

QUICK STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY (to get you thinking)

How to use this 'quick survey'

This survey concentrates primarily on the “revenue generation” aspects of your business – because the most important thing any business must do is to deliver, in the most effective manner, goods or services to ‘earn’ revenues that exceed costs (ie to make a profit).

The survey is also designed to be quick and easy to complete. Do only those bit you want or you feel are relevant to you, preferably in small sections at a time to maximise concentration. But really focus on the answers and, if you are not maximising those aspects of your business, think seriously about the remedial actions and consequences needed to take you forward.

How to use the form – Simply read the review question – write in your answer and, if on track, tick the ‘on track’ column and perhaps add a few comments or ‘memo notes’. If you are not ‘on track’, put a cross in the ‘on track’ column – make your comments as to why (ie what’s stopping you or taking you ‘off track’?) and then VERY IMPORTANTLY decide how, or what remedial action you need, to bring you back on track towards achieving maximum business performance and put the date by which you will implement the corrective processes. Use the well know acronym ‘SMART’ (see end of survey for details if you are not familiar with this process)

Review your survey and update it on a quarterly basis – and ‘share’ your problems AND progress with someone (trusted) for best results

Before starting, **please note** that the questions, other than being grouped, are not in any specific or meaningful order – also, this document is amended from time to time, with questions being changed or added to. Rather than comprehensively covering everything, the questions intentionally cover basics – otherwise the survey become less generically relevant to other users. However each section has several ‘spare boxes’ at the end for you to add extra questions that you may feel are specific and important to you.

Overview Section

Review Question	Short Answer	On track?	Comments	Remedial Action and completion date
What initially got me started in my business (motivation, occurrence, reason, etc.)?				
When I first started, where did my customers come from and what process, method or action did I use to attract my customers?				

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Why did customers originally buy from me?				
Why do customers buy from me now?				
What primary method of generating customers was used to build my business?				
Which of my marketing or sales efforts brought in the bulk of my sales/clients? What percentage of my business comes from this?				
How well-connected or how involved am I with my customers at the sales or transaction level (do I still sometimes take orders, or sell, or follow-up)?				
What ongoing sales efforts do I personally perform today? How do these functions differ from those I performed when I started my business?				
Where do my customers come from specifically (demographics)?				
What do I believe my greatest single competitive advantage is?				

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What aspect of my business, product or service am I most proud of?				
If I had a magic wand, would I rather attract more new customers or collect more money from my existing customers, and why?				
Who else benefits from my success? (excluding my customers, my employees and my family members)				
How many of my suppliers would be motivated to help me grow my business more because it will directly benefit them at a very high level? Who are they?				
When I create a new customer for my business or profession, who else have I indirectly created a new customer for?				
What is my vision for my business for the next: 6 months 1 year 3-5 years 10 years and beyond				
What or where is my biggest opportunity that will help me achieve this vision?				

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General Marketing Information

Review Question	Short Answer	On track?	Comments	Remedial Action and completion date
Who is my target market and how did I arrive at it?				
Describe what my business does completely (what I sell, how I sell it, and who I sell to by industry, commercial category or specific niche).				
What is my business philosophy as it relates to my customers?				
How have my methods for doing business, or the product or service line(s) changed since the inception of my business?				
What is my greatest strength, and is it consistent with this opportunity?				

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<p>What are my sales per employee? Is that above, below, or equal to my industry average and what are the steps I am taking (or going to take) to improve it?</p>				
<p>What is the “lifetime value” of my typical customer (i.e. how much revenue will he/she generate for me over the entire period he/she does business with my company)?</p>				
<p>What is the biggest customer complaint about my company, and how does my company address this problem?</p>				
<p>What is my Unique Selling Proposition or USP (why do my customers buy from me – what is it about my product and/or service that distinguishes me from my competition? I may have more than one for different product/service lines or segments of my business.)?</p>				
<p>Is my USP a consistent theme in all of my marketing and sales efforts? If yes, how, and if no, why not?</p>				

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<p>Briefly describe my marketing program or marketing mix (all the different types of marketing I use and how they interrelate – i.e.; yellow pages, spot advertisements, direct mail, direct sales, telemarketing, internet, etc.).</p>				
<p>Who are my biggest competitors and what do they do or offer that I do not?</p>				
<p>What steps do I take to offset their advantage? Are they working? If not, what needs to be changed?</p>				
<p>What is my competition's biggest failing, and how do I specifically fill that void?</p>				
<p>Do I use direct response marketing concepts (those designed to induce an immediate and measurable response)? If no, why not?</p>				
<p>How much of my time each month do I devote to marketing? Should I do more?</p>				
<p>Do I have a marketing director? If so, describe his/her primary responsibilities and duties:</p>				

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Do I have a written marketing plan that I adhere to? If so, explain it:				
Is the plan based on a fixed budget (i.e. £1,000 per month in the newspaper), or is it a variable percentage of sales?				
What do my customers really want (be specific, don't just answer "a quality product or service")? How do I know?				
Do customers buy from me exclusively or do they also patronize my competitors? What steps can I take to get the main portion of their business?				
Do I provide incentive bonuses to my employees for creating new and better marketing methods for my company?				
What's my market potential (universal) and my current share of that market?				
What are the ways I have used to obtain my existing customers (from best to worst)?				
What does it cost me to get a new customer? (i.e. if I ran an advertisement that cost £1,000 and I acquired two new customers, my cost would be £500)				

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<p>What is the average sale and profit generated from each new customer in the first year, and how is that information useful in my overall marketing strategy?</p>				
<p>What is my biggest and best source of new business, and am I doing everything possible to secure this business? If no, why not?</p>				
<p>What has been my biggest marketing success to date (defined as a specific promotion, advertising campaign, telemarketing script, etc.) and am I still using it?</p>				
<p>What is my biggest marketing problem or challenge today? Describe it in its entirety as candidly and directly as possible, including personal, financial, and transactional implications it may impose.</p>				
<p>How many better ways could I reduce the risk of transaction, lower the barrier of entry or reduce the hurdle for my customer, client or patient to make it easier for that person to do business with me?</p>				

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After the initial sale, are there systematic, formal methods I use to communicate and resell my customers? If so, what are they? If not, should there be?				
Do I have a systematic back-end (selling my own or others' products to existing customers)? Describe how it works:				
What problem does my product or service solve for the customer? Describe my customers' needs and the positive results my product/service provides?				
Do I have an adequate supply of customer testimonials, and is there a system in place for their capture? Are they written, on audio tape or video tape, and how are they used in my marketing?				
In what ways, if any, are the testimonials dramatic, dynamic and compelling to others?				
Describe the best specific achievement I have produced for one of my customers				

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Do I actively solicit referral business? If so, how does it work, and if not, why not? (Other than BNI or other networking groups)				
Have I ever tried to reactivate my former customers and non-converted prospects?				
Have I ever tried selling my non-converted prospects to my competitors?				
Do I make consistent efforts to communicate with and educate my customers about what my company is doing to help them? How formal, informal, or systematic is my process?				
In what ways do I try to up-sell and/or cross-sell to my customers?				
Are there other ways or different products/services I could be selling but am not?				
Do I need to make money on first-time buyers, or am I satisfied with only making it on the back-end (reorders)?				

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Do 80% of my sales come from 20% of my customers? What are the implications of my particular ratios?				
Do I ever barter my products, services or assets with other companies in exchange for their products, services or assets? Explain how it works:				
Have I used bonuses in my sales/marketing propositions? If so, how did it affect the response?				
What kind of guarantee or warranty do I give my customers, and how does it compare with my competitors or with the industry at large?				
What is my customer attrition rate? Is that normal for my industry?				
If it's too high, what do I think is the reason?				
If it's lower than average, why?				
How can my customer attrition rate be improved (be specific)?				

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Sales

Review Question	Short Answer	On track?	Comments	Remedial Action and completion date
If I have a sales force, how are they compensated?				
Do I have a sales manager? Describe his/her duties and objectives, and how they coincide and fit with the overall marketing strategy.				
Have I tried different types of compensation programs? How did they affect sales?				
If I use another direct sales firm (independent sales reps, dealers, manufacturers reps) have I ever compared the results to an inside or outside sales force?				
How do I capture the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all my customers and prospects? Do I use them in my marketing programs?				

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What is my selling season, if any, and am I actively looking to sell other complimentary products or services during the slower periods? If so, how do they interrelate?				
What is my gross and net income per salesperson? What are the methods I can use to improve it?				
How much time do I personally devote to sales or salespeople?				
What is my average order amount, and what are the steps I can take to increase it?				
Do I do anything at the point of sale to increase the order or add on other products or future products or services (up-sell)? If so, what?				
How much professional sales training have I had, and what type of training do I offer my salespeople (both junior and senior)?				
How long does it take me to fill an order after I receive it, and if I improved it would it have a dramatic effect on my sales?				
Is “buyers remorse” a problem for my customers, and if so, how do I overcome it?				

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Do my customers feel my customer service department is prompt and courteous?				

Advertising

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How do I advertise				
Is my advertising working? How do I know?				
Do I use two-step advertising (i.e. step one generates qualified leads, step two converts those leads to customers)? If so, describe it				
What's my conversion ratio (in other words, out of every "x" leads I get "y" customers or sales), and what are the different techniques I have used to improve it?				

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What is my advertising cost per sale (i.e. when I run an ad that cost £1,000, I generate £ "x" of sales)? Have I tested different approaches to increase this number?				
Do I use a conversion kit (a package of follow-up materials) to convert prospects to sales? If so, describe it. If not, describe the steps I take to convert a prospect.				
Do I test the different aspects of my advertising? What do I test? eg Headlines, Copy, Offers, Prices, Size and Position, Media used				
If so, what have my tests shown me that I didn't know before?				
What is the return on investment for my mailings, and how do I think it can be improved				
How much prospecting mail do I drop each month? To whom, and why?				
Do I use a list broker? If not, where do I get my names from?				

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How often do I mail to my own list of customers?				
How often does a typical customer buy from me?				

CONGRATULATIONS!

Just by completing this survey about yourself you have placed yourself ahead of most business owners in the world – those who never take the time out of their business to think deeply about their business, individuals (many of whom are your competitors) who spend so much time working “in” their businesses that they never take the time to work “on” their businesses.

Notes

SMART

This acronym stands for being ‘Specific’, ‘Measurable’, ‘Achievable’, ‘Realistic’, and ‘Timed’. In other words, the solution “increase revenues” needs to be replaced by (for example) “a 10% increase in revenues can be achieved by employing, from next month, a salesman specifically to cover residential homes in the ‘Highlands’ area (approx 7,000 homes requiring 3% conversion rate to meet target)”