



A Message from Dennis

Spring is here; well at least I hope it is. And we are already in the second quarter of the year. So how is business going so far? Better, worse, the same?

No matter which way you answered, here is something that I believe is crucial to your future success: your BOD, Board of Directors.

You might be thinking, "BOD? Hey Dennis, who do you think I am? Microsoft?"

Well, no I don't. I just believe that any business, large or small, needs a BOD. Let me rephrase that: an OBOD — Outside Board of Directors — a group or team that will help you look at your business from the outside in, and the inside out. Some people may call this a mastermind group, a management team, or in some cases, a personal business coach. Regardless, this is one of the most important business secrets out there. This type of review needs to be done consistently and regularly, even if things are very good. Remember, the enemy of great is good.

Create an OBOD and your business will take off. Remember what President Woodrow Wilson said, "I use all the brains I have, and all I can borrow."

Have a great and prosperous year, everyone!

~ **Dennis**

Protect Your Business Against Identity Theft

Experiencing identity theft is "a very painful thing, and it can be expensive," said Holly Nahabedian, vice president and branch manager of Century Bank in Andover, MA during a meeting of the Middlesex chapter of the Massachusetts Association of Insurance Women (MAIW).

While stealing personal information is the goal of every identity thief, individuals are not the only ones at risk of identity theft — businesses are as well.

Typically, "there is more money in business banking accounts, so for a thief, it's a quicker hit — particularly for small businesses. Small-business owners are so busy running their businesses, they may not always pay as close attention to their accounts as they should," said Nahabedian.

In addition, it can be fairly easy for fraudsters to gather a lot of information about a business from the company's own website, which can contain a lot of public information, including personnel.

"Someone could easily send [a fraudulent] email as if they are the boss, asking someone to wire money. Wire transfers are cash — that money will be gone."

To reduce the risk of falling victim to fraud, Nahabedian recommended that business owners take the following precautions:

- Pay close attention to bank account and business credit card statements.
- Consider having dual control for financial transactions. "Set it up so you receive an email or text alert from the bank if any transfer is over X amount."
- Dedicate one computer in an office, "preferably a desktop computer," to be used strictly for business purposes.
- Use a bank service such as positive pay to deter check fraud. Banks use positive pay to match the checks a company issues with those it presents for payment. Any check considered to be potentially fraudulent is sent back to the issuer for examination.
- Keep sensitive documents secure; do not leave checkbooks out in the open.
- Always keep business and personal finances separate, regardless of the size of the business.
- Train employees in best practices.

"The biggest thing is just paying attention. Balance your checkbook every month and look it over all the time."

What are the Best Healthy Snack Options for Your Office?

Keep your team healthy and full with the best office snacks!

Offering tasty and healthful snacks can help keep energy, spirits, and productivity up — all at relatively little cost to your business.

What kind of snacks are best for the office? Use this guide to the top healthy choices for stocking your breakroom.

Fruit & veggies: It shouldn't be surprising that fruits and vegetables are nutritionists' top picks for healthy snacking. Most Americans aren't getting enough servings of these crucial food groups, so by offering them you can help your team overcome this deficit. If you're having trouble keeping fresh produce in stock, consider unsweetened dried fruit. Packed with fiber and nutrients, this is a fantastic long-lasting option.

Nuts: Help your team fit in their healthy fat and protein by offering mixed nuts. Raw and unsalted nuts will be better for your staff's health, but offering some roasted or salted options can help mix things up.

Sandwich or rice cake bar: Looking for something customizable? Consider setting up a whole wheat sandwich or brown rice cake bar. Your team can then load up their grain of choice with peanut butter, honey, sliced bananas, or their other favorite toppings.

Greek yogurt: Greek yogurt has become a health craze for a reason! Offer toppings like granola or blueberries with plain Greek yogurt for a snack that will keep your staff full for hours.

(Authored by the PMC Insurance Group 3/16/16)

How To Grow Your Business in 2016 By John Chapin

Growing your business in 2016 is going to take two things: attitude and activity. Attitude includes: confidence, conviction, commitment, and perseverance. Activity includes: having a plan, the self-discipline to stick to the plan, and spending time and money on the right activities and resources.

Speaking of time and money, you need to track both. The most important activities you spend time on during the day are the ones that bring money into the business. It isn't working on your logo, driving to the post office, or entering information into the computer. During business hours 90+% of your time should be spent on

activities that generate cash flow. As far as money is concerned, most of the money that comes in should be reinvested back into the business. Track this money to make sure it is well invested. Any money that gets invested in the business needs to return equal or greater value.

Next, you need a plan which includes how much business you need, how many people you need to talk to, and where to find those people. The fastest way to build business is by calling on people in-person or on the phone. Business is a contact sport and is all about relationships and in order to build relationships and connect with people, you need to be talking to them live, not sending e-mails. Business is also a numbers game, if you talk to enough people during the day you will eventually run into someone who needs what you have or knows someone who needs what you have.

So where do you find these people? Start with friends and family and get back in touch with people you've lost touch with over the years. Make sure all these people know what you do and ask them for referrals. Next, get out and network, go to events, volunteer, look for any and all opportunities to meet new people. The bottom line is: you need a system for bringing new prospects into your business. If you still don't have enough business and prospects, you need to cold call. Yes, you're going to have to step out of your comfort zone and face some fears. Discomfort and fear is what stops most people. If growing a business was easy, everyone would be doing it.

When you are talking to people focus on what they want and are interested in. Ask good questions and determine whether or not you are a match. You always do what's best for the other person. Also, when you do talk, make sure it's about how your product benefits them.

Ultimately failure in business comes from what you fail to do. The bottom line is: If you absolutely had to build your business and make it successful, and there was no other option, you would. If you had to, you'd focus all your resources and make it happen. Now go out there and take massive action.

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