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Four Marketing Musts

By Matt McGovern

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One of your most important jobs as a solo professional or small business owner is to generate interest in and demand for your products or services. But if you're like many entrepreneurs, you discover finding time for marketing to be elusive. Much of what you could be doing remains undone—and without some form of marketing your business growth stalls.

To help get you untracked, here are my four marketing "musts" for small business owners. Integrate these four fundamentals and you're sure to feel more confident going forward . . . and more able to plan a bigger "bang" for your time and efforts.

1. MAKE MARKETING YOUR MINDSET

Make marketing a subconscious element of all that you do. This doesn't mean you should be in "hard sell" mode all the time, but it does mean you need to develop a mindset where you view every interaction with someone—planned or otherwise—by phone, by email or in-person as a marketing opportunity.

2. MAKE YOUR MARKETING SUSTAINABLE

For marketing to work, you need to be able to sustain your efforts over time. You might develop the most effective plan, but if you can't implement that plan because it's too costly, too complicated, or you simply don't have the time to commit to it, then your efforts will fail.

Plan your marketing in phases. Start with low-hanging fruit. Get a couple of small victories under your belt. Note what worked, what didn't work, what felt most "right" for you . . . and keep moving forward.

3. MAKE IT ROUTINE

Without structure or routine built around your marketing efforts, you're likely to lose focus and get distracted—something that's all too easy for solo professionals and the self-employed to do.

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One easy way to add structure is to create an overall marketing plan that outlines for you exactly what you hope to accomplish and when. You can then supplement this with shorter-term, action-oriented "to-do" lists aimed at reaching your marketing goals.

A word of caution, however, don't make "structure" your end-product. Consider structure only as a means to get the results you desire. This does not have to be a painful exercise—my plan and various lists usually fill only one or two pages. What's important is that there's always something to do . . . and that something always gets done.

You'll also want to maintain an element of flexibility in all that you put on paper or commit to your computer screen. Create your plans and follow them knowing that from week-to-week and

month-to-month your objectives can—and most likely will—change.

4. MAKE TIME

Allot time each week to pursue your marketing goals. Pull out your calendar right now and schedule an appointment with yourself. It could be an hour, two hours or three—whatever you need to keep moving forward. It could be the same day each week, it could be different days. Whatever you choose, honor this commitment of time. Make it sacred.

MAKE MARKETING MORE AUTOMATIC

Remember, marketing doesn't happen in a vacuum, nor is it automatic. You have to tell people why they should want to buy your product or service—and then tell them again.

Only once you've adopted a marketing mindset and are willing to commit the time and energy necessary to sustain your marketing efforts—only then will your marketing become more automatic, more natural . . . and more successful.

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### **How Stressed-Out Are YOU?**

**By Dr. David L. Thomas**

Are you feeling stressed out? Too many things to do, too little time? One more thing added to the To-Do list and you feel like you'll explode?

Whoa there, no exploding allowed! You can handle it—just listen in.

Listen? To what?

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To your self-talk. Not yourself talk, but your SELF-TALK. Listen in to the demands you're making of your time, but more importantly listen in to how you're saying them and what you're saying.

Many of us don't pay particular attention to what we're saying to ourselves. We've never been taught the importance of how damaging it can be to us nor have we been shown that we can use it to feel much better. You can literally un-stress yourself by using your own self-talk.

Listen in for -need-, -have-to-, -must-, type statements that you make to yourself.

"First I need to drop the kids off, then I have-to go to the grocery store, then I need to stop at the bank, then I have-to get home and work on those taxes before having to go back out and pick up the kids."

You've just created a lot of demands on yourself. And yes, in order for your life to continue like you want, you would prefer to do all those things exactly as you have envisioned. But you don't NEED to, HAVE-TO or MUST.

By using demanding statements on yourself, you open up a lot of opportunities to say irrational things to yourself that create stress.

When you use demanding statements, you then create a scenario of "what-if" in your head. And when the "what-if's" back-up, then watch out stress level!

"What if I don't get it done, what if I don't get there in time to get the kids, what if this, what if that." This is when you really go into stress mode!

Asking such open-ended questions is the origin much of your stress. You often answer with "that would be awful, that would be terrible" which compounds the stressful feelings even more.

Since awful and terrible are labels way beyond bad, (actually labels that are beyond definition) you've created a situation in your head that ends up with you saying to yourself "...and I couldn't stand it if that happened," or "...I couldn't stand feeling that way!"

It's indeed a vicious cycle of thinking that is common to all of us. Fortunately, once you know how, you can think your way out of these situations as quickly as you got in.

So where do you start?

First, flag such have-to, must, need-to statements in your head. Then replace the needs, musts and have-tos with preferences, desires, and wants.

Then when something doesn't go according to your desires, reduce the awfuls and terribles to simply, bad. Then rest-assure yourself that you can stand it.

What if you don't make it to the bank? What if you're late picking up the kids?? Well, it's not what you wanted, it may indeed even have consequences which may be bad, but in the overall scheme of things

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it isn't awful and you CAN stand it.

A great deal of stress is caused from within by this "I-can't-stand-it-it is."

Remember: whenever you hear yourself saying "need-to, have-to, got-to, etc" replace it with want-to or would like to. Substitute needs with desires; musts with preferences.

And remind yourself that awful things will not happen if your desires are not met. You may not like the results if things don't go your way, but you can indeed stand the feelings. It may not be good if things don't fall into place like you want, but the world will continue to spin and you will be able to handle it.

It takes some practice. Don't expect it to happen for you like magic. Pay attention to your self-talk, listen for the what-if statements, flag the must and need statements. Dispute them with wants and desires. Do it vigorously. With time it will become second nature, and you'll notice the lack of stress in your life.

Dr. David L. Thomas, LMHC

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. He

is also the co-author of Quit Smoking-Be Happy!--see

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