

## Have You Been Daydreaming Again?

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It's easy for successful businesses to coast to keep doing what they've always been doing. But the world is changing at a breakneck pace and you can't continue to be successful if you stay the same. Here are some tips to keep you up to speed:

**Update your marketing materials.** I think this should be done at least every three years. Photos need to be reshot, colors and fonts up-dated, layout styles changed. What was cutting edge in 1995 isn't in 2005. And I don't care how many boxes of the old letterhead you have. Saving a few hundred bucks isn't worth losing position in the marketplace.

**Fire the problem employees.** You know who they are - they are always negative, they just can't seem to get it together, they suck the life out of your team. You want to thrive? Be a leader and get rid of them. Do not believe in unconditional love in the workplace!

**Increase the value you offer your customers.** What other services can you provide that will make their lives easier? Can you provide valuable information on your web site? Offer a 1-800 number to solve problems? If you sell clothes, is it time to offer alterations? Make yourself indispensable.

**Go where the money is.** Determine which jobs or clients generate the most profit for your company and focus on expanding your market share. Often businesses will "dance with those that bring them" when they need to move on to more profitable partners.

**Do something scary.** If you're not doing something scary, you're not growing. What's scary? Launching a new product or service, making a large capital purchase, moving your offices to a larger market, adding employees —change is scary. While you're playing it safe, your competition is snatching up great new opportunities. You didn't play it safe when you started your company - you were aggressive, passionate and offered something new to the marketplace.

**Take care of business.** Are you certain you are covering the basics? Many companies have grown so fast, they've lost control. They offer a lousy customer service, their salespeople are poorly trained and their people are overwhelmed. It's just a matter of time before this house of cards falls. If you aren't taking good care of your customers, you're creating a great opportunity for someone else to do so. Don't rely on comment cards - unhappy customers won't waste their time filling them out. Develop an objective way to survey customers (ask for outside help if necessary) or you may never know the true situation until it's too late.



In this economy you have to change while things are going well - if you wait until a downturn it may well be too late.