NURTURING STRONG CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

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By Michael Heah
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There is a saying that questioning and listening are like the fragrant coconut rice and the sambal in a nasi lemak dish. You cannot have one without the other.

When you listen well, you automatically ask questions. As a coach or a leader, it is fundamental that you have to be very good at asking questions, and otherwise, it spells failure to communicate.

In fact, we can pick a good leader from a not-so-good one by the questions they ask.

What is the importance and power of questioning and what can they do to change the circumstances of a person’s situation and move them forward?

We will also understand why it pays for a coach or leader to be good at asking powerful questions, rather than telling people what to do.

WHAT ARE POWERFUL QUESTIONS?

Powerful questions stretch people to think harder and more creatively.

The trick to powerful questions is that it forces people to pause for a while before they can come up with an answer. This triggers the ‘Beacon’ in humans to search for the solution or idea.

Powerful questions also evoke or challenge people to think of ways that they have not thought of before.

HOW CAN PEOPLE ASK POWERFUL QUESTIONS?

The key factor lies in our deep listening.

When we listen deeply, we automatically become curious and intuitive. Questions thus come out spontaneously and intuitively, and are directly related to what needs to be asked at the very moment.

Keeping a tight conversation helps to deepen our listening. By this, it means that we follow every response that is made and then convert part of the response into a question.

An example is: The person says, “I’m feeling very down.” The coach asks, “What makes you feel down?”

While we can pre-plan our questions in order to be good at it, listening well is still the most effective way.

WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT?

Even if you say ‘no comment’ to a question someone asks you, it is still a response that you are making. Questions trigger our minds to say something, more so when the questions are powerful, they can do so many wonderful things.

It can stimulate your thinking (What is the next step?) or persuade you to act (What will make you do it?). It can challenge you (What is one small step that you can still take?). It helps you to focus on priorities (Out of the five, which is the best?).

It puts you in control (Can I ask you a question?) and so on.

So, what if a coach or leader uses powerful questions well, they move people forward, make them innovative, get them out of their comfort zones and can even empower them to act!

TYPES OF QUESTIONS AND WHEN ONE IS BETTER THAN THE OTHER

There are basically five types of questions in the question bag of a coach or leader.

The most common and perhaps the easiest is the closed question where only a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer is evolved.

It is best used when the purpose is to firmly establish a position in the mind of the person. For instance, “Are you committed in getting it done?” It should not be used when we want people to express themselves.

Another type is the open question. This one enables people to speak up. For instance, “Can you tell me more about it?” Be careful when using open questions as they can lead us to get too much detail especially when the person is long-winded.

The third type of question is a leading question. This one contains the ‘subject matter’ or the answer in it. One example is, “Have you told him that you dislike the way he talks to you?”

The fourth type is the probing question, where more details are asked from the person. For instance, “Why is it important for you to be fair?” It is good to get more details of the issue, they should be kept to the minimum in order not to be ‘drowned’ in them.

The last one is the challenging question. It forces the person to move forward. For instance, “What else can you try?” However, it should not be asked too soon lest the person may feel intimidated or being confronted.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

So, the next time you feel like you’ve failed, don’t think about giving in or giving up, think of it as a stepping stone on your pathway to success!

A good coach or leader will know what type of questions to ask at the right time to get the best result for the person.

How much did you learn from this?

1. Why is asking questions more powerful than providing answers to the person?

2. What are the many uses of questions? Give an example for each of them.

3. What are the types of questions, and when should they be used and not used?

4. What helps people ask powerful questions?

5. What will you do from now onwards to make asking questions (instead of giving answers) a way of life?

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WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO TRULY EXCEL?

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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ET’S get straight to the point. Those who are conscientious are likely to be more successful than those who are less so. But why is that? And what does it mean to be conscientious?

One dictionary defines conscientiousness as a person’s wish “to do one’s work or duty well and thoroughly.” It points to people who have a laser-like focus on the task at hand, who have a mindset that whatever they do is serving their long-term goals. In other words, they sacrifice whatever short-term gains they might receive from distractions and other temptations.

Price describes the idea that half of the work is done by the square root number of the people involved. For example, if you have ten people working on a project, the chances are that three people from that group will do the lion’s share of the work. This notion can be applied across any field that produces volumes of work. For example, most of the classical music that’s commonly listened to comes from a handful of composers. These usually include Mozart, Beethoven, Bach and Chopin.

When you walk into a bookstore at the airport, you’re most likely to find books by authors such as Danielle Steel, Stephen King, Paulo Coelho and Agatha Christie. In both the literary and the music world, hundreds of millions of works are published each year, and yet, only a few prominent names stick in our minds.

Common among all those who are prolific in their work is that, in their prime, they were the most committed to their passion: their time was dedicated to their work, with little being wasted on anything that did not add value to their long-term goal.

THE SECRET TO SUCCESS

“...if you work hard enough and assert yourself, and use your mind and imagination, you can shape the world to your desires.” — Malcolm Gladwell

In a 2012 study, Angela Duckworth and colleagues wanted to know who does well in life. What does it take to truly excel? Is it genius? Luck? Financial resources?

What they found was that conscientious people excel most in objective and subjective success. They are able to focus on what matters and dedicate their efforts to manifest whatever goal they shoot towards.

Explaining their findings, the researchers note, “What seems to be facets of conscientiousness together is the tendency to act in accordance with long-term, global goals, and standards when there is a temptation to do otherwise.”

“In the workplace, conscientious individuals who work hard, complete tasks thoroughly, stay organised, act responsibly, and make decisions carefully are more productive than those who are less conscientious – co-workers. The same behavioural tendencies may help conscientious individuals in many other domains of life, including romantic relationships, a key predictor of subjective well-being. Conscientious individuals are more likely to avoid unnecessary interpersonal conflict and amend rifts when they do appear.

Conscientiousness is one of the big five personality traits that measure five major dimensions of personality. These are: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism form the basis of personality research, by taking the test, we are able to get a sense of where we sit on each scale of the five dimensions.

As Duckworth and her colleagues imply, conscientiousness relates to the level of our work ethic. It makes sense that those who work harder achieve more, right?

Well, there’s a little more to it than that. It’s not enough to just work hard — our efforts need to be carried through with diligence, focus and a deliberate commitment to do the best we can...and to raise our game wherever it’s needed.

For some, being conscientious can be a difficult trait to develop but it can be developed. Instead of succumbing to distractions or a temptation to procrastinate, we can harness the power of our minds to focus on getting the job done where it helps us to move forward at a quicker rate.

Studies on time wasted, for example, have shown that we can waste, on average, up to five hours per day on things like checking email, aimlessly scrolling through social media, watching TV shows, and so on.

Over the course of a working week, that amounts to one full day’s worth of work lost. Across one year (assuming an hourly rate of RM20), the time lost amounts to RM26,000.

When we boil it down, conscientious people are more successful because they simply make the most of their time.

Of course, it’s important to take breaks from time to time. Hopefully no-one would suggest we should work 24/7 but time wasted refers to time that is available outside of aure time that could be put to more productive use.

Some might say, “It’s alright for those who are already conscientious, but what about the people who procrastinate and find it difficult to get motivated?”

Thankfully like leadership, conscientiousness is a skill that can be learned over time, and there are a few steps you can put into practice to get you started. Let’s take a look at three of those right now:

1. FOCUS ON THE SPECIFICS

If someone were to tell you, “Just be more conscientious!” you might (understandably) be confused by such broad advice. Think of it in the same way as fitness. If someone tells you to become more fit to set that as your goal it doesn’t really help much.

On the other hand, if someone says, “If you commit to running 1.5km fourtimes a week for a month, you’ll begin to see improvements”, that gives you something to aim for.

Therefore, set specific goals such as “For the next month, I’m going to reduce my social media use by one hour per day and devote that time to reading/mastering a new skill/learning how to start an online business.”

Taking that one step at a time has already increased your productivity rate by seven hours every week, and that’s a great start that you can then build on as you become more focused.

2. SET REMINDERS FOR YOURSELF

Try to change the habits of a lifetime. This can be tough, which is why it’s important to set reminders of the times that you’ve committed to improving your conscientiousness.

Let’s say you’ve set a goal to read for one hour per day. Set the time aside on your calendar and treat it like an important appointment, such as going to the doctors or attending a job interview.

By treating this as time of utmost importance — something that’s going to add enormous value to your pursuit — it will help you to cultivate a new behaviour that will become a productive habit.

3. LET PEOPLE KNOW WHAT YOU’RE DOING

Oftentimes, when we set ourselves a new goal to work towards, we fail in our endeavours (New Year’s Resolutions, anyone?). In many cases, this is because we keep our goals private, which limits the accountability to the very person who might procrastinate on our goals...ourselves.

By telling a few close friends or family members of our intentions and asking them to help keep us accountable, they can help to minimise distractions and keep us focused by providing support and the occasional morale boost when it’s needed.

After all, we wouldn’t want to let down the people who are there for us, and so we’re much more likely to stick to the commitment of improving ourselves when others are in on it.

4. REMEMBER TO REWARD YOURSELF

One of the reasons people give up while attempting to create changes in their lifestyle is because they feel like they have to push themselves all the way without stopping.

In other words, they don’t celebrate the small victories along the way, and that’s a vital component of maintaining your enthusiasm.

Self-improvement of any kind should be seen as an investment in yourself, not a chore, so remember to reward yourself.

For example, you could approach your goal through the Pomodoro Technique, or you could reward yourself whenever you recognise positive progress.

Let’s say you’ve managed to cut out seven hours worth of unnecessary social media scrolling in a week. You could reward yourself by doing something you enjoy, such as treating yourself to your favourite dessert.

The important thing here is to create positive associations with the efforts you’re making, which will increase the likelihood of staying the course, rather than feeling that your new lifestyle change is based on sacrifice and denial of small pleasures.

REMEMBER...

The most important thing to keep in mind when making any kind of positive change in your life is to focus on the value you’ll receive from your commitment.

Never think of your conscientious efforts as sacrifices. Instead, see them as part of the journey towards creating your best self. With this at the forefront of your mind, you’ll be motivated to keep pushing forward.

There’s a good reason why behaviour change is referred to as part of our development — it takes time, and while we might prefer quick fix solutions nowadays, the old adage still rings true: anything worthwhile takes time.

But as Charles Duhigg reminds us in his book The Power of Habit, “If you believe you can change — if you make it a habit — the change becomes real.”
AUTHENTIC SALESMANSHIP

YOU DON’T NEED TO BE PUSHY OR AGGRESSIVE IN SALES

By JERRY ACUFF
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In my career, I have met, trained, and even coached so many unbelievably successful salespeople. They had far more differences than similarities, but the one thing every one of them had in common was that they learnt the fundamentals of selling by thinking like a customer and then implemented those ideas with authenticity and just by being themselves.

FIND YOUR AUTHENTIC SENSE OF SELF

John Fuqua, Maryann DeMarco, Danny Craven, Chris Free, Joanne Stenerson, and Mike Tyner were all sales superstars who worked for my company when I was vice president of sales.

Here are the five reasons I believe they were so successful by just being themselves.

1. THEY WERE ENCOURAGED TO BE THEMSELVES

They learnt the fundamentals of selling from a coach who encouraged them to be themselves. Too many sales people never reach their full potential because they work for someone who has a skewed perspective of what works in selling.

Often, it’s based on what they did to be successful, and not by having a deep knowledge of what selling excellence looks like from the opening of the call to the action task.

2. THEY TRUELY BELIEVED IN THEIR PRODUCT

These salespeople were confident in their ability to sell because they believed in the benefits of the product or service they represented. “Selling is a transference of feeling,” Zig Ziglar used to say. And he was spot on.

When you really believe in your product, you are simply sharing what you believe by having a conversation about it. That is as authentic and real as it gets.

3. THEY TRUSTED IN THE PRODUCT TRIAL

Because these salespeople believed in the product and they wanted what was best for the customer or the customer’s customer, they had no trepidation about asking for the client or prospect to give the product a fair trial.

They wouldn’t be very authentic if they ‘believed’ in the product but didn’t care enough to ask the person to try it or use it when appropriate.

4. THEY HAD THE RIGHT DEFINITION OF ‘SALES’

Sales equals finding out what people want and helping them get it. These successful salespeople were not pushy, no matter how aggressive their manager might want them to be.

They would spend the appropriate time learning what was right for the customer, and if it wasn’t our product, they wouldn’t try and get the customer to use it.

They had what I call was ‘pure intent’. They weren’t trying to sell. Their authentic self demanded that they only look for prospects or customers who could really benefit from our products, and then — and only then — would they use their persuasive expertise to show the customer that the fit was there.

5. BEING THEMSELVES SETS THEM APART

Because of their belief in their ability to succeed at selling by being themselves, they automatically set themselves apart from all of the other sales reps, who show up and talk too much, don’t ask good questions, and do not come across as authentic.

Authentic salespeople know their product or service is not for everyone and when that absence of bias is on display in their sales conversations, their credibility is off the charts.

They build better relationships that way and it’s far easier for them to get access and get the customer to listen.

SUCCESS IS DRIVEN BY THE CUSTOMER BUYING

Those five reasons will help anyone selling anything to really think about selling without being pushy and aggressive.

The vast majority of salespeople are not aggressive and pushy people naturally. Be yourself, learn the fundamentals, get a great coach and become incredible.

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THE ‘BUSINESS OF BUSYNESS’

How Productivity Keeps Us from Preparing for the Future

By JEFF SCHWISOW

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Establish a strategic roadmap that makes the projects with the greatest strategic value a business imperative that has immediacy. This gives your strategy-making priority.

However, today, as the daily demands on people's time has increased, as the volume of information processing in our hyper-connected world places unprecedented pressure on the attention of business leaders, time and attention have become your business's most valuable commodities. This has shifted much of the focus on productivity from effectiveness to efficiency.

Our day-to-day activities are focused on maximising the immediate results from our actions – irrespective of the value those results deliver. This drives an emphasis on minimising the expenditure of time and attention on things that don't provide immediate value.

This can have some unintended consequences.

Research on knowledge workers, conducted by Julian Birkinshaw of the London Business School, found that an average of 1/3 of their time was spent on discretionary activities that offered little business value or could be handled on discretionary activities that offered little business value or could be handled.

Similarly, client research that Dr Andrew Pratley and I conducted showed that around 30% of everyone’s time was spent on work that created no value or wasn’t required to meet their business obligations.

This becomes a trap that the time- and attention-starved entrepreneur can easily fall into – busyness becomes a behaviour that’s valued over the effective allocation of time and attention.

THE TRADITIONAL STRATEGIC APPROACH ENCOURAGES A FOCUS ON THE IMMEDIATE

Time invested wisely in your business’s long-term health rarely has a cause and effect relationship.

Strategic action taken today might not manifest as business value for months or, perhaps, years to come. However, our traditional strategic approach, the very practices that should focus our thinking and activity on the future, will often compound with this productivity obsession to keep us anchored in the present.

A McKinsey study found that in 52% of companies, strategic decisions are made by a small senior group and poorly communicated to the rest of the organisation. This often makes your strategy a high-level concept that people struggle to relate to their day-to-day activities.

In addition, most organisations are not intentional about making future-focused work a part of their operational fabric. Their strategy, although rich in analysis and planning, often lacks a clear framework to convert their plans into action and activity.

This same McKinsey study found that only 23% of companies use a formal process to operationalise their strategic plans.

Without a framework and the leadership necessary to drive the future-focused work of strategy, decisions on how your people spend their time become disconnected from strategic considerations.

Your people will keep themselves busy with the operational activities that allow them to feel productive – reveling in the strong sense of accomplishment from a day filled with solving problems, responding to requests or getting through their to-do list.

TO BRING THE NEXT INTO THE NOW, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR AFFINITY FOR THE IMMEDIATE

To make strategy part of your business’s day-to-day reality, bring the future into the present by taking advantage of how we naturally allocate our time and attention.

Do this by translating the ethereal world of strategic aspiration into specific, outcome-focused initiatives – strategic projects – that move the business step-by-step towards your future goals.

A McKinsey study found that as much as 90% of strategy is not implemented.

Establish a strategic roadmap that makes the projects with the greatest strategic value a business imperative that has immediacy. This gives your strategy-making priority.

Show that you’re invested in the strategic value these projects offer. Create a project execution framework that empowers your people to leverage their knowledge and experience to deliver successful strategic outcomes.

Give these future-focused activities meaning for the entire organisation by recognising and celebrating the strategic progress that each project makes. By valuing progress towards your long-term goals, you’re motivating your people to generate more meaningful strategic progress.

For future-focused work to compete with the immediate and urgent, it needs to be given distinct separation from the things that matter in your personal world never leads to a thriving life – in or out of work. Find out if you’re too busy being busy. bit.ly/TooBusyBeingBusy

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ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS PROMOTERS OR DETRACTORS?

HOW A BAD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE RUINED MY HOLIDAY

By RIVA NAZERKAR

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I was my first solo trip and the idea of going to Spain for a month where I have absolutely no one both thrilled and caused me much anxiety.

The purpose of the trip was to push myself out of my comfort zone so as to make new connections, and to feel the way I would feel if I were to enjoy the same thing as the last thing was the sound of being a bit more in the sun and the wind of the Spanish heat. I thought it would be a great experience, but it didn’t go as far.

By the time I arrived, it was already the week of holidaying to do. What baffled me the most of the entire experience was the lack of support I received from the airline I flew with. After the initial complaint, the system was hooked up to an effective consultation and is revolutionising the way airlines stories out e-mag delivered to your inbox weekly!

Airlines stories out e-mag delivered to your inbox weekly!

According to CSO Insights, sales leads spend only 20% of their time helping customers. The initial time investment will motivate and inspire new customers, even if they have never purchased before. The initial complaints and train reps to access the content they need to close

WHAT’S HAPPENING HERE?

In Hindsight

In essence, there’s oversights generated from this solo trip. Throughout my trip and afterwards, I suggest that there was much work to be done. According to Caprera’s CRM Industry User Research Report that used an average of 70% of sales departments and of various sales, CRM

How were your salespeople do have the right tools?

By CHRISTINE CAMFORD

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ACCORDING to Glassdoor, professionals in sales feel well informed and engaged. They have access to relevant information with the pressure to reach new numbers, lack of feedback, training, and invalid metrics. Nearly one point per cent of companies take six months or longer to onboard new sales reps, and a third of all companies, it takes more than six months for new sellers to achieve a new number of a significant turnover, according to Deloitte research. Turnover among sellers is often higher due to the work environment needed to accrue their current job within six month. As we can say that they leave within two years. (Research from Deloitte, The 2016 Deloitte Millennials Survey)

Fifty-one per cent will seek for a new job at another organisation this year. Within (Research from The Corporate Executive Board Company (CEB) - Attracting & Retaining Attractive Millennials)

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DO YOU HAVE ANY PROMOTERS OR DETRACTORS?

WHAT DOES YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TELL YOU?

WHY DOES ANYONE CHOOSE TO WORK FOR YOU?

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

WHEN A CUSTOMER APOLOGISES TO YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER APPOINTS YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER EXPEL YOURS, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER TITLES YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER SCHOOL YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER LAWSUIT YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER SUE YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER SUED YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER FILED YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

WHEN A CUSTOMER ARRESTED YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?

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WHEN A CUSTOMER KILLED YOU, DO YOU THINK WHAT IS THE MISTAKE THEY MADE?
THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

By STEVEN TULMAN
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The world of social media marketing has changed drastically over the last couple of years, and it will continue to change.

This makes staying ahead of the digital curve a critical factor in the success of businesses around the world. Understanding how to take advantage of new features social media platforms continually roll out is key and to do that, marketers have to be perpetually looking forward.

So, what's next in the world of social media marketing? For those looking to get the most out of their campaign, marketers will need to channel their efforts into engaging influencers, and creating buzzworth content.

Let's examine each one individually.

1. **LIVE VIDEO IS THE WAY TO GO**

Video content has become an important avenue for social media marketers to reach their audiences. However, live streaming has proved itself to be an even more effective way to generate views. Studies show that people are watching live video three times more than pre-recorded videos on Facebook.

The social media platform has even altered their algorithm to ensure live videos remain closer to the top in news feeds than pre-recorded content.

Videos have become imperative to marketing strategies since they have a vastly greater organic reach than photo posts on most social media platforms.

Also, live videos take things one step further by allowing your audience to engage with you directly.

This makes live streaming an ideal platform for real-time questions and answers, a great way to create brand advocates, and an effective tool to promote conversations about your product, service and brand.

Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have made the ability to go live incredibly easy.

However, there are still some crucial aspects to consider before you make your live stream debut.

- **Make sure to test your connection.** Use a dedicated hot spot to ensure that your live stream broadcast doesn't drop unintentionally due to bandwidth issues.
- **Make your headline enticing.** Your headline plays a major role in drawing in people to join your live stream. When creating a live stream title, make sure that you give the audience a reason to want to watch your content.
- **Promote before going live.** An impromptu live stream won’t have nearly the same success as one that is scheduled and promoted. Promotion will help encourage participation from your audience.
- **Sound is important.** Sound can make a huge difference in your live stream, which makes it crucial that you have the proper sound amplification.
- **Prepare for audience participation.** Live don’t mean the live video has no further usage. You can re-purpose your video by either posting it again at a later date, or even using portions of clips and GIFs from the stream.

2. **ENGAGE INFLUENCERS**

Collaborating with an influencer has become one of the most effective ways to get a brand in front of a massive targeted audience.

Influencers have proved themselves to be incredibly valuable to marketing campaigns by drastically increasing conversion rates and retention.

Considering the benefits that come with influencer marketing, it seems the only reason more businesses aren’t utilizing it is that they don’t know how or where to begin.

Follow these tips to successfully secure and build a relationship with an effective influencer:

- **Work with a credible influencer marketing agency.**
  - There is much more value in working with influencers that will help you identify a campaign’s effectiveness and measure ROI of your influencer’s marketing initiatives.
  - Use these tools to your advantage to ensure that you have chosen the right influencers for your brand and to help you better understand how to engage and measure your return on any investments.

- **Be creative**
  - Influencer marketing is still fairly new and continues to evolve with each passing day. Think outside the box and generate ideas of new ways to create and build relationships with your influencers.

There are multiple uncharted avenues in influencer marketing that are just waiting to be explored.

3. **QUALITY CONTENT IS KEY**

The convergence between content and social media is continuing to become more frequent.

It’s important that your business is rolling out quality content for your social media strategy to be successful. Content that resonates with users will prompt them to share it, which will only work to increase engagement.

Analyse the engagement your content is generating to understand what your target audience is responding to.

- **Extract blog content.** A blog post covering the video’s ideas and topics can be repackaged as a 1-minute clip.
- **Create original memes and infographics.** Eminent quotes from the live stream can be further promoted through graphics.
- **Develop podcasts.** The audio from the live stream can be converted into a podcast.

TYING IT UP

Change is inevitable when it comes to social media marketing. Social media platforms are perpetually under renovation in hopes to serve innovative and unique features that separate them from the competition.

To stay ahead of the digital curve, it’s crucial to always be looking forward and finding ways to take advantage of what’s coming next.
By DR CAROL KINSEY GOMAN
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A customer-centric culture is not just about offering good service. It’s a way of dealing with customers that creates an engaging and positive overall experience in order to drive repeat business, customer loyalty and profits.

Whether your organisation is in healthcare or high tech, whether it is selling merchandise or marketing, the success of its customer-centricity depends on salespeople building positive and powerful relationships.

That’s where body language comes in.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

You and your customers are having two distinct conversations, and only one of them is verbal.

In the programme that I run, I show the audience how to analyse the “second conversation” by reading the non-verbal cues that signal how their customers are really feeling.

In general, the more open the position of your customer’s arms, the more receptive he or she is. Watch for expansive, welcoming gestures that seem to flow naturally from a person’s behaviour.

Let’s say you have just presented two written options to a potential client and you notice that your prospect’s gaze lingers longer on one than on the other. If, in addition, you see his eyes open wider and his pupils dilate, you know for certain that he has a much greater interest in this particular option.

In general, people tend to look longer and with more frequency at people or objects they like. A person may be trying to look uninterested, but his eyes will keep returning to the object that attracts him the most.

The same is true with person-to-person eye contact. Most of us are comfortable with eye contact lasting about three seconds, and prolonged mutual gaze without breaking can make us nervous. But when we like or agree with someone, we automatically increase the amount of time we look into his or her eyes.

Disengagement triggers the opposite gaze reactions. The amount of eye contact decreases as we tend to look away from things that distress us and from people we don’t like.

Similarly, a customer who is bored or restless may avoid eye contact by defocusing, gazing past you, or glancing around the room. Eyes signalling dislike or distrust will narrow slightly. In fact, eye squints can be observed as people read contracts or proposals, and when they occur, it is almost always a sign of having seen something troubling or problematic.

THE EYES ARE THE WINDOW TO THE SOUL

Researchers have known for years that eye pupil size is a major clue in determining a person’s emotional responses.

The pupils are a part of our body that we have practically no control over. Therefore, pupil dilation can be a very effective way to gauge someone’s interest.

Pupils dilate for various reasons, including memory load and cognitive difficulty, but you can expect your customer’s pupils to dilate when they have positive feelings about you or your product/service.

And you will notice that when that customer is upset or disappointed, his or her pupils will automatically constrict.

WHAT’S IN A SMILE?

Another way to judge someone’s emotional reaction is to ask yourself: is that smile genuine?

Typically, someone who agrees with you will smile and nod as you speak. (Disagreement shows up in the form of compressed or pursed lips, clenched jaw muscles, or a head turned slightly away, so eye contact becomes sidelong.)

But smiles are often used as a polite response and to cover up other emotions. A fake smile involves the mouth only. Unless someone is expressing genuine pleasure or happiness, it’s hard to produce a real smile – the kind that crinkles the corners of the eyes and lights up the entire face.

HOW ARE THEY CARRYING THEMSELVES?

Gestures are also telling.

In general, the more open the position of your customer’s arms, the more receptive he or she is. Watch for expansive, welcoming gestures that seem to flow naturally from a person’s behaviour.

When someone reaches towards you or uses a lot of open-hand gestures, it is usually a positive signal of interest and receptivity.

In contrast, people who are defensive or angry may protectively fold their arms across their chest, clench their hands into a fist, or tightly grip their arm or wrist.

The shoulders and torso also play an important role in a customer’s reactions. When people agree with you or like you, the more they will lean towards you and the more closely they will stand before or beside you.

On the other hand, when you say or do things your customer disagrees with or is uncertain about, the more they will tend to lean back and create space between the two of you.

When you see people turn their shoulders and torso away from you, you’ve probably lost their interest.

In fact, orienting away from someone in this manner almost always conveys detachment or disengagement, regardless of the words spoken.

When people are engaged, they face you directly, “pointing” at you with their torso. However, the instant they feel uncomfortable, they will turn away – giving you “the cold shoulder”.

And if someone is feeling defensive, you may see an attempt to shield the torso with a purse, briefcase, laptop, etc.

WHAT ARE YOU PROJECTING?

People who agree with each other tend to mirror each other’s behaviours. One will lead and the other will follow.

If you notice your customer has assumed the same basic body orientation as yours, move slightly and see if she follows suit. If she does, you know you’ve made a positive connection.

Of course, your body language is also being evaluated, and the way you dress, sit, stand, move, gesture and speak says more about you than you may realise.

For example, do you know that you only have seven seconds to make a positive first impression? Are you aware that there are two distinct sets of non-verbal signals that customers need to see from you?

Do you realise that when your body language is out of alignment with your verbal message, people will believe what they see and not what you say?

And most importantly, do you know how to use your body language to build positive and powerful customer relationships?

DO YOU SPEAK BODY LANGUAGE?
We are a society obsessed with talking about employees and entrepreneurs who ‘love their jobs’. They’re the poster boys and girls who prove that when we’re passionate about what we do, we excel.

However, the painful reality is that, just like pursuing a partner in life, not all of us will be lucky in finding a job we can call ‘The One’. Many of us will be paid for a job we love doing, but eventually, most lose the spark that once ignited it.

The causes for the latter are aplenty: a major life experience that changes you, a boss who micromanages, or boredom out of doing the same things for years.

What do you do when you start losing the love you once had? Here are four tips to consider.

1. **EVLAVE IN YOUR JOB**

Our employment contracts define our job description, but they’re also not cast in stone. You may have noticed that re-organisational changes happen more frequently in this digital age to keep up with business.

It is this same ‘open and ambiguous space’ that allows many employees to tweak certain parts of their job to find meaning and purpose. We call this ‘job crafting’.

I had an extroverted colleague, Julian, who excelled as an accountant in the company I worked for years back. Julian also found that his finance department was too quiet and ‘less happening’. But he was resourceful enough to find his stimuli: he volunteered to organise company parties, and he hosted the townhall meetings.

Over time, his boss assigned him to organise finance literacy workshops for sales employees. Today, he’s helping in the development of a finance software with the IT department.

Job crafting entails being proactive and deliberate in shaping your career path. It understands that while your boss, the HR department, or the management has your interests at heart, there’s no one else who can speak up for what you want in your career, but yourself.

2. **EXPLORE A DIFFERENT DEPARTMENT?**

Rediscovering your passion for work doesn’t mean you should quit your job either.

Here’s my proposition: you don’t need to climb a new mountain to reach a peak. Sometimes, you just need to look for a different route to get to the top.

You can stay in the same organisation, but perhaps you just need to move somewhere: a new department, a new assignment, or a new boss.

Ask yourself thoroughly am I losing the flame because I don’t like what I’m doing per se, or could it be that the people or surroundings are the ones causing me to hate it?

My sales colleague, Allan, once felt that he wasn’t enjoying his job anymore because it was becoming ‘too easy’ and ‘boring’. But he’s resourceful enough to find his stimuli: he volunteered to organise company parties, and he hosted the townhall meetings.

Over time, his boss assigned him to organise finance literacy workshops for sales employees. Today, he’s helping in the development of a finance software with the IT department.

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I asked him: have you considered requesting a territory change so you can face a new set of customers and competitors?

He did and got thrilled selling to a new audience that he had to study, and a new boss that he had to build a relationship with.

Allan is a competitive guy, and he simply needed to be challenged again to spark engagement.

3. **FIND YOUR OUTLET?**

You might also be asking the wrong question in life: should you force yourself to love this job, or can you go on this journey with a less-involved-relationship that gets you by?

If your answer is the latter, you’re not inferior to the rest but understand that this happens to many of us.

Continue doing good in your job but focus your love and energy on something else: a sport, a hobby, community, or a business that serves as an outlet for that skill or creativity you’ve been wanting to unleash.

My friend Angela who serves as an operations manager for a manufacturing plant isn’t the biggest fan of her job. But her company pays her well. And she’s been saving up to finance a start-up business she’s been dreaming to launch within the next five years.

In her current role, she also gets to stretch her leadership skills which will surely be handy when she starts hiring her own employees.

Angela may not be too happy with her job, but she’s happy whenever she imagines what’s going to come out of it.

4. **VIEW YOUR JOB AS A MEANS**

Many employees don’t desire high-powered careers because they believe that something else is more important in life. And there’s nothing wrong with this perspective as long as you don’t compromise your job.

What matters is understanding what’s important to you today is it your family? Your health? Your relationships? If you value these things more than your career, then look at your job as a means to achieve them, not as an end.

I once reported to the most hard-worked manager who had the potential to become the next CEO. When asked about her plans for promotion, she candidly said that she didn’t want it.

She was single at the age of 47, and didn’t want any more responsibilities and stress. What she wanted was to spend more time off travelling and to meet people, perhaps a lifelong partner too.

Even if she had the choice of climbing up, she refused to because she was already enjoying her pre-retirement life.

Once I started embracing this alternative mindset, I realised that there are people whose happiness is not defined by their careers, but by how their careers can support their lifestyles.

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SECRET TO A LONG AND HAPPY LIFE

By PETER ECONOMY
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S top missing out on happiness and the possibility of a long life. Here are a few powerful reasons to pursue your dreams even if you don’t quite accomplish them like you thought you would.

Diet. Exercise. Follow your dreams?
It’s no secret that good physical health—what you eat, if you do cardio exercise and lift weights, or if you have proper sleep patterns—is the key to a long life.

But as far-fetched as they may be, your dreams may be the real factor in how long you live. Here are a few reasons why:

HAPPINESS AND HEALTH
According to a study published by the Journal of Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, there is a direct link between mortality rates and people’s moods.

The study says that there is evidence that surviving longer and having a reduced risk of disease is associated with ‘positive affective states’ and ‘other measures of well-being’. Similarly, being unhappy can negatively affect any existing medical issues as well. Dr Dilip Jeste from the University of California, San Diego, notes that, “heart disease can cause greater stress in some people than in others, which might affect their level of enjoyment”. Translation? It’s a vicious cycle—being in poor health can cause unhappiness, and this same unhappiness can cause poor health.

But you can avoid these health issues by being happy through the achievement of dreams.

A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION
Naturally, dreams aren’t always realised. For all the amount of faith and willpower you may have, sometimes your dreams don’t turn out exactly the way you envisioned.

However, success is a journey, not a destination. Merely chasing after the goal can be enough to increase your sense of fulfillment and levels of happiness and health.

E N J O Y Y O U R S E L F
You know the saying—“choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” Support yourself, but still work towards what you hope to do in the long-run, whether through hobbies, classes, or an entirely new job itself.

When we ignore our hopes and dreams, we not only avoid getting the most out of life, but we avoid the chance at happiness and a long life.

Shoot for the moon—even if you don’t get there, you’ll find yourself in good health regardless.

Peter Economy has written more than 80 books on a variety of business and leadership topics. To connect with Peter, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Successful people take time to set personal and professional goals to achieve the results they want. They start by writing down the things that they purposefully set off to accomplish. Here’s something to help you transform the invisible into the visible: bit.ly/BRdreamstoreality

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Just follow your dreams

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We all have 24 hours in a day. But the difference between getting to the top of our field and remaining mediocre comes down to how we use those hours. Not surprisingly, the world’s most successful innovators and business people think very differently about how they use their time. Here are some lessons we can take away from them.

GETTING UNSTUCK
Everyone has experienced being stuck on a project. For the average person, this often leads to some form of procrastination, such as checking Facebook to see if your cat video has received another like. But the most successful innovators have strategies they draw on to get unstuck. Nancy Duarte, global expert on presentations and co-founder of Silicon Valley’s largest design firm Duarte, has a go-to strategy for whenever she reaches a stuck point on a project.

“Whenver I got stuck,” explains Duarte, “I would go on a walk and I’d be, maybe, 10 minutes down the trail…and I would see it. I would solve it. I would actually run the entire way back to my office, so excited because then I could sit and just keep going again.”

REFLECT AND RE-EVALUATE THE WAY YOU USE TIME
Many of us can feel like we are at the mercy of time. But to milk your workdays for every last drop, we need to constantly reflect on how we use our time and set goals for getting the most out of it. Wharton professor and best-selling author, Adam Grant, has a weekly ritual to get the most out of his time and ensure he stays focused on what matters most.

“I like to start a week by asking myself what are three things I want to accomplish, and who are three people that I want to help, or three ways I want to be helpful,” describes Grant.

“Then, I do an informal check-in on a daily basis to ask, ‘Am I making progress towards those goals?’ I think it keeps me from getting stuck in the weeds of the one goal that’s happening to loom large at the moment, and it forces me to make sure that I’ve got my priorities in order.”

HAVE NOVEL WAYS OF MANAGING YOUR INBOX
For many of us, email can be the bane of our working lives and certainly one of the biggest drains on our productivity. Where the world’s most successful people differ is they have created tricks to taming their email beast.

To help make the task of email less tedious, Grant came up with a new way to sort his email.

“I actually started going through my inbox and sorting by where I could have the most impact, and so it wasn’t who emailed me first, it wasn’t necessarily who I knew best, it was where could I add the most value. As I answered a few of those emails, I started to get a rhythm and I started to feel like I’m doing something useful here. Then, that would give me the energy I needed to finish the task and get my inbox cleaned.”

FINISH YOUR DAY HALFWAY THROUGH A TASK
It is tempting, and normal, to end our workday when we reach the end of a task. However, this can often make starting the next day more challenging.

“How you start is really key to the rest of the day,” says Botsman. “And a really easy trick I learnt is if you’re in flow the day before, don’t finish the paragraph. So, get halfway through the paragraph, and then stop writing. It’s then really easy to pick up the next day. Days where you’ve completed something, and you’re starting again, they’re harder because you’re kind of starting the engine from scratch.”

Dr Amanda Imber is the founder of Inventium, Australia’s leading innovation consultancy and the host of How I Work, a podcast about the habits and rituals of the world’s most successful innovators.

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