this report has sparked the will inside of you to take the time to think about your business...identify immediate baby steps... and to take action.

The breakthroughs are out there. Dozens of them. Just waiting for you to discover where they are hidden. Start looking...

And if you want some help looking, feel free to give me a call at 714-357-9267 or shoot me an email stover@strategymatters.com