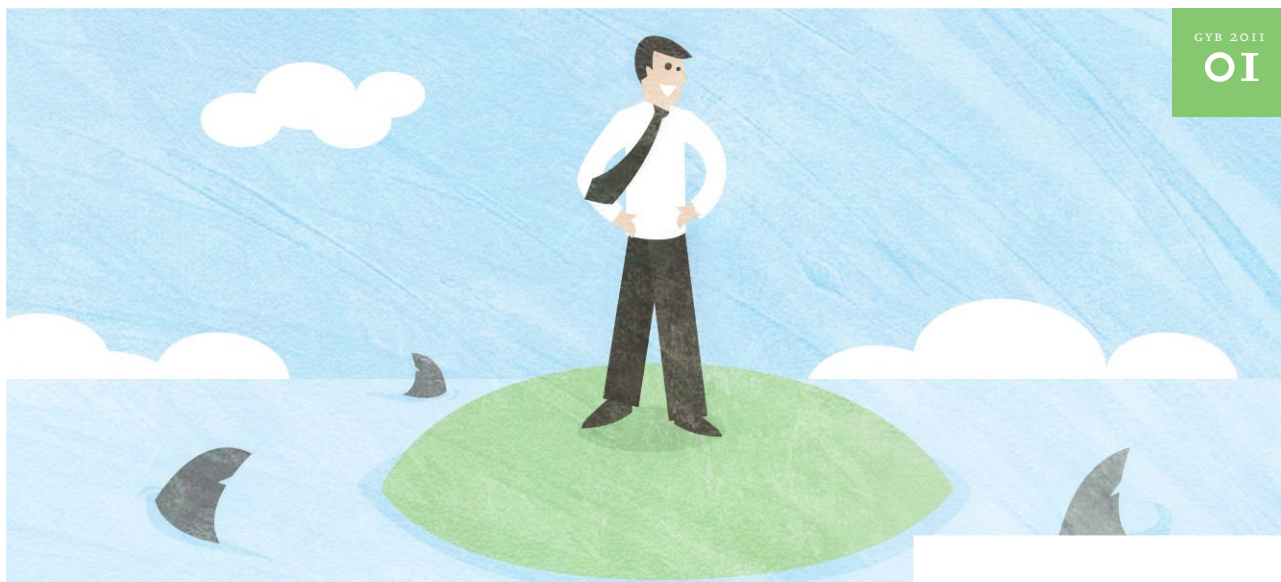




GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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Better IT Security – For Less

The dangers of the internet are real and multiply every year. Viruses, Trojans, worms, hackers, phishing, spearphishing - the number and type of attacks by organised crime syndicates are growing so quickly that the actual figures become a little meaningless. Some perspective is offered by law enforcement agencies which estimated that by 2009 the profits from computer crime, estimated at US\$1 trillion, had surpassed those of the illegal drug trade.

Firms have traditionally reached for a box of anti-virus software for team members' computers and a firewall for the network connection. Both defences require constant updating by IT security vendors to ensure they contain a database of the latest and most dangerous threats. If you fail to update your computer every day, a tearaway, newly-launched virus can slip past your defences and steal precious information.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

For many firms there is a more effective way of guarding your computers - and it could cost you a lot less. Most of the big names in IT security such as Symantec, McAfee and Trend Micro have set up data centers around the world to scan the

internet for malicious software (malware). The same firms that sell anti-virus software for your PC will sell you a service that uses these data centers to filter out all the malware and spam passing through your internet connection before it reaches your business.

“If you fail to update your computer every day, a tearaway virus can slip past your defences and steal precious information.”

This approach is far more effective because it draws on economies of scale. Other than banks or government agencies, a firm chooses the level of security in part by how much it can afford to spend on a firewall or other security appliances. Even large firms will only be able to afford modest levels of protection compared to a data center containing the Rolls Royce versions of firewalls and intrusion-detection systems.

The data centers also receive instant threat updates and virus definitions. And because they scan such high volumes of internet traffic, new malware is easier to spot - sometimes within half an hour of their launch onto the internet. This means that the likelihood of a security breach is far lower than relying on a locally operated firewall.

Another attraction is the payment structure. Firms don't need to outlay thousands of dollars in capital to buy security appliances. Security-as-a-service contracts are charged on a per-user, per-month basis which shifts the cost of IT security to operational expenditure. Adding team members is as simple as dialling up the number of users.

Finally, you might experience a lift in the speed of your internet connection or network performance. More than 90% of email traffic is spam and stopping all that useless traffic in the data center will reduce the congestion caused when you receive and block all that spam in your own firewall.



The iPad as a Selling Tool

If you don't own an Apple iPhone, chances are you know someone that does. Make that several people, given the phenomenal rise of the smartphone to third place by global market share.

Apple's tablet, the iPad, has surpassed the success of the iPhone by rocketing to 93% of market share for tablet computers. For those who have reservations about Apple's tightly controlled IT platform a flotilla of competing tablets is arriving this year based on Google's Android.

What's all the fuss about? And why are big businesses rolling out the iPad by the hundreds or even thousands?

MORE THAN JUST A FAD

Tablet computers like the iPad can change the dynamic of a sales conversation. Let's look at a common sales scenario - the client presentation. The most common delivery for today's sales teams is to use a laptop to display a PowerPoint file or a website which is accessed using a wireless broadband dongle plugged into the laptop. The sales rep is ushered into the boardroom and takes a couple of minutes to prepare - find and load the PowerPoint file or wait for the dongle to connect to the internet - and then they

are off, clicking and talking while the customer leans back to watch the show.

A laptop works well enough in a client's boardroom and has done so for many years. However, it's highly impractical in most other situations, such as standing in a lift, waiting in a queue or manning a stall at an expo.

Say the client in the boardroom decides to take the rep on a tour of the office and runs into the managing director in the hallway. A rep holding a tablet computer in his hand can quickly show the presentation and seize the opportunity.

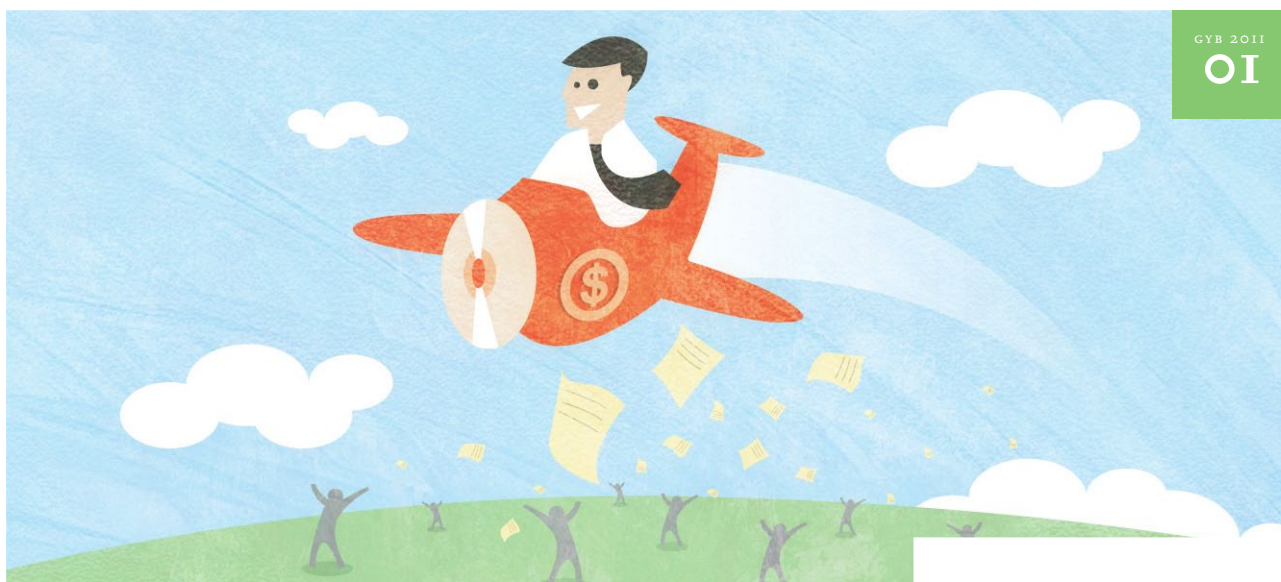
There's a physical intimacy in sharing tablet computers, too. The iPad's screen automatically swivels to the upright position if it is turned upside down, so the tablet can be passed over a table far more easily than rotating a laptop. Tablet computers are also far more engaging because they are generally held much closer to the face. This effectively makes a 10-inch screen seem much larger.

The iPad's high-definition screen does an excellent job of displaying still images and video, and the multi-touch screen opens the door to interactive programs.

"Tablet computers like the iPad can change the dynamic of a sales conversation."

Multimedia presentations can have much greater impact as a result. Lastly, tablets tied to the mobile phone network never need to pause to make a connection (assuming there is reception); the internet is always available.

Just to be clear; an iPad or Android-based tablet won't turn a bad sales presentation into a good one. However, they can make the slightly formal and tired PowerPoint-by-laptop a more engaging and enjoyable experience.



Time to Let Others Know How Good You Are

Advertising to your target market the products or services you sell is a great way to inform potential clients of what you have to offer. But every claim made in your advertisement is coloured by the knowledge that you are spruiking products for financial gain. Accordingly, a potential client will keep in the front of their mind that the promised relationship is between a seller and a buyer. As the famous saying goes, caveat emptor - "buyer beware". You can't trust everything that you read in advertising.

However, every firm is sitting on a highly valuable asset which, if used properly, has the potential to dramatically increase the number of new clients. That's right - a list of satisfied clients.

THE SECRET BEHIND STAR RATINGS

Potential clients like to read about satisfied clients because it is seen as an independent verification of the claims made in an ad. When you read how much someone has been satisfied by a spending decision, it raises confidence that the decision is a good one for other people too. And instead of a conversation between a seller and a buyer, you now have a buyer talking to a potential buyer

about the positive experience they enjoyed with your firm.

The power of recommendations is evident in the way e-commerce sites place user reviews or star ratings right at the top of the page next to the 'buy' button. Potential clients believe in safety in numbers, and if 40 out of 50 people have given a product five stars they will feel reassured that buying that product is highly likely to be a wise decision.

COLLECTING FEEDBACK

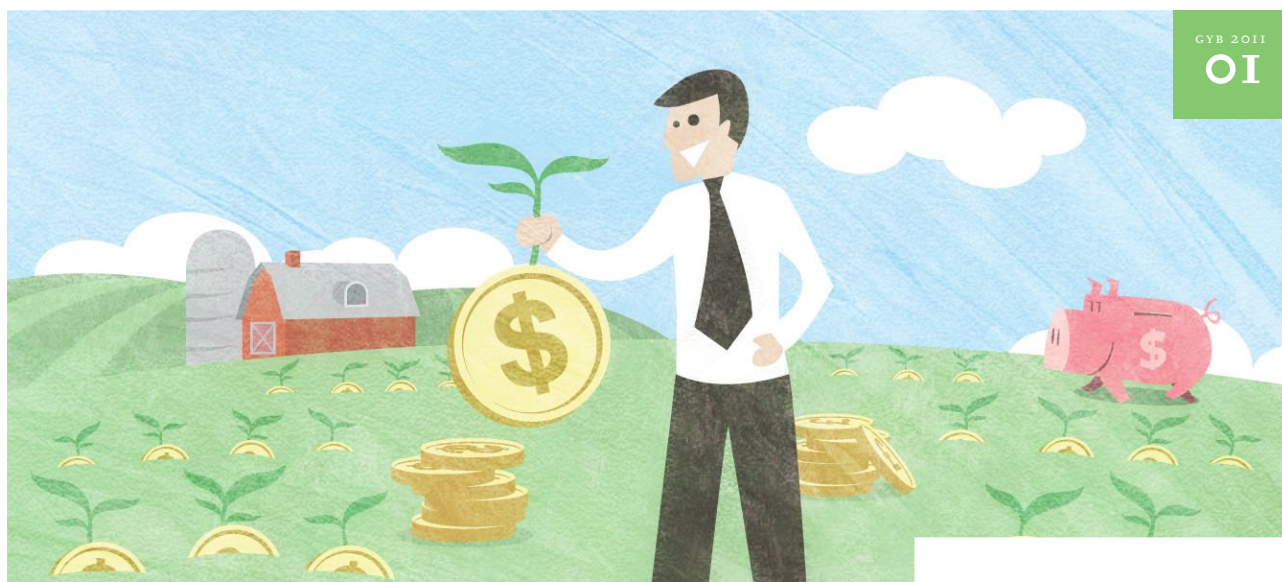
Satisfied clients are a fantastic resource because you already know who they are - it's information you freely own. There's nothing stopping you from emailing your best clients tomorrow for their opinions, although you might get a better response if you request feedback personally. Always ask their permission first before you include a testimonial; some clients might not consent to their name being used in a marketing campaign.

The first step is often the hardest. Collecting client satisfaction ratings can be a revealing and not always positive experience.

Some clients might love the product but have reservations about the timeliness in delivery, the quality of your website or the attitude of your sales team.

Recommendations consist of two elements - the message itself and the identity of the referrer. Both are important. It's often interesting to look at the 'puffs' on the back of a book jacket; sometimes the bigger 'names' are quoted first, even if their recommendations aren't as glowing.

Once you have a selection of short, snappy quotes from reputable clients, add them to any location a client might see them. That might mean your website, business card, newsletter, in-store marketing, pamphlets, corporate t-shirts. Good news deserves to be shared.



The Solution to Healthier Sales

Good times always feel like they will last forever. However, there will come a time when clients might be harder to find. The global financial crisis and its consequences showed that when an economy sours, firms without robust processes tend to founder. Falling sales is a typical sign.

Firms can reduce the effect of external conditions by working out where future sales will come from and how to win them. This process is called building a sales pipeline because it lets you track a potential client from the first point of contact through to a completed sale and beyond.

A properly developed sales pipeline will define how many sales you aim to close in a month, quarter or year. Looking back at your track record you can then make forecasts about the number of sales and the following revenue and profit you will generate. In other words, it helps you measure firm performance.

A sales pipeline will reveal interesting facts about the skills of your sales team. A salesperson might be great at finding new customers but terrible at closing

the sale; another might take twice as long to close as his or her colleagues. Salespeople can undergo training to help them improve problem areas or you could hire someone with complementary skills to your existing team.

“The more information your sales pipeline delivers, the more tightly you can focus on chasing the most profitable sales.”

A pipeline can also enforce discipline in the sales process and find more sales from existing clients, which is often easier than acquiring new ones. Analysing the reasons for losing a sale can help you understand which questions will lead to a win.

Studying sales as they progress through a pipeline will show that not all sales are equal. Larger deals usually take more effort to win than smaller ones, and knowing the cost of making a sale is important in finding out how much profit you made in each sale.

The more information your sales pipeline delivers, the more tightly you can focus on chasing the most profitable sales. Then you can hand your sales team a detailed picture of your ideal client, where to find them and how to convince them to say yes.

THE VALUE OF RECOGNITION

The next time you make a public speech at a firm event don't forget to thank your team members. Businesses succeed because of the efforts of all team members working together, from the CEO to the receptionist. Showing them that you are aware and grateful for their contributions will foster loyalty and give them greater reason to continue giving.



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