

Fearless Business Growth: 7 Strategies for Creating Your Biggest, Boldest and Most Profitable Year Ever ... Even in Slow Times

Do you or your company becoming a “shrinking violet” whenever business slows down? Do you find yourself panicking, frozen or going into knee-jerk responses out of fear and don’t know how to shift gears? Do you realize that, if you don’t put the brakes on this no-win thinking and behavior ... soon, this year will be more of the same ... or worse?

I’m on a mission. Right now, I am challenging every business leader and executive to stop, take a deep breath and digest this article to drive your own reality in this year and beyond. Below are 7 “must do’s” how.

Stepping Up Your Inner Game: Cultivating a Fearless Mindset

1.) Get Rigorously Honest About Your Fears ... *Otherwise, They Will Run Your Business Into the Ground*

Fear is activated in the most primitive part of the brain – the reptilian brain. It signals danger. In *life and death situations*, fear is an important survival mechanism to act quickly, mobilizing strength, courage and power we never thought we had.

In most situations, however, fear is a serious liability. When fear runs you, you can’t see its control over you. It impairs thinking, paralyzes decision-making and drives reactionary behavior.

To shift from fear to fearlessness, you must first get rigorously honest how fear may be running you right now.

- *What fears about your business, the economy or the future dominate your thoughts right now?*
- *How might those fears be costing your business?*
- *Who would you be without those fears? How might your future be different when coming from that fearless place?*

2.) Playing To Win vs. Playing Not To Lose : Which Is Driving Your Business?

Every action you take or goal you set is driven by motivation. The question is: *in which direction is your motivation driving your business now?*

Motivation can be categorized into 2 types:

- “Toward” motivation – ie., moving towards something positive
- “Away from” motivation – ie., moving away from something negative or painful

In growing times, it’s easy to “play to win.” In stressful, slow or tough times, however, most businesses are motivated “away from” -- ie., “playing not to lose.”

While vigilant spending is always a wise choice, layoffs, budget cuts and putting growth on hold are typically signs of “playing

not to lose.” The irony is: “playing not to lose” has the highest stakes of losing, leaving you in a vulnerable position organizationally and in the marketplace.

- *Are YOU “playing to win” or “playing not to lose”?*
- *How might “playing not to lose” – cost you market share? Performance? Growth? Profits?*
- *What negative thinking or beliefs are preventing you to “play to win?”*

3.) “Weather”–Proof Your Brain: *Upgrading Your Mental and Emotional Game*

Any type of negative messages – whether your own self talk, your team, the media or any other source -- are being anchored into your brain without you realizing it, turning off your creativity, risk-taking and intuition switches” critical during these times.

In a New York Times article, ***“In Hard Times, Fear Can Impair Decision-Making,”*** neuroeconomist, Gregory Berns warns us about the negative impact of fear:

“Fear prompts retreat. It is the antipode to progress. Just when we need new ideas most, everyone is seized up in fear, trying to prevent losing what we have left.”

The key is to neutralize the fear system inside your head ... to go where fear does NOT exist. To get started:

- Tune out all negative messages – especially the media -- which ignites the fear flames
- Disengage from pessimistic people
- Be vigilant, but not hyper-vigilant
- Stop asking “can your business thrive ?” to asking “**What will it take** for it to thrive and grow?”
- Exercise your risk muscle -- no matter how small.
- Reread my article: [“Emotional Mastery”](#)

These are actually *the best of times*, not the worst of times, no matter what tough times your business is going through. Those companies who disconnect from the fear mentality, take risks and seize new opportunities, especially in tough times, will have one of their best years ever.

How will you respond?

Stepping Up Your Outer Game: Cultivating Fearless Strategies and Actions

4.) Re-ignite the Passion in Your Business: *Identify Your BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal)*

BHAG -- Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal – is a concept coined by the business author, Jim Collins, in his book ***Built to Last***. When Jim looked at what the world’s greatest companies did to become great, he found that these “Greats” had a really big goal. A goal that inspired everyone in the company to see a future greater than the one in front of them.

BHAGs are ambitious, but not impossible. They create focus, instill excitement encourage creativity and make the journey worthwhile. BHAGs are the perfect remedy to counteract fear and paralysis.

- *What Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal for 2009 inspires you to be bigger than where you are right now?*
- *How might realizing your BHAG in 2009 serve you? Your customers? The world?*

5.) **“Reverse Positioning”:** *Leveraging Change To Win Big in the Marketplace*

When the economy is in a downturn or experiencing volatility, customers’ buying behaviors, decision criteria and motivations change. If your business is going through a downturn or slow period, it’s a signal that something needs to change.

So doing more of the same won’t work. You must adapt to the market’s signals and do something different than what you are currently doing. Otherwise, you will continue to suffer losses. Examples;

- In an economic downturn, buying “luxury” items – even for wealthy people – declines significantly. Consumers refocus primarily on buying “necessities.”. *How can you position your products/services as necessities during such times?*

- When your customers' orders slow down or your market is in its own downturn, security and safety rise to the top of your buying criteria. *How can you make doing business with your company 'safe,' such as low risk offers? How can your products/services increase their sense of security?*

6.) Cultivate Fierce Accountability ... *You're Not Even in the Game Unless You Do*

One common trait of high performing businesses is their commitment to accountability. Accountability is a simple concept, yet, for many, challenging to execute. It is often the difference between achieving vs. struggling to achieve a goal. Here's why.

According to the [American Society for Training and Development](#), the likelihood a person completes a goal is as follows:

Consciously decide to act on an idea: 25%

Set a timeframe: 40%

Develop a plan: 50%

Commit to someone: 65%

Specific accountability appointment with the person to whom they have committed -- 95% actually complete the goal

Because accountability is a "big" topic, I will address it in detail in the future. For now, take inventory of your accountability strengths/weaknesses on the following 3 levels and make

improving accountability a top priority.

- *Self-accountability*: to what extent are you keeping commitments to yourself?
- *“Peer” accountability*: to what extent are you keeping commitments to a team, partner, coach or mentor?
- *Organization accountability*: to what extent is your company keeping commitments to your stakeholders (such as customers, employees, investors, etc.)?

“Fierce” accountability is not a luxury, but a necessity, in slow times. *Identify 3 areas in your business where your accountability is weak and plug up the hole.*

7.) Finally, Be Like a Rock; Flow Like a River ... *The Secret to Performing at Your Peak, Even in Challenging Times*

For an individual or organization to perform at its peak, it must know how to operate in the world of paradoxes. In these times, your business must paradoxically be like a rock and flow like a river at the same time.

Be like a rock ...

Means moving from your core. That part of your business that is a constant ... that anchors you no matter how rough times get ... that stabilizes you no matter how unstable the world becomes.

Your core consists of your values, core competencies, culture and mission. When times get chaotic or shaky, the first step is to get back to your “core.”. It will re-calibrate your thinking,

decision making and actions from your place of strength.

- *What values, core competences and “causes” need to be strengthened to anchor your business during these unstable times?*
- *What current decisions or actions are not aligned with your “core?”*

Flow like a river ...

Means knowing how to navigate through the waters of change, especially those beyond your control.

In business, flowing like a river requires balance, agility and resilience. Balancing such opposites as: certainty vs uncertainty, short-term vs. long-term, strategic vs tactical, etc. Having agility means rapidly responding to change, minimizing threats and seizing new opportunities. Having resilience means having the capacity to bounce back from catastrophe or unexpected circumstances.

- *Where might you or your business be resisting change?*
- *On a scale of 1–10, how balanced, agile and resilient is your business right now? What do you need to improve?*

While, in no way, do I discount the current challenges facing your business. There are realities, constraints and uncertainties that you and I must deal with just to stay in the game.

However, we have more control over our business future than we

realize. You are bigger than any problem,, no matter how looming it seems. Your business economy does not have to be dictated by the global or market economy . The keys are where you put your focus ... how you respond to change ... and to what extent you are willing to step up your game bigger and bolder than you ever have.

The choice is yours: *Will you “play to win” or “not to lose” in 2009?*

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