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The Two E's That Need to Be Included in Your Business



By Gary Seibert, CEO, Small Business Resource Association

What a crazy year this has been, and it's not over yet. A worldwide Pandemic which has changed the way we live, communicate, shop, entertain, go to church, go to school, get medical help, network, solicit new business and service that which we have. Who would have ever thought, less than 7 months ago, that OUR country, the greatest nation in the world, would be dealing with a Virus with no cure, numerous riots and racial tension, political separation that threatens the core of our freedom, forest fires out of control, life taking hurricanes and floods, tens of thousands of small businesses going out of business, kids not going back to school this fall and a stock market that looks like a roller coaster.

Did I mention that our country is the greatest nation in the world? Because of that fact, I believe that all the above will someday be in the history books along with how Americans pulled together in this difficult time and became stronger and more united. As small business owners, we are being impacted the most and now is the time to support, encourage and help one another. I would like to share with you two "E's" that I truly believe, can and will, positively effect the future of your business.

The first "E" I would like to talk about is the word ENGAGEMENT. As human beings we were created with one common purpose, to have relationships with other people. We are not designed to be separated, alone, self-sustaining. We are meant to socially interact with other people to develop friendships, gain knowledge, seek help, worship, encourage, do business and the list goes on. For the past 6 months we have been told to isolate ourselves from other people and find ways to connect via technology. For some, this temporary interrupt has been acceptable. For most, I believe the stress of this way of life has grown old. The basic human desire to

engage with others they work with, do business with, play sports with, entertain with, go to church with and play with is driving them crazy. Therefore, I would like to suggest that you make a list of people you love, people you have close friendships with, people you work with, people you do business with and even a list of people you might like to get to know. Then purposefully start connecting with these people. Use whatever methods you feel they would be comfortable engaging in. For those of you that have businesses where you interact with the customers, teach your staff how to smile, have eye contact and engage with the customer. If at all possible, encourage them to find out the customer's name and something about them. Develop a friendly relationship. Remember the TV show *CHEERS*—where everyone

knows your name. Hopefully we will be allowed to resume a normal life again sometime soon. Keep those relationships alive now. By being ENGAGED today you will be together tomorrow. People will remember you as the one that reached out when the rest of the world was locked up. ENGAGEMENT.

The second "E" is the word EFFORTLESS. Not one of you reading this article can deny the fact that you have a real dislike for having to jump through hoops, press numerous buttons, wait for long periods of time, communicate your request to several different people, read numerous confusing directions, spend time looking for someone, try to figure out what the person is saying—just to get through what you thought was going to be a relatively simple process. In other words, it was a major pain in the tail, a waste of time and a considerable effort to give someone your business. And you actually paid for that inconvenience

despite your anguish. Now picture yourself in a whole new world. One where the business you are dealing with has studied everything about peoples buying habits, likes and dislikes and has now instituted an EFFORTLESS method for buying their service or product. Let's look at some examples of what I am talking about. WAWA and Sheets convenience stores installed kiosks where you place your order exactly the way you want it. You push the button to place the order and you get a receipt. The receipt has a number and when you hear your number called you pick up your food. Effortless. UBER took the PAIN out of



taking a TAXI ride. Call a number, a car shows up, you know upfront what the trip will cost, there's no cash or credit card transactions with the driver, you get to where you want to go and you can rate the driver. Because UBER made a difficult process effortless UBER is the #1 Taxi company in the world. And then there is AMAZON. You call or email your order in today, pay for the purchase, get free shipping and it shows up on your porch in 24 to 48 hours. If you are unhappy with what you received you can return it and they pay for the shipping. You can even order your groceries to be delivered. Smart, customer-oriented businesses are focusing on making your experience with them EFFORTLESS. The more effortless it is the more you will do business with them.

Now it's your turn to take a real hard look at your business and ask yourself, is it easy (effortless) to do business with my company. If the answer is NO, find out where the effort, (pain point), is and replace that process with something much easier and customer friendly. Your clients will love you for it.

Both of these "E's" are essential as we move out of the COVID-19 world into a New Normal, whatever it might end up being. I can assure you that those businesses that ENGAGE with their customers and make doing business with them EFFORTLESS will bounce back much faster and more profitably than those that don't. Take a hard look at how you do business and then consider the two E's.

SBRA Business Spotlight

BMG

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Zachary Bell & Kyra Denlinger, founders

At Bell Media Grp, we've mastered the art of storytelling for the digital era. We use our storytelling content to help build brand awareness and spotlight successful parts of your business. We also use storytelling as a means to drive emotion to potential and existing customers, which inspires action. We use channels such as social media, email, landing pages, print, digital, and more to help you captivate customers with laughter, tears, joy, and passion. We'll help you replace wasteful marketing campaigns with authentic business stories that capture real results.



Want To Be An Entrepreneur? SCORE Can Help.

By Willis Kanaley, SCORE Certified Mentor

An Entrepreneur is a person "who organizes, manages and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise." Small business is risky. The United States Small Business Administration's (SBA) records show 20% fail in their first year, 30% fail in two years and 50% fail within five years. SCORE can help you manage this risk.

SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business" is a part of the SBA with 10,000 volunteers in 300 chapters nationwide that provide confidential, unlimited, free business counseling and mentoring services to entrepreneurs starting or growing a small business. The Berks Schuylkill Chapter in Reading was started in 1965 and has 35 business owners and executives dedicated to helping small business get started and grow. Last year they provided over 400 individual mentoring sessions.

SCORE mentors understand the needs and challenges of managing a business because they have done it themselves. By sharing their "been there, done that" know-how they can help you achieve your goals. There is an old saying "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." I am convinced a written business plan is an essential for improved business success. SBA records show that businesses with a written plan grow 30% faster than those that do not have a plan. The following steps will greatly improve your odds for success:

1. Determine your target market and audience and investigate your competition. Your business will not interest everyone. Think through which groups will benefit most from your proposed product and services. A data base like <http://resource.referenceusa.com/> has a huge amount of information that can be searched in great detail. All you need is a library card from The Free Library of Philadelphia to gain access. <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/blog/post/2282>

2. Develop a network of contacts that with people that might help you in your business. The Greater Reading Chamber Alliance can be a big help. <https://greaterreading.org/> Another local organization that can also help is the Small Business Resource Association. <https://www.sbrassociation.com/>
3. Make sure you have the appropriate professional advice. Use the check list BLAIME to make sure you have not overlooked a key area. B is banker, L is lawyer, A is accountant, I is insurance, M is mentor and E is E-commerce. It is essential that you conform to local laws and regulations and keep the required records, particularly for tax purposes.
4. Determine how you will obtain the required capital. Will it be savings, friends and family, other investors, or bank loans?
5. Develop a comprehensive business plan and write it down. There are numerous sites on line to provide templates and guidance including <https://www.score.org/search/site/business%20plans> if you need to borrow money or attract investors, a complete plan including financial projections is essential.

If you would like to check on how strong your entrepreneurial ambitions are, here is a link to a short quiz that will give you some insight.

http://www.nmu.edu/sites/Drupal-cccc/files/UserFiles/Files/Pre-Drupal/Site-Sections/MarketplaceProgram/how_entrepreneurial_are_you.pdf

If you would like a confidential review of your situation and some assistance developing a business plan you can schedule a meeting with a local mentor at <https://www.score.org/#> or you may call SCORE at 610-376-3497 in Reading, 610-327-2673 in Pottstown, or 717-397-3092 in Lancaster to speak with a volunteer.

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- 10/6/20 New SBRA Insurance Programs
- 10/20/20 Are You Prepared for the Future Financially?
- 11/3/20 Healthy You - Healthy Business.
- 11/17/20 Making social media WORK.
- 12/1/20 The Law and Small Business.
- 12/15/20 Is your tax information ready?



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- 10/20/20 5:00-7:00 PM
- Check sbrassociation.com for location