

7 ways to grow your business

By Michael G Major
Business Strategy & Planning





CONTENTS

Page

Introduction – The Human Dynamic	3
1. Have A Vision That Inspires	5
2. Innovate Where Others Don't	7
3. Marketing – Turn Up The Volume	9
4. Sales – Connect Like You've Never Connected Before	11
5. Branding – A Person Is More Than Name	13
6. Customer Experience – Go Beyond "Have A Nice Day"	16
7. The Physical Environment - How Safe Is It?	18
Conclusion – The Emotional Dynamic	20
About	21
Contact	26

©Michael Major 7 Degree 2010

Introduction

The Human Dynamic

The fundamental premise to understand about business is they are run by humans and humans are emotional beings first and foremost. Humans like to think they are rational logical beings like Mr Spock when it comes to business, yet research by Harvard Business School has determined 95% of all decisions are based on emotion. Personally my view is all decisions are emotionally driven in one way or another and are justified a nano second later with logic!

In recent history, businesses emerged based on principles developed during the industrial revolution. These principles in part are based on rationalisation, systemisation, and logical progressive thinking. These principles are absolutely imperative; we wouldn't have achieved what has been achieved to date without these principles. Yet the dynamics of business are going through a new revolution, the traditional principles alone are no longer enough to survive yet alone to prosper. We have transitioned from the industrial age into the information age over the last 60 years. The information age has again led to a massive quantum leap forward for humans, this time in technology, social sciences, human rights, social responsibilities etc. Yet this massive amount of information has led to overwhelm on an individual basis. There is so much to take in, so much to do, so much to aspire to. The level of awareness is huge as to what is possible now. People's expectations have experientially increased to a level never seen before. With the advent of social media, this expectation has now got a voice which can't be ignored. However social media is just a conduit for the emotions people are craving for - bring order to my life, make my life simpler, make my life relevant, let me be heard, help me make meaning in my life. Social media has created a voice to give expression to some of these emotions, but not all. Social media has not made people's lives simpler, it has not provided order in a complex world which is spoilt for choice and is unlikely to become less complex – at best social media in this instance provides a release valve to voice all the frustrations.

But it is still not enough, it is only part of the story of what humans crave for, yes they want interaction, they want to feel part of a community, they want to feel they are making a difference, that their lives have a point, that there is meaning to what they are experiencing. Above all they want to engage with others at an emotional level, they want to connect, they want to make a difference, to leave a legacy that makes their lives worthwhile however big or small.

So why is this applicable to business?

It is very applicable because business is made up of human beings doing meaningful work for other human beings. And if businesses want to carry on doing meaningful work, they need to connect at a emotional level not only with their customers in a way that is relevant and meaningful for their customers, when customers are spoilt for choice, but also with the stakeholders in their business.

Businesses who tap into this vein will grow their business. Businesses who continue to tap into this vein will continue to thrive. Businesses that recognise the emotional drivers not only of their customers but also of themselves will create a strong and powerful, loyal following of raving fans, the ambassadors for their business.

For businesses to grow their business in this vein, they need to address 7 key areas of their business. Not in isolation but as a whole over time until all areas are totally in sync with each other. This doesn't happen overnight. It happens over time, slowly at first, picking up momentum until there is sufficient momentum like a fly wheel, where the business just keeps accumulating speed and power to the point where there is no stopping it. The momentum is too strong.

To get to this point businesses have to start or review their vision for their business.

1. Have a Vision That Inspires

What is a vision if it is not empowered with passion? No passion equals no vision - it's not even a dream. A business's vision has to be truly inspiring. It has to engage emotionally, it has to resonate with every stakeholder's values and drivers. It has to be meaningful and relevant. A vision, if truly inspiring, is like a magnet that draws a business towards it regardless of the distractions, challenges, and detours it encounters. There is inevitability, resilience, come what may, which draws the people within the business forward. To do anything else is unimaginable.

How many businesses are run by their leaders who are not inspired by the vision they are leading the business towards? How can they lead people down a path they are not inspired to go down themselves? Sadly it is all too evident judging by the number of business who struggle to survive or who go out of business altogether.

Whereas how many successful businesses do you know have achieved what they have achieved without a vision that is truly inspiring for all involved? Not many! And where does this vision come from in the first instance? It comes from the founder.

When Thomas Watson created IBM in 1911, he had a very clear vision for the company right down to the clothes his employees would be wearing including what briefcases his sales team would carry.

Every business needs to have a vision if they are truly to grow their business. It sets the direction the company is going to head; it is the compass, the map, the blueprint on which all strategic and tactical decisions are predicated. It is the dashboard to verify whether the business is on course or not.

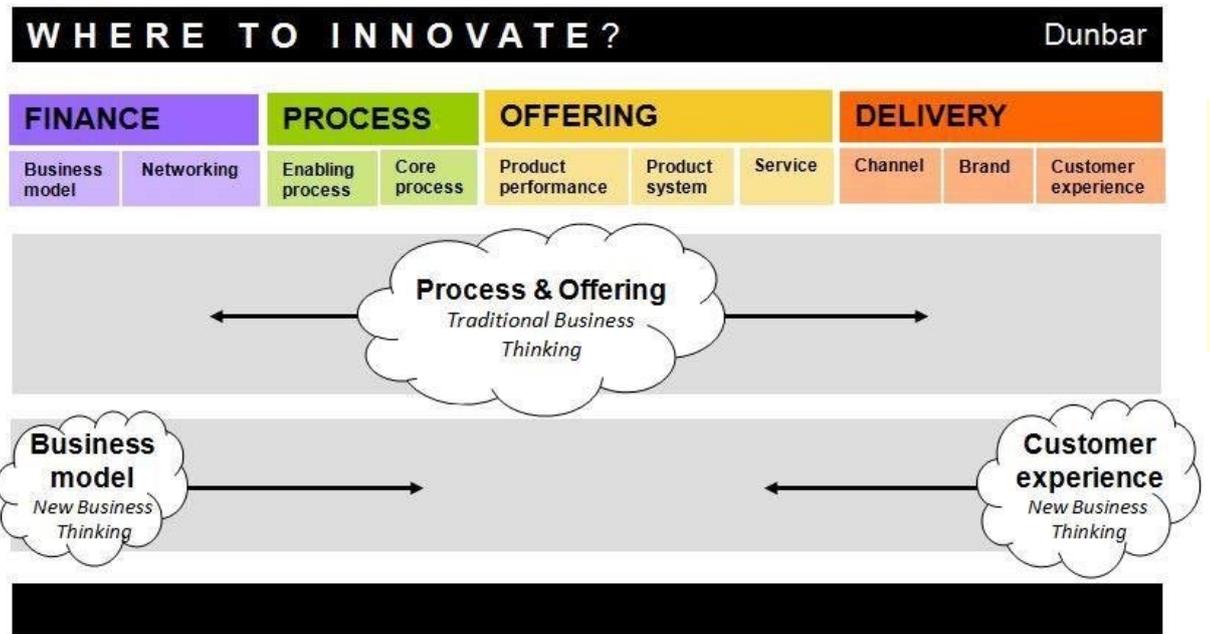
And in the face of all the challenges a business will inevitably be exposed to, the one thing that ensures the business keeps moving is its passion within. The passion is the greatest motivator against all odds.

Without passion, resignation becomes the dominant driver. Resignation doesn't allow for growth only decline. All businesses have the power to tap into their passion and draw inspiration, to re-motivate themselves.

Find the passion for the business and the vision becomes crystal clear – every business needs to have a strong and powerful vision. Without it, there is no platform to create a strategy for growth.

Humans are emotional. There has to be purpose in their activities. There has to be meaning in their activities. Some humans want to be part of a collective vision (not necessarily of their own creation), and some humans want their own vision to follow. What separates humans from the rest of the animal kingdom is human's ability to imagine, to visualise a future not yet realised. Visions are a future not yet realised. They are a powerful emotional driver for humans. Humans can't help themselves; they are genetically wired to behave this way!

2. Innovate Where Others Don't



Traditional business thinking has focused on process and the offering primarily. It is easy to understand, logical and predictable. The results are evidential almost immediately and it is measurable. This has been a successful approach in the past and will continue to be in the future as well to a greater or lesser degree.

However, its weakness is it is also replicable by the competition. They will develop smarter, more efficient processes and offerings. In response, the initiator business will seek to improve their processes and offerings to compete more effectively and so the cycle continues until the differentiation between one business's processes and offerings and another's becomes almost negligible! They end up scrapping for every piece of business they can find reducing margins, sacrificing market share in order to survive.

Yet there are two ends of the spectrum which can provide the biggest returns and dynamically change the fortunes of a business making it much harder for other businesses to replicate. These are in the spectrums of finance and delivery. Businesses have the potential to innovate new products and services in markets not yet identified. They have the potential to establish new markets, to become leaders in new markets. Yet, most businesses choose to develop and refine what they already know. It is a typical human reaction to stay with what it knows, to stay with the familiar rather than seek out new territories or new ways of doing things.

Reviewing the business model of the business can fundamentally change the financial dynamic of the business. Walgreens in the States switched its focus from measuring the profitability of each of its stores to the profitability per customer visit. In this way they were able to increase the number of stores they have and at the same time increase profitability across the whole business.

At the other end of the spectrum the way a business delivers its products and services to market can be equally as powerful. Innovation in creating new channels to market through the formation of new strategic alliances and associations or online. Innovate new ways for the business to communicate with its customers to establish stronger emotional connections. Create new ways of integrating, interacting, and engaging the customer in the experience they have of the business's products and services.

At both ends of Dunbar's spectrum margins can be increased, market share can be increased, profitability can be increased, yet most businesses feel more comfortable dealing in traditional thinking. To stay with traditional thinking in a volatile market will provide predictable results, but will they be good enough to survive and prosper?

Humans are emotional. To create new things is dangerous. What if it failed, what if there is a mistake, supposing we get it wrong. Yet to do nothing means certain predictability will prevail - a decline in profitability as other businesses move past with their new innovative ways of doing business.

3. Marketing – Turn Up The Volume

This is one of the most confused areas of business and so often confused with sales, though the boundaries sometimes seem to be somewhat blurred!

Marketing, at its heart, is creating the platform on which the sales can be made. It defines the target market, it defines the positioning of the business's products and services to create the best opportunities to appeal to the chosen target market, and it determines the best ways to make the products and services relevant and meaningful.

Marketing practices also include communicating directly to customers to promote the business and its various products and services through personalised letters, emails, and targeted campaigns using the business's customer database.

Importantly, marketing activity becomes the loud speaker for the business turning up the volume through the different advertising channels to raise awareness of the business's products and services.

What is often forgotten is every activity of the business has a direct impact on the business's marketing performance. So often business confine their marketing to a separate department or to a specific individual within the business seeing it as a completely separate activity to the rest of the business. The reality is every activity of the business has implication from a marketing perspective. And every business activity contributes to the growth of the business through supporting the marketing activities to attract and retain new customers. Or to state it in another way, the whole business is the marketing and marketing becomes the communication.

Marketing sets up the opportunity that the rest of the business has to deliver on. Operational capabilities are the key to any successful marketing campaign, if they fail to deliver; the credibility of the whole business is brought into question. Marketing and operations have to work very closely together, so there is no over promise with under delivery or as bad missing out on the ability to exceed by delivering at a higher level than perceived to be possible due to poor communication within the business.

The results for the business are phenomenal when operations and marketing work in sync. When businesses understand that the whole business is the marketing department, then the business starts to experience growth at a level not experienced before.

Marketing determines the emotional drivers that create sales. Marketing determines the emotional drivers that connect the business with their customer. Marketing is the driver for business growth. Operations are the driver for efficiency and effectiveness. Operations on the other hand improve margins. Operations reduce costs for the customer, however operations do not attract new customers to quite the same level as marketing initiatives achieve for the same level of investment. Yet businesses feel more comfortable dealing with operational issues because they are tangible, the results are immediate, - they don't need a leap of faith.

Humans are emotional. For businesses, marketing is a leap of faith and it can be scary. Yet from a new customer's perspective, marketing provides a safe portal for them to go through to bring their new business. From a customer's perspective, good marketing means there is no leap of faith.

4. Sales – Connect Like You’ve Never Connected Before

1. Prospecting
2. Getting Appointments
3. Qualifying
4. Problem Identification and Clarification
5. Presentation Skills
6. Answering Objections
7. Closing sales
8. Follow-Up and follow through
9. Referrals and Re-sales

There are numerous books and training programmes on how to make sales and they all focus in one way or another on basic steps to close a sale as indicated with the nine steps shown above which is applicable when selling business to business.

I do not intend to add more to this except to say, at the heart of most sales transactions is the human connection between the buyer and the seller (which is why in some instances such as selling a house it is better to have a third party to carry out the negotiations!). When it comes to business to business, people like to do business with people they respect, admire, or fundamentally like. The latter being the greatest determinant of the three!

In retail if the staff member establishes a rapport with the customer that resonates emotionally for the customer, the staff member is more likely to make the sale than not. And certainly when they establish an emotional connection with that customer it is more likely to lead to repeat business over time. The challenge for businesses is to how to connect with their customers authentically? How often have customers heard the words "Have a nice day" and felt the person saying it is just going through the motions and doesn't care one 'iota' whether or not the customer does or doesn't! Yet when the same customer comes across someone who is passionate and engaging, a person that makes them feel truly special in some way or another, a person who is genuinely interested, it is very compelling.

It has to be remembered with so much choice, it is no longer as easy to sell to customers. There is a shift that has happened from selling to buying with so much choice. It is vitally important therefore for the staff member to connect with the customer in a compelling way if a sale is to be made.

Humans are emotional, they want to be liked and they want to like people, it's a non negotiable condition of being human. In sales this has to be remembered at all times regardless of what step the sales process is in.

5. Branding – A person is more than name

Branding like marketing is an often a misunderstood term. For a lot of people it is seen as the logo for the business. It is and it is not!

A brand is just a perception. It is a feeling that a human attributes and associates with a logo. The logo in itself is meaningless; it is merely a manifestation of how the business wants to convey its core values. This is the same for a word. The word 'google' in itself is meaningless, yet we can all relate to this word, giving it meaning. The same can be said for the word 'apple'. When associated with fruit it engenders one set of emotions, when associated with computers it engenders another set of completely different emotions. Yet it is just a word.

Branding represents the stories we associate with the mark. As with cattle branding, the mark represents the qualities of a particular product, or the product and services provided by a business. The brand imparts the story behind the product, its credibility etc.

Branding is about trust first and foremost. Someone once said to me, you can judge a brand by how it performs when the business is caught with its pants down! Or another way to put it and a somewhat kinder way of explaining the dynamic of whether or not a brand can be trusted. All golfers get themselves into trouble whether it is shooting into the rough or into a bunker. The difference between a good golfer and a bad one is how they get out of trouble! And so it is with businesses.

The list of trusted brands that at some point or another have had problems to deal with is endless! How they respond can have a direct impact on the future profitability of the business. Some do it well, some not so well. The latter to a greater or lesser degree can leave a bitter taste in the consumer afterwards which can affect whether they choose to do business with them in the future or not.

Another aspect of branding is the ability to stay interesting, to stay relevant to the wants and needs of the customer. In a buyer's market this is critical. Some businesses reach a certain level of success and rest on their laurels only to wonder why they are losing traction to their competitors. It creeps up insidiously without them realising. They suddenly find the market has shifted and they have been left behind.

The brand is a living entity that has to be likened to a person. While the person stays interesting, people hang around them. When they become predictable and boring, people lose interest. People seek new things, they are curiously drawn to what might be the latest and greatest whether it is or not. Business cannot afford to be both predictable and boring. They can be predictable and in some cases this is essential such as choosing which airline to fly with, but never boring. As soon as it becomes boring, the chances are it has become commoditised. And when this happens, businesses end up fighting for market share on price alone! And that is a one way street to a decline. Businesses need to understand their brand is the business and their business is the brand. How the business behaves, conducts its business, how relevant they are to the wants and needs of the customer and how the customer perceives them whether it is true or not has to be managed. And with the advent of social media, business can no longer just tell them, they have to engage in a two way dialogue. This is both exciting and scary at the same time. And it is far scarier not to engage – heaven knows what is being said.

To be judged and tried without offering a defence is frankly foolhardy. It is better to know thine enemy than not to!

It is also true that great brands attract a better quality of potential staff to the business. The skills and capabilities of the business increase exponentially to the perceived view people have of the brand (read business) wanting to be employed. The better the quality of staff employed can only mean that there is a better business is in the making, resulting in stronger growth.

Humans are emotional. They want to be associated with success, and they hope by association others will see them as being successful too. This applies equally to customers as well as staff.

Humans are emotional. They want to deal with people and brands they trust.

They want to be associated with people and brands who make them feel good about themselves. They want people and brands to make their lives feel enhanced, valued, and appreciated. They want to associate with people and brands that make them look good in the eyes of their friends, peers, and compatriots.

A business which manages itself as a brand addressing these emotional drivers will find their business growing dramatically over time. The business will find the value of their business will be measured not only in terms of profitability and its physical assets, but also in terms of brand equity. When it comes to selling the business, the brand value is taken into account when valuing the business. In the case of Coca-Cola, if all its physical assets (including manufacturing plants), and all its distribution channels were lost completely, and therefore not able to trade, the brand by itself was valued in 1999 as being worth US\$83.845 million. When seen in this context, managing a business brand beyond having a well designed logo becomes an imperative.

6. Customer Experience – Go Beyond “Have A Nice Day”

Some people in the business world talk about the customer experience as being the quality of service that is provided for the customer.

Again like branding it is and it is not. Customer service is only part of the equation, not the whole equation.

Service is service is service. Businesses pride themselves on the service they provide. The reality is “so what?” The customer expects great service as a pre-requisite. There is nothing distinctive about customer service. It has to be good, or a business doesn't survive. This is a buyer's market!

But herein lies the opportunity. Instead of thinking about customer service in isolation, analyse every interaction the customer has with the business and determine what type of experience would the customer want and need. What are they expecting? Then raise the bar and ask the question, what experience could they have that will create a positive reaction in them? An experience they will remember! Think beyond people to people experiences, think about all the senses we process the world through. Think how these other senses can create memorable experiences. Think how they can all interrelate and interlock to create a consistent branded experience that can be managed strategically to the business's advantage.

Move out of mediocrity. Create an experience that creates a reaction. Customers want to have experiences that lift them out of their everyday existence. Businesses who consistently achieve this enjoy a level of growth other business don't experience.

Humans are emotional in decision making. Give them a great experience and they will want to come back for more.

'The experience IS the marketing'

7. The Physical Environment – How Safe Is It?

Retail, hospitality and the entertainment business care very much about the physical environment they do business in. Why – because when they get the environment right it has a dramatic effect on the profitability of their business.

It is also true for other commercial businesses. The business environment is a direct reflection on how a business truly sees itself. It is a direct reflection of the values the business has. Sure, there are pragmatics and practicalities that have to be taken into consideration, but at its heart, the physical environment is a reflection on how and the way the business does business.

How many times have you walked in to another business and have made all sorts of judgements based on the environment the business is operating out of – good and bad? How many of those judgements have turned out to be true?

It either engenders trust and confidence or makes you feel very wary and apprehensive. It can make you feel at ease straight away or not! The environment can make you feel straight away that they are a business you feel comfortable to do business with or not.

It is an emotional dynamic that is at play here. It is essentially about a human's basic need to feel safe. Fundamentally do I feel safe here in this environment? If the answer is no, then business will suffer.

It will suffer not only in terms of the customer wanting to buy from the business, but it will also suffer by the quality and type of staff the business attracts into the business. Not having the right type of staff in the business can directly and indirectly hinder the profitability and ultimately the growth of the business.

Humans are emotional. They need to feel safe fundamentally, and when that is achieved they want an environment that makes them feel good, an environment that lifts their spirits, and an environment that makes their daily lives easier. They ideally want an environment they are proud to be associated with, an environment they can connect with. If these feelings are not met, then the business performance will suffer. The irony is it doesn't have to cost a fortune to achieve. Just clarity is needed and a realisation of its importance to the sustained growth of the business.

Conclusion – The Emotional Dynamic

Humans are emotional. Businesses are run by humans. Customers are humans. 95% of all human decisions are made based on emotions. The emotional dynamic for both business owners and their customers is the driver and determinant for the level of business success that can be enjoyed.

To ignore the emotional dynamic of what it is to be human in all business activities is dangerous.

To embrace the emotional dynamic, businesses can work it to their advantage to attract new customers and grow their business.

To leverage the emotional dynamic, businesses can grow a sustainable business that will carry them forward with momentum to fulfilling on their vision.

To be consistent around emotional dynamics provides security and trust for all the stakeholders in the business.

To manage the emotional dynamic with passion can lead to untold financial rewards over time.

Work the 7 ways to grow your business collectively and the business will create the results the business wants and needs.

There will be a compounding effect as each 'way' is developed and implemented. Each one building on the other, until all 7 ways are in place, then the flywheel really takes off creating a momentum in itself lifting the business results to new levels that can be sustained over time.

Embrace the human dynamic and enjoy the rewards – it's the secret that few businesses understand!

About

I believe that the way businesses do business with their customers is the same way people connect with each other, i.e. passionate people connect at an emotional level with far more people than passionless people. Passionate businesses are more successful due to their ability to connect with far more customers than passionless businesses - their light shines brighter and never dims.

My own personal journey to the understanding and acceptance of my core skills has been a gentle unfolding over time. What unfolded are my capabilities in being an ideas generator, a problem solver, a big picture thinker predicated on an intuitive and pragmatic understanding of the emotional drivers of people in any situation. This combined with running my own business, has given me the skills and understanding over the last 28 years to help other businesses achieve the results they want. My emotional drivers are fulfilled when I am helping a business move forward towards their vision with greater velocity, creating the right platform to attract new customers and therefore by default grow their business.

What I Do

I help businesses at various levels find or create their inspiration to implement with passion whatever they produce, deliver, sell, or advise to their customers in a way that draws more customers.

I help businesses by turning on the light in their business that draws customers to them like moths to a light – a natural inevitability!

Why It Matters

Every business wants to **attract** more customers with greater ease.

Every business wants to **grow** their business with greater velocity to achieve their vision.

Every business wants blindingly **loyal** customers who are raving fans (so important with the advent of social marketing).

Every business owner has a passion, however sometimes and overtime this **passion** loses its drive, gets forgotten and they want it to be **re-ignited** (or as Kevin Roberts might say... have their love light turned on again!).

Every business may need to have a few potholes fixed but not sure quite where or how to fix them.

Every business may find their pathway has worn out (simply their products and services are no longer relevant, attractive or not as emotionally engaging as they used to be) and needs to be re-sealed again with completely new products and services. I help them to develop **commercially innovative** products and services market ready to be launched.

Every business needs an outside perspective sometimes to help them **strategise** the big picture, to reconnect with their vision that **inspires** those around them to collectively **engage** and get into **action**.

Every business wants to improve their margins without losing quality in their business offer.

Every business wants to minimise their investment in acquiring new business to achieve a better ROI.

Every business wants to make the process of **finding, winning, keeping, and growing** their customer base a seamless activity that is efficient and effective.

Sometimes businesses become so operationally focused they are driven to improve effectiveness and achieve greater efficiencies. This can result in them taking their eye off the ball in providing equal focus to attracting new customers with the same amount of energy and commitment.

Alternatively or in addition, through a variety of circumstances, either external or internal, businesses lose their focus on just how they attract new customers. The reality is businesses don't grow by being operationally efficient alone. They must at the same time take the appropriate actions to attract new customers. If this is not done consistently and regularly the result over time is their business curve flattens out or worse, falls in a downward trajectory! In these scenarios, a fresh perspective is needed to unlock the dynamic the business has found itself in: a fresh perspective, unencumbered by having to deal with the day-to-day management issues. This fresh perspective provides an objective view, resulting in new thinking and new ideas that can be implemented to **attract** and **grow** the business again.

How This Is Different In the Marketplace

Businesses see business as serious, based on a series of logical and lineal decisions to achieve the vision of the company. They can well feel they have to behave rather like Spock, stay emotionless and let logic prevail in all decision making. Yet humans are emotional beings at heart. Spock did eventually conceded to Captain Kirk's view that logic on its own is not enough to solve all scenarios.

Logic is important but it is not the only driver in business decisions. Passion plays a big role as well (consciously or not) however illogical this may seem. The irony is when businesses seek to engage with their customers they seek to appeal to their customer's emotional wants and needs. It is as if the customer's emotional behaviour is completely alien to how business should behave.

Businesses forget they are human! Businesses forget they have emotions as well and the further irony is the more they are prepared to express the emotions that lie behind their passion (their purpose) the more attractive the business becomes. Their passion is the making of the business brand. Their passion is enduring and so will their brand become by default. I work in the world of unlocking the passion in a business or a particular project to unleash the emotional drivers that causes customers to engage fully with the business or its project.

Most branding consultancies focus on the product. I focus primarily on the business itself. I focus on ensuring the light of the business is at full strength to attract as many customers as possible to help the business owners to grow their business with greater velocity.

In addition once the light is strong enough, I work with businesses to help them build a cantilevered bridge to their new customers, either as a trusted adviser, mentor, problem solver, ideas generator etc.

My focus is to maintain the big picture view on the soft side of the business; to ensure the light of the business is shining brightly at all of the customer touchpoints.

I have a passion to help business owners realise their vision, to give them tools to achieve them, to re-ignite their flame of passion that will inspire others and motivate them to keep moving forward whatever the challenges they are facing.

Strategy, innovation and creating the connections are the main tools, and the craftsmanship in the use of the tools comes from the passion of the business. The passion creates the emotional connections that bring the customers to its flame. I help businesses to become better craftspeople.

No other consultancy focuses purely on 'emotion' being the essential driver in business for growth.

No other consultancy sees the interconnectivity between all of their activities and the impact it has on their customer experience.

No other consultancy seeks to make their role redundant over time by teaching their clients to 'fish' for themselves!



7 ways to **grow** your **business**

Connect with us and let us help you attract more customers and grow your business now.



business **strategy** &
planning for **growth**

mobile: +64 (0) 21 709 007

PO Box 125-293, St Heliers,
Auckland 1740, New Zealand

www 7degree.net

email: connect@7degree.net

blog: www.7degree.net/blog



@7degreenet



michaelgmajor



7degree

Subscribe to our 7° Blog

We send out 4 blogs per month offering insights, tips and the occasional whimsical observations on how to solve business problems to help you strengthen your connections with your customers and generate new business. You can always opt out at any time.