

From the Sacramento Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/stories/2009/05/11/smallb2.html>

Eyes on Business

There's no 'usual' in business today

Re-evaluate how you're selling, and how customers are buying

**Premium content from Sacramento Business Journal - by Larry Mandelberg,
Contributing writer**

Date: Sunday, May 10, 2009, 9:00pm PDT

Related:

[Human Resources](#)

I was asked to speak at a Rocklin Chamber of Commerce breakfast mixer last year. The community was overbuilt with retail, and with real estate heading south fast, people were starting to get nervous.

The chamber asked me to talk about what could be done to improve the regional business economy. My message to them still rings true today.

What I told them in Rocklin was that they were lazy. They looked at me like I was nuts or maybe drunk (this was at 7:30 a.m.). Then I explained what I meant.

Business today is not business as usual. You can't come to work early to get work done while it's quiet, then go through the same old grind you do every other day, stay late, miss your kid's ballgame, eat a cold dinner, take your problems to bed, and wake up early to do it all over again.

Right now you have time to spare. It might not feel like it, but all the pressure you felt for the past few years has changed. Unless you respond to it differently, you won't survive. You must find a way to let yourself ignore all that busy work you are so worried about and start focusing on new ideas and approaches.

I heard a quote recently that was quite poignant: "Your systems and processes are perfectly designed to achieve the results you are achieving. If you want different results, change your

systems and processes.”

This was the point of my Rocklin message. When was the last time you looked at your marketing plan or updated your business plan? What about your job descriptions or staff roles and responsibilities? Instead of grinding through that same old pile of busy work every morning, you should be working on your business and thinking about what's next.

Reflect on how customers are buying today. “People are not responding to push marketing (ads, direct mail),” said Jennifer Beever, principal of New Incite, a marketing firm in Los Angeles. “Rather, they are going to sources they trust — they are following friends and colleagues online on blogs, Facebook and Twitter to get ideas and recommendations,” she added. “Companies need to establish a credible presence online through third party referrals or testimonials and get their customers buzzing about them.”

It is extremely difficult to plan when everything around you is happening for the first time. Take some time and focus on the reason you are in business, what you are trying to achieve and the value you deliver to your customers, and you will uncover new ideas and solutions.

You can find innovative ways to leverage your strengths, knowledge and technology to define a new way of thinking about your products and services. Position your business as a means to cut costs or save money, which is what resonates today.

Get out of the office and meet new people. Talk to them about what they are doing and how well it is working. The old saying about two minds being better than one is really true, so talk to people you don't know and uncover a few new ideas.

If you belong to a chamber of commerce, go to a meeting or mixer. If you don't, join one. They are one of the best resources for meeting new people and gathering new ideas, and the cost to join is minimal.

Bottom line, you cannot do business as usual and survive. You might be able to limp through, but when the economy turns around the people that have spent their slow time preparing for the new future will leave you in the dust.

Don't let that happen. Tonight when you go home, leave the business at the office and give yourself a present — play this weekend. When you come to work Monday morning, make a commitment to do something new. Read your business plan. Look at your job descriptions. Reconnect with why you got into this business in the first place and find new energy.

Take a risk, try something different and prepare yourself for success.

Larry Mandelberg is a principal of BullsEye Integration, helping companies reduce costs and improve leverage, making them stronger in these difficult economic

times. He can be reached at Larry@BullsEyeIntegration.com or 916-798-0600.