



OWN YOUR MARK

## BUSINESS GROWTH 5 POINT PLAN

Growing your business can feel frustrating and lonely at times. It can be difficult to know what strategies are working and whether you should jump onto the latest “hack” or craze in an effort to find that elusive secret to growth.

This 5 Point Plan is certainly not designed to replace a well-crafted Business Plan and Marketing Plan. Those documents should be part of every business’ fundamental strategy process and absolutely should be reviewed as the business changes and the world around us changes.

Whilst these 5 Points don’t replace your overriding marketing strategy, they may supplement it and provide you with a fresh perspective to shake up the status quo in your business, or fill some important gaps.

### 1. STEAL FROM UNEXPECTED PLACES

It’s far too easy and conventional to remain fixated on what our competitors are doing or to follow what the people that have gone before have done. In doing so, we may be making a mistake.

You can create a **huge advantage over your competitors** by doing what most of them are not: finding innovative and useful strategies in use in other industries! It might seem counter-intuitive at first, however some of the most successful and disruptive businesses are emulating things that successful business giants are doing.

How often have you heard that X Company is going to be the Uber of their industry, or the AirBnB of Y? Those business founders are attempting to take a tried and tested model on display in the transportation / accommodation industry and use it to their benefit. The lesson: **keep your eyes open everywhere you go**; you’ll be surprised what elements (small or large) you’ll be able to “borrow” from other businesses.

### 2. SPEND JUST ENOUGH ON A WEBSITE

It’s 2018. Far too many businesses either have sub-standard websites, or shockingly don’t have a website at all. We’ve encountered examples where expired web domains were listed on social media profiles. We’ve seen far too

many websites riddled with dead pages. Even more commonly, numerous websites feature drastically out-of-date information.

We live in an era where **the first place a potential customer or client looks to assess the attractiveness of your business is your website**. Sure, they may ask friends about you, they may look for objective third-party reviews online and they may even try to call you. However, their first port of call will typically be to look up your website.

Those potential customers want to find out how you can solve their problems. They want to see if you understand them and their needs. More than all of this, they want to just have a look and ensure that you look “legit”.

If you have an out-of-date, unattractive or incomplete website (or worse, none at all), you will immediately fail that “legit” test and they will go elsewhere.

All of that said, **if you have limited funds to spend, don’t waste exorbitant amounts on creating a super-flashy website**. It might feel good to do so, however it is unlikely to be the defining factor in you securing business.

When funds are tight, spend just enough on your website to ensure that it appears professional, that it clearly communicates your message and that it allows potential customers to easily get in contact with you or do business with you.

### 3. CUT THE PAIN OUT OF YOUR BUSINESS

As business owners, we’re forced to wear many hats. Some of those hats are not altogether comfortable. Some people hate the “bookkeeping” hat. Others despise the “sales” hat. Many others hate the “digital marketing” or “admin” hats.

Regardless, there are always tasks within the business that we are significantly better at than others. Generally, those are the reasons we started the business in the first place – our place of passion.

**I encourage all business owners to audit your time for 1-2 weeks.** Put yourself through the dreaded timesheets routine. It can be painful, but it will certainly be worth it. Long-term gain for that short-term pain.

Highlight a task that you are spending a significant number of hours in the week on, yet really don’t enjoy, or are not efficient at. We need to get rid of that task.

You either **outsource it, automate it, or eliminate it altogether** if it is non-essential.

I find that business owners end up spending inordinate amounts of time on these types of tasks, purely because they are not efficient at them. Certainly, there will be someone out there who is more efficient and/or enjoys that task more.

Find yourself a trusted consultant (ask us if you need a steering hand) in the field in question, or even outsource the task for a very low cost via Fiverr – [get 20% off with this link](#).

This exercise will clear the way for you to focus on your real “value add” to the business – your core competency and passion. You will experience immediate gains in productivity, inventiveness and more importantly, **happiness outside of the business**.

#### 4. UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR TRIBE WANTS

Really understand. Too many people assume that they know what their target customers or clients want and need.

How that typically plays out is, a business owner develops a product and pigeonholes potential customers into that offering. Instead, to form a truly successful and sustainable business, you need to understand your target audience’s true pain points and drivers.

How do you do this? There are a number of ways.

- (1) **Walk a mile in their shoes.** If you have been the customer and fought their battles, experienced their pain, you will be much better prepared to meet their needs. That may involve role play, or you may have already fallen into their situation naturally.
- (2) Do some good old-fashioned **market research**. Talk to potential customers on social media, in forums, at networking events, at shops – or even to your existing customers, if you have some. Ask them open-ended questions and listen to everything they say – including the WAY they say it.
- (3) Use this tool: **Answer The Public**. You’ll find it at <https://answerthepublic.com>. This thing is so fantastic, it almost should be illegal! Have a play by inserting your business keywords into the search bar. You will be provided with some fantastic data trees, full of the questions that your market is asking.
- (4) Do some pro bono (free) work online at places like **Quora or LinkedIn**. Dive into conversations where your potential customers are asking questions. Show off your expertise by helping them out with their queries. It may result in some new clientele for you, but more likely, it will provide you with valuable insights into your customers’ true problems and hence what they are searching for.

Use all of the above to inform every piece of content you produce, including of course, the front page of your website.

## 5. DON'T FEAR THE RISE OF THE MACHINES

Since the industrial revolution, waves of humans have feared the rise of the machines. They've feared that robots are going to take away their livelihood and steal their jobs, rendering us all useless.

The great news is, just as when the automated production line was invented, or the personal computer, we have nothing to fear. Quite the contrary.

Certainly, the coming advances in artificial intelligence, the internet of things and virtual reality (to name but a few) will have impacts on many existing job descriptions. Notwithstanding this, we are posed with a fantastic opportunity to harness these new technologies to better our businesses.

One immediate example which we've been helping some of our clients with is building **Facebook Messenger Bots**. These bots answer standard questions that potential customers have. They guide them down your sales funnel too. They save you a great deal of time, meaning that you can replicate repetitive tasks over and over.

Another simple technology use case which makes our business lives easier is [Evernote](#). This app allows you to take notes, no matter where you are. You can use it on mobile, tablet or desktop. You can record audio, images, text notes or even snip pieces of information from webpages. This is just one example of how cloud-based applications are making us more efficient and effective.

For every cumbersome process in your business, there is likely a technological solution available now to combat it. Often there is a free version too. Of course, it all starts with talking to the right specialist to help guide you down the path.

## 6. \*BONUS\*

**Do something that makes you uncomfortable.** Promise yourself that you will and get someone else to hold you accountable. Chances are, that if you accept this challenge, you will see short-term results. Make 10 phone calls a day. Video yourself and post it to social media. Meet with that client who consumes inordinate amounts of your energy for little return and sever ties with them.

There is a lot to take in here. Yet, we have barely scraped the surface.

If you need a guide on the path to growth, **get in touch with me at Own Your Mark**. We can arrange for a strategy session or build a coaching plan to take your business in the right direction.

**Mark Schiralli, [mark@ownyourmark.com.au](mailto:mark@ownyourmark.com.au)**

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