



Greater Birmingham
Chambers
of Commerce



Growth Through People 2019

Multiplying Value

Improving the Productivity of Your People and
Your Business Using What You've Already Got

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In partnership with

Connect. Support. Grow.

Bass Clusker Consulting

Welcome



Paul Faulkner

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We have published this report with Andy as a tool for local businesses looking to boost their productivity, unlock the full potential of their people and ultimately, raise their bottom line. It's also a showcase of how Greater Birmingham businesses, of all sizes and from a range of sectors, are at the forefront of best practice leadership and people management.

Within the Chamber ourselves, we are constantly thinking about improving the service we offer our 3,200-plus members, and how we can bring what we do to the next level. We have built an agile and reactive workplace culture with people at its very heart and are proud to share our journey within this publication.

In these pages, we look at five key ways you can multiply value by improving the productivity of your people and your business using what you've already got. Each key is illustrated by case studies from Chamber members that have already inspired us. We hope they will inspire you.

Introduction

When businesses are thinking about increasing productivity, the clichés start flying thick and fast. “You’ve got to do more with less,” you’re told. “You’ve got to sweat the assets.”

But “doing more with less” often becomes an excuse for cutting corners, or for putting excessive pressure on people, and “sweating the assets” is fine for machinery but it’s a good way to wear out humans.

And in the words of another, better, cliché, “You can’t cut your way to greatness!”

What do you do if you want to increase the productivity of limited resources, but without stressing, abusing or burning out your people?

It turns out that once you start looking for ways to create more value from what you already have, while at the same time helping your people to grow, you can tap into more ingenuity and productive potential than you thought possible.



Dr. Andy Bass

Founder, BassClusker Consulting

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We've identified five of the highest potential ways to improve results without cutting, and with low additional costs.

The five approaches covered in this guide are:

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The over-arching idea is to tip the first domino. Success with any of these approaches will mean that people have behaved in new ways, achieving results that are intrinsically rewarding. As they succeed in new ways, their understandings of what is possible begin to change. People realise they can be effective in creating change. They will want to do more.

You see engagement and ownership spike. And you gain knowledge that can make you much more confident in making subsequent investments.

Case Studies featured in this guide

- **Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce**
Bringing the outside in
- **KEP Print**
A clear challenge plus creative freedom equals a runaway success
- **Mills & Reeve**
Co-creating leadership and team development
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An App in a day!
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Helping the team help themselves (and their communities)
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Solving your own problem, then selling the solution
- **Wright Restaurants t/a McDonald's**
People are our vital ingredients



Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

Bringing the outside in

The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (GBCC) connects, supports and helps grow businesses in the Greater Birmingham area. Accredited by the British Chambers, it has acted as the voice of local businesses since 1813. GBCC is headquartered in Edgbaston, Birmingham, and covers six geographic divisions and four themed Chambers.

The Challenge

If the rate of change in the environment is faster than the rate of learning inside the organisation, you're in trouble! Back in 2015, like all Chambers nationally, GBCC faced the perception of an inevitable decline in membership, with people questioning the relevance and modernity of the offering. It had also been severely impacted by a sharp recession in 2008 and a reduction in publicly funded programmes. Internally, a silo mentality and ill-defined alignment to growth objectives was acting as a brake on operational efficiency and ultimately reducing the Chamber's ability to provide the most effective support possible to businesses, which is the core purpose of all Chambers.



Actions

Starting in autumn 2015, the Chamber began a series of member and employee-focused actions in order to 'rebuild' their offering. These included:

- Focus groups with existing/past/potential members and staff to gather a wide range of the relevant perspectives.
- Benchmarking/reviewing other Chamber/membership offerings.
- Full review of the existing membership offering and Chamber communication channels, especially digital.
- Forensic analysis of what worked and what didn't, and which elements of the membership package got used and which didn't.

The 'rebuild' could then follow: the team designed the offering so that it was as relevant as possible to businesses, i.e. focusing on the elements they now knew people used and valued, in order to give them more of those elements. This included a new offering – 1813 – which could do this and be priced and internally resourced appropriately, ensuring not to over-promise and under-value.

Every relevant department was kept engaged through the changes, and the Chamber re-launch, including a new website and brand refresh, took place on 1st April 2016.

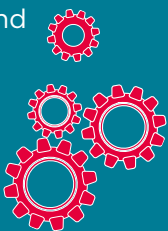
Results

Results have included:

- Consistent membership growth for the last three years – now running at 1% per month (24% in the last 2 years)
- Winning the national award for 'Excellence in Membership' in 2018
- High performing and motivated staff, delivering an excellent customer experience
- Low staff turnover
- An inclusive workforce demonstrating high levels of skills and specialisms
- 100% of staff were proud to work at the Chamber in 2018, with success being celebrated regularly.

Lessons learned

Supposedly "inevitable" decline can be reversed by accelerating an organization's ability to learn and change. A big part of this is making sure that people inside the business are getting more and better insights about what's going on outside the business. Gathering a wide range of perspectives and combining this with analysis of actual take-up of services provided the insights to refresh and rebuild the offerings to create new growth.



KEY 1 Delegate a mission, not the task

If leaders can't delegate a job to someone else and get it returned to a required standard, then they can't build leverage. Without leverage, productive capacity is going to be limited by the number of hours a leader can work personally.

In the words of General George Patton: 'Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results'. As well as benefiting from their ingenuity, there's another plus: if you are too specific about the route to achieving a goal and there turn out to be unforeseen roadblocks, some people will give up and dump it back at your door: 'You told me to go this way, and it didn't work, so I give up – over to you'. If you have specified the destination, not the route, then the onus remains on them to find their way – it's reasonable for them to request extra help, but not to give up.

Here's a format that works very well, based on the British Army's 'Mission Command' process.

1. **R** esults required
2. **E** vidence for success
3. **W** hy is the result important?
4. **A** gree to make a contract
5. **R** esources and support negotiation
6. **D** ocument the agreement
7. **S** upport the delegate

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Here are the steps in more detail:

1. **Results:** Delegate the results you want, not the method. Hold people accountable for the result: not just for following the process or completing the checklist. Of course you should provide help, guidance, proven processes and tools, but keep making it clear that the job is to get the result, not just go through the motions.
2. **Evidence:** how will you both know for sure that you got the result? Here's a common, and very annoying problem: you ask someone to do something, and what you get is not what you wanted, but you can see how they got the wrong end of the stick. You end up settling for what you didn't want, or having the work done over – a real nuisance. Usually the culprit is vague language. Make it absolutely clear what you want to see, hear and/or feel that will confirm the result. E.g. "What I am really after is a one page press release on my desk, with all the right facts and contact details already filled in, that makes the reader feel like they want to get on the phone for the story immediately".
3. **Why:** Make it clear why the result is important. Individual jobs, especially staff jobs, can seem quite disconnected from the world of living, breathing customers. Explain how the result you are requesting contributes to the mission of the business. It helps people get motivated, it shows how your request is reasonable, and it enables them to improvise if they come up against problems.
4. **Agree:** Make it plain that you are proposing a contract, or agreement – ask them if they accept. You can coerce people to do things, but that's not delegation. Instead, you ask them: "Are you prepared to sign up to this? If you do, you are accountable." Be vigilant that they don't accept too automatically. Consider playing devil's advocate. Maybe they ought to go and do some research before they commit themselves. If they are more junior, this is a big opportunity to coach and develop them.
5. **Resources:** Allow the assignee to negotiate changes to the specification, including resources, support and ground rules. Ideally you want someone who says: "Yes, I can make this happen for you, as long as I have the following resources". The negotiation process is crucial for creating commitment (this is the process inherent in transferring ownership of the job).

6. **Document the agreement:** A simple email will be enough in some cases. In others, something more akin to a project proposal, with milestones, metrics, etc will be needed. Your decision about appropriate documentation will be a function of a number of things, including your level of trust in their competence to deliver.
7. **Support and monitor:** There's a difference between delegation and abdication. Don't solve all their problems for them.

On completion, acknowledge results and give out rewards. This doesn't have to be a big deal, but it shouldn't be skipped either. Since real motivation is intrinsic, the best reward comes from helping someone feel personal satisfaction and an increasing sense of ability.

KEP Print

A clear challenge + creative freedom = a runaway success

KEP Print Group is a leading point-of-sale and commercial print company offering services including large format print, digital and litho print, finishing, graphic design, direct mail, fulfilment, and cardboard engineering. Their customers include Virgin Atlantic Airways, Debenhams, and AGA Rangemaster. KEP also has a strong association with motorsport, as the owners' son is British GT driver and former 24 Hour of Le Mans champion Martin Plowman.

The Challenge

The company needed to be more innovative. The in-house cardboard engineering department, under the time-pressure familiar to most businesses, struggled with creativity and kept producing reheated versions of its previous designs. But customers were asking for fresh ideas, and the owners were worried that they might be overtaken by challengers who could come up with more creative solutions.

Action

KEP has always had a culture of trusting its people's capabilities. They gave their 3D engineering department a mandate to spend some unstructured time outside the business looking for ideas. It felt uncomfortable to be doing things that didn't feel like 'work', but it turned out to set up the conditions for a huge breakthrough. The trigger? A visit to one of Martin Plowman's races. Head 3D cardboard engineer Tony Kilgallen saw kids running around wearing toy helmets and wondered if he could design a KEP helmet made out of printed card.

Results

The resulting patented helmet (see picture) is printed up in a single piece and then folds into shape. The product became such a hit at the race circuits that KEP created a separate company - Pop Up Tops Limited - to exclusively market and sell the card helmets.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with Jaguar's Formula E team using them for fan giveaways and Silverstone Circuit retailing the helmets at race meetings.

KEP has since extended the idea to other sports where competitors wear helmets, like American football, cricket, and hockey. Virgin Atlantic ordered 5,000 American football helmets - complete with face grill - for an NFL London game in October 2018. When the cameras zoomed in on a bunch of helmeted fans, Virgin Atlantic got TV coverage worth over £250,000 - all from £2,500 worth of card helmets.

Other ingenious cardboard solutions have followed, including a twisted display unit that Ferrero Rocher loved, buying 4,000 of units totaling £48,000; a "sun hut" for LloydsPharmacy's own brand suncare Solero; and a full-sized cardboard fridge for Iceland's reception display.

Lesson

KEP Print Group allowed Tony and his colleagues to invest some unstructured time, trusting that the combination of creativity, external stimuli and a concrete business goal would pay off. It's a great example of releasing growth potential by giving people the freedom and encouragement to discover a new solution.



KEY 2

Don't impose 'solutions': Enable people to create their own improvements

Very often the easiest way to improve performance is to get the people you are trying to engage to do it for you. Actually, to do it for themselves.

At one financial institution I worked with, the employee satisfaction survey levels were embarrassing. Employees felt like cogs in a machine. They didn't understand how their jobs fitted in, or why they mattered. Staff attrition was high, and performance was sluggish. This was despite the extensive training materials and courses the company provided during induction to try to explain the job and its significance.

The solution to both was as simple as convening teams of those very employees – under the leadership of junior managers – and having them design their own induction programme. After all, they knew what would make most sense to their millennial colleagues better than anyone.

The most successful team developed an interactive board game, in which players followed the journey of a trade through its various stages, getting clues from established colleagues running the actual desks involved. Some of these desks were in the same building and could be visited physically. Others necessitated international phone calls. The players raced each other to complete the process. By the time they had finished the game – win or lose – they had grasped the end-to-end process and started to build the relationships they would need across the business.

The solution was far more creative, effective and cheap than senior managers expected, and when they were shown to the CEO on his next visit, he immediately sponsored its global roll-out including spending a small amount to have the game materials professionally made.

Tips for helping your employees help themselves

- Expertise is vital, but don't just rely on the experts to improve things. Doing so often leads to solutions which are technically sound, but not quite what is actually needed. Any experts should be in a supporting role.
- Create a team of employees from among those actually involved in the work.
- Give them a clear goal to improve something that affects them: induction, workflow, workplace conditions, safety, customer satisfaction etc. Make sure there are clear ways to measure progress.
- The experts' job is to support the employee team with materials, resources, advice and perspectives (but not to dictate the way they use them or engage with their colleagues)
- Consider some kind of forum or platform to help the team coordinate their efforts.
- Encourage inexpensive experiments, look at the measures of progress, and use the feedback to improve the approach.



Mills & Reeve

Co-creating leadership and team development

Mills & Reeve is a national full service law firm with clients such as Jaguar Land Rover, Birmingham City University and Iron Mountain. The Birmingham office is home to 150 lawyers, 30 of whom are partners. The firm has been one of the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For for 16 years running.

The Challenge

The firm recognises that the market for legal services is changing fast. Clients want a new kind of relationship with their lawyers. No longer do clients just want an expert to 'tell them the answer' – they want legal advisers who they can work with to solve problems, for example, to think through the commercial implications of different legal options, or figure out how to deliver more value for less. For many experienced partners this has required a big shift in mindset as well as skill set. But it wasn't initially clear how to create the time and space to make that shift in a way that would also be perceived as time-efficient. Law firm partners are time-poor and often sceptical about the value of workshop-based training, given the large time investment it required.



Action

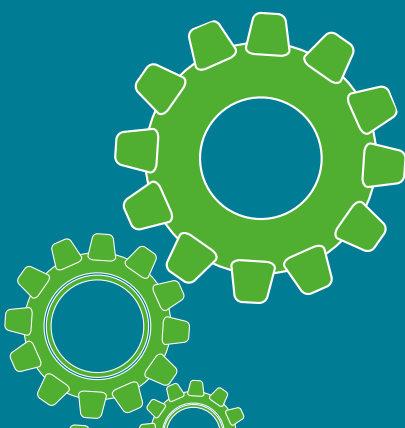
Recognising and sympathising with the resistance to "being trained", director of knowledge, learning & development Trevor Comyn proposed a 'co-creation' approach whereby a small team of partners would develop their own development programme with help from his team. They suggested convening small self-managed learning teams of six to focus on their own development. A number of the groups have started by improving their own teamwork and strategy. L&D curate materials and support the partners in facilitating their own development team meetings. The whole process is partner-led: for example partners interviewed staff members themselves, rather than relying on others to do it for them. As partners from different practice groups have shared their strategies, they have found that they have learned huge amounts from colleagues who turn out to have remarkably similar challenges.

Results

The process has achieved phenomenal engagement and acceptance. Initially the policy was that the self-managed teams would meet for two hours at a time. Getting that much time was difficult enough, but after the first few meetings, the partners themselves started asking for three hours, such was the value they felt they were gaining. Partners on the programme have quickly started doing things differently, for example in developing strategy, making team meetings more effective, improving team performance and in considering how to deliver better outcomes as a leader.

Lesson

Rather than giving people the canned expert answer, it is far more productive to help them develop their own solutions. These solutions fit their needs better, face far less resistance (because they are not imposed), and ultimately benefit from enthusiasm and ingenuity that might otherwise have been left untapped.



KEY 3

Set 'impossible but fun' challenges

Has this ever happened to you? You want to achieve some ambitious daily, weekly or monthly performance levels in some area of the business. It could be anything: zero defects, 100% schedule attainment, response to client enquiries within a certain time, quotes out within a certain time, or zero unsafe acts. Everyone acknowledges the importance of the goal, but in practice it is rarely if ever met, and if people were honest, they'd admit that just can't see how to do it.

The idea of meeting such standards day-in and day-out can seem insurmountable if it has never been achieved before. But what if you made a game out of it? What if you start by trying to achieve the standard for just one day, or one week?

In one manufacturing plant, Tom, the factory manager, was struggling with a common issue. When they were under time pressure to meet delivery promises people rushed, and quality suffered.

To address it, I suggested Tom organise a 'model day' experiment. He selected a day that was two weeks ahead and attached a simple goal to it: For one day, meet the aggressive schedule with zero defects. See if we can do it, and discover what we can learn from trying.

The exercise was a great success. As Tom explained:

"I used the REWARDS delegation format to brief everybody on what we were going to do. We actually tried it on two lines on two different days. We started by picking straight runs with no changeovers so that we had a good chance of success. It was great that everybody who was on the factory floor that day had a go - everybody rotated in and out of those lines. And at the end of the day they were running over to the whiteboards to find out: "Did we do it?"

"It engaged people. Especially when I explained the "Whys": a lot of people had never been talked to like that. Previously, the attitude was: "If we don't get it done - oh well." They didn't understand the consequences. They appreciated having an explanation, and they appreciated knowing the results. Now I am picking lines with change-overs to make it more of a challenge, and we're going to make a documentary so we can show it to teams in other plants."

The steps

1. Identify an ambitious performance level you want to achieve.
2. Pick a date two or three weeks in the future on which you will aim to have a perfect 'model' day.
3. Announce your intentions well in advance. Brief the relevant people using the REWARDS delegation formula.
4. Record the preparations and the action on the day, using photos and videos.
5. Hold an all-hands meeting afterwards to review lessons, and discuss how that level of performance can become the new business-as-usual standard.
6. Set up the next challenge.



Deutsche Bank An App in a day!

Deutsche Bank 

Deutsche Bank is Germany's leading bank, with a strong position in Europe and a significant presence in the Americas and Asia Pacific. It provides banking services to companies, governments, institutional investors, small and medium-sized businesses and private individuals. DB Birmingham connects data, process and people across the bank's global services.

The Challenge

Businesses large and small are having to get to grips with digitalisation. Deutsche Bank is very conscious that if digital transformation is to meet the real needs of customers and employees, it cannot just seen as the sole province of technologists. It's easy in any organization for people to develop silo mindsets, but for digital transformation to really work, people from across the business need opportunities to participate and contribute to areas that they may have shied away from in the past.



Action

Deutsche Bank organized a 24-hour Hackathon in which small, multi-disciplinary teams competed to produce apps for the autism charity Autistica. The teams included not only technologists but people from around the business: trading, HR, legal, compliance etc. The winning app included an emotion diary to help young people with autism to understand and manage anxiety.

The bank followed the success of the Autistica Hackathon with a similar event for Cure Leukaemia. The winning team developed a prototype app that suggests "buddies" with similar diagnoses, age and gender. It also curates articles from trusted sources and keeps track of a patient's well-being and key statistics. Patients can choose to share this information with friends, family, buddies or doctors, as well as fetch blood test results and report their daily progress.

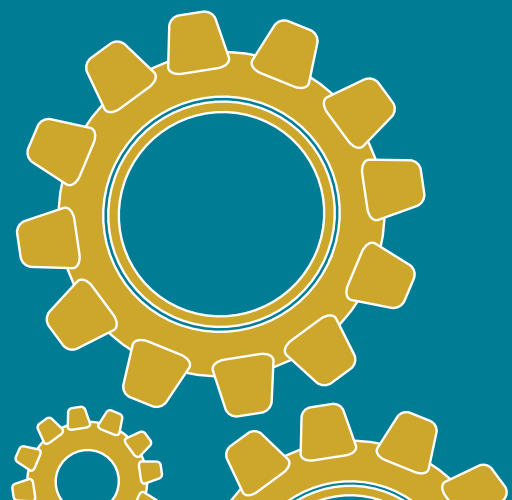
Results

In addition to intrinsic value of helping these great causes, there have been business benefits for the bank too. These include connecting people who wouldn't otherwise work together, underlining the value of being a DB employee - important for satisfaction and retention - and most importantly, broadening people's horizons, particularly by exposing them to digital technologies and methods such as Agile, which they are now applying to their own disciplines, e.g. HR.

Speaking of the Autistica app, a Management Board spokesperson said: "This prototype app is an example of how hackathons can help us change the way we work - how we partner together, solve problems together and leverage diverse skills to make a difference."

Lessons you can apply

Getting diverse teams together to work on a short-term, high-impact project for a meaningful cause provides a great way to develop your organization's learning capacity, cross-pollinate learning etc. It is also a far more 'real' and lasting morale booster than can ever be provided by empty 'jollies' or motivational trainers.



KEY 4

Tap into what people know but don't say

Too many managers overlook the staffs' views, and therefore cut themselves off from a vast store of potential for business improvement.

Sometimes, regrettably, they are deliberately dismissive, seeing frontline people as less qualified and of lower status in the pecking order. "What can they know?" they ask themselves. More often though, the bias is unconscious – it simply doesn't occur to executives to consider whether the frontline might have valuable insights and ideas.

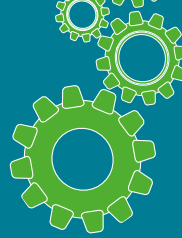
Whatever the causes, the tendency is damaging. One turnaround specialist says that the first thing he does when called in to rescue a failing business is to talk to the shopfloor and customer service people to find out "how management have messed-up the business, and what we should do to fix it."

The answers are almost always valuable. Time and again, the information to help the business has been there all along, but was ignored by managers.

The frontline know about customers, they know about waste, and they know about bottlenecks. How can you tap into that knowledge?

Some ideas:

- Get "Back to the Shopfloor" and see for yourself. Every 90 days, answer phones, do a night shift, go on sales calls.
- Shop at your own business, or have a trusted friend do so. Order something, make a complaint, call your helpline.
- Create forums where people at all levels can share insights about the work and the workplace.



UK Power Reserve

Helping the team help themselves (and their communities)

UK Power Reserve, part of the Sembcorp Group, is a leading provider of secure, flexible, low carbon electricity and services to the UK power market. The company helps keep the country's electricity system balanced and resilient with fast-ramping, low-cost assets that can supply power to the grid in just a few minutes.

The Challenge

UK Power Reserve is a young, fast-growing company, established in 2010, that now supports over 160 employees. Retention and attraction of skilled talent is crucial in order to support this growth and so it has been important to make sure the company is seen as a great place to work. In particular, as field staff can feel detached from the centre, it has been vital to find ways to give them a sense of belonging.

Actions

In addition to healthcare and employee assistance programmes provided by external experts, UK Power Reserve has tapped into the capabilities and enthusiasm of its own people with a series of initiatives including:

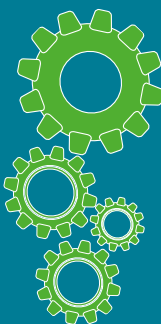
- A Wellbeing Committee comprising people from all parts of the business, to champion the welfare of the whole team. The committee is responsible for supporting the mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing of employees, based on insights from the people on the ground as to what will improve the company as a place to work.
- Brown Bag lunches. At these events, employees volunteer to update each other about developments in their various areas, and share information between the centre and field. These are relaxed sessions that give staff the chance to learn from one another, whether about different roles within the business or a particular industry topic. Lunch is provided for those attending in person, and lunch vouchers are sent to all who listen in to the presentation on the phone.
- Match Funding. Employees taking part in voluntary activities, or fundraising for charities and causes that mean a lot to them, can apply to the company's Charity Committee to have their efforts matched by UK Power Reserve.

Results

Reported wellbeing has improved. Employees appreciate knowing they have support to turn to in times of need, and that they don't need to go far to find help. This enables them to maintain focus in their professional lives, and consequently work more harmoniously as a team. In parallel, absences have measurably decreased, with attendant benefits to service delivery. Furthermore, showcasing these activities online has helped in the competition to attract the talent UK Power Reserve needs to continue its growth.

Lessons

Tapping into the workforce's insights about happiness and wellbeing helps maintain a strong work ethic, whilst enabling employees to perform at their best in a fast-paced environment, and making the company an attractive place to work for potential recruits.



KEY 5

Repackage what you already have

You can often rearrange or repackage capabilities you already have so that they deliver additional value to your customers. To do so, you have to pay extra attention to how your customers needs are changing - often it's your frontline people who will get this information first.

For example, Cardinal Healthcare was in the commodity business of surgical supplies: things like gloves, sutures and scalpels. The company were experiencing intense price competition because hospitals regarded their excellent quality products as essentially interchangeable with those of other suppliers.

But Cardinal hit on an extremely powerful idea: bundling supplies into kits that were perfectly matched to specific surgical procedures. So for example, for a hernia operation, they would deliver a kit on the day of the operation, with all the supplies sequenced correctly in sterile packs, simplifying setup, minimising risks of error, and of stock outages, and so reducing hospital inventory and inventory management costs.

With the same basic products, insight into their customer's real needs, and well-thought-out packaging, they cornered the market and earned a well-deserved premium.

You can use a similar approach: It's likely that your current array of offerings and capabilities can be made more profitable by intelligent repackaging and repurposing.

So, how do you develop such combinations? Here are three powerful techniques:

1. **Package up and sell the tools you've made for yourselves.** Amazon Web Services was born when Amazon realised they could market the internal capabilities that they had developed to run their own website. Basecamp, the popular project management tool, was originally developed as an internal tool by 37 Signals. They realised it was a better product than the ones they were selling, and the rest is history!
2. **'Before, during and after'.** You can use a technique from the theatre to rethink the customer or client experience. Theatre directors sometimes get their cast to improvise what happened immediately before and after the scene actually written by the playwright. That way, they create a back-story which makes the scene itself more satisfying. Business can do something similar. For example, Virgin Atlantic does a lot for passengers before and after their flight - food, showers, haircuts, even shoe-shines - and it bumps up the value, and so the price, nicely. How can you make the before, during and after better for your clients and customers?
3. **'Mise en place'.** It's a French phrase which means 'putting in place'. It refers to organizing and arranging the ingredients and utensils that a chef will require for the dishes they are going to prepare. It's exactly what Cardinal Health did with the surgical kits they tailored to specific operations. By doing the mise en place for the surgeons, they commanded a premium.

IO Studios

Solve your own problem, then sell the solution



IO Studios develops bespoke software solutions based upon proven Microsoft technologies. They have a dedicated onshore technical team, customer service team and consultancy team delivering agile software development.

The Challenge

In order to track its own leads and sales pipeline, the company was signed up to a well-known customer relationship management (CRM) system. The problem was that nobody liked using it. In general when people find a product unpleasant to use, they don't bother. Instead, they follow their own workarounds. At IO Studios, people fell back on cumbersome spreadsheets, and everybody was doing things in a slightly different way. The team were concerned that leads would fall through the cracks and result in lost opportunities.

Action

The company decided use their own capabilities to develop a CRM for themselves – one that they would actually like using, something with an easy and natural look-and-feel. One day a client saw it and, impressed, asked if they could adopt it too. After other clients showed an interest, IO Studios built and launched a commercial version called Salesradar.

Results

Salesradar is now a standalone business, has enjoyed three years of solid growth, and has customers ranging from freelancers to giants like Costco. It continues to sign up new users daily.

Lessons

The old saying is that “the shoes of the cobbler go unshod.” IO Studios broke that mold and used their internal capabilities to fix a their own problem. When they noticed that others shared that problem, they acted entrepreneurially, packaging up their solution into an attractive commercial version to seize the opportunity.



Wright Restaurants t/a McDonald's People are our vital ingredients



Wright Restaurants is a leading franchisee of McDonald's. Starting from one restaurant in 2002, founder Dr. Douglas Wright DL and his team have grown the business to a turnover of more than £50M with 20 restaurants and around 2,000 staff. In a business renowned for its obsession with process, they have pioneered flexible employment policies which have been vital for growth while still delivering the consistency for which McDonald's is globally famous.

Challenge

Doug describes the challenge as "localising a global brand." Sustainable growth depends on the ability to recruit and retain the best people. In turn that means being embedded in the local community, so that customers, employees and prospective employees realise that rather than a faceless corporate entity, there are real people behind the brand. Doing that requires balancing the discipline of process and the human touch.



Actions

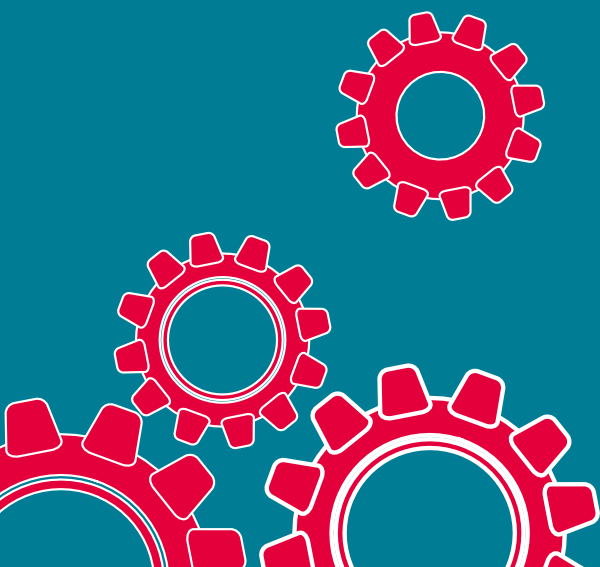
In the early days, Doug and the team ran the business "like sergeant majors." Everything was done rigidly by the book (the corporate employee handbook). But they soon realised this wouldn't give them the commitment they needed from people. So they stood their approach on its head, and resolved to go out of their way to make things work for each individual based on their unique needs. Maximum flexibility became the mantra. "Rather than telling an employee, 'The handbook says NO', we ask ourselves, 'How can we say YES?' If someone can only work four days or limited hours because of commitments as a carer, or wants indefinite maternity leave, or even to take a year off to travel, if they're committed to us, we'll make it work. It's how we differentiate ourselves as an employer. We focus on retention over recruitment. We are constantly thinking about our 'talent pipeline' so that we have people ready for promotion, or to staff new restaurants, before we need them. It's created huge loyalty among our people, not to mention vital trust in the local community."

Results

This flexible approach, which has often challenged McDonald's corporate guidelines, is fundamental to Wright Restaurants' growth, and their results are the envy of McDonald's franchisees. The power of the approach is further underlined by the successful turnaround and growth of restaurants taken over from failing operators.

Lessons

Here's how Doug summarises the key lessons he and his team have learned: "As you get bigger, make sure everyone still feels valued and respected as an individual. Treat people the way you want to be treated yourself. Process is vital, but just the price of admission if you want to run a successful business. In short, 'People are our vital ingredients.'"



What next?

You've read about five keys:

KEY 1 Delegate a mission, not the task

KEY 2 Don't impose 'solutions':
Enable people to create their own improvements

KEY 3 Set 'impossible but fun' challenges

KEY 4 Tap into what people know but don't say

KEY 5 Repackage what you already have

Along the way, we've seen how seven very different local companies have been multiplying value by building on what they already had, especially the capabilities and insights of their people.

What about your business? How can you take ideas and inspiration from these stories in order to fuel your growth?

A great idea is to share these keys and examples with your people, and see what you come up with together. And share your success stories with us!

About the Authors



Paul Faulkner

CEO, Greater Birmingham
Chambers of Commerce

Paul took over as CEO of the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce in June 2015, having previously been CEO of Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa. Since taking up his appointment the Chamber has seen significant growth in membership – now representing nearly 3,500 regional businesses – and strengthened its position as the leading independent support and voice for business in the area.

Working closely with local, regional and national stakeholders, the Chamber also provides a range of international related services and support, including launching the Greater Birmingham Commonwealth Chamber in 2017 as the region gears up to host the Commonwealth Games in 2022. In 2018 the Chamber's growth and development was recognised when it was awarded the British Chambers Award for Excellence in Membership Services.

A history graduate from Cambridge University, Paul began his career at MBNA Bank, completing the Bank's Graduate Management Scheme and working in a variety of roles across the organisation in both the UK and the US.

Following a period working as a consultant for Michael Page, Paul returned to the US in 2005 working for Brooklyn NY Holdings, a private family office of the Lerner family. In 2006 Paul was an integral part of Randy Lerner's purchase of Aston Villa, and relocated to Birmingham to work at the club, initially as COO and then as CEO from 2010 to 2014.

Locally, Paul is a Trustee of Birmingham Womens and Children's Hospital Charity, and Cure Leukaemia. He is also chairman of Sport Birmingham, and vice-chair of Performance Birmingham Limited (PBL) which operates the Town Hall and Symphony Hall in the city, and a board member of Culture Central. He lives in Sutton Coldfield and is married with two young sons.

Andy helps leaders to drive performance and release change. In his work, he emphasises doing more with resources that the client has already. He has worked across a wide range of industries and sectors including professional and financial services, packaging, technology, creative, health and education, in the UK, US, Scandinavia, Mexico, Russia, India and China.

Andy has taught at Warwick and Aston Business Schools, and for the Aston Centre for Executive Development, and is a member of Interchange Research, an international think-tank that investigates revolutionary approaches to organisational change. An active member of the Birmingham (UK) business community, Andy is a former member of the West Midlands Regional Advisory Board of Common Purpose and a former board director of Birmingham Forward (now BPS Birmingham). He is the author of 'The Performance Papers: Incisive Briefings for Busy Leaders', and co-author of 'Networkability: building your business one relationship at a time.'

Andy can be reached on 0121 313 3594 and at his website www.basscluser.com, where you'll find further free resources on leadership, innovation and growth.



Dr. Andy Bass

Founder, BassCluser Consulting



About Us

The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (GBCC) is a membership-led, business support organisation that has acted as the voice of local businesses since 1813. Today, we continue to connect, support and grow local businesses. We are one of the largest Chambers in the country, with over 3,200 member companies covering six geographic areas across the region (Birmingham, Burton, Chase, Lichfield and Tamworth, Solihull and Sutton Coldfield) and four themed divisions (Asian Business Chamber of Commerce, Future Faces, the Transatlantic Chamber of Commerce and the Commonwealth Chamber of Commerce).

Members range from young professionals to SMEs and large, high profile organisations, including 38 Chamber Patrons comprising companies such as Mondelez International, Jaguar Land Rover and The NEC Group.

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Connect. Support. Grow.