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The Monthly Resource Guide For Startup Businesses

NEW BUSINESS

MINNESOTA



Secrets of Success

Special Report

Small businesses need all the help they can get to become successful. These experienced business pros, who share space at OffiCenters, share what they have learned about the patterns and behaviors that make for a successful business: **Juan Ramirez**, Marcelita's Cookies; **Dr. Rebecca Amstutz**, Perpetual Motion Animal Chiropractic; **Judy Zimmer**, Coachology; **Joey Pepka**, Peptronics; **Lori Spiess**, OffiCenters; **Karlen Padayachee**, Encompass Law; **Cathy Paper**, Rock Paper Star; **Michael Thannert**, Whizkids; **Amy Lokken**, MÜD Modular Marketing Systems and **Ben Theis**, Skol Marketing.

Secrets of Success

Do You Have the Habits and Attitudes that Are the Hallmark of Successful Businesses?

Publishers Note:

Are there really secrets to success in business? Well, since success can often be elusive, some struggling entrepreneurs probably believe it to be true. The reality is that success has a signature. There are certain behaviors and attitudes that you can copy and incorporate into your businesses that can help you be more successful.

New Business Minnesota approached the experts on these pages to share their expertise and offer insights that every new and small business can benefit from.

The authors will share more information in a free interactive workshop this Fall. For more information, go to www.newstartupmeetup.com.

Success Comes from Collaboration and Connections

Along the Way, Don't Forget the Value of Having Fun!

By **Lori Spiess**
OffiCenters

For more than 36 years I have observed thousands of new and small businesses up close.

As the founder of OffiCenters, I have provided them with office space, meeting rooms and support services to help them grow their businesses. They have told me their stories about their struggles and the challenges they faced.

I've had a front row seat in watching what it takes to succeed. Day in and day out, members of our community are interacting with me and my awesome team.

Today, we have representation from almost 1,200 coworkers who choose the option to work the way that works best for their business.

We have more than 300 businesses that make their home with us in a private, dedicated space and close to 700 businesses that choose the flexibility of working at any of our locations by using the drop-in coworking spaces and meeting and conference rooms by the hour. That is a whole bunch of people working awesome each day.

After a while, I can almost tell by their habits and attitudes which ones will make it and prosper and which ones need help to get back on track. Here is what I have learned about the secrets of success:

Attention to Detail

Successful people always sweat the details...all of the details. When it comes to appearance, it's not just how they look and dress that matters. It carries over to their business cards, their web site, letterhead and even the look of their invoices. Clients want to do business with people who are professional looking in all areas of their business.

People are always sizing you up as a business. If they see you don't mind the details, they figure you won't mind theirs either.

What will they think about you if you send out a newsletter filled with misspellings? Or a form letter that begins "Dear First Name"? Being careless sends the message that you couldn't care less.

Call To Action

Stop at any of our five locations and mention this article to schedule one hour of free conference room time.



Focused Priorities

Priorities can determine if your business will survive. When a business moves into one of our spaces, you can see what stuff they're bringing in.

Someone who got a business loan and then bought a big, fancy desk, an expensive chair and artwork is focused on the image of success.

The really successful ones have perspective. They begin with humble furnishings. The nice stuff comes later.

When your priorities are on your client first, you are on the right path. When scheduling a meeting with a client, ask what works for them. Don't tell them about your busy schedule and how you will try and fit them in around your kid's soccer game.

Show clients you care by being on time. Nothing is more insulting than someone who is always running late. That tells a client where they stand on your priority list.

Being an entrepreneur is selfless. If it's all about "me," you may not make it.

Be Decisive

As a business owner, you are where the buck stops. If you don't make a decision, no one else will. Needless hesitation can cost you money and lost opportunity.

Even on small matters, indecision has consequences. That's how you get piles of paper on

your desk; you decide not to decide what to toss or file. Just decide already. That's how you get rid of clutter and distractions. Check it off.

A business needs to keep moving forward and that requires decisions be made confidently and quickly. If you don't know the answer, give it your best guess. Leap. If you can't make decisions, you will never be successful.

Billing (Seriously)

Billing should be a no brainer, but for some business owners it is a chore they abhor. It is the number one thing a business owner has to do. Get your invoices out on time and collect the money from your clients. If you aren't comfortable, find someone to collect for you.

I work a lot with lawyers and other non-accountant professionals. The most common problems I hear from them are billing and collections. They get so busy with their practice that they wind up not invoicing for months.

Bottom line: no billing, no revenue, no business.

Isolation and Collaboration

Isolation isn't healthy. In prison, if they want to punish someone, they put them in the hole or the tank...isolation. Think about that for just a second.

When we choose to isolate ourselves, we don't realize how damaging it can be. If you work at home, get up, get dressed. Get out of the house. You'll find all kinds of energy you didn't know you had.

People catch energy from each other. In a collaborative environment you meet people every day. When I see people hang out together they have more sales and higher productivity.

It's hard to do that at home, which is why we invite all of our members into the workspaces for regular events, networking, game playing

Lori Spiess, owner of OffiCenters, is a long time Workspace Industry Professional, who has provided office solutions to thousands of small businesses for 36 years. She is a past president of the Global Workspace Association and has been a speaker and trainer for the Office Business Center Industry worldwide. OffiCenters has won the coveted Most Innovative Workspace Award for the design and community building aspects of her company. Lori is a winner of Minnesota's Real Power 50 award and is a longtime member of the New Business Minnesota Board of Advisors.

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Whizkids

By Michael Thannert

Michael Thannert is CEO of Whizkids, a managed IT, unified communications, and cloud services provider for small and medium-sized businesses. He can be reached at (612) 454-0401 or michael@whizkidit.com www.whizkidit.tech

I've spoken with hundreds if not thousands of business owners and their key personnel over my career, and I know one thing to be true: companies that embrace technology get ahead—and they get there faster.

As a managed service provider for small and medium business in the Twin Cities market, we work with clients to align technology with their organizational mission and goals. No client is the same. Each requires a different suite of technology, whether it be cloud-based solutions, security, managed IT, video conferencing, screen sharing, unified communications, or customized helpdesk support. We've seen over and over that how a company positions itself in relation to technology will undoubtedly influence its future.

Based on starting my own business, Whizkids, and helping bring IT solutions into other

startups, here are some of the secrets to success I've learned:

Start right. Invest in the tech tools your team needs, and do it today not tomorrow. In the early days of Whizkids, we invested in multiple, integrated, software tools that we knew were necessary to success. This allowed us to focus on growth and it prevented any interruption to our momentum later on.

Process. Create repeatable, scalable business processes that can be done by anyone who has that job in the future. Hold staff accountable for those processes – even if you're a one-person business, hold yourself accountable. Business processes are tied tightly to technology, which is another reason it's important you've invested in the proper tools straightaway.

Learn from others. Look at successful com-

panies in your industry and find out what technologies they use. Most industries these days have something industry-specific that is widely used, such as practice or patient management. If you're a small startup, there are often cost-effective cloud versions of these types of software that you can implement quickly and fairly easily.

Strategic vision. My most successful clients have a vision and detailed plan for how technology will help them meet organizational goals. If growth projections require them to add 20 employees in the next year, they've already called me for a technology plan and we've already had a strategy meeting. Technology must scale with your organization, and preparation is key.

The right partnerships. You can only be as good as your suppliers and vendors. You have to put faith in those relationships, so do your due diligence and interview different providers before making a decision. Find that right technology partner who will work with you when your small and be ready to meet your needs as your grow.

Right-sized tech. Choose wisely between cutting edge and bleeding edge technology. Bleeding edge can be exciting, but it's so new it may not have been fully tested yet. Manage your expectations and remember technology is imperfect. Invest in tech that is stable, tested, and resolves problems—not creates them.

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OffCenters - Continued from previous page

and more. The more connections you make, the better your business will become.

Have Fun

I have noticed that the most successful business people like to have fun. They have a lightness and an airiness about them as individuals and as an organization. It's not a party vibe, but a true enjoyment in what they do.

You can see it in their faces when they arrive in the morning. People who love what they do have a natural radiance. I make sure that all of our workspaces create an environment that supports positive energy.

That's why people do well here and thrive because nobody can be unhappy when they work with our group. It just isn't allowed. I've seen our Community Ambassadors pull smiles out of the sourest of the lot. It's just their job and they do it well.

We create opportunities for people to meet. We created collaborative spaces where you can take your nose off the grindstone and visit other members for a minute.

We lure members out for our workshops or for a chance to network or for a gathering that often includes donuts, lunch or even the adult beverages that are provided in the wine bar or Kegerator. (That's right, I said Kegerator.)

Today's workspaces include something for everyone and we are purposely raising the

fun factor. We spend too many hours working and everyone should be rewarded with great downtime. That is what makes a true WORK AWESOME experience.

We are a playground. Members come to work; share the sandbox. I love it when they bring a great attitude. When we play and work well with others, it doesn't get better than that.

Conclusion

The first secret to success is the most obvious: Hard work. The most successful are always in motion, taking calls, setting appointments, always being available for appointments. I see them burn the midnight oil. The hard workers are always successful.

Look at the people around you who seem to be on the right track. Emulate them. Copy their habits. That's what I've done my entire career, which has been dedicated to supporting the success of my clients. Successful people have habits and I have just named some of the biggest distinctions.

Lastly, WORK TOGETHER. Find a place that works for you and find great people to hang with.

This is the best time in my 36 years of business. CoWorking is not just for millennials. It works for everyone across the board. I see five generations of workers in my locations and that energy and experience helps everyone to

grow and look at their businesses in a different light.

Members with all levels of experience helping one another. Many have said they have grown and learned by having a built-in sounding board for vetting new ideas and programs.

I see members partnering to go after new business, creating partnerships and new products and services. Every day I get chills thinking about the community relations we are seeing formed before our very eyes.

My dream was to build a community where all are equal. I wanted to have an impact on their businesses, not by just supporting them, but by nurturing and helping build contacts.

We've created a directory that encourages everyone to buy from our community first, whenever possible. Because of this, in a survey we took last month, over 75 percent of our members say they have seen an increase in their bottom line.

And look at this issue! We all worked together to put together something awesome because we want to tell others that it is no secret that OffCenters helps to grow successful businesses! Stop by and see for yourself.

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MÜD Modular

By Amy Lokken

Amy Lokken, Inventor of MÜD Modular, is a Creative Rockstar who helps businesses be memorable by discovering their inner Rockstar. She can be reached at (715) 379-3148 or amy@mudmodular.com www.mudmodular.com

My product is a unique magnetic modular display system that helps showcase businesses in trade shows, office lobbies, presentations or just about any place where people gather.

The goal of my displays fit perfectly with my prescription for success: Be Bold. Be Innovative. Be Inspiring.

Today, you have under two seconds to have someone want to engage with you. I believe we are viewed from all angles. Snap judgments are made within the first 4 seconds and final judgments are made in under 30 seconds and often from 30 feet away, before we even have a chance to interact.

Here are some of my observations about my success and that of my clients:

Be Different. Don't be afraid to be different. Discover your inner rock star, that strong confident side of you that offers an element of surprise.

It's about being bold enough to make a great first impression, which in turn makes you memorable.

Be You. Just be yourself, otherwise you are trying to be someone else and risk coming off as unauthentic. If you are yourself, you will have no trouble being consistent.

Remove barriers. People often push others away. For trade shows, I want people to come into my space, so I don't have a table to block them. Some exhibitors act as if they are literally guarding their booth, which creates the exact opposite effect you want. People won't feel drawn in.

Focus. Don't try and be a jack of all trades as a business owner. You'll spread yourself too thin. Focus on what you do best and find other resources to handle the rest. If you aren't good at numbers, find someone who is. Truly successful people do only what they do best.

Stand out. Think outside the box...or the booth, in my case. You want to be surprising and

maybe a little daring. Beyond the trade show environment, I have clients use their displays to engage customers and prospects in unexpected settings such as in a building lobby, at a dentist's office and even a local fitness center.

Example: To promote advance ticket sales to a fitness expo, one client took her interactive booths into wellness and fitness facilities to promote her event. When you are surprising, people will remember you.

Who's in your orbit? Success to me is surrounding myself with like-minded individuals who really believe in lifting each other up and have the ability to see each other's value as a resource.

All of the people in my orbit have different approaches and personalities. It includes people I serve, those who are attracted to me, who want to be bold, innovative and memorable. Others are more reserved and want to blend into the background more, yet they bring valued experience to the table.

These people also motivate me, inspire me to be better. I get energized by being involved in good, quality networking groups and make sure that I get out and be a part of a community, like with the people at OffiCenters. It's a great organization to be a part of.

Participate. Whether it's your networking group, a professional association or community group, don't belong just to belong. You only get out what you put in. Give of yourself. Engage.

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Encompass Law

By Karlen Padayachee

Karlen Padayachee is the owner of Encompass Law, where he focuses on serving as a trusted business advisor to business owners and families in areas of corporate entities, business planning and succession and estate planning. He can be reached at (612) 708-5130 or karlen@encompasslawmn.com www.encompasslawmn.com

When I first started my law practice, I realized that for me to be successful, I'd first have to be true to myself. When you know who you are, you can focus on where you want to go.

That led me to business law and estate planning where I could develop ongoing relationships as a valued legal advisor.

Instead, I focused on entrepreneurs and how I could help them build and grow their business. That was a much better fit for my goals and values.

Based on my experience as a business owner and an advisor to other business owners, here are some key things I've learned about success:

Believe in yourself. Generally, you really have to believe in who you are, first and fore-

most. That will help you make a decision, stick to your guns and see it through. Have a vision of where you want to go, and believe in your ability to get there.

Value relationships. As a business owner, cultivating long-term relationships is critical. Take good care of your business relationships, and that includes clients, referral partners and suppliers. Don't burn bridges.

Anticipate problems. Many clients first come to me when facing a critical issue, but the truly successful ones consult with me before they get in trouble. They want to talk before making any big decisions and the want me to be part of the process.

They value me as a trusted business advisor and want help to avoid problems before sign-

ing a lease, hiring an employee, planning any transition or negotiation, etc.

Clarity/Explain. Any important part of what I do for clients is to take complex problems and make them understandable. The law doesn't have to be so complex if you boil it down to plain English.

Value. Value yourself. If you don't, you'll be undercutting yourself with clients. Confidently show them how their objectives will be achieved by working with you. Clients will be willing to pay what price you quote provided you deliver the value they expect.

They need to know what you bring to the table as a trusted business advisor, and a friend. The value is in the relationship.

Make things right. Even when you do the best job for a client, they may be disappointed. You have to manage that. I always try to understand all the issues so I can help give them realistic expectations.

Even when I've done a good job for them, there may be underlying emotional issues that leave them disappointed. Sometimes, to salvage a relationship I value, I've refunded money or offered free hours to resolve the issue.

If you treat clients or customers right, they will remember and appreciate you. Make things right for the sake of the relationship, even if you are in the right.

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Skol Marketing

By Ben Theis

Ben Theis is Director of Skol Marketing, a digital marketing agency specializing in web development, pay per click, SEO and search engine marketing, social media management for small businesses. He can be reached at (612) 787-SKOL (7565) or btheis@skolmarketing.com

You can find success with businesses in any market segment if you know how to meet their needs and keep business personal. That's been one of our key secrets of success.

At Skol Marketing, we specialize in micro businesses with 10 or fewer employees. They are on a journey and for them to feel comfortable having us along on the ride, we focus on building a strong business relationship.

When you do that, your client will have an easier time opening up to you. You'll get deeper into what they need now, later in the year and in five years.

And, yes, it gets personal. Some of my clients were at my wedding. We've tailgated together (Vikings... Skol!). Because of that personal approach, we also have a very high retention rate.

Strong relationships are the foundation, but here are some other secrets we've found.

Be flexible. To meet a client's needs, you need to be open to all solutions and go with what works best for them. By being flexible, we can find new opportunities and introduce some new twists.

In our world, there is old school marketing (direct mail, print advertising, etc.) and new school marketing (All things digital.) What has really made us successful, is being able to bridge the gap between the old and new schools to find what works.

Clarity over mystery. I want our clients to understand what is going on, so we demystify everything. We take a big subject and break it down into bite-sized pieces so they see how things work. Whether its Googly Analytics or SEO, we want clients to understand what it really means to their business.

Earn trust. Our clients know we are looking out for them. And they know they can pick

up the phone at any time and ask us questions about technology and digital marketing. We are their resource.

Be patient. We took on a client who really needed to get his business into the digital marketing age. At that time, however, he had never used email before. Fortunately, my team is really good at building trust and connecting at a personal level so they were able get him and his business up to speed.

Since then, we have increased his incoming calls and internet traffic, though we still have to remind him to use his email.

Find the right people to outsource to. I tried to do everything in the beginning. I wanted to cut costs, but finally realized I could make more by spending my time selling and growing the business. In hindsight, I would have hired a bookkeeper much sooner.

Commit to being current. My most successful clients understand that technology and marketing strategies are always changing and they have to change with it. If a business owner thinks he'll build a website and then he's finished, he won't last long.

We hold regular meetings to bring new ideas to our clients and look at what needs to be done. We create a plan that fits their resources of time, energy and money. And we focus on what they need now and later down the road. It's an ongoing process.

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Coachology

By Judy Zimmer

Judy Zimmer is president of Coachology, a coaching and public speaking consultancy firm serving business owners and executives in small to mid-size companies. She can be reached at (612) 396-7574 or Judy@coachology.us

When a typical executive coaching client first starts working with me, the word that comes up most often is "Stuck." They have experienced great success, and now for some reason they feel stuck.

Some part of their career has gotten complicated or become difficult. They are struggling. And I help them figure out how to get to what they say matters most.

I work with executives and business owners to help them create the best results for themselves and their company. My coaching is project based, so we agree up front on what they want to accomplish and on what time frame.

Here are some of the things I have learned

about success:

Three essential elements.

1) Be head over heels in love with what you do. It is imperative for me to love what I do. I get catapulted out of bed every morning, eager to meet with clients who are doing amazing things.

2) Have a proven system. For me, it's like making a recipe over and over again. I tweak the recipe to improve the outcome. Consistent. Reliable. Always improving. That's my brand.

3) I'm a lifelong student. Always be learning new things, about business, your personal brand and your clients. I bring a curious eye to the world of coaching. That's what success is all about.

Get unstuck. Many of my clients have been stuck for years. When they get unstuck, every area of their lives improves: work, home and life. They move from perspiration to inspiration. Everything works better including creating outstanding results.

Be humble and be honest with yourself. Acknowledge that the old formula of success isn't working and commit to doing whatever it takes to turn things around. That may mean asking for help or recognizing that a personal growth spurt is needed.

Change your mindset. Your mindset is like the operating principles you use to guide your decisions and actions. When your mindset is stuck, you are stuck. Coaches understand how mindset works and how you can change your mindset to get unstuck. When you shift your mindset, the whole world shifts.

The ultimate mindset question is "Who is it you want to be?" It is about design. Determine the goals you want to design and then make a path for it to come to you. Love your personal brand. Love your work. Be unstoppable.

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Rock Paper Star

By Cathy Paper

Cathy Paper is president of Rock Paper Star, a marketing, coaching and consulting firm that serves individuals and organizations to increase their exposure and results through book promotion, speaker development and executive network coaching. She can be reached at (612) 349-2744 or cathy@rockpaperstar.com

What struck me as I first started my business, was I was not very organized. I was going off in all directions. Though I was busy, I wasn't productive.

Then I met Lori Spiess of OffiCenters and became her client. Lori told me that the fish rots from the head down...I was the head and I was the problem. To become successful, I realized I'd have to invest time to become organized and to improve myself. And now, 10 years later, I'm much more and successful.

Here are some of the other things I've learned about the secrets of success:

Delegate. I had someone advise me to delegate anything under \$100 an hour, which was hard to do in the beginning. Now I use OffiCenters for all my admin support, such as scheduling meetings, entering informa-

tion in a database, etc. OffiCenters has been key to me staying organized.

I have the good fortune of having Harvey Mackay as a client. He told me, "We all have the same amount of time." So I have a delegation list of things that I will outsource when I can. There is no short cut to getting more time. You have to clear your plate to get more.

Build a strong network. Identify the top 25 people in your network: referral sources, trusted advisors, best customers, peers, prospects or friends. These are people who can have an impact in your business. Support them. Go to their events, "Like" their stuff on social media. Ask and give advice as needed.

Ask for the business. I used to just send out proposals and wait for a response. Or make a presentation and say Thank You as

I left. Then I started going into presentations with a proposal in hand and before leaving ask if they were ready to sign up. When you're face-to-face, ask for the business.

People appreciate that you take initiative. It's not rushing someone to say, "I want your business and took the liberty of preparing a proposal of how I can work with you and what I can do for you."

Humility. If you tell a prospect one or two things about how accomplished you are, that will help reassure them. If you do three or more, you risk crossing the line into excessive self-promotion. Be humble. Share your successes in moderation. And don't forget the little things that can help you connect, like sharing your home town, college, etc.

Embrace planning. To make the best use of my time, I plan daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly. It helps me know where to best spend my time and keeps me from chasing the next bright and shiny thing.

Seek help. A part of my business is coaching executives and business owners. They may need help with a book, marketing or executive coaching so they can present themselves better. Part of their success is they were willing to seek help to get stronger. As a business owner, you really have to always be looking at ways to improve yourself.

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Marcelita's Cookies

By Juan Ramirez

Juan Ramirez, a.k.a. Juan The Cookie Man, and his wife Marcie, owns Marcelita's Cookies, which makes delicious Hispanic gourmet cookies as corporate gifts and ship them to any city in the country. The personalized gift boxes also include gourmet coffee from Mexico, handcrafted coffee mugs and more. He can be reached at (612) 605-5634 or juan@marcelitascookies.com www.marcelitascookies.com

My secret to success is pretty simple: A cookie a day will keep the doctor a way. In all seriousness, Marcelita's Cookies is based on a family recipe perfected by my wife, Marcelita.

We discovered early that it's not enough to make the best cookie our customers will ever taste. We have to have outstanding packaging to truly impress the receivers in an elegant way, down to the last detail.

Every time we send a gift out, we put as much care into it as if it were a personal gift from us. Care is the most important ingredient. Most businesses only have one customer to take care of. We have two: our customers, who send the corporate gifts; and their customers, who receive them.

Here is what I have learned about the Secrets

of Success:

Be unique and memorable. Our clients send Marcelita's Cookies, because the unique gift helps them to distinguish themselves among competition.

We find that our clients like to stand out by sending our cookies at Thanksgiving or other special occasions. If you only send gifts at the end of the year, you can get lost in the shuffle.

The best gift is the unexpected gift. That's when you make the most impact.

Thank those who help you be successful. We focus on two primary markets. People who buy for family and friends, and business owners and professionals who buy cookies as "Thank You" gifts for customers, referral partners and high-value prospects.

You really have to take care of the 20 percent

of your customers who provide 80 percent of your revenue. You may not be able to do this for everyone, but you need to take care of those who are the foundation of your success. Say Thank You often.

Go the extra step. We personalize all the gift boxes with an elegant card that includes the sender's company logo, portrait and thank-you message. The objective is to wow their customers with a beautiful gift box and attention to detail that makes them feel very special.

In a very competitive marketplace, small things can really make a difference.

Reward customer loyalty. Show them you value their relationship. Business owners and professionals use Marcelita's Cookies as a reward for repeat business and for referral partners.

Our customers are also very creative. One business sent a box of cookies to a client with a very past due invoice. They got paid right away. In trying to get an appointment with a prospect that doesn't return emails and dodges phone calls, the cookies have proven to be great ice breakers and get the appointment.

You have to have a good team. We have a wonderful team of strategic suppliers -- our partners -- we rely on for branding, packaging, shipping, ingredients, online marketing and more. They have been awesome in supporting us. Nobody succeeds alone.

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Perpetual Motion Animal Chiropractic

By Rebecca Amstutz

Rebecca Amstutz is founder of Perpetual Motion Animal Chiropractic and provides certified chiropractic care to pets. She enjoys seeing the profound effects chiropractic has on the animals and the significance of what those results mean to their parents. She can be reached at (612) 709-2675 or info@perpetualmotionchiro.com www.perpetualmotionchiro.com

Like any new business owner I had a lot to learn when I started my animal chiropractic business. Fortunately I've been able to figure things out either on my own, through trial and error, following my vision, or with timely advice from people I trust.

Success is the result of putting all the pieces in the right order, working really hard, and not giving up. The quote "Being an entrepreneur is jumping off a cliff and building a plane on the way down" couldn't be more true. Here are some of the secrets I've learned along the way.

Perseverance. Seeking funding for the business was a challenge especially when I didn't have the "right collateral" or meet the "textbook criteria" for bankers. I remember sitting in one

banker's office as I was being told no, thinking in my head, "Well, I guess I'll keep doing what I'm doing because it's working". I didn't give up, got very creative and self-funded the business. I figured it out and seven years later still have a growing business.

Patience. When my first assistant left I was devastated. A customer gave me some great advice; no employee or the right employee was better than the wrong employee. He said if you are doing the right thing, the right person will find you... and she did! My new assistant is fantastic!

Have a Business Culture. We have created a culture and sense of community in my business. It is the expectation of a high level of customer

service and personal touch that keep the customers coming back.

We have steps of engagement in the business plan to ensure the customer and their pets have a "Rock Star" experience as they arrive and we maintain that mindset throughout the appointment. We have a monthly newsletter and admit to sending birthday cards addressed to the pets.

Maintain focus. Maintaining focus makes things operate more smoothly, cash flow seems better, I worry less about the business and more new patients seem to find us. The first thing I do in the morning is make sure I'm well-grounded. For me, prayer is the best way to get centered and it helps me to be at my best for my clients. Choose something that is meaningful to you.

Education. I invest time in educating my clients and the veterinarians who refer patients to me. My customer, the pet parents, learn the value of continuing care, upkeep and maintenance, after the acute problem has been addressed. The vets learn the ongoing health benefits chiropractic provides for animals. The maintenance customers add to the consistent revenue, and without education my repeat business would be less frequent. Your customers should understand the value of your services and goods.

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Peptronics LLC

By Joey Pepka

Joey Pepka is Founder and Chief IT Guru of Peptronics, LLC, which helps small to mid-size companies operate effectively by leveraging the use of technology. Covering everything from where the internet comes into the office, to the keyboard and everything in between. We can be reached at (612) 758-0949 or computer@peptronics.com www.peptronics.com

I've been doing IT consulting for more than 20 years, the last seven as owner of my own business. Whether it's integrating new systems with old ones, bringing Office 365 into their current environment or integrating VoIP system, we are always dealing with clients whose success is dependent on technology.

My clients and I share some core philosophies, especially when it comes to the best way to face problems. Acknowledge problems. Anticipate problems. Have a plan. Be proactive. Get help.

At Peptronics, **WE take the SH out of IT!**

So, here is what I have learned about the secrets of success in my business and from my clients:

Manage problems. You will always have problems in business. You can choose to wait around and be surprised, or you can take preemptive action. My most successful customers manage their technology. Every year they have

a number of computers scheduled for replacement so they don't have to replace everything at once. Software is kept current so there aren't version conflicts. They know problems are coming. They choose to be ready and minimize the downtime.

Educate clients. It is usually a single problem that leads people to first call us. The symptoms had been there for a while, but they just got used to dealing with it. Then they were caught off guard when it failed.

By educating my clients, I can help them be more aware of the early warning signs of a technical problem and what steps they should be taking.

Education is the best way to address the threats of cybercrime. We provide instruction to employees, the weakest link, on how to avoid all the email phishing scams. This helps them stay ahead of the game.

It is also a great way to engage customers

and strengthen the relationship.

Value your time. I did a lot of DIY in the beginning by necessity, and you probably have, too. But you will be better off investing three hours of time in activities to grow your business than Googling on how to fix a glitch.

It can be hard to let go, but if you value what you do, it's a necessary step in taking your business to the next level.

Rely on accomplished professionals when you start outsourcing tasks. My web designer, Ben Theis of Skol Marketing, can do a better job than I could ever do. I could read up on business coaching, but I use Judy Zimmer because she is the best.

OffCenters has been a great resource for me to get the help I need because there are hundreds of professionals that I have met and gotten to know.

Personal service. There are a lot of managed IT service companies out there who do it all remotely. What my clients appreciate about onsite service is they don't have to take their equipment offsite and waste valuable time, which leads them to being more productive.

When we can experience their environment, see what they see, and observe them, we can offer better solutions and educate them on how they can solve that same problem in the future.

Never underestimate the value of personal service to any successful business.

NBM