

Business Owners Best Tool

Action International helps small business think big

By **MICHAEL BROWN**
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There's a reason we have coaches. Hockey coaches, fitness coaches, lifestyle coaches, coaches for rehabilitating a bad knee or a coach to help in the delivery of a child – if it involves something where there is a likelihood of developing a bad habit or you are partaking in an endeavour where a neutral eye is needed, there's a coach. Business is no different.

Having a coach used to be just another advantage that big business had over small and medium-sized outfits, but change is in the air.

Action International Business Coaching has made it its mission to provide small businesses with the same direction that corporations have always had, at a price point that they can afford.

"Growing your business can be a massively rewarding, amazing experience," says Brad Sugars, Action International Business Coaching founder. "In business today, it's not a luxury to have a coach; it's a necessity.

"My coaching team has coached every type of business in every type of marketplace."

Best in the business

This is especially true of the diversified Alberta business landscape, which is regarded in the coaching industry as possessing the best coaches in the business.

"We go into a small business – and they don't have to be struggling; they can be beyond that – and we work on their business with them," says Rob Carol, who, along with Carol Coffey, make up Action International's managing director team.

"We do bring differences to the table, like techniques and methodology, that they don't have, but probably the biggest thing is we influence business owners to do what they already know they should be doing."

Carol explains that the biggest obstacle facing small business is owners aren't accountable to anybody but themselves. They're not necessarily business people, rather, they are just people with a winning

idea or a passion. Nonetheless, often they're forced to deal with business aspects that they don't want to deal with.

"Our main focus is to get the business to the point where the owner doesn't have to be there," says Carol.

Action International does this with techniques that are based on five ways a business can progress and a six step principle to better results.

Leading the way

The first way is lead generation.

"Finding prospects," says Carol. "We have a whole list of methods – in fact there are 87 things we can advise on."

However, Carol says all the prospects in the world won't help, without a firm grasp of the second technique, closing more deals. He explains that lead generation can often be expensive (i.e. advertising), so it's important to

make the most out of them. "There might be a lot of opportunities to convert a sale that the business owner doesn't take advantage of.

"Let's take a 20% conversion rate. If we can bump it up to 30% – and that's not hard to do – that goes right to the bottom line."

The third way in which progress is achieved is to bump up the average dollar sales.

"We work with everyone from medium-sized businesses that do millions of dollars in sales down to the neighbourhood locksmith," says



Carol. "The scope may differ but the techniques stay the same. In the case of the locksmith, we generated a shopping list for his clients to look over while they wait. Do you have a bicycle lock? Do you have a lock for your gym locker? We asked a whole number of things people wouldn't think of if they didn't have a list. The result was an immediate jump in their average dollar sale."

Now, Action International's next course is to get your customers to drop by more often.

"We worked with a hair salon who would call their customer every eight weeks," says Carol. "We decided to call their list of clients every five weeks.

"We managed to shrink their duration between visits from eight weeks to five. And for this we have 80 things we can do – like loyalty cards – to help increase the number of customer visits."

The fifth and final improvement is increasing profit margin with regards to staffing, purchases, etc.

"It's unbelievable how much time and money you can save here," says Carol adding that once all five techniques are implemented, they begin to compound on each other. "If you just did a 10% increase in each category – and that's not a lot – the net result is a 62% increase and that's all profit."

He continues, "Ultimately, running a small business shouldn't be just another job. The average small business owner usually works the most hours, takes the least vacation time and quite often isn't even the highest paid employee.

"Action International supports the business owner allowing them to hone in on the reason why they undertook that business in the first place."



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– Rob Carol, one of Action International's managing directors