

The Magic of Giving in the Business World

There is an energy out there in the small business community, which helps us all, and that is the power of giving. As an independent consultant for the past ten years, one of my missions is to help "small business get more business" through effective marketing initiatives. But more than that when I meet people, even those who don't utilize my services, I like to be able to provide them with a good source of information, a good connection or even a good referral.

I find this mindset very much a part of the entrepreneurial world. It's inspiring as an independent consultant, to get the support and encouragement of like-minded individuals, some of which may even come from your competition. By us helping one another it brings more credibility to our collective field and raises our profile in the business world.

This is a very different environment than the corporate world, but I think they are slowly learning from us. Nowadays, through mergers and acquisitions, many corporations are forced into forming alliances with their once perceived competitors to be a more powerful force.

Independents have known the power of alliances in building their business for quite sometime. For me in particular this has been a key ingredient in my business growth and success. If you are a new business owner, I encourage you to tap into this act of aligning and helping one another.

Whatever you put out there, you get back. If you are respectful, helpful and supportive of others, people will just naturally give that back to you. I'm sure you've heard the phrase, "what goes around, comes around". The same holds true in the act of giving in the business world, and by using this principle, not only do you feel good, but you have helped others too. Here are some thoughts on putting this into practice:

Give without expectations – When you pass on information or a referral to someone, don't do it with the motive to get it back in return, you may be disappointed if that is your only reason for doing it. If you do it without this expectation in mind, it will just naturally come back to you in the most delightful way, but you have to do it for the right reasons and the sincere desire to help others.

Support One Another – By us supporting each other, we are building the credibility and profile of the independent, entrepreneurial and small business world. Support other small business owners, by purchasing their services and products, instead of products and services from the larger companies. Find out more about businesses and what they have to offer, and if you have received good service from another small business owner, take the time to tell others and pass their name around.

Be Active in Building Your Network – Many times when we are very busy, and I'm guilty of this at times, we tend to drop off on our networking and not keep in touch with people as often. Yet this is the time we need to reach out, get support, maybe even have someone assist you with aspects of a larger project to alleviate the workload.

What happens is, when you stop connecting and your busy period is over, you're almost have to start from scratch again. Networking, making connections, utilizing others' services and keeping in touch is critical to business success.

Learn from Others – You can always learn from other people. As an independent consultant, you need to get other perspectives. We don't have the advantage of working with a team in the workplace, we just have ourselves, therefore we need to ask others for their advice, listen and learn from them –even in areas that you feel you are an expert. I strongly recommend, developing your own informal or formal "small business advisory group" of people from different businesses. Utilize their expertise and perspective to give you fresh ideas and new ways of doing things that you may not have thought about before. Sometimes people who aren't as close to your industry can come up with some fantastic ideas.

Don't Abuse People's Time – Many entrepreneurs are very happy to provide information and advice to others, but be careful not to abuse their time. We are all in business and our goal is to run a profitable business. We need to be aware of when we are asking for too much for no cost, it's not fair to put others in that position. Be realistic in your requests.

We're In the People Business – We are all selling different services or product, but when it gets right down to it, we are really in the "people" business, providing a particular service or a product.

Think of an experience in a restaurant, you could have a so-so meal, with excellent customer service and you would consider coming back, but if you had good meal with terrible customer service, you would probably never go back. People make the difference in the experience.

It's people that render services. It's people that buy from people. It's people that refer people. It's people that give to people. No matter what you provide as a service or produce, eventually it comes down to people.

A quote from Winston Churchill is – "*We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give*". Practice this philosophy and you will discover the "magic of giving" in today's business world.

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