

Avoid growing pains.

Ouch! Growing up was hard enough thanks. Today, as business owners, we can implement smart strategies and enjoy the growth.

Dean Parker

You know what it's like when you're busy. Your desk is a mess, your to-do list endless. You've stretched yourself too thin. You feel you're not achieving anything. The best way to get back on top of things is to focus strategies that will give you the most return.

All organisations aim to grow, but growth must remain focused. Growth strategies must be implemented carefully. If you lose focus on what you do best, and on your ideal [profitable] customers are, things will begin to get messy.

Initially it may seem easier to grow by adding new products or services to your range. This may not always be the best growth strategy to adopt. You may be wasting your time and money. Just because you are successful in one category [eg: flavoured milk] does not mean you will be successful in others [eg: flavoured yogurt]. Why? There's already a leader in flavoured yogurt and its going to cost a lot to attract their customers. You are not seen as a yogurt supplier which means it will take a lot of time and money to educate and convince customers to switch.

When it comes to competing within your own, established category, if you are not the leader, you won't get there by simply copying what they do. In marketing, it's all about perception. In the minds of your customers, the leader does the job the best. To motivate customers to switch, you must focus on offering an alternative [and better] solution to your category leader. Focus on one benefit that the leader may not be promoting. Put yourself in your customers' shoes and think "What's in it for me." If you're a carpet cleaner, it may be a simple message as "We turn up on time". Focus on this benefit and you're giving customers a valid, memorable reason to switch.

If you try to speak to everyone in the market, chances are, not everyone will hear you. If you're speaking to people who don't need or understand your message, then they won't respond and you're wasting your money.

To make your message more effective, identify your specific customers and tailor your message to speak directly to them. When customers are looking for a photographer, who will they choose? If they want to have a photo of their children, they'll most likely go to a photographer who specialises in photographing children. How many brides do you know go to photographers that are not wedding specialists? A specialist presents a reduced risk. Specialists speak directly to target markets. Specialists help motivated potential customers to purchase. Become a specialist. It's a relatively easy strategy to adopt.



To help you grow with focus, have a marketing plan created. It will probably be cheaper and more effective if you outsource this job to a professional. Your plan shouldn't be a long winded version of War & Peace. A marketing plan only needs to be a few pages long. This means you can easily refer to it and maintain focus on marketing activities. Don't forget to include a definition of who your core customers are. This will help you understand who you must speak to. Refer back to your plan regularly, remain focused and prepare yourself for growth.

* ENDS *

Dean Parker combines 15 years of marketing experience with a Masters of Marketing degree to help small/medium business owners maximise their profit.

Four P's Marketing Solutions assists small business with all marketing activities including planning, corporate branding, website content, trade shows, advertising and various promotional strategies.

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