

THE
**HEALTHY
BUSINESS**

SHAPE UP, SURVIVE
& THRIVE

A GET-FIT PROGRAM
FOR SMALL BUSINESS

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Q&A PUBLISHING

Chapter 1: Assessment

Set Your Goals

You started your business with great excitement and expectations. Maybe you prepared a business plan; maybe you just jumped in and got started. Now, after the first couple of years, the excitement has waned, the income hasn't met expectations and you've started to wonder if you made the right choice. At 3 a.m., the worries hit, where you wake up and can't get back to sleep because you're thinking about what needs to be done, how the bills will be paid and what you would do if you lost your business.

It's time to leave your current path and follow one that will create your ultimate "healthy business." With a regular fitness program and the right tools, your business can thrive. But before embarking on any new program, you need to start to look at your current level of fitness and why you want to change. Without powerful motivation, you are likely to read this book and take maybe one idea and implement it in your business, and then wonder why you still aren't as successful as you'd like.

Signing on for a gym membership doesn't do much for your abs — you actually have to go to the gym and work out. But when you are feeling sluggish in the morning you need a powerful motivation to get you into your sweats and out the door. Give your business the same attention you would any fitness program, and use your financial statements to measure your results.

The Three T's

We are assaulted every day with the Three T's – thoughts, toxins and traumas. From the moment we wake up worrying at 3 a.m., we entrepreneurs are at risk. We need a consistent strategy to prevent the Three T's from sabotaging the health of our businesses.

Negative thoughts need to be confronted and changed to positive, immediately.

Toxins include the people who create negative results, from the customer who lies about the check in the mail to the staff person

Getting Out Gracefully

Tale: John's company sold a machine to a customer known in his industry for bluster and bad manners. The customer called the next day to complain about the equipment, in such an ugly manner the receptionist burst into tears. John's response? He immediately went to the customer's place of business, walked over to the machine and started to replace it in its original box. The customer started swearing and telling John he just needed better directions for use. John calmly replied, "I wouldn't want an unhappy customer." And left.

The customer received his credit note and no more was heard from him. Two years later the same company moved close to John's business and placed an order with reception. John didn't refuse to do business with the company, he just quoted prices at three times the norm. The ex-customer got the message, and John saved himself a bundle when that same toxic individual did a midnight flit and declared bankruptcy a few months later.



who complains about everything from the quality of the coffee to the requirements of the job. These people need to be confronted and either change their ways or leave. Immediately.

The toxic customer is confronted with the reality of the situation by immediate response – an offer to drop by and pick up a check, a discussion of the value of the product delivered. This is an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with your customer. If you can't turn it around, change the situation by shifting the customer to cash on delivery (COD) terms or raising prices – the polite way to let a customer disappear.

Business traumas for the small business owner come in myriad forms – the late delivery of product, a client canceling an appointment too late to book another, staff calling in sick on the busiest day of the week or a burst pipe flooding the office over the weekend. What to do?

You know it – confront the problem and find a way to change it into a positive experience. Late delivery gives you a chance to call the customer and chat about other requirements that you might fill. A free hour allows you to work on a new marketing plan that attracts clients who make an appointment with you a priority. A missing staffer lets you get out front and center and chat with customers while explaining the staff problem in a humorous way. And that burst pipe – well, it gives you an opportunity to clean out old files, put in new carpet and give the office a fresh coat of paint.

Albert Einstein once said, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” When your business experiences any of the Three T's:

- Stop;
- Take the time to understand the problem;
- Confront the problem;
- Make a plan;
- Change what you are doing.

The Downward Spiral Of An Unhealthy Business

Stay vigilant for the signs of an emerging problem – these are the

alarm signals that range from receivables more than 90 days old to staff who no longer smile at customers. Fight the resistance to change that keeps you from dealing with problems. Couch potatoes need to move to exercise; business owners need to look at the consequences of inaction to avoid the flab.

Signs of poor health in your company: credit dries up, suppliers put you on COD terms and your employees send out resumes.

If you continue to resist taking a hard look at what's not working, exhaustion starts to set in, making it harder to confront and change. Get help fast – a mentor, a cheerleader, someone who is on your side and will help you realistically face your options.

Picking up this book is a great first step to halting problems in their tracks. Look at it as buying a gym membership: you will only see an improvement if you are willing to do the work.

A healthy entity needs all the parts working well and working together.

The Business Plan Revisited

When you started your business, you may have prepared a business plan. It may have been a simple cash flow projection to ensure your business was viable, or a sophisticated package including marketing plans, human resources, industry specifics and full projected financial statements for the next five years. If you didn't prepare any plans, now's a good time to start. If you did, it's time to revisit, rewrite and rededicate yourself to a plan that will work.

When the business is just in your head and your heart, it is easy to picture everything going well. Customers line up to buy your service or product, expenses are reasonable, suppliers love you and cash flow is a positive thing.

If you enjoy what you've read so far, look at purchasing a copy of the book and get ready to be as successful as you wish.