

in this issue

Severe Summer

A Different Approach

Reading List

*What Were They Thinking?:
Unconventional Wisdom About
Management*

Announcements

About Trek



trekking

a newsletter on practical strategic thinking and action
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severe summer

"Summer has set in with its usual severity."

~Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Normally, I wouldn't have agreed with Coleridge, but this summer is different. Everybody's results are down from past years, except maybe discount retailers, bankruptcy lawyers, and auto repair shops (if you can't buy new, you have to keep the old one running).

Indications are that this recession will not end quickly. Unemployment nationally has risen to over 9%, credit is tight and shrinking for small and medium sized businesses, and more financing problems are looming. So should you sit back and wring your hands over the current predicament? You know the answer is not "yes".

If the revenue pie is shrinking, companies have to work smarter to keep a share commensurate with past revenue levels. But the big question is, "What resources do you have to address the issue?"

a different approach

As advocates of Strategic Conversations (<http://trekconsulting.com/Publications/Articles/StrategicConversations-HBS-2005.pdf>), we believe it is important to get feedback on the market as well as your business by communicating well with others. In this process for businesses, we encourage an organized program where one person is in charge of contacting key stakeholders – customers, prospects, suppliers, industry experts and employees – to get both a big picture feel and more feedback on your business as well as industry trends.

With everyone worrying about business and putting off vacations in favor of stay-cations, this summer is a perfect time for individuals to have these conversations, as well and look for new ideas on how to grow their businesses. Whether you are an attorney, consultant, banker, business broker, or financial advisor, the summer represents a great time to re-connect and get fresh information.

How do you go about it? We all have contact lists, whether in our Google or Outlook directory or LinkedIn or a CRM or sales force automation database. Here's an approach I've taken recently:

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fresh information. smarter decisions. great results.

- 1) Review your contact list from A to Z, thinking carefully about each person. If local, is this someone with whom you'd like to re-connect or exchange ideas? In this difficult time, you might be surprised to see how many people are willing to collaborate to help one another to make progress.
- 2) Make a Top 20 list of contacts.
- 3) Pick up the phone, send an-e-mail, or text these acquaintances you haven't seen in a while and whose business acumen you respect.
- 4) Invite them to meet by asking, "Hey, Betty (or Bob), it's been a while since we've connected. How about grabbing breakfast or a cup of coffee and we can brainstorm about each other's business? We can talk about what you see in the market and what I'm hearing, and see if we can help one another." The other person will see it's not just about getting, but also about giving.
- 5) Prepare for the call or meeting. Have an observation or two to share about what you're seeing in the other's person's market, or a general observation about developments – like the impact (or not) of Twitter, which companies are dying, surviving or thriving in the market, or just some good, thought-provoking questions for your coffee mate.

In general, people are more available to meet or talk in the summer because organizations postpone events until September. So don't underestimate the importance of networking in a down economy. Reach out, brainstorm, and those new revenue-generating ideas are sure to follow.

reading list

What Were They Thinking?: Unconventional Wisdom About Management **By Jeffrey Pfeffer**

A couple of years ago, Jeffrey Pfeffer, Stanford Business School Professor and columnist for *Business 2.0*, was named to the Global List of Top Thinkers (along with Jim Collins, Jack Welch, Michael Porter, Bill Gates, Tom Peters and 44 others - <http://www.thinkers50.com/?page=2007>). Much of the acclaim for Pfeffer came from his 2007 book on management, *What Were They Thinking?: Unconventional Wisdom About Management* (http://www.amazon.com/What-Were-They-Thinking-Unconventional/dp/1422103129/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1247155032&sr=8-1). This is a pretty tight book full of illustrative stories backing his theories of good (and bad) management. He offers his sometimes sharp insights on topics ranging from training, communications, benefits, executives getting experience on the front lines of the business, compensation, corporate strategy (and budgets and forecasts), hiring, and evaluations. Good read for managers, owners and those who advise them.

announcements

Michael Oleksak recently presented to a class at Boston College of students studying for a combined Masters Degree and CPA. The class was entitled “Strategic Conversations and Strategic Momentum”. The thrust was that, as these accounting students move forward in their careers, their roles in firms will at some point expand to leadership and management. And that using a resource like gathering feedback from a company’s key stakeholders can be a great way to build a foundation from which they can fine-tune strategy, develop action plans and execute. It was a little right-brain thought process for students who are generally left-brain thinkers.

Mary Adams has posted a video on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brBwWqiSg8g>) about how to leverage knowledge as a business asset to fuel growth in your business...using a model built out of LEGO’s. There is a companion worksheet available (<http://www.i-capitaladvisors.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/white-paper-want-to-grow-like-google.pdf>). Please share your own knowledge factory models and pass this on to your colleagues—and do your part to help build a nation of “Googles”! For more information on this topic, visit the Intellectual Capital Advisor web site (<http://www.i-capitaladvisors.com/>).

There are many upcoming XPX-Boston events over the next months, providing great content and networking opportunities with advisors to business owners:

- **Friday morning, July 17** – “Who is going to own your business after you?” A Review of Buy/Sell/Keep Alternatives; Speaker: Herbert K. Daroff, J.D., CFP; location: Babson Executive Conference Center, Wellesley.
- **Tuesday morning, August 4** – Forum for Entrepreneur-Advisor Collaboration; topic: “Business in Crisis: Entrepreneur Needs Your Assistance”; location: the offices of Gesmer Updegrave, 40 Broad Street in Boston.
- **Thursday morning, August 13** – Content and Curriculum committee; topic: Social Networking; location: EEC Room at Foley Hoag Emerging Enterprise Center at Bay Colonies in Waltham.
- **Wednesday evening, August 26** – Networking and light hors’ d’oeuvres; location: the waterfront of the Newton Marriott.

You can get more information or register for any of these events at the XPX events page (<http://exitplanningexchange.com/index.php?/xpx/events/>).



about trek consulting

Trek works with owner-managed businesses to develop action plans for growth. Trek also works with the owners to prepare for their successful exit by coordinating the resources necessary to increase and preserve the firm's value, creating the succession plan and assembling the right transaction team, financing and post-transaction plan.

Our clients report improved market focus, greater revenues, better margins and increased profits. To learn more about Trek Consulting and how we can help you improve your company's results, visit us on the web at www.trekconsulting.com or call us at 781.729.1008.