



Robert Ciccone

The secret to life and business is ... focus

Clarify four key areas for success

Do you remember the hit 1991 comedy *City Slickers*, with Billy Crystal cast as the neurotic leading man, and Jack Palance as the leathery, tough cowboy named Curly? One particular scene from that film has stuck with me for years, in which Curly says to Billy, "Do you know what the secret to life is?"

Billy says, "No, what?" Curly replies, "One thing, just one thing. You stick to that, and everything else don't mean squat." "That's great," Billy counters, "but what's the one thing?" Curly says, with a glint in his eye: "That's what you've got to figure out."

Curly is talking about the importance of staying focused, of keeping your attention on what matters most. Of course, this is great advice from a big-picture and life-purpose perspective, but it also speaks volumes from a business and marketing viewpoint.

As a marketing consultant, I consider myself fortunate that I get to work with so many creative, innovative business owners. This entrepreneurial spirit is great, and it's definitely something to celebrate. Yet this same spirit often makes it difficult for the entrepreneur or business owner to stay focused.

On a big business scale, this is what happened to Hewlett Packard a few years ago. The undisputed king of the printer business, HP decided they wanted to also penetrate the PC market as well. There was nothing wrong with HP wanting to expand and compete in a new arena, except for one important oversight: in the pursuit of this new market, they lost sight of their existing successful core business – printers and replacement cartridges.

They turned too much of their focus and attention elsewhere. In essence they became sidetracked and when that happened, their competition seized the opportunity and captured a substantial part of HP's market share and profits in printers.

Many, if not most, of my small business clients must deal with focus, as the bigger companies do. The difference is, when a small business loses its focus, it can be catastrophic. Lose focus in your small business, and you might be out of business.

Focus begins with clarity. Clarity is the process of clearly identifying and understanding your marketing goals and objectives; the steps needed to get there; what the expectations are; the roles of everyone involved; and how success will be measured. When you are clear on these points, it becomes easier to focus on what is important and what makes a difference in your business.

So what are the right areas to focus on in your marketing strategy? Obviously, there are many issues to take into consideration; but as a starting point, I suggest you look at and get focused on at least four key areas:

1. Your ideal target customers – profile them. Who are they? Where are they? What do they buy and why? What do they want today and what will they want in three years?
2. Your core product(s) – what you do best, your strengths. When pursuing other areas, be sure not to lose sight of your core products. Otherwise you may end up with neither your core strength nor what you are pursuing.
3. Your uniqueness – continually ask and answer the question, "Why should someone do business with me versus all other choices?"
4. Your margins – keep your eye on profitability. Concentrate on the particular markets and products that are the most profitable.

Focus on these four things, and you will be set. You won't run into the problems of many other companies, big and small, which often lose focus – with disastrous results.

As they do for me, let Curly's words remind you to stay focused in your marketing efforts. Focus is power, focus builds momentum and focus will keep you more productive and on the fast track to success.

Robert Ciccone is the president and founder of Success Unlimited Sales and Marketing Group (www.susmg.com). He is also the creator of the Marketing for Profit Program, a three-part results program that provides the marketing systems, tools and ongoing support to help participants effectively build, manage and operate a profitable business (www.susmg.com/MarketingForProfit). Robert can be reached at 604-688-7733 or rob@susmg.com.

OKI®

PRINTING SOLUTIONS



- Network printing capable.
- Integrated Fiery.
- Full colour printing at 36 CPM.
- Scanning feature allows creation of electronic files.
- Single pass printer handles card stock (up to 150 lb.).
- Full finishing, including booklet, folding, 3-hole punch & stapling.
- Can print on sheets up to 12.9" wide by 47" long (full bleed).
- Full 3-year onsite warranty
- Total support from authorized provider.
- Toll-free technical assistance 24/7/365.
- 5¢ per page based on 8.5" x 11" standard coverage per colour.

The all-new OKI ES3640 business workstation offers outstanding colour image quality, unmatched reliability.

Colour copies only 5¢ per page. \$14,995



OKI 3530 MFP
Full colour, 1200 x 600 dpi. Prints 16 ppm in colour mode and 20 ppm in mono mode. It also prints, copies, faxes and scans to PC network or email.

\$995



OKI 5510n MFP
Full colour, 1200 x 1600 dpi. Prints 16 ppm in colour mode and 20 ppm in mono mode. It also prints and scans to PC network or email.

\$895



OKI B4545 MFP
Prints 21 ppm as mono printer. It also copies, faxes and scans to PC network or email. (Duplex tray & large capacity tray available for an additional \$500.)

\$750

Available at Vancouver's best office values:

OFFICEWISE SOLUTIONS

14 W. 7th Avenue (at Ontario). Vancouver, BC.

604-681-4800

More than 10,000 sq. ft. of new and used desks, chairs, file cabinets, boardroom tables, panel systems, bookcases, whiteboards, personnel lockers, storage cabinets and folding-leg tables. Also copiers, faxes, printers with full service contracts. We sell, rent or lease.