



HOW TO UNLOCK YOUR BUSINESS'S POTENTIAL

Don't get caught in a static loop, learn how to innovate to enjoy entrepreneurial growth.

By Howard Blake

When we think of entrepreneurs, our association should be that of dynamic, perceptive risk takers who are above all else innovative.

How then do the paradoxical words 'static' and 'stagnation' often become associated with entrepreneurs? In the real world of day-to-day business, what often starts as a great idea can soon slip into a static state leading to stagnation – even if the entrepreneur is energised and motivated. If the entrepreneur fails to innovate and develop the original concept, then it enters a state of mediocrity. And it won't be long before the brand is perceived in the same way.

Overcoming stagnation

Innovation is what confronts the static stagnation of a business. It makes no difference in what economic sector you trade – mediocrity is a threat each and every business faces and must deal with. Continuing innovation and widening of the initial entrepreneurial offering is critical for both the entrepreneur and the business. To illustrate, our company began life 20 years ago collecting accounts receivables for doctors and the motor retail sector. From there, our clients grew to include credit retailers and banks. Although we were experiencing growth, this represented our static stage. Why? Because we were simply doing more of the same. We were not being innovative. Something had to change or we would be forced to eventually accept our fate as the engineers of our own redundancy.

Growth = Growth

Recognising our static state, we introduced technology to our service offering. A piece of software that altered our offering simply by adding an automated letter writing process revolutionised our business. But that new spurt of growth was soon followed by another static phase. Sure, the product had changed, but once that change was complete it was more of the same for a few years. Until we introduced additional intelligence into our process, giving us a predictive algorithm that calculated each debtor's propensity to pay.

This latest innovation grew our business at 100% per annum. Why? Only one word answers this question - innovation! Not only did we widen our offering and grow our customer base and the business, but we were soon presented with new opportunities as a result. There's your second valuable lesson: growth leads to more growth. A widened service offering opens new doors. But we didn't stop there.

Our innovation continues today. At the core of our business model is a focus on non-stop development, adding value and putting processes in place to address an ever changing market. An entrepreneur who

trades in a technology rich sector but fails to introduce innovation in cycles of less than 18 months will soon feel the effects of stagnation.

Staying ahead of the game

What can entrepreneurs do to ensure they stay ahead of an opportunity?

- Go back to the basics of your offering. Make a critical assessment of what the value drivers are in the service or product you offer.
- Isolate each driver and see how it can be improved and re-offered to the market with additional value.
- Make sure your re-offering is of significance to the customer.
- Build an additional value proposition into an expanded sales offering.

Innovation is not always a piece of technology but rather a state of mind that challenges the existing status quo and refuses to accept it as best practice simply because it's the norm. Early recognition of static stages in your growth allows you to unlock the potential of your business. The moral of the story? Always look ahead and never be reticent to challenge your successful formula. Reinventing your business can lead to unprecedented growth!

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