

flackery

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SUCCESS

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Money? No
Problem!

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Marketing is building relationships by telling your business's story.

Editor's Note

Brighter days are here in the northeast U.S. Do you find yourself more productive when the days are longer?

I do. I'm able to get up and out for an early morning walk (which I can do year-round, but it's nicer when I can see what's around me), breathe in fresh air, get my heart rate and creative juices moving, and enjoy some quiet before getting back to cultivating business relationships by sharing stories about what I do.

We're in business to succeed, aren't we? So why is marketing so far down on our to-do lists? Success can't come from hoping people will find us or our services, we need to let our avatars (e.g., ideal clients) know we exist!

And the best way for that is to tell our stories -- through articles, social media interactions, and general conversations, in other words, through *marketing*.

We need to be more audacious in letting people experience our personalities and start to know, like, and trust (KLT) us enough to want to work with us.

Flackery is one avenue offered through The Business Guild to help small business owners market and promote themselves and their business. This digital magazine has advertising opportunities available, as well as opportunities to share your expertise through articles -- writing your own, or letting us help you craft the perfect story.

The Business Guild is a community of small business owners supporting each other to succeed and the membership fee is less than what it costs to pay for one-time ads. Check us out at <https://thebizguild.com>.

Welcome to our newest edition of Flackery!

Lisa J. Jackson

Editor of Flackery

Co-Founder of The Business Guild LLC

Please feel free to share this issue of Flackery with other small business owners!

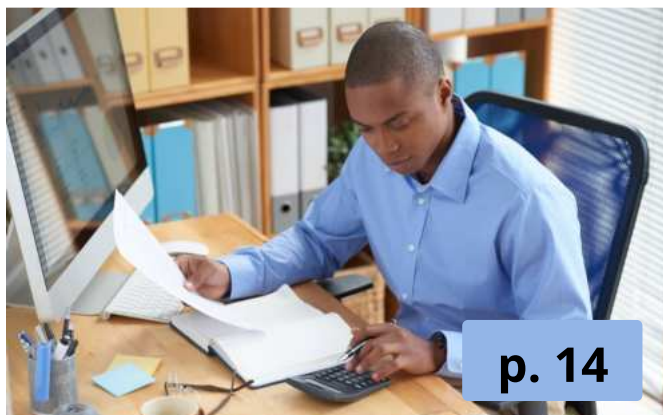


**Wondering why the heck we named
The Business Guild magazine
flackery?**



Here's a quick video with all the answers...

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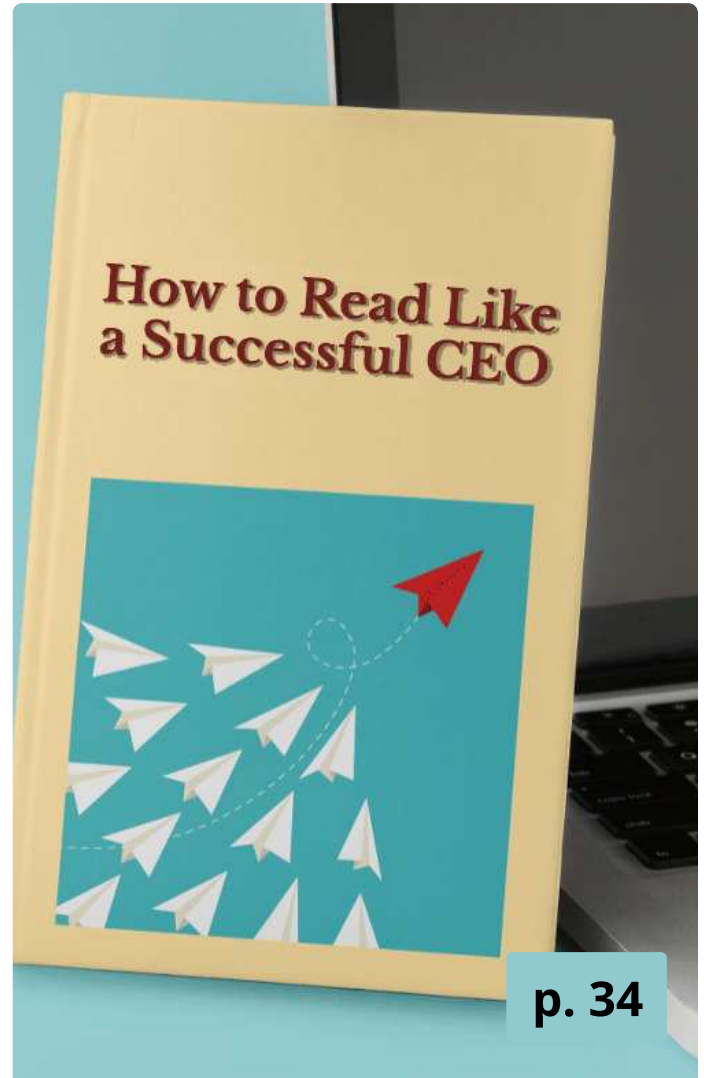
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Get your planner!

Title: _____		Prepared for: _____	
Subtitle: _____		Prepared by: _____	
Start/End Dates: _____		Date: _____	
What is the goal for this strategy?		Version: _____	
Who are you trying to reach?		List the steps to implement this strategy	
Customer Relationship Strategy			
What channels will you use to reach your customers?	What tools, people, or services will you need? (E.g., CRM, Zapier, content writer, videographer, etc.)	How much will it cost and what is the expected revenue or benefit? Example: A strategy to improve user satisfaction by providing tips & videos for how to use a product might be represented as a 3% increase in additional purchases or referrals with a dollar value of \$10,000	

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3 Customer Relationship Tips to Boost Your Bottom Line

By Pat Hammond, The Business Guild



Are you ready to take your business to the next level?

What if we told you there is an easy way to tap into your existing customer base to position yourself as an industry expert, increase referrals, and get more sales?

How about if we said it's low cost and low effort?

That's music to your ears, right?

In her book, **Customer Loyalty: How to Earn It, How to Keep It**, customer retention expert Jill Griffin says, "American businesses spend seven times more money attracting new business than trying to keep existing ones."

That's like turning on the heat and leaving the windows open.

Why would anyone do that?

It's not intentional. Part of it is because we assume people who have bought from us in the past already know all about our other products and services, but the main reason is **there is so much emphasis on finding new customers we often forget our existing ones.**

That's wasted time, money, and opportunity.

We're going to show you three different ways to maximize your marketing efforts by staying in touch with customers and leveraging that trust without breaking the bank or burning the midnight oil.

1. Automate
2. Get Personal

3. Follow Through

Before we dive in, it's important to understand that customer relationship marketing is about building on the initial sale to develop strong, long-term relationships.

Unlike customer service, which is a responsive action to customer inquiries or concerns, your customer relationship strategy is proactive. It's your plan for getting to know the people or businesses who buy and use your products and letting them get to know you.

1. Use automation to stay on the radar

The first, and most common, strategy is to use an automated drip campaign for post-sale and continuing customer contact.

Get to Know Your Customers Day is the 3rd Thursday of each quarter

According to Microsoft's **Global State of Customer Service** report, "more than two-thirds of customers want an organization to reach out and engage with proactive customer notifications."

A simple 30-, 60-, or 90-day campaign is a fantastic way for you to add value and stay on their radar without coming across as salesy.

Share information such as:

- How-to videos and tips for using the product/service they purchased
- Testimonials and case studies showing how other customers overcame a problem using your product/service
- Thank you messages and coupon codes

They've already given you

their money and trust, now they want to hear from you.

Once you're past the initial sale, get a little more assertive.

- Share new product news and company updates
- Suggest companion products and next steps
- Invite them to virtual or in-person events
- Offer some freebies or downloads
- Ask for a testimonial or referral

These types of campaigns are effective, inexpensive, and require almost no effort once they're set up.

2. The personal touch...

A 2018 report from **Accenture** states "91% of consumers are more likely to shop from brands who

recognize, remember, and provide them with relevant offers and recommendations."

This is your advantage.

It's hard to compete against companies with deeper pockets and more employees, but as a micro-business owner, you are in a unique position to make the personal connections.

It doesn't matter if you pick up the phone, meet for coffee, or send a personal email. This is your opportunity to stand out and make an impression.

- Get to know your customers
- Ask if they have questions about using or implementing your product
- Find out what other challenges you can help them overcome

In addition to increasing the likelihood of having them become a repeat buyer, taking the extra step to develop relationships

with your customers lets them know you're listening and valuing their opinions. Personal messages may sound time-consuming, but you can make it easy by drafting one or two boilerplate emails you can use and reuse. The same goes for phone calls.

Write a basic script and use it.

These are the types of things that help build stronger relationships that lead to new product ideas, referrals, and partnerships. If you truly don't have time to set up a regular cycle of personal calls or emails, try social media.

Something as basic as connecting with a customer on LinkedIn and sharing a relevant article or offering congratulations if they post a big win goes a long way to showing they're not just a number on your sales report. You can even tag them in your own posts.

Like the automations, these

types of activities are easy and budget-friendly. The people you follow on social media are already in your timeline or feed. All you have to do is spend a few minutes a day reviewing social media posts.

3. Don't forget the follow through

It does no good to run campaigns to cultivate relationships if you forget to follow through.

- Use technology to streamline and manage your campaigns
- Read campaign reports to find out who is opening or clicking emails so you can follow up with them
- Use a CRM tool to schedule reminders and keep track of conversations

If a customer says they are pitching a big client next month, put it on the calendar to follow up and see how it went.

Looking for more info about customer relationships?

Check out **Build Strong Business and Customer Relationships Using a CRM System** and be sure to download our **Customer Relationship Strategy planner** on **page 41**.

When you consider that **65% of a company's business comes from existing customers**, it makes sense to take the time to develop strong customer relationships.

People want to do business with people they know, like, and trust. Following these three strategies will help you build the kind of relationships that inspire customers to become faithful repeat buyers who are happy to share their experiences and refer their friends and family. ✓



Martha Walters

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Be the Go-To: How to Own Your Competitive Market, Charge More, and Have Customers Love You for It

By LISA J. JACKSON, The Business Guild

Book Review

Author:	Theresa M Lina
ASIN:	B088RKV1WF
ISBN:	978-1-5445-1435-2
Price:	\$19.99 paper / \$9.99 Kindle
Where to by:	Anywhere books are sold
Note:	Many resources available: apollomethod.com

Although aimed at corporate marketing executives, small business owners can glean some useful nuggets on how to stand out from others in their competitive niche as the go-to business by learning about Lina's Apollo Method. The method name comes from lessons learned from the Apollo space team's experiences in solving challenges -- and they certainly faced challenges!

Even micro-business owners need to answer tough questions, perhaps not life-or-death in regard to a person, but definitely toward their own business. They may not have a team to weigh in on decisions, or have to worry about getting program buy-ins, but all business owners need to know their product or service thoroughly and be able to find their path to standing apart from their competition.

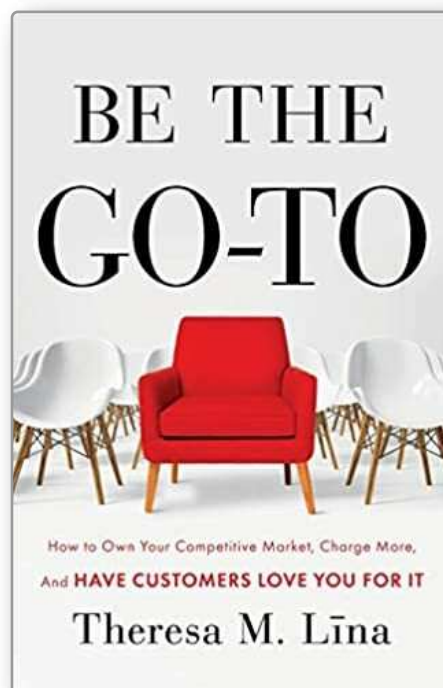
The worksheets after each chapter (also accessible online) are worth working through to discover new avenues for marketing your business, new people – influencers – to help you expand your reach to innovators and early adopters, and a lot more.

I particularly liked the content in the Launch and Ignite chapters as they emphasized points I already knew about SWOT analysis, developing customer personas (avatars), and knowing your customer's journey from first touch to purchase and beyond. It was familiar content, but presented in a new way, which always helps in making the knowledge 'stick.'

Becoming the "go-to" boils down to truly knowing the business problem your business solves and how your solution is different than everyone else's in the same area.

With almost 400 pages, the book has some heft to it physically; the content is a bit dense, too, however it's worth the read if you're currently struggling with how to shine above others in your niche or industry in ways other than pricing. Keep your focus on your solution, communicate well to your market, and you'll make great strides towards success.

It's a great benefit to have the worksheets, book notes, and more, available through the author's website -- you can put words into actions, and isn't that how to discover new answers to tough questions?





What Is the Real Cost of Hiring? Weighing Your Options and Opportunities

Congratulations! You worked hard, made smart decisions, and are at the point where you're going to have to turn down work if you don't get some help. The question is, are you ready?

Hiring your first employee is a big step. For many of us small business owners, it's a sign that we are successful, or at least on the right path to success.

As exciting as it is, hiring is a decision that comes with a lot of responsibility, fear, and

doubt.

- Is there enough work to justify a full-time employee?
- Do you have enough savings to pay an extra salary when business is slow?
- How much can you afford to pay someone?

According to Donna Sovie, CEO of **Check & Balance Business Solutions**, it's quite common for business owners to look at their workload and think, "I can afford to pay someone \$20 an hour," without

realizing the true labor burden a new hire will have on their business.

- Base pay/salary
- Employer taxes
- Misc. state costs (Example: Some states require paid family/medical leave)
- Worker's compensation
- General liability insurance
- Equipment and supplies

That's all before you get to employee benefits like health insurance; 401K matching; paid time off (PTO) for holidays, vacation, and sick days; tuition reimbursement, and any other perk you might offer to attract top candidates.

As a business accountant, Sovie says, "I try to tell people 1.5 times their hourly rate will help cover almost everything – taxes, insurance, benefits – and maintain a little wiggle room." If you have other employee expenses like

company vehicles, gas cards, or cell phones, the actual amount you need to factor into employee costs will be higher.

Get your financial books in order before you post your first Help Wanted notice.

Sovie says you need to understand all the costs involved with hiring your new employee and make sure you have the resources to pay them *before* you move forward.

Your profit-and-loss statement will tell you if you're actually profitable, but you also have to take into consideration items on your balance sheet, as well as supporting documents like your cash flow and revenue statements.

If running and reading accounting reports are outside your wheelhouse, don't be afraid to get some help. (**See 5 Essential Accounting Reports & Why You Need Them**)

Looking for help with accounting or human resources?



Donna Sovie

Check & Balance Solutions

(603) 541-7485



Leddy Group

(877) 202-7005



Labor Burden = Total Cost of Employee

You don't need a licensed CPA, but you should look for a **professional accountant who has management-level experience and formal education in accounting.**

Once you've reviewed your finances and determined that hiring is the right choice, you need to think about your hiring options.

Hiring Options

Mary Leddy, the owner of the New England-based **Leddy Group** staffing agency, says, "You may want to consider multiple variables such as the cost of not having someone in the position (opportunity cost) and whether you have the current infrastructure to hire, onboard, train, and support a new hire."

Start by asking yourself if hiring a regular full- or part-time employee is the

best choice right now.

If you're in a temporary crunch and only need help for one project, think about outsourcing. The person or business you hire is likely to have other clients, so you won't have as much control over their time, but it is a cost-effective solution for a short-term need.

The downside to this is the cost.

Outsourcing often has a premium price tag and there is a point, usually when you can guarantee a set number of hours every week, that it becomes more economical to hire a regular employee.

If the thought of all that extra responsibility makes you queasy, consider trying a test run with a temp worker.

The staffing agency does the legwork of vetting

applicants and taking care of payroll; all you have to do is interview candidates and *hire*. The length of the assignment is up to you.

It's a little more expensive than a regular employee, but it gives you some breathing room to figure out if having an employee will help you increase your profitability without making a long-term commitment.

No matter which option you choose, hiring direct or temporary, Sovie suggests you have a very good understanding of your ability to pay for your new employee before you hire. Identify a reliable, recurring revenue source and have at least three months of payroll in the bank before you start the hiring process. ✓

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Build Strong Business and Customer Relationships Using a CRM System

By Lisa J. Jackson, The Business Guild

How frustrating is it when you know you've met someone, but can't find the details about:

- the woman who wanted you to reach out when you launched Product Y because she wanted to make sure she was one of the first to purchase it
- the man who asked you to follow up with him in 3 months, because he'd be ready to hire you by then
- the organization that was celebrating

its 5-year anniversary, and you wanted to send a note

Customer relationship management (CRM) is not a new concept but has been most widely used by big companies more than small companies, and especially more than micro-businesses because corporations have the money to invest in full-bodied business automation applications.

Micro-business owners have limited funds, so investing in a CRM solution that has

CRM Magazine reports that 91% of companies with 10 or more employees use CRM software

many bells and whistles may be a non-starter.

When you're starting out, it might make more sense to use a spreadsheet to build your own relationship tracking tool to capture the basics: name, title, company name, date of introduction, and notes about the encounter.

Start with your existing customers. Once you've logged all

their information, including past purchases, move on to those business cards you've collected.

Don't forget to review the small notes on the back about when you met the person and what struck you most about them; enter all the data into your

worksheet or database.

As you build your business, you can expand on the spreadsheet, get it online (perhaps into Google Sheets, for instance), and add extra columns for more notes and details as you interact with that person.

If you don't use a CRM tool, you are missing out on opportunities to build and strengthen relationships!

Move to an online CRM solution

You'll reach a point where having an online database to manage all that data—one that can keep track of your relationships with prospective customers, current customers, past customers,

prospective business partners, potential referral partners, and others, will be a must-have.

An online CRM tool will make it easy for you to pull up contact details, categorize and prioritize your contacts, keep notes from conversations with

the contacts in one place, schedule reminders for events and milestones, and more.

A 2018 Statista study revealed that **85% of CRM users expected an improved customer experience and 54% of business owners felt CRM tools could streamline their operations.**

Maybe you're still old school and have a Rolodex of contacts.

A CRM solution is perfect for solos who want to streamline tasks, save time, and stay on top of important relationships

Those ragged-edged cards may be your go-to solution when you want to reach out to someone or make an introduction.

Do you always remember the name of the person you need to find in that collection of cards?

Are all your notes about the person still easy to read?

How many phone numbers and email addresses are scribbled out or written over?

Just like with business cards, Rolodex cards are great starting points for your online CRM system.

Keep your focus on the relationships

A customer relationship management tool is a *great way to help you stay proactive with clients and*

prospects—add special dates for them, make notes of any wins or special achievements they post on social media—track it all in the CRM tool and set a reminder so you can email, send a card, or do something special for them when the time is right.

Many small business owners can struggle with the follow-up or follow-through with prospective clients. A CRM solution is a basic set-it-and-forget-it tool that can make this easier by enabling you to set tasks and reminders.

How great can your day be when you get a reminder that “Sally Customer’s business anniversary is next week; send a gift” or “Reach out to Leslie Client for her project; she said

she’d be ready by Sep 2” or anything else like that?

When you’re able to follow up with people, especially when they have asked you to, it goes a long way to building a long-term relationship with them. They will appreciate you ‘remembering’ them and their requests and their needs.

Finding the right CRM tool for your business

Like with any software solution, there are numerous CRM solutions out there for consideration.

You can start with a ‘Top xx CRM Solutions’ list with a simple internet search.

CRM systems, like any software solution, run the gamut from lean to robust, affordable to expensive, easy to implement and use to needing an expert to install and manage them.

I went from an Excel worksheet half-heartedly updated combined with

business cards sorted into categories with tiny notes on the back to using **Less Annoying CRM (LACRM)**.

[That is an affiliate link that enables you to get at least 60 days to try it out.]

I like LACRM for reasons that matter to me: it's applicable for a micro-business; ease of use; affordability; integration with my email and newsletter services, as well as my calendar; and ease of access to quality technical help and tutorials. You need to make a list of the features and functionality that are important to you and will help you maintain your business relationships in a way that works for you.

Consider features such as:

- Contact management
- Lead management
- Campaign templates and management
- Email tracking
- Social media management
- Sales pipeline tracking

- Deals tracking
- Task reminders
- Reporting for activities, tasks, and pipelines
- Integrations: calendar, email, storage
- Dashboards
- Mobile use
- Customization to your workflow
- Security for the data you will be tracking

If you're overwhelmed by options, ask other business owners what they use.

Also, check out **3 Customer Relationship Tips to Boost Your Bottom Line** for useful ideas, and more inspiration, for building business relationships that take your sales to the next level. And the **review on Be the Go-To: How to Own Your Competitive Market, Charge More, and Have Customers Love You For It**. The book contains real-world stories, tips, and exercises to build your

Need help finding the right CRM for your business?

Flackery's and The Business Guild's Pat Hammond uses **Capsule CRM** and did quite a bit of searching and trying before deciding on this platform for her business and customer relationship management needs.

You can also read ***How to Look for a CRM Without Losing Your Mind*** for guidance on how to search for a CRM without overwhelm.

business well beyond what it is now by dominating your niche through marketing (which, of course, has a foundation in relationship management!)

A CRM solution can help you keep the conversations moving to build on the know-like-trust factor! ✓



How to Avoid Costly Mistakes: 3 Important Facts About Paying Founders In Equity

By Pat Hammond, The Business Guild

Are you thinking about paying your startup employees in equity?

A lot of startups, particularly technology companies, embrace the practice of offering equity instead of cash to save money on salaries.

It kind of makes sense.

You believe in your future product.

The worker believes in your future product.

Why not save a little money by making them a stakeholder with minority ownership?

It's not like you're forcing them to come to work for you.

Everything should be fine if they're happy with the arrangement, right?

I'll give you a hint, the answer is no.

There are a myriad of state and federal wage laws that

should give you pause and send you running to your attorney before you enter a straight equity-for-work type of arrangement.

If you're one of the thousands of U.S. business owners struggling to find workers right now, you may wonder how startups entice potential employees without the promise of premium pay and bonuses, but it happens.

It's more common in the tech industry where the legend of Microsoft's Unlikely Millionaires and other success stories run rampant, but it can happen in other sectors as well.

Before I jump into the gotchas and other warnings, I should point out that offering employees equity isn't simply a way for startups to

Is your startup breaking the law? Are you sure?

The idea of saving some money by paying employees with equity sounds good, especially when you know that federal law allows it, but it can be an expensive proposition for both you and your business if you don't have all the facts.

I've put together the top three things you need to understand before you take the plunge and offer your new startup employee equity in lieu of a salary.

As always, I'm a journalist, not an attorney. This content is meant to be informational, not legal advice.

Always consult a lawyer before you make an offer or sign a contract.

save money on salaries. Equity is also a tried-and-true method of establishing a company culture of inclusiveness that motivates early employees to work hard to start and grow the

Fun Fact: The minimum wage for shepherds in California is \$2,488.97 per month

business. There are many benefits for both the business and employees, as long as you follow the rules.

With that in mind, there are three things founders need to understand before they offer equity in lieu of pay.

1. The **Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938** (FLSA) only exempts **owners who own 20% or more of the company and are actively engaged in management** from standard minimum wage requirements.
2. Many states **require all employees, including full owners, to receive the minimum wage** established by the state.
3. Failure to understand

and follow the requirements of FLSA and/or state employment regulations can result in fines and open the door to expensive litigation.

Let's start with the FLSA.

Under federal law, you must pay employees at least a minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour.

As noted above, the two key tests outlined in the FLSA for the founders' minimum wage exemption are that ***the person is actively engaged in management and owns at least 20% of the business.***

But that is just federal law.

In some cases, state law can supersede federal law.

This is where things can get tricky.

Not all states offer minimum wage exemptions for founders

Even if the employee passes the FLSA test for

the founders' minimum wage exemption, every state has its own minimum wage laws and regulations.

Sometimes, individual cities and counties within states can set a local minimum wage rate as well.

With 50 states and over 19,400 cities in the United States, you can see how this can get overwhelming.

The thing to remember is that when multiple jurisdictions have conflicting legislation, **the law that most benefits the employee is typically going to take precedence.**

To keep things simple, I'm using Washington State for our examples because their labor laws are easy to find and read for the average business owner. You should review the labor laws in the state your

business is in and the state(s) your employees are in. (See the [US Department of Labor](#) for links to each state's labor office.)

Paying employees with equity is a complex topic that can have serious financial and legal ramifications for you and your business. These examples are illustrations of the differences between state and federal regulations, not legal advice.

As with most other important legal topics, your best option is to **speak to your lawyer before offering start-up workers equity instead of pay.**

There are too many state and local regulations for a one-size-fits-all guideline, but I can give you a general overview of some things to ask when you speak to your attorney.

- Is it legal to offer straight equity-for-work compensation in your state?
- How about the state where your worker is?
- Do you have to pay a minimum wage, and how much is it?

For example, the state of [Washington offers an](#)

An employee is anyone who works for a company -- including the owners, founders, and CEO

[Executive Business Owner Exemption](#) similar to the federal exemption, but the [state of New York](#) does not.

Besides the 20% ownership requirement, Washington State has specific criteria to determine if a worker meets the management test of whether they are **"actively engaged in the business's management"** to qualify for that

exemption.

- Can they hire employees?
- Do they have authority over other workers?
- Can they make business decisions or bind the business to contracts?

If the worker fails to meet the requirements for a founders' business owner

exemption, or your state doesn't allow this exemption, you might have to pay your people the

minimum wage allowed in that state.

It would still be far below the standard rate an experienced worker could command in the open market, but your company would comply with minimum wage requirements should there be a wage or labor complaint.

Don't forget that local cities

and counties could have a different minimum wage than the state or federal government.

Taking another look at Washington State, the current state minimum wage for non-tipped employees is [\\$14.49](#) an hour, but the minimum wage in Seattle is \$17.27 an hour. Both are substantially higher than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour.

You may also have to pay founding employees overtime.

In Washington State, overtime pay is the standard of 1.5 times regular pay for time worked over 40 hours in a week.

For a minimum wage worker, that would be \$21.74 an hour for time worked beyond the

40-hour threshold.

Based on Washington's state minimum wage, a 60-hour week would cost you \$1,883.70 plus any state or federal taxes and employer contributions.

You could avoid overtime costs by classifying a worker as an exempt employee, but you can't just give a worker a new

title and claim they are exempt.

For an executive employee to qualify for exemption from overtime, they have to pass the duties test and minimum salary requirements outlined in state and federal law.

Washington State's executive job duties requirements

Some cities and counties have higher minimum wage rates than the state or federal government

1. The employee's primary duty must manage the enterprise or manage a customarily recognized department or subdivision of the enterprise
2. The employee must customarily and regularly direct the work of at least two or

more other full-time employees or their equivalent

3. The employee must have

the authority to hire or fire other employees, or the employee's suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring, firing, advancement, promotion, or any other change of status of other employees must be given particular weight

4. The employee must

Several states require companies to pay **CEOs and founders** at least minimum wage

be paid on a salary basis equal to or greater than the required salary threshold.

Your state's rules may vary.

The federal rate for the executive salary threshold is \$684 per week, but the Washington State rate is 2.5 times the state's minimum wage of \$14.49 X 40 hours. That's \$1,449 per week.

Some states also have special exemption qualifications for different occupations.

In Washington, if the exempt employee is a computer software professional, the salary threshold goes up to **3.5 times the state's minimum wage**. (That's \$50.72 per hour!)

Putting this in perspective, instead of trading work for

equity, you may be obliged, by law, to pay a founding employee thousands of dollars, plus overtime, if they're not exempt as an executive or salaried worker.

What does this mean for your business?

The federal founders' minimum wage exemption sounds good in principle, but may not be legal or practical for your business.

Work for equity is a common practice, especially for startups in the tech and medical sectors.

People get excited about new ideas and getting in on the ground floor of something with big potential, but what if it takes longer than expected?

How long can people work without pay and what

happens when they become disgruntled?

One complaint can open a can of worms that could have long-term effects on both your company's viability and ability to raise funds.

You can circumvent some of this by using contract workers instead of employees, but you better have an ironclad contract and make sure the arrangement passes both the **federal** and state tests for qualifying contract workers.

Don't fool yourself into thinking you can hide behind your business.

Registering your company as a corporation doesn't give you a free pass from litigation. Some states allow employees to pursue business officers and managers and the

corporation for wage compensation violations.

As the sole founder and employee, you're not likely to sue yourself, but what if you have a falling out with a junior partner?

What if they disagree with your decisions or timelines? What are the ramifications of not paying wages if that partner leaves?

Wrap up

Offering equity in lieu of pay is one of those situations where saving a little money now can create a lot of problems later, especially if you're in a state that requires all employees, including founders, to be paid the state's minimum wage.

Exchanging equity for work isn't much of an issue if you also pay the employee at least minimum wage, but it could be a major legal and financial headache if you ask your employees to work for equity with no

other remuneration.

If you know some of your team members won't qualify for a founders' minimum wage exemption, consider offering a lower wage with equity and future bonuses tied to milestones or achievable benchmarks. This will give them the stake they're looking for, as well as the incentive to help build the business without leaving your company vulnerable to labor and wage litigation.

Be sure to **have an open, honest conversation with your corporate attorney about your options, responsibilities, and potential liabilities before**

you commit to any non-standard compensation package, especially if it includes an equity for work arrangement.

You may also want to discuss confidentiality agreements, assignment of intellectual properties, and other potential points of contention.

It's not a guarantee that a disgruntled worker or co-founder won't file a complaint, but it should put you in a position where you have a better understanding of your responsibilities and what you can do to protect your business.✓

Useful Resources

- US Dept. of Labor - State Minimum Wage Laws
- Defining and Delimiting the Exemptions for Executive, Administrative, Professional, Outside Sales and Computer Employees
- DOL Executive Fact Sheet #17B - Executive employees
- DOL Executive Fact Sheet #17E - Computer related occupations
- IRS Independent Contractor or Employee



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THE BUSINESS GUILD



**No Time? No Money?
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We've Got Your Answers to Why You Need to Join The Business Guild Right Now!

**"I keep hearing about The Business Guild, tell me more."
"How is it any different from the Small Business Administration, business coaching, or chamber of commerce?" "Why should I join? "**

The Business Guild doesn't pigeonhole into standard boxes like *coaching* or *networking*, so we've put together a list of the three most-common hesitations to joining The Business Guild with our answers to how we are different, better, and worth your time and money.

1. "I'm a solopreneur. I'm so busy running my business I don't have time for another commitment."

We know, that's why we've done the work for you.

- Planning tools for every aspect of

business

- Platforms & programs to master & manage your marketing challenges
- Classes, webinars, and articles to help you quickly learn essential skills

The Business Guild gathered all the tools and resources you're looking for and put them in one easy-to-find location.

2. "It sounds good, but I'm a bootstrapping startup and I can't afford another expense."

The Business Guild *saves money*. We're serious. All of our programs are designed to help you promote your business, and connect to the people, information, and resources you need to succeed. We're serious about this. Our memberships include everything you need to get your business up and running — *at no extra cost*.

- Advertise your business in newsletters & other guild

Promote - Connect - Succeed!

(Our motto says it all...)

publications, such as the quarterly Flackery magazine which offers you 4 full-page multimedia ads each year, 4 issues to share your content, 4 opportunities to showcase your business & share your expertise

- Join us on the Success Funnel podcast where we spotlight your expertise and business
- Connect with people & overcome challenges through our masterminds & networking groups
- Quickly learn essential skills through classes, webinars, and articles
- Save \$\$\$ by using our platform to host your own classes (Members can host Free classes for FREE!)
- Access the abundance of tools & resources we've compiled to start and grow your business
- Get 1-to-1 help with business

We have the tools & resources you need to grow your business

challenges by taking advantage of our weekly open office hours

These benefits are included — at no additional cost — with our standard professional membership.

3. "I already tried BNI or the chamber of commerce — networking groups aren't for me."

Yeah, we hear that a lot. Our response is *we're not a networking group.*

We host a few networking groups, but our primary products are tools and resources to help you promote your business and connect to the people and information you need to succeed.

Unlike those paid networking groups, **our focus is on providing value to help you grow your business**, not waste your time or take your money.

- We don't pile on costs couched as *opportunities* — When was the last time the chamber of commerce included free advertising as part of membership?
- We give a lot of stuff away for free (Check out our [Tools & Resources](#))
- We know your time is valuable — We

don't mandate participation, referrals, or anything else that takes away from your efforts to grow your business

- Membership includes almost everything you need so there are no surprise expenses

The Business Guild believes that with a little support, solopreneurs and micro-business owners can build a solid foundation for their business. That's why we focus on things that

help you with marketing (promote), mastermind and networking groups (connect) to develop critical relationships with peers and partners, tools, and resources (succeed) to answer questions and provide the information you're looking for.

We understand our strength comes from our members, and every product and platform we have is designed to promote and support them – to support YOU.

As it says in the title, ***no time, no money, no problem.***

We've built all of our programs, platforms, and tools for the needs, and budgets, of micro-business owners.

If you're still not sure if The Business Guild is a good fit, look around our website. See the resources we give away for free and you'll understand the value of membership. ✓



How to Read Like a Successful CEO



How many times have you heard someone say successful CEOs read at least one book a week?

It's crazy, right? Who has time to read that much? And why would you?

Success & leadership coach Avil Beckford from the **Invisible Mentor** says that while it is common to see articles about how many books people like Elon Musk, Warren Buffett, and Oprah Winfrey read, nobody focuses on why these busy executives do this or how they find the time.

The answer is simple.

Knowledge is the power that fuels success.

When author and trade show marketing expert Lisa M. Masiello sat down to write her book, **Trade Show 411: The Essential Guide to Exhibiting Like a Pro**, she made a conscious decision to present the content in standalone chapters. Her goal was to give marketing professionals a quick reference tool for guidance about specific areas of trade show marketing.

She says, "Businesspeople want to find the answer and move on to the next item on their to-do list. While a

296-page book can add value, they need the information now."

Successful CEOs don't read business books cover to cover.

Instead, they start with the chapters that address their specific questions.

Beckford believes this method of reading is an important skill for business professionals who want to embrace continuous learning and develop leadership skills.

Most of us read books front to back, cover to cover, but Beckford says we don't have to.

The focused style of reading can be a challenge for people because it means re-learning how to read. However, it is the

Contrary to what most people think, no rule says you must start on page 1 and read every word until you reach the last page.

most-effective method for a busy businessperson to rapidly read and distill information. (Why do you think websites like Wikipedia are so popular?)

The good news is that Beckford has an easy way to skip the fluff and digest the key information so you can remember and apply it.

1. Start by understanding what information you need, then make sure you have the right book
2. Skim the table of contents and index — be sure to highlight pertinent sections
3. Take notes as you read — We all remember college. How often did you underline, highlight, and scribble thoughts and takeaways in the margins?

Unless it's a how-to book that builds on previous chapters, you can dive into

the middle of most business books without losing the plot.

Using *Trade Show 411* as an example, if you want to understand exhibitor shipping options you would bypass the early sections

Reading an e-book? No problem! Kindle, Nook, and most e-reader apps let you highlight text and take digital notes while you're reading.

about strategy and pre-show tips and go directly to chapter 16, where Masiello outlines the various shipping options, tips, and warnings about shipping your exhibitor booth and materials.

What about books that aren't written with standalone chapters?

Some non-fiction books, like biographies, are meant to be read as a whole. They tell a story that follows a classic structure and skipping sections could

mean losing important parts of the story.

In most business books, however, you don't have to read chapters in order.

Authors go to great pains to present a logical order to content, but if it's not in line with your need, by all means, jump around and read the sections containing the takeaways you're seeking.

As Beckford says, many books suffer from "too many words."

Although the rise of e-books has given many skilled, insightful professionals a vehicle to share their expertise, many self-published authors fail to understand the value of a professional editor to weed out excessive prose.

These extra words take away from the reader's ability to quickly find the information they need.

If that's the case, skim non-essential content and flag sections to come back to later.

Successful executives understand that the more they know, the more successful they can become, so they embrace reading as part of their daily and weekly routines.

This is an easy habit you can cultivate, too.

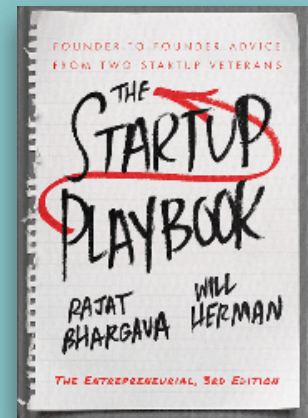
You don't have to read a

book in one sitting.

You don't even have to read a book every week. Just set aside 10 to 15 minutes a day for reading to increase your business knowledge; before you know it, you'll discover the value that the Musks, Buffets, and Winfreys have known about for years! ✓

Do you have a favorite business book?

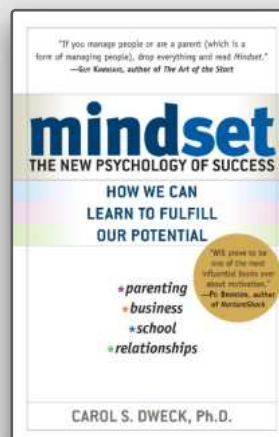
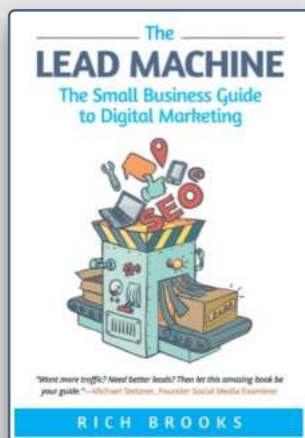
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Looking for a business book?

Click the book cover to see books reviewed in previous issues of Flackery.

You can also find more book reviews on our website, **thebizguild.com**





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Have you been to one of The Business Guild's bi-monthly PowerUp Relationship Building events yet?

The value of networking is developing strong business relationships.

The Business Guild's virtual bi-monthly PowerUp Relationship Building events are focused on building those relationships between like-minded business owners to "know, like, and trust" each other.

PowerUp Relationship Building is designed to foster strong business

relationships by sharing ideas, collaborating, and connecting each other with the people and resources they need to succeed – creating a space to help each other grow their businesses.

These bi-monthly virtual evening events offer:

- Moderated topics
- Group discussions
- Break outs for 1-to-1s

In Episode 6 of the Success

Funnel podcast, Pat and Lisa chat about the value of networking with PowerUp.

For more information about The Business Guild's PowerUp Relationship Building events, please visit the **events page on thebizguild.com** under Connect. ✓



How to Create the Perfect Customer Relationship Strategy in 7 Easy Steps

By Pat Hammond, The Business Guild

Have you ever logged into a customer relationship management platform and wondered “what am I supposed to do now?”

Lisa J. Jackson already explained why you need to use a customer

relationship management (CRM) tool in **Build Strong Business and Customer Relationships Using a CRM System**, and I talked about why you need a customer relationship strategy in **3 Customer Relationship Tips to Boost Your Bottom Line**.

In this article, I will walk you

through how to use The Business Guild’s Customer Relationship Planner tool to help you break your strategy down into manageable steps.

1. What is your goal?
2. How long will the campaign run?
3. Who are you trying to reach?

Title: _____

Subtitle: _____

Prepared for: _____

Prepared by: _____

Date: _____

Vers: _____

Start/End Dates	What is the goal for this strategy?		
Who are you trying to reach?		List the steps to implement this strategy	
What channels will you use to reach your customers?	What tools, people, or services will you need? (EPS, CRM, Zapier, content writer, videographer, etc.)	How much will it cost and what is the expected revenue or benefit? Example: A strategy to improve user satisfaction by providing tips & videos for how to use a product might be represented as a 3% increase in additional purchases or referrals with a dollar value of \$10,000	

Customer Relationship Planner

© The Business Guild 2022

Click the Customer Relationship planner above to open in a browser window.

4. What channels will you use?
5. What steps are involved?
6. What tools will you need?
7. How much will it cost?

The first step in your strategy is to define your goal.

1. What is your goal?

You can't jump into the plan until you understand why you are creating the plan and identifying your desired outcome, such as:

- Win new customers
- Increase customer retention by 12%
- Improve your net

promoter score by 2 points

Once you know what your desired result is, you can use the planner to build out all the steps required to get there.

2. How long will the campaign run?

Customer relationship

The key to a strong customer relationship strategy is to identify your goal

strategies are designed around specific goals and should have predetermined start and end dates.

You can use fixed dates like “January 18th through February 5th,” a set period, like 6 weeks, or the total number of interactions in the campaign.

For example, a transactional campaign based on a purchase is likely to follow a 30- or 45-day cycle after the sale.

3. Who are you trying to reach?

One of the more confusing things about customer relationship strategy is that it can refer to both existing customers and potential customers, to include:

- People who have purchased your products or services
- People you met networking or through social media
- People who abandoned a shopping cart

If your goal is to foster long-term relationships that lead to a 3% increase in referrals, you will want to target people who have purchased your services rather than people who follow you on Instagram.

This is why you have to know who you want to reach before you can create a plan to do it.

4. What channels will you use?

The digital world has

expanded our opportunities to connect with our customers.

For example, if you’re trying to convert a LinkedIn connection to a lead, you might have to interact through LinkedIn’s platform, but if your goal is to convert an existing customer into a repeat buyer, you might have options for email, phone calls, direct mail, or a combination of all three.

Depending on your audience, you could have multiple potential points of contact, or just one.

Once you identify your available channels, you can determine the steps needed to implement your campaign.

5. What steps are involved?

This is the nuts and bolts of your customer relationship strategy, mapping each step of a customer interaction.

Will it be:

- a drip campaign sent at regular intervals?
- triggered by a specific event like a purchase?
- fully automated, or will it require personal interaction?
- proactive, or responsive?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach; the steps involved will depend on your goal.

If your goal is to convert abandoned carts into sales, your win-back strategy might be a series of three emails:

- A reminder about item(s) left in the cart - 1 hour later
- Follow-up reminder - 24 hours later
- Incentive email - 7 days later

If your goal is to increase customer engagement, your campaign might use a more personal approach that involves multiple steps over a longer period:

- Personalized emails that reference previous sales or interests
- Attaboys and mentions on social media
- Special offers or coupons
- Videos and useful



information and tips about how to use products

Whatever steps you choose, be specific about the type of content or action, including timelines and delivery methods.

6. Do you have the right tools?

No matter what type of strategy you have, you're going to need to track and manage it.

If it's an automated email campaign, you'll need an email service provider (ESP), you may also need a service like Zapier to connect your shopping cart or customer database to your ESP.

What about a CRM solution?

Do you need a full-fledged platform or can you get by with a spreadsheet or some other low-tech system?

These types of platforms represent the bare minimum most businesses need to implement a typical customer service strategy, but your needs may vary.

7. How much will it cost?

A customer relationship strategy is useless if you

can't afford it or the cost outweighs the benefits.

- Will you need to pay for printing and postage?
- Do you have to hire a content writer and/or graphic designer?
- How many hours will it take your team to develop, launch, and manage the strategy?
- Will you have to pay for third-party services

like an ESP or CRM?

This is why it's essential to detail the total cost of your plan before you implement it.

As you can see, customer relationship strategies involve a lot of moving parts — ***before you draft your first email*** or drip campaign.

If the idea of planning a successful customer relationship strategy is

overwhelming, try our Customer Relationship Planner.

Not only will it help you prepare an organized plan, but you will enjoy the confidence that comes from understanding the hows and whys of the customer relationship strategy planning process.



Need help planning sales and marketing? Try our Sales and Marketing Planner tools.

The Sales Planner form is a structured template for planning a sales campaign. It includes fields for Campaign Title, Subtitle, Prepared for, Prepared by, Date, and Version. The main body is divided into four quadrants: Prospecting (Identify the customer), Preparation (Identify customer's pain point, How do you solve their problem?, Demonstrate Value), Presentation (Connect with the customer, How is your solution different/better?, Outcome Objectives), and Closing (Ask for the sale). A Follow Up section (Building new relationship, Ask for referrals) is at the bottom right, with an arrow pointing from the Preparation section to it.

Sales Planner

The Marketing Planner form is a structured template for planning a marketing campaign. It includes fields for Title, Subtitle, Prepared for, Prepared by, Date, and Version. The main body is divided into four quadrants: Customers (Who are you trying to reach?, What problem do you solve?, What do your customers value?), Competitors (How is your product better?, What are your competitors?, What are their strengths?, What are their weaknesses?), Channels (Where will you reach them?), and Metrics (How will you measure success?). A Cost section (Cost, Funding, ROI) is at the bottom right, with an arrow pointing from the Channels section to it.

Marketing Planner

The Email Marketing Planner form is a structured template for planning an email marketing campaign. It includes fields for Campaign Title, Subtitle, Prepared for, Prepared by, Date, and Version. The main body is divided into four quadrants: Customers (Customer Persona: What's a unique need for each persona?, What customer pain points are you solving?), Triggers (What triggers the email?, How often are emails sent?, How many emails in campaign?), Frequency (Time of day, Day of the week, Day of the month), and Targeting (List segments, Personalization, How will you build your mailing list?, A/B Testing). A Goal section (Why are sending the email & desired outcome), Metrics (Define success & how you'll measure it), and Cost section (Cost, ROI) are at the bottom.

Email Marketing Planner



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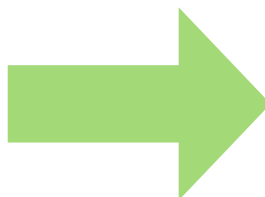
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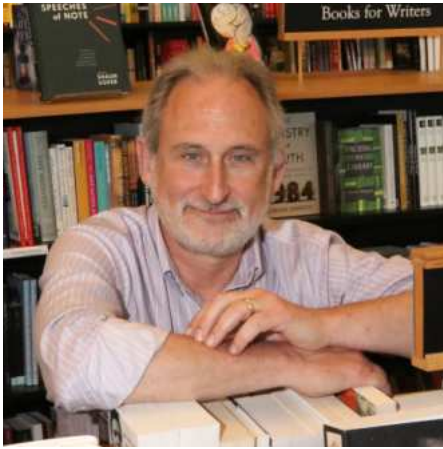
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It would take the entire magazine to list resources for every city, state, or county, so we're including direct links to the corresponding resources pages on The Business Guild's website. If you're looking for a resource that isn't listed, please send an email to info@thebizguild.com and we'll try to help you find what you're looking for.

Free and Budget-Friendly Resources for Your Business

Business & Strategic Planning

This includes federal business resources, useful tools, and all of The Business Guild's business planning templates.

Web Design

The web design resources feature useful tips for choosing a CMS, building a website, improving page speed, and managing site maintenance.

Graphic Design & Video

The section covers graphic design tips and links to several free graphic design programs as well as helpful information about video setup, recording, and editing

Sales & Marketing

Sales & Marketing has info about ERPs and CRMs; tips, tricks, and strategies for boosting sales; top picks for email marketing programs; templates for sales and marketing campaigns; and links to community partners.

Classes & Training

The classes & training section offers a collection of live and on-demand classes, events, and seminars from The Business Guild, our members, and community partners.

Back Office

This section contains a variety of back office tools and resources for your HR, accounting, and IT questions.

thebizguild.com/succeed

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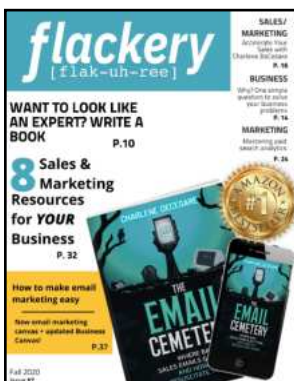
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Lasting business relationships start by using 'We' instead of 'I'.

