



SUCCEED!

Idea-rich strategies to succeed
in business despite global disruptions

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Preface

“In challenging times people need HELP and they need HOPE! That is MY business!” Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooey

As I write and edit this latest short book, we are in the early stages of a world-wide **COVID-19 pandemic**. Cities, States, and countries are in lockdown around the globe. Businesses are closed and workers are sitting at home, worried and waiting for it to work its way out (we hope!).

Governments are playing catch up, most having been caught totally un-prepared, flat-footed, to lead and to cope with this global emergency. By the time it has worked its way out, 100’s of thousands, perhaps millions will die. Not a fun scene.

Also important in this crisis are the long-range economic impacts of that shut down. No travel, little manufacturing, only essential businesses remain open (like groceries, pharmacies, hardware stores, etc.) This is a serious challenge for those of us in business, **if we want to survive and stay in business over the long-haul**. And, we now have the time to work on it!

Disruption has changed our lives, both personal and corporate, as we know them! Overnight, businesses have shuttered their doors, laid off their staff, and turned off their lights. Overnight, many workers and leaders have been thrust into the digital, virtually interconnected world. Working from home, in physical isolation, became our new norm. How will we adapt and deal with this new global challenge? The results are yet to be written and evaluated. But it is an exciting time too.

Quite simply, we don’t know yet. We are making it up as we go along, feeling our way, one day at a time in totally uncharted territories. Some of us had already started down this virtual path of digital connection, collaboration, and

creation. For others, just thrust into this digitally changing world, the results remain to be seen. More than ever, we need to work together to find our way in this confusing new world.

I have been in the speaking business for over a quarter of a century and have ‘evolved’ during previous world-wide crises; **9-11, 2008, falling oil prices**, changes in our industry to less in-person programs, and massive cancellations. In the past short while, I have seen 3 international events where I was to present, cancel overnight. One of them, I reluctantly had to pull the plug myself, as Spain was in lockdown for the foreseeable future. As in times past, people said that the speaking and training industry was finished, and we wouldn’t come back. **They were wrong then, and they are so wrong now! We will come back**, empowered, adapted, and more relevant than ever before... that is, if we are willing to change how we do business. **To succeed in ‘any’ business is an elusive quest**, but an attainable one. You can do it! Like many of my colleagues, I am exploring different ways to continue to deliver value to my clients – **digital ways to connect, educate, and engage**. My commitment to help my clients is as strong as ever, stronger, just the delivery methods change. **How may I help you?**



More than ever we need to reassess what business we are in, who are our potential clients, and how can we best reach and serve them despite these disruptive times. Those who take this seriously and adapt will emerge stronger, perhaps, totally redesigned and restructured. And, perhaps more relevant and profitable as well. This is our opportunity, our challenge as business leaders, to demonstrate our commitment to our clients, teams, suppliers, and communities. **We can do it by working together!**

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A few thoughts to succeed in business

When all is said and done, there are essentially three simple (although not necessarily easy) ways to increase your business.

Work to increase the number of clients you attract to visit (in person or on-line) and retain to deal with you.

Work to increase the average size of the sale for each client.

Work to increase the frequency or number of times each client returns and buys again.

If you really want to **'SUCCEED in Business'**, you need a solid, easily followed process that allows you to strategically work on each of these three key areas. Each key area will have its own challenges and opportunities for growth.

Look for innovative, virtual ways to **attract more clients** in the services and product mix you offer. Like the comparison of having a single line in the water or having multiple lines with different baits. Which one will have the best chance of catching more fish? What kinds of bait do you have? Hmmm?

How about looking for ways to add-on or cross sell? **Adding-on** helps move the client to a larger or superior product, package or service. It is based on really understanding the intended use and realizing the basic product or service will fail to meet the real needs of your client. Help them chose wisely!

Cross selling introduces your client to additional products or service. Offer them alternatives that perform better and are in 'their' best interest. Fore example, phone providers do this well with bundling: Voice mail, call waiting, auto call back, 2nd line, autodial, calling cards, caller ID, 3rd line for security, internet, cable, and computer information delivery systems.

Test your offerings, product mix, and services offered. Experiment with your website, advertising, promotional materials, sales and direct mail letters, live and **virtual** sales presentations, and in store/**virtual** demos, guarantees, USP's, pricing points, volume purchase and discounts, or accessible financing. Keep refining until you find something that is more effective and then update it as needed to keep it fresh and relevant to the changing marketplace and client needs.

Look for opportunities to form **strategic alliances** with those companies who are already dealing with the people you would like to attract; those companies who have already earned their trust and respect. If you offer **complimentary**, non-competitive services or products that assist them in serving 'their clients', you will find a more favorable response. Look for opportunities to offer this kind of connection to people who want to deal with your clients and who offer something you don't offer or are unable to do so profitably at this moment.

Condition your mind to look for break-through ideas and creative solutions. Investigate other industries, look at their success stories and best practices and see if they hold a secret that you can transfer to yours. For example: Fed-Ex simply copied the central distribution system used by the banking system for courier delivery. Fred did ok with this transplanted break-through idea!

As fellow author **Jay Abraham** says, ***“Break throughs let you out-think, out-leverage, out-market, out-sell, out-impact, out-defend, out-maneuver, and continuously outwit your competition at every level.”***

Look for **breakthrough/transferable ideas** in marketing, innovation, creativity, operations, sourcing, technology, virtual services, systems, process, selling, financing, product mix, service list, and distribution. Now is the time to grow!

Out-market, out-think, and out-perform your competition, ‘even’ in tough times!

“One can never consent to creep, when one feels an impulse to soar!” Helen Keller

One word as we begin; my objective here is to give you and your team a series of ‘*mental nudges*’. **A suggestion for getting the best value from this short book** – take a few minutes and read it all the way through in one sitting. This will allow you to plant a few ‘*idea seeds*’ in your fertile mind. You might find one or two ideas that jump out at you can be ‘*unleashed*’ or leveraged immediately, or within the near future. This will allow you to start leveraging the investment you made in this book; to augment the investment you continue to make in your career and organizational growth and success.

Systematically re-consider at least one ‘SUCCEED in Business’ idea-a-week. Let it ‘*germinate*’ in your mind as you go through your week.

- Does it apply to what you are doing (some may not)?
- Can you apply it immediately?
- What would it take to make it feasible? Can you adapt it?
- Can you see the importance of investing in making it a reality at this time? IF not now, when?
- Can you improve on it and make it even more productive?
- Does it spark your creativity in bringing a new or more innovative idea to mind?
- How will you implement it?
- Can you track the cost savings or income potential associated with it?
- **When will you begin acting on it (key question)?**

Enjoy the adventure!

Learn for Life! Use a portion of each day to read, study, and expand your experience, knowledge and awareness.

The average North American reads one book a year. Investing only 15 - 20 minutes daily to strategically read, allows you to cover 17- 20 books a year in your chosen field of study. Wow!

This can give you a real competitive advantage and increase your depth of expertise. It will also give you access to new ideas and fields, where you can apply innovation in your career or organization. Education doesn't stop when you graduate or when you land the job of your dreams. In sales and business, it is a *life-long* commitment! You might even want to set up a reading success team and summarize or regularly share what you read with each other.

Make more productive use of business cards – use both sides to create a mini-brochure. Some people like to use the blank sides of your card to make notes. However, for most of us, the *'unused'* side is a *lost* opportunity to tell a bit more of your story, your uniqueness, and your commitment to your client. The cost to print on the back is marginal for a mini brochure.

Create a customer focused newsletter, blog, or e-zine with tips, techniques and testimonials: Keeping in touch with your current clients, suppliers, team members, and even people in your industry is a key in marketing visibility. Let them know when something new or exciting has happened. Share your team successes with them. Outline tips and suggestions to make their use of your products or services more effective or profitable for them. Technology connects us in a digital age.

Keep them updated on what is happening, but **don't make this an 'advertising' piece about you.** It needs to have solid value for the reader, and a reason to want to open it and read it. Keep it simple and value added. Give them permission to share it or send it to their friends and colleagues. Permission to reprint (*with credits and contact information included of course*) is a great way to leverage your reach and exposure.

Look for areas of cross-promotion and joint venture opportunities with other companies or professionals: Look for new opportunities to work with other professionals and organizations. Co-op to help each other reach a larger market and to better serve your combined clients by offering a better service or expanded range of products. Look for ways to assist them in the same manner and suggest mutual benefit.

Always leave the door open. Companies change policy and suppliers. People change jobs. Situations change too. Make sure you keep your options and contacts current. Work to keep a good relationship with all potential clients – even if they say no! They might not at another time, or if transferred to another organization. Keep in touch for future business.

Make use of the new ‘social’ media. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Zoom, Skype all provide excellent opportunities to keep yourself visible. Out of sight, out of mind, out of business.

Collect and use customer testimonials in your promotional efforts. This is an area where you can effectively ‘leverage’ your efforts to reach new clients. When your current clients say nice things about you – ask them if they would mind sharing that in writing? Often, they will be happy to do so.

Another way to get testimonials is to do on-line customer satisfaction surveys or have feedback forms as a part of your process. I make this a part of each seminar I conduct. They help on-line and in other promotion. You’ll get information that will allow you to improve your service and tools to help potential clients decide to deal with you.

For example, ***“I still get comments from people about your presentation. Only a few speakers have left an impression that lasts that long. You hit a spot with the tourism people.” Janet Bell, Yukon Economic Forums.*** Remember, people will trust credible, third party endorsements more than anything you can tell them in your own marketing efforts.

Celebrate and reward failures. Share the lessons learned from them! Start a ‘mistake’ of the month club! Encourage your team to take risks and celebrate their successes. This is a great way to reward them for succeeding. Celebrate the failures and lessons learned as well. Make sure the lessons are applied and shared with the whole team. Leverage the learning and cultivate their willingness to take risks in expanding your business. Sure, people will make mistakes, that is normal – just make sure everyone learns from them!

The ‘secret’ here is to reinforce the culture that empowers your team to take calculated risks in building or unleashing the potential of your business. If mistakes are shared, not hidden, the learning curve will be accelerated throughout your organization – so will the successes!

Have fun at work – your staff will love it, and your clients will too! Take a page from some of the newer and more aggressive companies who have a culture of fun at work! This doesn’t mean ignoring the basics or your clients. It does mean more energy and a more conducive environment for client engagement and innovation.

People learn best in times of enjoyment. Creativity is enhanced when your brain is having fun, and you are among people who are also having fun. **Hint:** People like to have fun when they do business with you – even if they don’t always like to admit it!

Give a copy of “MY ‘Next’ Million Dollar Idea Book” to all your clients and team members. (updating now) **Challenge them to innovate, not imitate!** Challenge your team to come up with one ‘new’ idea a week that would help them become better or more productive. Make this a part of your innovation process in expanding and unleashing your business potential and you will see continuous growth. Each idea need not be a major improvement. But, if each one nudges you slightly ahead and makes what you do more attractive, profitable, or makes your systems more effective, you will win!

Take regular time to ‘THINK’, dream, and plan. This is important for time management! I cannot stress this enough. If you would be innovative in your career or company, and stay ahead of your competition, you must allow time for your creativity. Schedule regular time away from your ‘normal’ hectic pace to dream, think, and reflect on how you might be better at what you are doing. Don’t force it – let it come and write it down. Train and encourage your staff and co-workers to do likewise! **Record and Reward!**

Write an article or column on your field of expertise.

Provided you have been in your field for a while and have stayed current, you may have expertise you didn’t realize; expertise that might be of solid value to potential clients. I got started down this path of speaking and writing by doing articles on kitchen design. I started sharing ideas I had learned about business management, creativity, and customer service etc., drawn from those rich experiences. Being perceived as the ‘expert’ in your field can open new doors and draw additional ‘qualified’ clients to your doorstep. Works for me, ☺.

Conduct and publish the results of a survey (do this on regular basis) to become a strategic resource to your clientele. This could be as simple as exit surveys of your own clientele. Or have someone call a decent cross section of people and ask them specific questions that might be of interest to your potential clients. Compile their answers and share the information in a special report. This could become an annual event and something that your competition cannot provide.

Use a FAQ section – frequently asked questions – to assist your clients. Systemize your business to make it easy for people to get their questions answered. If you provide an on-line FAQ section that covers some of the most frequent questions, you will make it easy for them to evaluate doing business with you. Keep it current and add questions that come along on a recurring basis. Our is www.ideaman.net/FAQ.html

Have a ‘users’ group section for your website and monitor postings (problems or opportunities.) This can be a treasure trove of information, if you set it up correctly and monitor it on a frequent basis. See what people are talking about, and what secrets or tips they are sharing with each other. This can be a valued customer service function for any business, and allow you to collect data on challenges, successes, and problems for your products or services. It can even provide a strategic glimpse on new services or innovations needed to keep current or competitive in the market.

Selectively attend and display in tradeshow (network and prospect for new business and connect with suppliers).

This is a valuable method of connecting with your potential clients, showcasing what you do or what you sell to potential buyers. It can also be a method of gathering information, feedback, and customer survey materials on your company and its product or service mix. It can also provide an opportunity to meet and recruit strategic partners and potential suppliers you would not normally meet from other geographic locations.

Ask for additional business and referrals. Go back to existing clients. *Farming*’ referrals or additional business from your current crop of clientele is an often, over-looked method to enhance the top line. Ask for their help!

If they like you and are satisfied with what you’ve done to date, ask them for referrals or introductions to people they know who could benefit from your services. Make sure you have asked for, and gotten, positive feedback on their experience with you first. If it is positive, ask for the referral. Don’t be afraid to come back to them with additional offers, repeat sales, new products, new services, new connections, or additional programs. Re-selling current clients can be a very profitable use of your time and efforts.

Sponsor or co-sponsor an event (like a Sunrise Seminar, Breakfast Briefing, or a Lunch and Learn!)

Give a gift to your association, fellow business owners, staff, or your clients. Sponsor a mini-seminar that can be held before everyone heads to work – a sunrise seminar, or a lunch and learn session where people can brown bag it and hear a local (or virtual) expert (or me) on a topic of benefit. These can be **live or on-line**. Live: provide coffee and donuts or muffins in the morning and coffee or juice for the luncheon.

Contact the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers for ideas and speakers. Visit www.canadianspeakers.org for more information on speakers in your area.

Create and declare a special day or holiday. Promote it widely! Hey, why not! Santa Claus was originally a creation of the Coca Cola Company. The greeting card companies designed many of our holidays, such as Easter, Mother's and Father's Day. Why not have a national day in honor of something that relates to your business or the benefit you provide to your clients. Perhaps this would be a good opportunity to partner with others to expand the reach and exposure of this event. Make sure it is either a fun event, or something of solid value in the community. Perhaps honoring a local hero or cause.

Delegate and train your team to free you up for the more productive use of your time. This important! If you are *serious* about unleashing your business potential, free up time for the more productive activities such as customer service, sales, and marketing. Train your staff to cover off on the more routine stuff, so you can do what you do best. *I designed a course for the sales team along these lines: "Creating 'TIME' to Sell! – How to successfully create more face-to-face time for the sales and marketing process." That led to additional work outside of this quest.*

Sponsor or co-sponsor an award locally – or create your own award. Perhaps having your own special day doesn't work, but you can certainly gain exposure in this arena. Get behind a local award program as a sponsor, or better yet create or co-create your own unique program.

For example, if you have a garden center, the best lawn award, or a newspaper giving a best emerging writer award. **Be creative!**

Network outside your industry – learn and apply new lessons. Remember when they said, ‘It’s not what you know it is who you know?’ Well, when it comes to succeeding in unleashing your business potential, this is particularly true. The answers and innovation you seek to make your team or organization more profitable often lie in the mind of someone in a different industry.

The trick is getting to know them before this ‘*secret to your success*’ is revealed. People outside your industry see things differently and can often shed valuable insights on your challenges. They also form a basis of mutual benefit, as advisory teams, with cross promotions, and even as a volunteer board of directors for your company. You might even set up a leadership success team from these associations.

Join your local Chamber of Commerce, networking group, or professional trade association. We don’t succeed alone, but we can fail in isolation! Getting out with fellow business professionals on a regular basis is good for your soul. Some of them need you and your services – but they need to know who you are first. Sharing ideas, challenges, laughs, and even a beverage or two, can work wonders in stress reduction. You then return refreshed and ready to tackle the formerly ‘*insurmountable*’ challenges. You never know, something you hear in conversation might just be your next big idea!

Hand-written ‘Thank you’ notes. This ‘*simple*’ courtesy will set you apart from your competition. When was the last time you received one from someone you did business with? How did it make you feel? Did it help build a closer bond with that merchant? This is the most effective way to show me that you appreciate my business!

Engage Canadian, Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey and put his Ideas At Work for your group, convention or association. Call +1-780-736-0009 to find out how you can unleash your team's potential now!

Ok, I want your business! 😊 I would love the opportunity to explore how we might work together, and how some of my programs or consulting might be a benefit for you or your team. Visit my web sites for more information on what I bring to the table, www.ideaman.net or www.BobHooey.training

Hire a professional business coach, consultant, or mentor.

Take stock of your strengths and weaknesses. Where do you need help or a little polish to help you succeed? Where would the services of a dedicated professional help you enhance your performance or gain additional expertise in a 'specific' skill? Just as professional athletes and superstars engage coaches, so should you! Select coaches or mentors who have *earned the right* to teach you and check their published expertise carefully. Ensure you respect them and their accomplishments to facilitate a good working relationship. If you have a mentor who is investing time in you, work diligently to ensure you fulfill and exceed their faith in you.

Develop, expand and promote a company or professional web site (visit ours at www.ideaman.net). In today's global economy, if you are not easily found on the web, you are potentially dead! Your site does not need to be flashy or expansive. It does have to be professional, value-added, and accurately and attractively tell your story to potential clients. My site has more than paid for itself in direct contracts from speaking, training, and consulting clients, and as a tool to direct potential clients interested in hiring me. I promote it in my programs, literature, postcards, by voice mail, and my on-line articles for other websites. I've worked to make it value-added for business owners and professionals, like you, and for meeting planners too! It has become a very valuable tool in my success!

Have your services list and catalogue on your website for ease of ordering. Direct people to visit your web site in voice mail and literature. Make it easy for people to learn about you and your company, even while you sleep. What can you up-load to make it easier for me to evaluate your service or product mix, and to do business with you?

Can you use an easily updated PDF format for your catalogue? Make it easy for your customers to search your site to find what they need and to navigate from page to page.

Turn your website into a 24/7 information and service tool. Make it resource driven and value-added and they will visit, tell their friends, and come back again! This is a logical and profitable extension to your brick and mortar business and a customer service tool that levels the playing fields with the big boys in any market.

Collect client and potential client emails and publish an e-letter. A lot has been written about this. You are throwing away money, if you are not doing this! Use permission marketing to *'farm'* names from your own clients and from people who visit your website, call your office, or deal with you. Make sure you follow CASL guidelines here in Canada. Ask them to write you on-line and use a systematic process to capture those addresses for ongoing communication and additional sales.

Use your list to share ideas, successes, staff celebrations, and to remind clients about regular services, introduce them to new ones, or send along special offers.

Become a media resource or expert in your field. Just as writing a column or article will help establish your credibility and expand your visibility, so will becoming a media expert or resource in your field. Contact your local media and let them know who you are, what your expertise covers and that you would be willing to act as a resource from time to time if the opportunity arose.

You might be surprised at the response and the coverage when they call, interview you, and share your wisdom on air, or in print. Doesn't hurt your business to be associated as a *'credible expert'* in your field. I've done several online summits like this.



YouTube, LinkedIn, or Instagram marketing. Of late, people spend enormous amounts of time on these and other on-line platforms. They work; I just got an invitation to speak in Stuttgart, German (Sept. 2020) after the conference chair saw one of my videos. It helps establish you as a trusted advisor and accessible expert too.

Post card marketing to acquire new clients or keep in touch with current ones. This is an idea that has made me quite a lot of money over the years. I learned this idea at a conference in California. It is a very cost-effective way to contact and keep in touch, because it gets past the gatekeepers to be read. People tend to look at both sides of a post card!

Present mini-seminars, classes, or informative talks to local community and service groups. Draw on your expertise and experience to share your story in your community. These can easily be moved on-line. Our speakers' community is working to do just that virtually. If you need a little coaching, find a Toastmasters club and join it. That is where I got my start. It was the best investment of time I have ever made.

Letting people know what you do, and where you are, can be so easy. These local groups are looking for *'interesting'* speakers on a weekly basis. You might be surprised at how productive this method works in marketing and promoting your career or business. I got my start doing continuing education classes prior to turning professional.

Include additional offers or tips along with your invoices, receipts, packaging, and sales slips – cross promote. This is a perfect opportunity to let your clients know about your special offers, new services, or just remind them what you bring to the table. Often, clients forget about all the products or services you offer. This is a great opportunity to share new ideas, products, and services from your strategic partners with your clientele.

Of course, **they will reciprocate with their clients, so everyone wins!** Provided their materials and services are value-added, sharing them with your clients is an ongoing commitment to their well-being – and a step to converting them into loyal fans and champions.

Look for ways to 'bundle' or sell value-added services or products. Take a tip from companies like Bell, AT&T, etc., which offer a special bundle of telecommunication services. What services or products can you add to make what you offer more value-added? Can you offer a *"good"*, *"better"*, *"best"* choice in your contracts or product mix? Can you cross-promote value-packs drawn from your strategic partners as well as your own services?

Build volume-based reward systems – don't simply compete on price! One of the best ways to build your business is to entice your clients to purchase longer contracts, more products over a period, or to give them a reason to enter into these types of arrangements. A variation of the buy 5 – get one free, so popular with coffee shops. Tire shops use it, so do restaurants, movie houses, and a host of other companies. So, do I in my training/coaching series! What can you build on with your clientele?

Design and promote 'product of the month' as a series of business builders. Variations on including a special offer with each invoice or receipt. Design a promotion that rewards your clients and entices them to buy a *'special'* product or service add-on each month. Reader's Digest did well with the book of the month deal, as did Columbia and other music companies when I was growing up.

What can you do in today's economy that would be broken down into a monthly instalment, series, or incentive system? For example, a wine or coffee of the month club.

Focus on the top line to grow your business. All too often we focus on the bottom line and make changes or cuts primarily on their ability to impact this area of our business. Real growth comes from applied innovation in expanding the top line with additional sales methods, training, services, products, processes, marketing materials, technologies, systems, financing plans, distribution channels, sourcing, operations, product mixes, and service lists. These are the areas which will develop new markets and bring in additional streams of revenue.

This will allow you to find economies of scale, build in better compensation plans, increase productivity, enhance staff training, and explore new technologies and ideas to better serve your clients. That is not to say you should ignore your bottom line – track and evaluate everything – but increase your top line to grow your business and unleash your business potential.

Teach your staff how to brainstorm and harness that power to ‘unleash’ your business! Take time to ensure your staff know how to creatively apply the principles of brainstorming in dealing with client challenges, problems, and unique opportunities that crop up.

This is a business survival skill! Teaching them to look at problems as opportunities to learn, and creatively serve clients better. This change will make a difference in their attitude and their productivity. Schedule time to gather for specific brainstorming sessions to enhance performance. This is an essential part of the innovative process.

Use bulletin boards around town as mini billboards (use every opportunity to reach me as your potential client.) This is often overlooked or considered un-professional – too bad! For those who see the potential to simply let their clients know about something special this is a very cost-effective method of marketing. Make sure the brochures are well laid out and professional in appearance – not slick! Why not investigate electronic billboards and other on-line options.

They can be as simple as one page with black and white lettering on colored paper. Hire a kid to put them up or give some to your staff members to keep with them as they travel. Often, they will get to places you never would. How about apartments, local stores, community bulletin boards, and other businesses in your Cross-promotion team? Great opportunities to reach new clients at a very small cost.

Cross-train your team for solid customer service and coverage. Empower your team – ‘everyone’ is a customer service and satisfaction agent. In our increasingly competitive market, each team member must be able to step-up, step-in, and assist a client when needed. Gone are the days and the attitudes of *“it’s not my job!”* Many companies are working with smaller teams and each person is now carrying more responsibility.

Cross training empowers your team to act to help a client without making them wait for someone else. Remember, to your client, each team member *'is'* your company, and has an opportunity to prove you value their business!

Invest the time to train each team member to be a customer service agent and deal with client problems, concerns and complaints. Each one needs to be fully aware of your policies, guidelines, and range of services and products. ***This may be one of the most productive things you can do this year!***

Drive by billboards – each company vehicle can be a mobile advertisement for your business. Does your company have a delivery truck, or service vehicle? Have you fully taken advantage of turning it into a traveling billboard to tell potential clients what you do?

How about putting something on the roof so those in high rise office buildings can see your website address or phone number?

How about giving team & satisfied clients bumper stickers with a catchy slogan and your URL? Or, a reverse print sign or an instant sign/bumper sticker for their back window or bumper?

Teach to reach – hold in store training sessions for your potential clients. Arrange demonstrations of services or products (in store or cross promotions.) Is there an aspect of what you do that has an *'educational'* or *'how to'* component that can be leveraged? For years I augmented my design business by doing kitchen design and informational seminars for potential clients. It was fun and it was very, very productive!

Can you apply in store demonstration style promotions seen in department stores to entice or educate potential clients about new products or services? How about doing some as cross-promotional events with strategic partners? Of course, they will return the favor at their location!

Take time to celebrate the personal and professional successes, accomplishments, and outstanding efforts of your staff and team. A successful organization is just a successful group of people! This can be a great morale booster for your staff or team, when they are recognized publicly for something they have accomplished. It doesn't even have to be directly related to your business – it could be something they have done in their community or additional education accomplishments.

Several of my past employers leveraged my Toastmasters' success in their marketing efforts. This can also personalize your business. People love to know what people are doing and may decide to work with you because of a shared connection with a staff members' success. This is relationship marketing at its best!

Try crazy ideas! Time and time again, we read of what was considered a crazy idea turning into a goldmine, opening a lucrative new distribution channel, or even creating a new industry. Being creative and taking risks can be the true secret to your success. Don't let fear get in the way, but don't bet the farm on them either. A balanced approach in taking a calculated risk is the path to success.

Always give them more than they expect! This is a solid practice of good customer service, and a way to build loyalty. If you've been counting, you may have realized I have given you more than 47 Ways. Hey...I knew there were some keeners who would buy this short book! And, I practice what I preach.

Share your 'best' idea here:

I hope you've found this series of '*mental nudges*' productive in your efforts. Drop me an email at bhooney@mcsnet.ca and let me know of your success. I'd love to hear from you!

Conducting an image self-evaluation

Perception is reality! This is often the case in our business dealings. People like to deal with people they like or trust. People base their business perceptions on the image we portray. That image is enhanced or blurred by how we act or present ourselves. **How do your clients/customers see you?**

Take a moment and give some honest feedback to yourself, based on your past 3 to 6 months' experience in dealing with your clients/customers. **Hint:** Your answers might lead you to 'unleash' your business potential – and show you where you can improve your client/customer service! Good time to check in with your clients on these issues too.

- Is your image one of honesty and straightforward sincerity? How do you know?
- From the buyer's point of view, would you be considered reliable? Why is that true? If not, what needs to change?
- Could you honestly say your customers received special benefits dealing with you not available from one of your competitors? What? Why?
- In their eyes, would you appear to be an expert in your field? Why would they say that?
- Have you been effective in helping solve their problems? How so? Examples?
- Would you say you handled complaints to their complete satisfaction? How did you accomplish this?
- Is integrity one of your watchwords? How does it show in your dealings?
- Other than your business dealings, would you think your customers believe you have their best interests and welfare at heart? Why?
- Do your customers look at you as a good reliable source of product or service information? Why?

- Would most of your customers continue dealing with your business, even if a competitor offered slightly lower prices? Why would they do that?
- What percentage of your customers or new clients comes from referrals? Why is that number significant?
- How do you plan to keep yourself and your staff educated and current in your field?
- Describe how you keep in touch with past clients. Describe the results.
- Other questions?

If you have been honest in your appraisal of your business operation you might have seen a few areas in which focused improvement would help. Go back over your answers and **ask yourself:**

- How can I ‘unleash’ my business potential by improving based on the answer to this question?
- How can I improve how I seek and service my clients?
- How can I change what I offer them to more accurately reflect what they need?
- How can I make a difference in my career and my community by making the changes I see needed here?
- How can I equip my staff and co-workers to better reflect the changes needed?
- How can I partner with other business owners to strengthen and expand the way we do business and the services or products we deliver?
- Can I reorganize my business to allow myself to enjoy my life better?

Honest reflection, followed by a commitment to act, will perform miracles. Time and time again business owners have done some soul searching and come up with some great ways to re-invent their business and give their clients the service they deserve!

So, you have a problem... that's great!

So, you have a problem, that's great! Whoa? Some of you are thinking, "*Are you crazy, Bob?*" Actually... NO! Someone once told me that "**I'd get paid or determine my value, by my ability to solve problems.**"

If it was that '*easy*', everyone would be doing it, and the competition would be intense. But, as most customers will tell you, most businesses are not in the problem-solving field. Your ability to solve your client's problems will be directly related to the number of sales and continued growth of your firm. The more successfully and **creatively you solve these problems**, the more referrals and fans you'll see. The more productive you are personally in being a solution-oriented owner, manager, or employee, the more dramatically it will impact your paycheck and career path.

I've learned a **simple 4-stage process for dealing with problems**. This is an effective way to deal creatively with customer complaints and concerns as well as other areas of your business and life. These ideas also work with creative and strategic planning or in everyday problem solving.

Since many of my clients and audiences have a need to be effective in dealing with their clients or customers, I've written from that perspective.

1. Invest time making sure you **UNDERSTAND** the problem.
2. The key to understanding is to **IDENTIFY** the real cause.
3. Take time to fully explore and **DISCUSS** possible solutions.
4. Take action to **SOLVE** or resolve the problem.

Creative client engagement is a commitment to go through this process with your clients. After the problem has been successfully resolved, **go the extra mile**. By that I mean do something unexpected to assist the client or to show them you appreciate the opportunity to fix the problem and prove your commitment to his well-being. This will help turn an angry or frustrated client into a fan or better yet a champion for you and your business.

Stage One: Understanding the problem. Often a problem is a perception of a difference of what we expected to happen and what *actually* happened. Here are three action steps to help.

1. Gather **ALL** the facts. Be thorough and investigate. Let the client talk!
2. Listen carefully and don't be defensive. Wait until they've finished talking and ask more questions to draw them out to find out their **REAL** concerns.
3. Rephrase or repeat the problem back to the client to make sure you've heard it correctly and understand what needs to be resolved. Agree at this stage.

It's important at this point to ensure you don't fall into the trap of denying or trying to avoid the problem. Don't blame or attack someone else. Don't demonstrate the same negative emotions in response to a customer's complaint. Just listen and calmly gather the facts!

Stage Two: Identify the Cause of the Problem. You might ask yourself or your client a few questions to find out what may have caused the problem.

1. **What has happened?** Listen and ask questions. Undertake a true assessment of the current situation.
2. **What should have happened?** Ask questions and listen carefully. Was perception a problem?
3. **What went wrong?** This is where you start partnering with the client.

Keep in mind the true cost of an unhappy client. What future purchases could you expect from this client? What future business could this client influence? What does the problem at hand cost to rectify?

Problems generally often fall into 4 major areas:

1. **Mechanics or Function** – product or service failed to work as expected.
2. **Assembly or use** – someone didn't use it correctly or put it together incorrectly.
3. **The People Factor** – we make mistakes in how we do something or how we deal with a client.
4. **Client EGO** – how this PROBLEM makes them look (good or bad) in their eyes and the eyes of their friends and families.

Stage Three: Explore and DISCUSS possible solutions.

This is possibly the most critical part in the client satisfaction/problem solving process. Here is where we need to fully focus and objectively review identified challenges we've partnered with the client to solve. **Here are three action steps.**

1. **Suggest options.** Take time to explore ALL the options that might effectively help solve this problem or at least minimize the impact.
2. **Ask your customer for their ideas.** Very often, they have a solution in mind or have some good input that will help you mutually resolve it to their satisfaction. If they are a partner in the decision, they will help make it work and will be more inclined to be happy with the results. Their satisfaction will result in referrals for you!
3. **Agree on the best solution or course of action.** After you've fully explored the options, make sure you both agree on what you will do and when in order to resolve it. THEN DO IT!

Stage Four: Take ACTION to resolve the problem. This is the completion stage that builds a foundation for a potential long-term relationship with your *'formerly'* dissatisfied client. Make this a priority focus for your firm. Once you've agreed on what needs to be done, move heaven and earth to do it and do it better and quicker than you've promised.

Remember, they are watching to make sure you were serious about making them happy. This is your chance to *'prove'* your commitment. **Again, three simple action steps.**

1. **Physically remove** the cause of the problem and/or take steps to retrain if it involves personnel.
2. **Take corrective action** to substitute, replace, or repair the product or service.
3. **Ask the client** if they are satisfied with the changes and action you've taken.

Go the extra mile! This is where you cement the relationship by doing something extra, something totally unexpected by the client. Show them you care and are concerned about the inconvenience they've experienced.

Use your complaints as a source of product or service development. Each one is an opportunity for you to learn how to better serve your clients, refine your service, or improve your product in the marketplace.

This is also an opportunity to expand your business or service by using solutions as stepping-stones or business building blocks.

Yesterday's problems are today's new creations and improved products or services. Want to be a creativity leader? Then learn from each lesson your clients give you. This is an opportunity for you to build a strong foundation for success. **Don't miss the lesson. It might be a 'v-e-r-y' valuable one!**

One percent better!

“Excellence results from doing 100 things 1 percent better, rather than one thing 100 percent better.”

Author Unknown

One of the biggest obstacles to growth is the ‘misguided’ quest for the big idea, the big break, the big sale, or the big change. In reality, success, sales, and growth happen one step at a time, one improvement at a time, and often a simple, one percent-at-a-time.

Sure, there are many stories of major breakthroughs and advances; perhaps you’ve even experienced one or more yourself. However, when you look at what led up to them, you’ll often see multiple efforts to improve, research, prepare, and experiment. This is often the case in my life and business as I work and prepare in advance of the successful completion or creative breakthrough.

It would be so easy, if we could simply wait until the **big million -dollar idea** drops into our brains or laps and then reap the benefits. It would also be unrealistic to live that way. It would be like buying a lotto ticket as a means of paying your monthly bills. Top performers and leaders are never fully satisfied with where they or their teams are. They have what many would call ‘*creative discontent*’ in that they can always see ways of tweaking or making it better. Many of the ones I meet or work with live this way.

Peters and Waterman (*In Search of Excellence*) wrote, “*The essence of excellence is the thousand concrete, minute-to-minute actions performed by everyone in an organization to keep a company on its course.*”

Sam Walton of Wal-Mart was *famous* for looking at his competition with the eye of learning ‘*one thing*’ he could use to

make what he and his team did a bit better. He built a large, successful, multi-national company from a very little one by applying this concept of continuous improvement.

Jack Welsh made some amazing and profitable changes in GE by doing the same thing.

What are your competitors doing better that you can apply to your operations or services?

Are there 10 to 15 areas where you can make changes that will give you a 1% improvement?

Write the ideas for improvement down and schedule specific time to make them happen. It pays!

One percent better can be your rallying call in the pursuit of excellence and success in your leadership, career, or company. Succeed and then change!

Brain boosters: (take a minute and play with one or two)

Write your name upside down – and backwards! This means you start from the last letter in your name. Notice how this feels.

Make up a list of ‘socially acceptable’ activities people could do while standing in line.

Draw a picture of a nature scene only using triangles.

A new business magazine has just been created, unlike any others on the market thus far. What is the name of this magazine and what is its focus?

Note: I love these ideas to challenge your brain someone sent to me more than a dozen years ago. Wish I could remember who sent them, so I could give them credit. They are amazing tools to train your brain.

Take advantage of ‘business’ opportunities...

A profitable business is, at its very essence, based on innovation, solving problems, or fulfilling the real needs, wants, and desires of our clients. Here’s a *potpourri* sampler of how to take advantage of opportunities to expand or unleash your business potential. **SUCCEED in business!**

Out-perform, out-think, and out-market your competition by applying some of these ‘mental nudges’.



What business are you REALLY in? Keep asking this question and keep adapting your business to keep it fresh. **Hint:** think in terms of customer benefits. What do your customers get when they deal with you? What do they really want? Our **‘Make ME Feel Special!’** program is focused on the end benefit customers get from dealing with smart business owners.

Transplant or adapt an idea from another industry and transform it or adapt to suit yours and the special needs of your clients. (For example: air miles/coffee cards/buy 10 get one free loyalty cards and deals are still very popular.)

Try something that didn't work the FIRST time. It might now. With changes in technology, resources, client needs and attitudes – try again!

Use a different material or process to do a traditional job. Applied creativity and innovation count big time! Explore outside your industry.

Combine two or more products or services to create a new one. Perhaps you can work with a strategic partner to develop a new service or product that will bring mutual benefit? Synergy works – use it!

Take advantage of the trends or changing interests in the marketplace. This is where your customer service focus and research will help, a lot! Ask questions, read outside your market, and visualize applications.

Look for ways to be a value-added company or person, focusing on timely delivery of solid customer service. How can you personally make value-added changes to what you bring to your work and clients?

Profitably enhancing your career or organization is built on innovation and applied creativity. As I tell my audiences, “Being creative is often as *‘simple’* as being awake, and willing to risk by trying new or unfamiliar things and activities.” Wake up your creativity today and enhance your performance!

Applied creativity can solve your client's problems and build long-term business success. **Innovation = Ideas At Work!**

Looking at your career or business from different perspectives is one secret of tapping into your inner genius. **It may also uncover or unleash your idea to SUCCEED in business, despite global disruptions!**

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SUCCEED! *Idea-rich strategies to succeed in business despite global disruptions*

Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooey, Accredited Speaker, 2011 Spirit of CAPS recipient. Prolific author of 30 plus business, leadership, and career success publications

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Bob's B.E.S.T. publications



Bob is a *prolific* author who has been capturing and sharing his wisdom and experience in print and electronic formats for the past fifteen plus years.

In addition to the following publications, several of them best sellers, he has written for consumer, corporate, professional associations, trade, and on-line publications.

He has been engaged to write and assist on publications by other best-selling writers and successful companies.

His publications are listed to give you an idea of the scope and topics he writes about. Bob's **B**usiness **E**nhancement **S**uccess **T**ools.

Leadership, business, and career development series

- **Running TOO Fast** (8th edition 2019)
- **Legacy of Leadership** (3rd edition 2019)
- **Make ME Feel Special!** (6th edition 2019)
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- **Speaking for Success!** (9th edition 2020)
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- **Prepare Yourself to Win!** (3rd edition 2017)
- **The early years... 1998-2009 – A Tip of the Hat collection** (2020)
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Kindle Shorts (2017-2020) - more to come in 2020

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- **SUCCEED!** *Idea-rich strategies to succeed in business, despite global disruptions (2020)*

Co-authored books created by Bob

- **Quantum Success – 3 volume series** (2006)
- **In the Company of Leaders** (95th anniversary Edition 2019)
- **Foundational Success** (2nd Edition 2013)

Visit: www.SuccessPublications.ca for more information

What they say about Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey



I frequently travel across North America, and more recently around the globe, sharing my **Ideas At Work!**

I am fortunate to get feedback and comments from my audiences and colleagues. These comments come from people who have been touched, challenged, or simply enjoyed themselves in one of my sessions.

"I still get comments from people about your presentation. Only a few speakers have left an impression that lasts that long. You hit a spot with the tourism people." **Janet Bell**, Yukon Economic Forums

"Thank you, Bob, it is always a pleasure to see a true professional at work. You have made the name 'Speaker' stand out as a truism - someone who encourages people to examine their lives and adjust. The comments indicated you hit people right where it is important - in their hearts. Each of those in your audience took away a new feeling of personal success and encouragement." **Sherry Knight**, Dimension Eleven Human Resources and Communications

*"I am pleased to recommend **Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey** to any organization looking for a charismatic, confident speaker and seminar leader. I have seen Bob in action on several occasions, and he is ALWAYS on! Bob has the ability to grab his audience's attention and keep it. Quite simply, if Bob is involved - your program or seminar is guaranteed to succeed."* **Maurice Laving**, Coordinator Training and Development, London Drugs

*"On very short notice Bob cleared his schedule and graciously presented at our meeting when the original Speaker was unable to attend. **Last week Bob set the tone for our two-day BMO leadership meeting and gave us all a motivational lift.** His compassion and true interest in people was clearly evident, making him very credible. He shared some great stories, has a wealth of experience and knowledge and it was a pleasure listening to him. His down-to-Earth style makes it easier to retain the information presented. He also followed up with additional info and handouts, cementing his message of building bridges, not walls. Fantastic job, Bob, and thanks again!"* **Barbara Afra Beler**, MBA, Senior Specialist Commercial Community, Alberta North

*“I have been so excited working with Bob Hooey, as he has given inspiration and motivation to our leadership team members. Both at the Brick Warehouse – Alberta and here at Art Van Furniture – Michigan; with his years of experience in working with business executives and his humorous and delightful packaging of his material, he makes **learning with Bob a real joy**. But most importantly, anyone who encounters his material is the better for it.”*

Kim Yost, retired CEO Art Van Furniture, former CEO The Brick

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Call +1-780-736-0009 to connect with Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooey today!

Email: bhooey@mcsnet.ca Learn more about Bob at: www.ideaman.net or www.BobHooey.training

“In challenging times people need HELP and they need HOPE! That, is MY business!” Bob ‘Idea Man’ Hooey

To succeed in ‘any’ business is an elusive quest, but an attainable one. You can do it! **More than ever**, amidst this global disruption, we need to reassess what business we are in, who are our potential clients, and how can we best reach and serve them despite these challenging times.



Those who take this seriously and adapt will emerge stronger, perhaps, totally redesigned and restructured. And, more relevant and profitable as well. **This is our opportunity**, our challenge, as business leaders, to demonstrate our commitment to our clients, teams, suppliers and communities.

We can do it by working together!

Canada’s IdeaMan, Bob Hooey partners with committed leaders and organizations to equip and motivate for profitable growth and success. He teaches secrets of idea-rich business and leadership development built on solid foundations and taking strategic action.

Bob is the prolific author of 16 plus business and leadership success books and travels the world sharing his innovative Ideas at Work!

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