

# The Titan Times Newsletter

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## Masterful Quotes

*"The secret of change is to focus all your energy not on fighting the old but on building the new."*

~ Socrates

*"If you can't fly then run. If you can't run then walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward."*

~Martin Luther King Jr.

*"There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come."*

~Victor Hugo

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## 7 Ways to Strengthen Your Business Relationships

As a small business owner, one key to success is your ability to build solid relationships. It is easy to isolate yourself in the daily management of your practice but make no mistake that it is paramount to your success that you keep productive dialogue going with everyone you can. Relationship building is a cornerstone of success.

- Be sure to stay in touch with your mentors. Think about those people who gave you valuable advice when you were trying to get your business off the ground or that person you call immediately when you need advice. That person is your mentor, and you want to have a close relationship with him or her so that he or she is willing to go that extra mile to help you build your business.
- Be flexible with the people you count on. As a business owner, often, a day won't turn out exactly how you planned. That is why it is so important for you to be flexible when those around who may run into problems and need to change their schedules in a way that affects your business.
- It's important to nurture relationships with those people who aren't necessarily working for you but who service you or your company regularly (ie: vendors). This helps increase the likelihood that they will be flexible with you as well.
- Have conversations with your customers to find out what you can do better. Most of the time unsatisfied customers don't approach you with a list of the things they'd like for you to improve on. They just leave you for one of your competitors. Therefore, you must set aside some time to ask them what they need from you. This will also create a fair degree of goodwill. (continued)



## 2023 Federal Legal Holidays

January 2  
New Year's Day  
(observed)

January 16  
Birthday of Martin Luther  
King, Jr.

February 20  
Washington's Birthday

April 17  
District of Columbia  
Emancipation Day  
(observed)

May 29  
Memorial Day

June 19  
Juneteenth National  
Independence Day

July 4  
Independence Day

September 4  
Labor Day

October 9  
Columbus Day

November 10  
Veterans Day (observed)

November 23  
Thanksgiving Day

December 25  
Christmas Day

Do you have employees?

- Make sure employees have everything they need to do their jobs. Nothing frustrates a high-performing employee more than having to struggle to do his job because he doesn't have the right computer program or because he must make do with faulty equipment.
- Never miss an opportunity to give your employees the recognition they deserve. Everyone likes to be told they've done a good job. Very often, people who are interested in working for small businesses are driven more by recognition than by dollars.
- Encourage a sense of ownership among your employees. A sense of ownership will go a long way toward creating strong ties between your employees and your company.

Building Relationships will create buy-in, trust and loyalty. Aside from this, there are emotional benefits for everyone involved. Make it a point to nurture your relationships and in doing so, build a better business.

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## When Should I Start Thinking About an Exit Strategy?

When should you start thinking about an Exit Strategy? The short answer is – now! Don't wait to see how the business pans out first, because that is like waiting to see how large a fire gets before having a fire escape plan. Furthermore, if you begin with the end in mind, you can base business decisions on actions that will help you achieve that end goal.

For example:

- a) Are you planning to sell your business to an open-market buyer in the long term? Perhaps you need to look at a strong balance sheet with many assets to boost the overall value of the sale.
- b) Are you looking to pass along the business to a family member? Maybe the best course of action would be to employ those family members now so they can learn the business and be ready to take over, come time.
- c) Maybe you are looking to sell your share of the business to a Partner. Is this based on a book of business that you can/should carefully cultivate and work on familiarizing your clientele with the other Partner(s) for transition's sake?

Even if you don't know what you Plan to do in the end, at this time, recognize that simply shutting the doors and walking away is not a smart option. You will have spent years building your business, why treat it like it was just a job that ends one day? Rather, build it over time with the thought that it will be worth something to you as an additional retirement vehicle.

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It is also okay (and entirely normal) to change your exit strategy as time rolls along. In general, start by trying to build long-term value. This will benefit any exit strategy you ultimately land on. You are likely to change your business model several times before you figure out what it will be in the longer term. Once you have a robust business that is producing clear value for customers, then you can have a serious conversation about optimizing it for a buyer.

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## Critical Planning for Success

In this rough inflationary environment, one thing is for sure: sooner or later many businesses simply won't be able to hold off any longer on making critical business decisions while waiting for a strong uptick in the economy. Furthermore, customers may sooner or later say "I'm tired of this," or "I can't wait anymore," or "Let's get going" and start spending more money once again. Will you be ready? Now remains a good time to prepare yourself and your business.

A plan designed as a platform for growth and profits must consider each of the following critical success factors:

- Money factors: positive cash flow, revenue growth, and profit margins.
- Acquiring new customers and/or distributors -- your future.
- Customer satisfaction -- how happy are they?
- Quality -- how good is your product and service?
- Product / service development -- what's new that will increase business with existing customers and attract new ones?
- Intellectual capital -- increasing what you know that's profitable.
- Productivity -- how efficient are you? How effective?
- Strategic relationships -- new sources of business, products, and outside revenue.
- Employee attraction and retention -- your ability to do extend your reach.
- Sustainability -- your personal ability to keep it all going.

For each of these factors, ask yourself these three broad questions:

What can you learn from last year's experience with this factor?

What did you do right? What worked? Always start with this question. Why? Because it's positive. That's why! It's shocking how people naturally drift toward the negative. How can you do more of those "right" things? How can you make them even better? How can you apply what you learned in this area to some other?

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2. What is missing? What can you add to improve your efficiency and effectiveness?

Effectiveness can be stated as the ratio of OUTPUT to INPUT. Efficiency, on the other hand, is how many INPUT actions you take per unit of time. For instance, you can increase the number of calls you make per hour; that is an increased efficiency. You can increase the volume of sales for the same number of calls; that is increased effectiveness.

Setting new, specific goals for these can transform your business. Your goals should be bold and dynamic -- big enough to inspire you and everyone around you. Some examples: increase last year's sales by 12%; cut production hours 3% with no decrease in units produced; develop and ship two new products by the end of the third quarter; solve customer issues within x number of days, etc.

3. How are you going to achieve these goals?

There are a few considerations to make such as: Who will be accountable for each goal? Not you - then who - which executive/supervisor/manager/employee? Which department(s)? Some factors map directly into a specific department. For example, revenue is owned by sales and marketing. But factors like intellectual capital or customer satisfaction clearly don't always fall onto one department.

Even so, someone still has to 'own' the factor. Figure out whom. If no single person is accountable - guess what - it very likely may not happen. What strategies and tactics have a good chance to realize the goal? Each target should have an identifiable path with a reasonable probability of getting you there. That path will define one or more initiatives and milestones you can put on a timeline.

What structural and procedural changes will you make relative to this factor? Does this initiative require new people? Do you need new job descriptions, or to add managers?

Can you do it all at the same time? Most businesses don't have the resources for that, so you may need to figure out your timing too by creating a well thought out plan of action to complete this task. Need help or an independent review of your plan? Give us a call, we're here to help.

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