

SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS



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An Old Marketing Model Made New

Applying AIDA to Modern Marketing

In the last few months I have attended several seminars on how social media is changing the way we do business. There's no denying businesses who want to survive in the future will need to learn and tap into this whole new arena (if you're not yet convinced, watch this brief video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIFYPQjYhv8>, for some shocking statistics and the reality that social media is here to stay). Yet there's a part of me that wonders if we have to throw the baby out with the bathwater. While the way in which we market is already, and will continue to change, that doesn't mean sound marketing principles aren't worth using. In fact, in doing research for this article I came across an older marketing model whose with the acronym AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire and Action). It was developed in 1925 by a business analyst named E.K. Strong. While the model isn't new, in fact, by modern standards it should be archaic and irrelevant, it still has incredible value to marketing today's business.

Attention:

The first principle is attracting your customers' attention. This probably looked quite different in 1925 than it does now, but it is at the core of what advertising does. If you don't get their attention, you can't persuade them to buy anything. Consumers in 2010 have a much shorter attention span than they did in 1925, so grabbing their attention needs to happen quickly – within the first few seconds – or they've changed the channel, or clicked to another page. One of the future trends we talked about in last month's Small Business Success was the tendency of today's audience to demand more edgy content to get their attention. They want it rawer, riskier, bolder, and on the edge, and they want it NOW. Traditional marketing isn't geared to now. It comes whenever a customer picks up a magazine, turns on the TV or radio, drives past at billboard or gets a flyer in the mail. Social media allows for immediate attention grabbing. Twitter, and you've got hundreds of people's attention immediately; Facebook for even more. And there are



dozens of social media sites to tap into. This principle may be old, but it is as relevant today as it ever was. As a business, you're going to have to come up with ever cleverer ways to reach your customers and get their attention.



Interest:

Once you've got their attention, you have the equally difficult task of keeping it. Today's consumers are more savvy. They know more about what they're buying, and they expect more of the companies they buy from. They need, more than ever, to know what's in it for them, so the focus on benefit rather than features (see article this month called Value-based Selling) is vital. Keep their attention by asking them questions and being interested in what's important to them. Listen to what they are saying and respond in ways that will mean something to them. Traditional surveys can do this, but social media allows for even greater information sourcing. A question on Facebook or Twitter could get more responses and genuine information than paper, telephone, or even online surveys.

Desire:

Once you've got their interest, you must convince them that they want what you have to offer and that it will meet their needs. People can recognize that they have a need, but that is not desire. Desire is what motivates people to buy. Some traditional ways of creating desire are using the scarcity principle (telling people the item to be desired will not be available for long), demonstrating how other people approve of the item and have acquired it for themselves, or showing them how what you have to offer will solve some of their problems. One of the websites I looked at in researching AIDA suggested that a modern substitute or addition to the "D" is DIALOGUE. Today's consumer wants to talk about what they're buying. They're asking everyone all over the world about their experience in buying what you're selling (remember Real Time Interviews from December's edition of Trends?). If you can open up a dialogue with potential customers that shows transparency and that you're listening, it will assist you in creating that desire.

Action:

This principle says you must lead your customers toward action. It is known in current terms as a "call to action"; a "click here", or "phone now" suggestion, moving the customer toward the purchase. Shopping channels do this brilliantly, as do many infomercials. On the left hand side of your TV screen you see how many items are available, and as the hour ticks on you actually see the number of available items going down, presumably as people are flocking to their telephones to order. "Special offer ", or "if you call in the next 5 minutes you get a bonus" are calls to action. So are dated sales. The next generation of customer will be less and less influenced by these traditional calls to action, so smart businesses are going to have to find a way to move them to action without pressure tactics. They'll take their time, but when they're ready they'll commit. They'll know exactly what they want.

Finally, some marketing experts have added an "S" to the acronym, for Satisfaction. This involves exceptional customer service - satisfying the customer so that they repeat buy and refer their friends.

So, here tradition meets the future. AIDA provides strong, relevant marketing principles, but

businesses today need to find new ways to apply them. Do some research. Take a course on social media and get your head around what it will mean for your business in the future. Keep up to date on trends and stay on the forward edge in your industry. Be the one who stands out because you get it, and you'll see success.

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Things That Scream "Home-Based Business"

Tips to Making Your Home-Based Business Look More Professional

There are reasons you chose to work from home. Some may have to do with lifestyle, - the ability to be available to family and to choose your own hours. Or, they may have been financial – a decision to start small and grow your business slowly. Yours may be the type of business that doesn't require a formal office and working from home makes sense. Out in the marketplace however, you want to be careful that home-based doesn't mean second rate. While your services may be stellar, there are certain hazards of working from home that could detract from your credibility as a business. Be aware if you're losing business because prospective clients doubt your capacity to perform based on their perception of your business. I'm not saying that it's necessary to hide the fact that you are home-based, but rather that it is necessary to create a professional image to instill consumer confidence. Here are some "must do's" to create a polished professional presence for your home-based business.

1. Have a separate space from the household

This is priority one. If your phone and computer are sitting on the dining room table and clients calling can hear dogs barking, kids crying, or the washing machine going in the background, your credibility is gone. If you're serious about your business, make sure you have an office with a door you can close to drown out household noises and free yourself mentally from distractions. Shared spaces are usually disorganized spaces. You don't want your teenager to take your report to school because it was sitting in the same place she was doing her homework last night. Take yourself seriously enough to create a professional space to conduct your business. If you have a family, it's also important to have a separate phone line for your business. Nothing detracts from your professional image more than having your kids answer a business call.

2. Pay attention to presentation

How you present yourself both online and on paper says a lot about you to potential customers. Unless you have a commercial or high-end printer, you should not print brochures, business cards

or other marketing materials on your home printer. Customers can tell if you've taken care to ensure your materials are professionally done. I can't tell you the number of "home-made" brochures I've seen from people who have obviously used a Microsoft Publisher template and think they can pass it off as a professional piece of marketing. As a potential customer, their credibility in my eyes is zero. Yes, it costs money to hire a professional designer and have them commercially printed, but that should be part of your marketing budget, even as a home-based business. You may have heard the old saying, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression." It could not be more true. The same goes for your website. If you can't afford a web designer, there is software that can help you create a relatively decent website, but if you don't really have an artistic eye, enlist the help of someone who does. Never use a public domain for your website – spend the few dollars it takes to get a private domain name. Also, never use public email addresses like yahoo, gmail or hotmail for your business email. That screams "I was too cheap to get a real email address and settled for a free one." If you don't care enough about your business to spend money on how you present it, why would anyone else want to spend their money in your business?

3. Be cautious about using your home address



When you put your home address on your marketing materials, even if you have a business that doesn't normally see clients at your location, you take the risk that customers could show up at your doorstep looking for you. If it happens to be a day you got up late and are still in your pajamas with your first cup of coffee, it could be embarrassing, not to mention the end of your relationship with that customer. You may want to consider renting a post office box for your business mail. It looks more professional, and it gets you out of your

office at least once a day!

4. Get buy-in and family support

If you are running your business from home, there are certain rules or etiquette that your family should be aware of to support you in your business efforts. Don't assume they will automatically know what those are. Have a family meeting and discuss your expectations. For example, perhaps you want them to know that when your office door is closed, it means "unless it's an emergency, don't bother me." Or maybe it means there are certain designated "quiet hours", especially if kids are coming home from school in the afternoon before your business day is done. Define what that means. TV and/or stereo kept on low volume, play happens someplace farther from the office, etc. Let them know what you want them to do when the phone rings and you aren't there to take the call. Do you want your spouse to answer it for you, and if so, how? Or do you want all messages to go to your voice mail, or perhaps be forwarded to your cell phone?

Working from home can be a fantastic experience that facilitates doing what you love and balancing the demands of home and work, but it also can lend itself toward sloppy habits or taking yourself less seriously than a "real" business. Work from home, but when it comes to presenting yourself to your customers, think and act like a big business.

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Making Friends with Time

Identifying the Enemies of Good Time Management

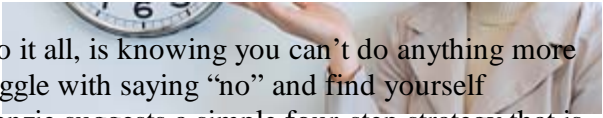
Time for Success by Alec Mackenzie is one of the most popular time management books in print. The copy I have was printed in 1989 but I've seen it reprinted numerous times, and it still sells on Amazon and other sites today. Mackenzie has written a dozen or so books and is considered somewhat of a guru in the area of time management. In this book he says, "Because human time barriers are so much a part of us, we are slow to recognize them for what they really are: the principle obstacles to our control of time." Mackenzie goes on to say that making changes to the way we work with time requires discipline, but it also requires an understanding of the things that are creating the problem (of not enough time) in the first place, and a systematic approach to revising our behaviour. Here are the seven things Mackenzie identifies as time wasters – or enemies of good time management practices.

1. Attempting too much - according to Mackenzie, the problem for most of us is not that we can't say no, but that we actually believe we can do all the things we commit to. Then we run around like crazy people, getting stressed out because of everything that's on our plates, when we should have recognized in the first place that there are only so many hours in a day. The solution to this barrier is to do an honest self-evaluation on how much time you are actually using for work, home, recreation and volunteer pursuits. If you honestly assess the number of hours in a week to do the things you're committed to, you'll probably find you're already overcommitted, never mind taking on anything else. Our culture drives us to "do" more, but taking on more than we can realistically do means some of those things aren't going to be done well, and that we'll enjoy doing them less and less because of the stress.

2. Personal disorganization - "Chronically disorganized people are liabilities to themselves and to others who depend on them for timely, reliable information and decisions." says Mackenzie. In an even stronger statement, he says disorganized people have a disruptive effect on others – impacting their ability to maintain personal effectiveness. Organization is a key to making friends with time. If your files are ordered and easy to locate, you can find more minutes in your day because you're not wasting them looking for things. Some people are naturally organized. If you aren't, hire an organization consultant who can help you develop systems that will be easy for you to maintain. It may cost you some money but it will free up hours you never even knew you had.



3. Inability to say no - the opposite of



attempting too much because you think you can do it all, is knowing you can't do anything more but not being able to say that to others. If you struggle with saying "no" and find yourself constantly taking on more than you should, Mackenzie suggests a simple four-step strategy that is easy and effective. First, listen attentively to the request being made of you. You can only genuinely say "no" if you have heard and assessed the request. Second, if you really don't think you can or want to do it, be honest and say no; not maybe, or I'll think about it. "No, I'm sorry I won't be able to do that." Third, give a reason for your answer. "I've got another deadline to meet," or "Other commitments are taking up my extra time right now." Finally, suggest alternatives, if possible, to show the person you understand the importance of their request. "Have you thought about asking Charlie? I know he has an interest in that." Or "I can't commit to the entire project but I can give you an hour this week to see if I can help you come up with some ideas."

4. Lack of self-discipline – time management requires discipline, pure and simple. It means being aware of how you spend your time and refusing to do the things that don't contribute to your plan. Spending an extra hour at the mall shopping when your afternoon calendar is full, deciding not to tidy your files before you go home at night, allowing distractions to take away your focus – you know what those things are for you. They are the things that are hard to do, the things you generally don't like to do, but the things that if you do them, save you time and aggravation. Look honestly at where you can be more disciplined and BE disciplined. It will make a huge difference.

5. Procrastination and indecision – we all do it to some degree. We put off the painful in order to enjoy something more fun, more interesting. Some people put things off because they are undisciplined, some do it because they are overwhelmed at the thought of getting started, and others because they have difficulty making the decisions required to get to the task at hand. Regardless of why you put things off, the key to stopping this time killer is making a commitment to take one small bite at a time. Doing something creates momentum. So the task is enormous! What two small things can you do today to dig in to that task? What one decision do you need to make to move forward? What will the consequence be of not doing this in favour of something else be? Starting – just starting, will get you going.

6. Leaving tasks unfinished – this habit is often a result of a lack of discipline, or a tendency to get distracted and lose focus. It takes twice as much time and mental energy to go back to a task you have left unfinished than it does to finish it when you've got the momentum. I realize it's not always possible to finish things. In fact, sometimes walking away from a project helps you to clear your head and come back with a fresh perspective. If you choose not to finish when you're in the zone, you take the risk that it will require more time the next time you get to it.

7. Socializing – a lot of time is wasted because of the amount of time we spend chatting. Some of us are more prone to this than others. If you are a people-oriented extrovert you'll have a more difficult time curbing this behaviour than if you're a task-oriented introvert. While friendly conversation needs to be part of a collaborative and healthy work culture, too much is deadly (for killing time that is). Can a conversation with someone take 10 minutes rather than 20? Do you really need to go into that much detail when you tell your story? Of course, it's more difficult when you're on the receiving end of the storytelling, but there are ways of letting people know that you're interested in what they have to say, but need to get back to your deadline. Make lunch hours the time you socialize, when you're taking a break anyway.

Take a look at whether these seven enemies of time management have a grip on you. If so, it may be "time" to make some changes that will buy you more hours, increase your productivity and reduce the stress of not enough time!

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Value-based Selling

The common misconception that lower prices sell more products has often prevented sales people from focusing on those to whom price is only part of the purchasing equation. While there will always be those who make their purchasing decisions primarily on price, there are many more who factor in a lot of other things. One of those things is value. My parents-in-law are a perfect example. They have never made a decision on price alone. In fact, they are happy to pay more if they feel they are getting better quality, better service, or a better warranty. While it often takes them longer to make purchasing decisions because they do their homework, they are also more often than not, happy with the decisions they make, and they are twice as likely to purchase from the same person or company again. Here's how you can tap into an area of selling that takes you to a whole new level.

Recognize it's not all about price. For some people, anything but the rock bottom price is too high and quality or value is less important than how many dollars they spend. If you've got one of those customers, there's not much you can do except direct them someplace where they can find those rock bottom prices, making sure you let them know they may be sacrificing value for price. It's up to them to make that decision. But for most people, value is more important than price. If I pay \$10 for a pair of shoes that last me two months, I'm not getting the same value as if I pay \$60 for a pair that lasts me four years. Your job as a sales person is to get your customers to look beyond price and to see the value they are getting for their dollar.

Think benefits, not features. To determine the value of your product or service, don't think about features, think about how it ultimately benefits the customer. For example, say you're selling database software. You can spend all day telling your client about the things it can do, all the features it has and how well it works, but if you can convince them that it will save them three hours of data processing every day - you're talking value! Or if you are selling service contracts for computers, don't only inform them about your technical knowledge and expertise, and what types of problems you can fix, and how you're always available. Convince them of the benefit of eliminating worry and stress. No matter what happens or when, you'll be on their doorstep within an hour. Now you're talking value!

Don't pussyfoot around objections. Expect objections, and deal with them squarely. If you appear to be hedging issues or beating around the bush, the value of your product or service will be suspect. People have questions. The more honestly you can deal with those objections, the closer you are to getting to that sale. Objections often come from those who need to be convinced of value. Listen to what's beneath the surface. What are they really saying? What do they really need and, what do they value? How can your product or service address those needs? Use objections to get information, and use that information to add value.



Add value to existing products or services. Let's say you've started by offering a service at a specific price, but your customer isn't convinced. If you can offer additional things that add value to the package, but don't cost you a lot more, you're on the road to making the sale, because you've increased the value of what they're buying. For example, a graphic designer (Sally) sets a price for designing a brochure for a client. The client has never hired a designer before, and thinks the price is high. Sally begins by explaining all that's involved in designing a brochure to try to show the value of the service. The client is still unsure. Then Sally offers not only to design the brochure, but throws in a free business card design, as well as managing the printing process. The client thinks he's getting a great deal because of the free business card, and since he has no knowledge of graphic design, feels confident that the printing will be done well because of Sally's expertise. Sally wins because once the brochure is designed, she can copy elements of the brochure into the business card so it takes her very little time to do the extra task. Since she's offered to manage the printing she can go to the printer she most likes to work with, which also saves her time. By adding value to the service, Sally won over the customer.

Include the value of your integrity. People make buying decisions based on a multitude of factors, but they base repeat buying primarily on their satisfaction with what they originally purchased. Use your integrity as part of the value of the package. Always be fair and honest with your customers. Deliver on time. Do what you say you are going to do. Follow up when you say you will. Go above and beyond what has been asked of you. Take responsibility for your mistakes and make it right. If you do this, your integrity becomes a major factor in their purchasing decisions in the future. If you are someone who always comes through for your customers, they will come back to you (even if your prices are higher than someone else's) time and time again.

Take another look at your company brochure or product list, but this time, look at it from a value perspective rather than from a simple product or service perspective. You might be surprised how many new angles you can find to build into your sales process that will increase your success.

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10 Tips for Developing a Positive Attitude in the Workplace

If you work with people, chances are you've had to deal with negativity to some degree in the workplace. As a business owner, you're the person who sets the tone. It's easy to let negativity or a toxic environment get you down, it's harder to make a positive attitude a priority, but the end result is worth it for you and your staff. According to Colin VanderMuelen, here are 10 ways to help you develop greater positivity in your workplace.

1. **Gratitude** – Be appreciative of everyone who does a good job and gets things done on time. Be especially appreciative of those who go above and beyond what they're required to do. Appreciation feels good for both the giver and the receiver.
2. **Celebrate the victories** - For some reason, many people tend to focus on everything they don't like and what's going wrong. Try instead to focus your attention on things that are going well by taking time often to celebrate the victories at work. Reward yourself or praise another individual for a job well done. If you're a manager, send frequent notes out to your staff outlining things that are going well for the company.
3. **Turn problems into opportunities** – If problems are encountered, don't just focus on them. Instead, change your focus by asking yourself or your team, "How can we solve this

issue, and what can we learn from it?” Every problem, or challenge, is an opportunity to learn and grow. Don’t wallow in the issue; focus on the potential to become better instead.

4. ***Keep healthy and well rested*** – It’s tough to have a positive attitude when you’re feeling run down and tired. Make sure you’re getting enough sleep, eating lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, drinking enough water, and getting regular exercise. This may all sound time-consuming, but you’ll end up having much more energy and focus and you’ll actually be able to get more done in less time. You’ll also feel much better mentally, which will help you maintain that positive attitude.
5. ***Smile*** – Force yourself to smile, even if you don’t feel like it. A smile will actually shift how you feel internally. And when others see you smiling, they feel better as well.
6. ***The “No Complaining” policy*** – No one likes a complainer. Tell your team that you would like them to not come to you with an issue unless they have a proposed solution to go with it. This both minimizes complaining and turns the focus away from the issue and to possible solutions instead, thereby maintaining a constructive work environment.
7. ***The win-win policy*** – Make it your own personal philosophy or make it a requirement in your workplace that each agreement reached must be win-win. Agreements and negotiations must never favor one party. There is always a way to make agreements positive for both parties involved. Ask “What would be good for you?” Once they and you have answered that question, do your best to work out a solution that implements as many of the good ideas for both sides as possible.
8. ***Put people into positions that use their strengths*** – What better way for people to enjoy their job than to have them doing things they’re good at and that they enjoy. People will be more motivated and get better results when they enjoy what they do. Some people like crunching numbers: get them to work on the spreadsheets that need to be done. Others like talking to people: maybe they would like working in customer service. Some people are natural problem solvers: put their skills to use. If you play on people’s strengths, you’ll see a dramatic shift toward a positive attitude in the workplace.
9. ***Trust others and evaluate people based on their results*** – Trust your people to do the jobs they were hired for. If you give people the authority to do their jobs, you will get amazing results, much better than if you hover over them. Tell your people what you want them to achieve, and then let them go do it. When you trust them to do it well, they will want to honor that trust. Most people will do the best they can to live up to the confidence you’re placing in them, and they will appreciate you for it.
10. ***Focus on what you enjoy, improve the things you don't enjoy*** - Make a list of the things you enjoy about your business. Make it a point to review this list often as a reminder about the good things. For the things you don’t enjoy, ask yourself how you could make them tolerable. Could you do them at a different time, in a different location, maybe with some music going? Do whatever you can think of that might make those tedious tasks more enjoyable. Keep challenging yourself with the question of how you can make things better until you feel a noticeable difference in your attitude toward those tasks.



You can start creating a positive attitude in your workplace. Just take it slow. If there is a lot of negativity right now, it could take a while to get the momentum going in a positive direction. Try

one idea at a time. Stick with what works and know when to let go of what doesn't. Before long you'll be well on your way to feeling much more positive on the job!

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