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Leverage Good Intel To Beat The Competition

There is a lot of information floating around about your competitors – you just have to find it. When you do, you can give yourself an edge as you put together your own marketing campaigns.

Colin McIntosh, founder of Sheets & Giggles, did, and when he differentiated from his competitors, the customers noticed and flocked to his company. *Inc.*, Jan. 4, 2021

A NEW WORLD REQUIRES NEW LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Last year marked a major shift in how companies do business. This shift also meant leaders had to change as well. In 2021, adaptation is the name of the game. There are several points leaders have to recognize in their communities and their workforce.

Things won't go back to the way they were. The future will be defined by a new normal. Expectations are different – the expectations of customers and of employees. Buying habits have changed, and work habits have changed. For example, much of the workforce expects a remote or work-from-home option or greater flexibility from the

For example, the founder and CEO of Wagmo, Christie Horvath, went as far as contacting and sitting down with a few former employees of her competitors. She was developing a new pet insurance company and wanted to know where those other companies had fallen short. The intel allowed Horvath to innovate and bring new ideas to the table. She didn't copy the competition – she did something different.

Here's another way to approach it: use Facebook's Ad Library tool to watch competitor's Facebook and Instagram marketing initiatives. See what they're doing so you can do something different and stand out from the crowd. This was something



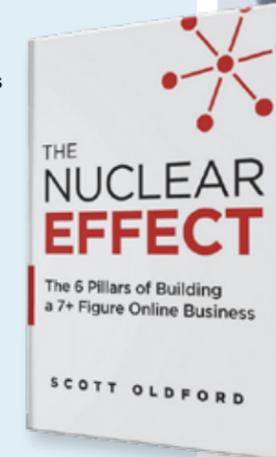
traditional “9-to-5 at the office” model. If you don't adapt, it may be harder to find qualified employees for your team.

You have to experiment. As you adapt to the changing world, you have to experiment more. This includes your approach to running your business, the products or services you offer, your marketing, hiring practices and so on. Be opening to trying new things, see what works and what doesn't – and let your employees do the same. It's all about encouraging ideas. *Forbes*, Jan. 16, 2021

The Nuclear Effect: The 6 Pillars Of Building A 7+ Figure Online Business

By Scott Oldford

As the explosive name hints, *The Nuclear Effect* is all about chain reactions and finding positive results. Author Scott Oldford brings years of experience to the table in *The Nuclear Effect: The 6 Pillars Of Building A 7+ Figure Online Business* – a relevant book during this time when having an online presence is more important than ever.



Learn the truths about online marketing and foundational principles that entrepreneurs often miss. Oldford's six pillars are practical, accessible and necessary for your own chain reaction of success.

April 2021



This monthly publication provided courtesy of Chris Schalleur, CEO of Christo IT Services.

“As a business owner, you don't have time to waste on technical and operational issues. That's where we shine! Call us and put an end to your IT problems finally and forever!”



What You Need To Do Before Committing To A New VoIP System

There comes a time when every business needs to invest in a phone system: they're buying a new phone system for their new location or they're upgrading from an older system. Regardless of the reason, they're ready to make the commitment.

Your phone connects you to your customers, so you need it to be reliable. You want it to have a specific set of features (such as voicemail, call waiting, call forwarding, conferencing, recording, etc.) and you want your investment to be supported for years to come. The question you have is, “Where do I begin?”

First and foremost, finding the right phone system can be a pain. Doing research online leaves you sifting through site after site as you look for answers only to find way too much information – and most of it isn't worth your time.

As a business, you're about to drop serious money on a new phone system, so you want to know you're getting what you pay for. Unfortunately, the phone system business is a competitive one, which means it's hard to find websites, reviews and data that isn't biased or skewed in some way. There are countless websites featuring deals that aren't really deals, or websites hosting reviews sponsored by a phone service provider. This isn't helpful.

So, what is helpful? Here's what you need to know.

Most phone systems are essentially the same. There may be a few features that vary from system to system, but most VoIP systems will all have the most important features demanded by businesses. Your best bet is

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to define your phone needs *before* you start searching for a system. Chances are it won't take long to find what you're looking for – if you ignore the clutter.

What you really want to find is a stellar service provider. You might get caught up in trying to find the best phone with the best features, but none of that matters if you don't get good service to go along with it. You need someone who will be with you every step of the way, from setup and installation to configuration and the all-important support.

You need someone you can rely on. That way, if anything goes wrong or you have questions, you have someone you can call. The fact of the matter is that most people

“Your best bet is to define your phone needs before you start searching for a system.”



aren't and never will be VoIP or phone system experts. Business owners have too much on their plates to learn – from scratch – about a new phone system.

This leads to the questions you should be asking before you commit and buy a new system:

- Who is setting up my new phone system?
- Will they customize it for my specific needs?
- How do I get help if my phone system stops working?
- Who do I call if I have additional questions?

As you vet potential vendors, get exact and direct answers. If they beat around the bush, that's a red flag. They should be able to answer all of your questions in a language you understand. If they don't answer your questions, or you aren't happy with the answers, find a different vendor.

There are many vendors who will send you a system and leave the rest up to you. If you

know what you're doing and have the time to set it up, it's no big deal. But that isn't most of us. And forget about support. If anything goes wrong, you're on your own.

The best thing you can do when searching for a new VoIP phone system is to find an honest, reputable, local phone system reseller that you can verify will do the following:

- Set up the system.
- Customize the system for your business's specific needs.
- Offer personalized and continuous support and training.

In most cases, the answer lies with a dedicated and experienced IT services firm that knows technology. This is the kind of company that not only checks the boxes but can also ensure that your system works with your network without any hiccups.

The bottom is this: Do your research. Ask questions, get answers and be confident in your decision before handing over the credit card and signing on the dotted line. You'll be much happier that you did!

SHINY NEW GADGET OF THE MONTH
Ember Temperature Control Smart Mug

Porcelain mugs are so 20th century! Meet the Ember Temperature Control Smart Mug – a mug that gives you more options than any mug ever.

What's the big deal, you ask? The Ember keeps your drink – coffee, cocoa, tea, milk, etc. – at the exact temperature you want, between 120–145 degrees Fahrenheit. You can also control the mug from your smartphone – adjust the temperature, set notifications and more. The Ember mug is hand-wash safe as well.



The mug itself includes a 1-hour battery to keep your beverage hot on the go, or you can use the included charging coaster to keep your beverage hot all day long. Find the Ember mug on Amazon or learn more at Ember.com.

It's Time To Uninstall Adobe Flash Player



On Dec. 31, 2020, Adobe dropped support for their Adobe Flash Player platform. For 25 years, Flash Player had been an integral part of the internet. It gave webpages an extra oomph in the form of interactivity. It came in the form of video, audio, games, buttons and much more. It laid the foundation of what much of the internet is today.

But Flash Player had a dark side. It was a security nightmare. Hackers and cybercriminals routinely exploited Flash and put countless users and websites at risk. Over the years, security experts tried to get people to uninstall Flash, but the platform persisted. Until now. If you still have Adobe Flash on your computer, take a minute to uninstall it.

Cartoon Of The Month



“Don't use your dog's name as a password.”

Pink Goldfish
True Differentiation In The Marketplace

Consider the following: *P Is For Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever* by Raj Haldar, Chris Carpenter and Maria Beddia teaches kids and readers that P is for Pterodactyl, K is for Knight, and U is not for You.



P Is For Pterodactyl is also in the top 100 books purchased on Amazon. People are buying this book in droves. Why is that?

It's actually fairly simple. It **deviates** from what we have seen as a successful alphabet book in the past. It strays from the standard and avoids following the fundamentally competitive strategies in the industry.

We always see companies and brands wanting to be the best – to provide all services possible. The concept of *Pink Goldfish* encourages a focus on your weaknesses, on those things you're terrible at. Why not be the worst at something if, in turn, it means you attract the customers you want and the culture you represent?

Here's another thing to consider: *kintsugi* is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery. Skilled artisans mend the broken pieces with lacquer or powdered gold or silver, making it more beautiful than before. It's an intentional approach to imperfection.

Pink Goldfish is also intentional imperfection. You illuminate the imperfections of your business or products.

The 7 Types of Pink Goldfish

- 1. Flaunting** ... to parade without shame. Flaunting is about being unapologetic about your organization's flaws. Take pride in those unique characteristics!
- 2. Lopsiding** ... take your weaknesses and exaggerate them. Most brands

try to be balanced and well-rounded. This type encourages you to be unbalanced and imperfect. You need to amplify your weaknesses.

3. Antagonizing ... is about polarizing, alienating, repelling and taunting. Do more of what *some* customers don't want and then brag about it.

4. Withholding ... is about limitations, restrictions, boundaries and constraints. It is about doing less of what your industry and competitors think you should be doing. This can involve fewer locations, fewer product offerings, fewer services, etc.

5. Swerving ... is about deviating, diverging and veering from competitors. As we see what successful companies are doing, it is natural to emulate them. When everyone is copying the leader, then the entire industry starts to look the same. Small deviations from the norm change things up.

6. Opposing ... is doing the exact opposite of what others are doing. It is being unlike the competition. Different from swerving, opposing is a complete break with convention.

7. Micro Weirding ... is the minuscule actions to differentiate your brand. You can set your brand apart with some cohesive master plan; you can be just a tiny bit weird.



Andy Bailey is the founder, CEO and lead business coach at Petra, an organization dedicated to helping business owners across the world achieve levels of success they never thought possible. With personal experience founding an Inc. 500 multimillion-dollar company that he then sold and exited, Bailey founded Petra to pass on the principles and practices he learned along the way. As his clients can attest, he can cut through organizational BS faster than a hot knife through butter.

Free Report Download: If You Are Considering Cloud Computing For Your Company, DON'T, Until You Read This...



If you are considering cloud computing or Office 365 to save money and simplify IT, it is extremely important that you get and read this special report: **“5 Critical Facts Every Business Owner Must Know Before Moving Their Network To The Cloud.”**

This report discusses in simple, nontechnical terms the pros and cons of cloud computing, data security, how to choose a cloud provider and three little-known facts that most IT consultants don't know or won't tell you about cloud computing that could end up causing you MORE problems and costing you more money than you anticipated. **Even if you aren't ready to move to the cloud yet**, this report will give you the right information and questions to ask when the time comes.

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