

ISSUE 04

Compliments of Patrick Yanahan

BUSINESS

IN **ACTION**

HOW TO BE LUCKY IN BUSINESS

Tips to bring good
fortune your way

PG. 03



THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

Askinosie Chocolate balances
profits and purpose

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EXPERIENCE THE FASTEST PATH TO GROWTH

How to put customer and
employee satisfaction first

PG. 12

ISSUE 4
COVER PRICE \$6.99



Front of Tear Out Card 1

End-of-Year Motivational Checklist



Use this **checklist** to hold yourself accountable and keep your **productivity high** through the end of the year.



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UNLIMITED SALES ASSISTANCE
STRATEGIES



Back of Tear Out Card 1

END-OF-YEAR MOTIVATIONAL CHECKLIST



- ✔ **Check up on your competition.**
Take thirty minutes each day to review what your competition is doing. Jot down any ideas that stand out to you.
- ✔ **Set actionable goals.**
Every goal should be actionable. Review your goals for the end of the year, and create a daily action item for each of them.
- ✔ **Network.**
Check in with your most valuable connections. Call, text, or DM your top prospects once a month. Create a list of influential people in your industry you want to get to know.
- ✔ **Seek out mentorship.**
A mentor can hold you accountable and keep you motivated. If you don't already have one, find one. If you do have one, set meetings with them through the end of the year to touch base.



Dear Bill and Judy,

Well, greetings again.

To be candid, I held my breath on the last mailer beta test as we always strive for perfection. The client feedback from the last magazine mailer was very positive. In fact, the team at USA said "YES, YES, YES, let's do it BIG TIME. It's fun!" So here we are for round two, sitting in your hands.

At the time of writing, the vast markets in which we do our research and marketing work in seem to be humming along well. Thus far, no negative growth indicators seem to be reported from our technology, packaging, machinery, plastics, and software clients. The news outlets seem to repeat the word "recession" over and over, but it's the strangest darn "recession" we've ever seen, as no one appears to be singing the blues. Heck, even my pals at the university are enjoying the biggest freshman class ever in the history of the institution this fall. So much to be thankful for.

The content you will read today is pulled from a vast number of sources that are not necessarily industry-specific, which is by design. What it does cover, however, is the very essence of our purpose at the company: growing your market, your sales, and your contact list. And again, if you learned one single thing from this issue as far as how to expand your business with at least one tactic, we met our objective, and it was mission accomplished.

Enjoy and see you soon.

Patrick Yanahan and the USA Strategies team



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IN ACTION

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How to Be Lucky in Business

To have “luck” in business, you need to take action and have a positive mindset. Employ these tactics to make good fortune shine on you. BY LAUREN KIM

SOME PEOPLE may appear to be luckier than

others, but experts say what these individuals have is a combination of attitude, action, and intuition that allows them to take advantage of the events around them. Follow these strategies to create “good luck” in your career.

Assess your attitude

Lucky people tend to “make their own luck” through their optimistic outlook on life. For instance, if you tried to win a business contract but lost, you could look it as a learning experience and aim for a better outcome next time. Or you could nurture self-doubt and hurt your chances of landing future deals. Aim to develop an upbeat attitude, and your luck may change for the better.



Be receptive

“Lucky” people tend to be so because they are open to the events around them and have a knack for perception. British researcher Richard Wiseman, author of the book *The Luck Factor*, discovered that individuals with “good luck” welcome and more easily perceive serendipitous circumstances that may benefit them. If you only see what you expect to see, you may miss chances to get ahead, and it’s also

possible to train yourself to spot more opportunities, he says. For example, you can do this by staying abreast of current events, reading business magazines, staying in touch with your clients, and keeping tabs on your competition.

Listen to your gut

Doing your research

is a big part of being “lucky,” but part of it depends on listening to your gut, or what you’ve subconsciously learned from past experiences. ReminderMedia president Luke Acree suggests, “Stop doubting yourself. Go in 100 percent with your intuition, and always be open to opportunities.”

Build strong relationships

Maintain existing relationships and build new ones, as these connections can be key to your success. Attend networking and community events, stay in touch with your contacts via social media, email, or text, and plan get-togethers now and then.



Work on building connections. Send a text or an email to an old friend or business contact or attend a social or business event to meet new people.

How to Grow Real Relationships

BY MATTHEW BRADY

YOU’VE PROBABLY heard the phrase “If you can’t count on family, who can you count on?”

Barb Betts found this out the hard way. When her grandmother passed away in the early 2000s, she thought for sure that, being a real estate agent, her family would want her to sell the property. That turned out to be a hard no.

“I was devastated,” Betts reveals.

Now a seasoned leader in the industry, Betts advises other agents on how to prioritize and nurture relationships to maximize success. By following a system of simple, commonsense relationship-marketing principles, she says that any person or business can easily and naturally create raving fans.

Be remembered

As the above example illustrates, you can’t necessarily rely on people—even your family—to remember you. That doesn’t mean Betts’s family forgot about her; however, her being a real estate agent might not have been top of mind when it came to selling her grandmother’s house. To prevent this, Betts says you need to be proactive about your business relationships. She mails something of value every month to every single person in her



I never use the word ‘referral’ anymore with my clients because it’s way overused and comes with the connotation that you’re going to get something if you help me.”

Seek connections, not referrals

“People don’t want to hear it, but *no one* cares about your listings. The only people who do are the people who are buying or selling a home,” Betts says matter-of-factly. Instead, she recommends using the CTA to introduce yourself to other people. “I always tell agents that you’ve got to sell *through* someone, not to someone,” she continues. “If you just sell to someone, you’re a cheesy used-car salesperson, and that’s unfortunately how people view us. When you sell through someone, though, you’re looking to help people and people they know. Good people know good people. If I loved working with you, I want to work with more people like you.”

And how you say it is just as important. Betts insists, “I never use the word ‘referral’ anymore with my clients because it’s way overused and comes with the connotation that you’re going to get something if you help me.” Instead, she started using phrases like “Introduce us,” “Connect us,” and “Share us,” which led to her referrals skyrocketing. In addition, she says her “secret weapon” is plain ole sincerity: “My message will be ‘I was in your neighborhood today and thought of you,’ and then I’ll ask how their family or business is doing. It shows

database, or what she refers to as her “list of relationships.”

And then there’s the one thing Betts says agents always forget to do: ask. “Agents want to apply this relationship-based marketing system and have it work immediately. But it won’t if you don’t tell people you need their business.

Trust me, they won’t be lying awake at night worrying about you. You have to ask all the time for it to work.”

Show them you know them

If you have an older parent, then you likely know that technology isn’t always their friend—and that the reverse is probably true if you have a millennial sibling. Betts

says that navigating and using such knowledge is invaluable in real estate, simply because you can maximize the impact of your relationship-building with minimal effort.

“I’m not reaching out through Facebook Messenger to older people; I’m calling and leaving a message,” she admits. “Conversely, if I call a

twentysomething or thirtysomething client, they’ll think someone’s dying because you just don’t call those people. But I know if I send a message on Instagram, I’ll get an instantaneous response.” Betts also recommends tracking such communication-preference trends and logging them in a CRM for easy reference, especially if you have a large database of clients.

you really care about the person and not how you can benefit from your relationship with them. Ninety-nine percent of the time, they respond.”

Timing (and patience) is everything

Believe it or not, people are referring agents every day; agents just don’t always know it. Betts is adamant about this based on her experience. “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve thanked a client for a referral, and they say, ‘I’m so glad they finally called you. I told them about you months ago,’” she shares. “The client is silently referring us; they don’t need accolades and they don’t think twice about it. But there’s no way for me to follow up.”

To bridge this communication gap, she suggests gently asking the client in the future to introduce potential buyers/sellers to the agent through Facebook or a group text message. This will lessen any



BARB BETTS

“Our pipeline grew exponentially and our business transformed simply because I’d say, ‘If you know someone who is looking to sell this year, there are some things they need to start doing now. It’s never too soon to contact us’.”

awkwardness and open the door to communication—and the upside could be huge. “Our pipeline grew exponentially and our business transformed simply because I’d say, ‘If you know someone who is looking to sell this year, there are some things they need to start doing now. It’s never too soon to contact us,’ she shares. “I want to know about those people now so I can nurture them. In fact, I sometimes know about referrals two years ahead of time; I wouldn’t get those clients by getting referrals when they’re ready to sell.” Plus, when people refer you, especially those Betts calls “advocates,” the referred people will like you before you walk in the door. So when you do walk in, you can just be yourself.

Finally, even though she ranks her client relationships (see sidebar), Betts only ever removes a client from her database if it’s clearly necessary. In this field, patience is

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BARB BETTS

Ranking Real Estate Relationships





certainly a virtue. “The ways that people show up are mind-blowing. I even heard from someone about selling a condo after *nine* years of no responses. They apologized to me!” she marvels. “It just shows that every single time I think about deleting someone from our database, they reach out, saying ‘I don’t know if you remember us....’”

Betts learned firsthand the value of relationships

after her missed family opportunity years before. “Looking back, I know why that happened,” she reveals. “They had no obligation to use me. Fast-forward to today, and my family is 100 percent going to use me. We’ve earned it after all these years because we’ve worked hard to build relationships. Anyone can if they believe in themselves and establish real connections with people.” ■



For more information, visit barbbetts.com or follow Barb on Instagram at [@barbbetts](https://www.instagram.com/barbbetts).



The ways that people show up are mind-blowing. I even heard from someone about selling a condo after *nine* years of no responses.”

Experience Is the Fastest Path to Growth

Tony Johnson, chief experience officer for the global consulting firm 4xi, explains how devoting yourself to improving employee experience and customer experience can positively shape your business.

BY TONY JOHNSON





THE LAST TWO YEARS have been challenging, but there has also been an acceleration in areas of business that may have otherwise taken another five years to come to fruition. The customer experience landscape has always been evolving, but the *experience evolution* is now in overdrive.

Customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX) have found their moment to shine at the forefront of business thinking. Taking care of customers and your team has always been the right thing to do, but now, at all levels, most organizations see the compelling business case behind these efforts.

As Albert Einstein once framed the calculation for energy ($E = mc^2$), the same can be said for relationships within customer experience. Growth is the output of happy, engaged employees who deliver exceptional experiences, and when multiplied by emotional quotient (or EQ), the results can be game changing. When applied to growth, this might look something like $(EX + CX) \times EQ^2$. That is to say, putting people at the center of everything you do can have an amazing impact on your growth.

Happy customers spend more and more often. Happy employees tend to stay longer, reduce attrition and costs, and boost your business's performance. It is generally more cost effective to retain your current customers and employees than to continually reload with new ones to make up for lost opportunities and people.

Satisfied customers and employees will be advocates for you in the marketplace and defend your reputation if you are attacked online. Glassdoor reports that 86 percent of prospective employees

research company reviews and ratings to decide where to apply for a job. So a key ingredient to delivering great experiences comes down to people delivering on safety, hospitality, quality, simplicity, and inclusivity—and not just once or a few times but every time.

This puts enormous pressure on organizations and their leaders to prioritize the employee experience. It is one of the things that is easy to say but tougher to do, and it really isn't as much about a fancy strategy or buzzwords as it is about adopting a few key

Customer experience (CX) and employee experience (EX) have found their moment to shine at the forefront of business thinking.



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behaviors and tactics that have an impact in real time.

Leaders have had the best of the hiring situation for a decade now. There were often more candidates than jobs, so they could not only be selective but also do so knowing the market was more forgiving of bad behaviors. Leaders were known to treat prospective candidates poorly once on the job, and communication, training, and recognition were lacking.

That dynamic has shifted, and leaders must adapt.

Those with a high degree of empathy, or EQ, know at a base level that you must understand your team, listen to them, and look at their work experience from their point of view. This invariably will help you be a better leader and inspire confidence in your team. Impactful leaders understand themselves first—and that fuels their empathy, respect, and connection with others. Those who lead with optimism and grit will inspire their people to create positive and emotionally connected experiences.

You can move toward a more employee-focused workplace by following these three tactics.

1/ BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION.

These are areas where organizations have not paid nearly enough attention in years past. This goes beyond finding great talent; it is about your reputation in the community as an employer of choice. It's about being a great talent scout and taking the time to really listen to and be curious about those you are looking to bring into your organization. You must look beyond traditional skills and education for those who bring a positive attitude, experience, and innovation to your team. You should also be wary of your applicant tracking system (ATS) if there is an AI component to your online application process. Too often these systems may weed out great candidates because they don't have a properly formatted resume or because of arbitrary keywords included in their cover letter. Now is the time to remove anything between you and the people who can help your organization win.

2/ PRIORITIZE ONBOARDING AND TRAINING.

This may sound like a commonsense approach to employee retention, but it is one of the most complained-

about items by employees and can cost you talent early in your new-employee journey. Robust orientation is more than just job skills and paperwork; it is creating a connection to others within the organization, providing tools to help people get off to a great start, and ensuring there is alignment between expectations and performance. Ongoing training and development should, of course, prioritize the skills needed to provide great service and quality but should also keep an eye on the future and be refreshed often. This is a way to show commitment to your team members' development and give them a path to growth within your business or portable skills that make them more valuable to the marketplace in general. You may only keep great talent for three to five years, but that beats retaining mediocre talent for decades.

“Fifty-nine percent of employees claim they've had no workplace training and their skills were self-taught.”

— LORMAN EDUCATION SERVICES

Those with a high degree of empathy, or EQ, know at a base level that you must understand your team, listen to them, and look at their work experience from their point of view.

3/ BE GREAT AT RECOGNITION.

Everyone likes to know that they have done well, and showing appreciation for great work is the right thing to do. But there is also a case to be made for good business here. What you reward will be repeated, and that kind of positivity is contagious. Remember that when you think about powerhouse recognition, it must be personalized. Everyone has a different perception of recognition—some like it publicly and others in private—and, as a leader, you must know the difference. Authentic recognition comes not only from finding your own style of gratitude but also by including everyone in on the fun. The most impactful recognition is peer to peer, when colleagues and coworkers thank one another. Whether you use an electronic system, handwritten notes, cards mailed to your team's homes,

or verbal thank-you-messages, your gratitude should be specific: what happened, and why was it important? Finally, timely recognition is perhaps the most important piece. Too often leaders wait too long to send a note or express a thank you—and that diminishes the return on the gratitude. An immediate thank-you makes the recognition stickier when it comes to influencing future behavior.

All this is a way of saying that how you treat your team is how they will ultimately treat your customers, and that will drive the perception of your brand and business growth.

Customer experience has gone beyond a differentiator to be the price of entry for success. While great service is the expectation, mediocrity in the marketplace still leaves plenty of room for it to be a

key pillar of your future success. Just as Einstein embraced the physics of motion, now's the time to embrace the power of experience for employees, customers, and guests to elevate your growth as a people-focused organization.

Remember that GROWTH = (EX + CX) x EQ² and that experience matters! ■



TONY JOHNSON is the chief experience officer at boutique consulting firm 4xi Global Consulting & Solutions. He is a world-renowned customer-experience thought leader, strategist, author, and keynote speaker. Tony is a certified commercial drone pilot, a chef, a mixologist, and a proud uncle, and lives in Florida with his wife, Melissa, and his pet King Charles spaniel, Charlie.



To learn more about Tony and his work, visit www.4xiconsulting.com. You can buy his books from Amazon.com, or send a note to hello@4xiconsulting.com.



SPOTLIGHT

the SWEET TASTE of SUCCESS



Lawyer-turned-chocolate maker **Shawn Askinosie**, founder of the direct-trade, high-end chocolate company Askinosie Chocolate and author of *Meaningful Work*, advocates for a radically different entrepreneurial mindset and purpose.

BY MATTHEW BRADY



Why did you decide to start a chocolate business?

I was a criminal defense lawyer for nearly twenty years and was ready for a change; I just didn't know what it was going to be. I spent five years searching for my next inspiration. I didn't have any hobbies; I spent most of my time either preparing for the courtroom or in the courtroom. I loved it but then stopped loving it. I didn't have a lifelong love of chocolate, but I gradually started making chocolate desserts and then got the spark to make chocolate from the bean.

Such discovery of one's passion is a more prevalent mindset today. In the past few years, millions of people have quit their jobs to find fulfillment rather than just jumping to the next shiny object that came into their purview.

Can pursuing "shiny objects" be detrimental to entrepreneurs?

It can destroy a business if you're not vigilant because if you don't have the cash flow and capital to do it, the business strays off its mission, which is called mission creep. It's especially dangerous during these times of raging inflation and looming

recession. I think that businesses need to be very careful how they navigate the difference between the shiny object they think will bring them to the promised land and what their business actually needs. After all, fish are hooked by shiny objects.

As your dad did, you frequent a monastery. Tell us about that:

I started going on retreats to Assumption Abbey twenty-two years ago for the silence and solitude. It's a Trappist monastery where my dad spent a lot of time, and it's where he spent his last night before he died.

The abbey's biggest influence on me is concerning sufficiency. It's how the monks live their lives: they make something they can sell but only enough to survive, and this idea has found its way through all aspects of my life and business. As entrepreneurs, asking ourselves "How much is enough?" can be a real challenge—but a rewarding one.

How smooth was your transition from high-paid lawyer to chocolate-making novice?

As a lawyer, I was at the top of my career, so I had a naive, nothing-can-hurt-me mindset—even though I put

our life savings into this venture. I felt confident because I figured I could always practice law again. That said, I took zero business classes in college, didn't know how to make food, and am not that mechanically inclined, so I had to get help. To this day, people are teaching me.

I also readjusted my definition of financial success. I understood from the beginning that I was going to make less money, which relates to sufficiency economy. I didn't set out to create the biggest, fastest-growing company possible. Instead, I envisioned that it would be small

"I WAS A CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYER FOR NEARLY TWENTY YEARS AND WAS READY FOR A CHANGE; I JUST DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS GOING TO BE."



SHAWN ASKINOSIE AND HIS DAUGHTER, LAWREN, MEETING WITH A FARMER IN TANZANIA.

and that I'd view success through moments of transcendence.

Vocation—a quest to discover your true self and life purpose—is a central topic in your book. Would you explain how it can help a company?

I think that finding a vocation is especially important for organization founders. In the beginning, they must step away and find a place of solitude—not necessarily a monastery—to discover what their personal vocation is. You're certainly not going to find it by googling it, and it takes time; it took me five years to start Askinosie Chocolate. Plus, for entrepreneurs, especially of startups, there's usually no distinction between their personal life and business life; it's almost inevitable



“MY BEST EXAMPLE OF MUTUALITY WOULD BE OUR FARMER RELATIONSHIPS.”

That said, I understand a bottom-line perspective, and I think that there’s a place for businesses that prioritize it. Personally, though, I don’t want to go through life missing out on opportunities to experience much more. Sure, I have a financial meeting every week, so I’m looking at cash flow, forecasts, sales plans, and budgets. But I’m designing opportunities into them to keep me connected to why I started the business in the first place, and traveling to meet with our farmers is a big part of that. Sixteen years and forty-five trips later, I’m getting even more out of it now than I did on my first trip.

How do you foster transparency in your business?

We practice direct trade, which is all about relationships and trust. With our farmers, we have a very clear set of criteria and specifications as to what we need in cocoa beans and how we conduct business. In turn, we profit share with them, and we pay

that the two get infused into the business. Then, ideally, that vocation is inspirational for your employees. Before you know it, you have people all pulling in the same direction and have a company vocation.

Another concept discussed in Meaningful Work is mutuality. What does that mean to your business, your employees, and your farmers?

Father Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest who has worked with gang members

in Los Angeles for thirty-five years, wrote about it: having enough humility to truly connect with people and lose any sense of hierarchy or labels. It’s being, as opposed to doing. Admittedly, this may be very hard for entrepreneurs because we pride ourselves on discovering solutions to problems. That’s literally what I did as a lawyer.

My best example of mutuality would be our farmer relationships. Since I started the business, I’ve been

buying and importing cocoa beans directly from our farmers in Davao, Philippines; Zamora, Amazonia; Del Tambo, Ecuador; and Mababu, Tanzania. But I also work with



them on a variety of community-development projects. Mutuality requires not saying, “Step aside; we’ll handle this.” That is the traditional approach. Quite honestly, in many ways, it is an easier one, but it’s not ours because the farmers are our partners and friends. It’s a back and forth between me and the farmer, and neither is above the other as the solution provider. The same applies to our employees. Ultimately, mutuality makes our chocolate better.

You believe that greatness and goodness are inextricably intertwined. How?

I love the way Kahlil Gibran sums it up: “If you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds but half man’s hunger.” So we don’t do our work half-heartedly or skew it only to the bottom line. We want to make our chocolate with the utmost care and respect—and we believe that this ultimately gives us a better product and improves our lives.



SHAWN AND LAWREN
ASKINOSIE INSPECTING
BEANS IN TANZANIA.

"I WANT MY COMPANY TO GROW DEEP,
NOT WIDE. IT'S WHY I STILL GO TO OUR
FARMER LOCATIONS AND WHY WE
HAVE ONLY TWENTY-TWO EMPLOYEES."

them directly. From the beginning, we've also put all our financials on our website so our customers know exactly how we spend our money. And we open our books weekly to our employees so that everybody knows where we are financially. This creates a sense of peace for them, especially in times of trouble, that everything is OK at the company.

Does the title of your book resonate today more than ever?

When we started sixteen years ago, some companies were mindful of their community, whether that meant their street, city, country, or world. More

companies claim to practice it today. The difference is that consumers, especially younger people, are looking for meaning in what they do and what they buy, so they're combatting marketing strategies with ever-increasing levels of discernment. They have very sensitive BS detectors, so they easily see through a ruse and expect companies to do what they say they do.

You de-emphasize company scaling. Why?

Western culture has conditioned us to believe that growing or scaling businesses is the de facto model—and for good reasons, such as employing more people, bettering communities, and getting better returns for investors. All that may be true, but I challenge whether entrepreneurs can stay tethered to their personal and company vocations. That's what I mean by practicing reverse scale—I want my company to grow deep, not wide. It's why I still go to our farmer locations and why we have only twenty-two employees.





When it comes to vaccine distribution or hunger or disaster relief, people don't need reverse scale; they need scale. But entrepreneurs can use reverse scale to transform themselves in a way that can help change the world. I don't know if it's going to come back tenfold for me, and I don't care because it's not quid pro quo. That's why I believe reverse scale has a lot of power.

What's the meaning behind your motto "It's not about the chocolate; it's about the chocolate," and how has it contributed to your success?

I have a timely example to explain it. We just won a sofi Award from the Specialty Food Association. It's an international contest, and the competition is stiff. I am laser-focused on making sure that our chocolate is of the highest quality so we can win such awards. I don't want people to buy our chocolate because of all the things we've been talking about—I want them to buy it because it tastes great and they love the quality.

If they get to know us and like our story, awesome. However, I could make a chocolate bar that tastes like sawdust, and they would probably try it based on the story and purpose behind it. But they wouldn't buy it again or share it with their friends. If

they didn't, then we couldn't provide for our employees and farmers as we do; and without working directly and having relationships with our farmers, we wouldn't have the premium cocoa beans for our products and couldn't produce such high-quality chocolate. Therefore, it's not about the chocolate;

it's about the chocolate. And it's how we've remained competitive all these years: by being focused on quality and it being inseparable from our vocation of mutuality and creating meaningful, fulfilling work. ■

For more info, visit askinosie.com

"I DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO BUY OUR CHOCOLATE BECAUSE OF ALL THE THINGS WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT—I WANT THEM TO BUY IT BECAUSE IT TASTES GREAT AND THEY LOVE THE QUALITY."



Is Owning a Franchise Right for You?

BY BONNIE JOFFE

FRANCHISES have taken the lead in the United States' economic recovery according to The International Franchise Association (IFA). It predicted that the industry would experience a 2.2 percent growth in 2022 over the prior year, equaling over 792,000 franchise operations nationally. It was also anticipated that this growth would create more jobs, increase wages, and add billions of dollars to the GDP.

Anne Marie Ramos, who co-owns ZIPS Cleaners franchises with her husband, Angel, shares their experiences and what life is like as franchise owners.

How did you come to own a franchise?
In 1999, we had an opportunity to

become a dry-cleaning operator with a chain in Maryland called Dryclean Depot, which also had twelve other operators. The chain owner offered us a lease deal to run the operation (in essence, we were working for him) with the option of purchasing our store in two years based on its gross sales, which we did. In 2001, along with the other chain operators, we decided to standardize our operations and change the name to ZIPS Cleaners. We created a board of directors and basically functioned like a franchise without the actual incorporation. Five years later, we officially converted ZIPS Cleaners into a franchise. At the time, the idea was a revolutionary one—provide a dry-cleaning service that offers same-day pick-up and also brand ourselves as the \$1.99 dry cleaner.



ANNE MARIE RAMOS

What's the best part of owning a franchise?

It's been great to be a stakeholder, both as a franchisor and franchisee. We've been so fortunate to not only have a wonderful support system in place from the franchise itself but also have all the legwork done for us, including the training processes, marketing campaigns, and overall operational systems—we did not have to re-create the wheel. And now, twenty-plus years later, we own two of the sixty-seven ZIPS Cleaners nationally.

What has been the most challenging aspect of owning a franchise?

Because we wear multiple hats as a franchisor and franchisee, we always want to be sure we are doing what's good for both sides. It's a tricky balance for sure. The biggest challenge was the first two years; the days were very long because we worked every day from open to close. It was also very difficult not spending time with our children, who were only ten and eleven years old when we started, but we knew that this was the best way for us to provide for them in the long run.

“We've been so fortunate to not only have a wonderful support system in place from the franchise itself but also have all the legwork done for us, including the training processes, marketing campaigns, and overall operational systems—we did not have to re-create the wheel.”

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZIPS CLEANERS



ANGEL RAMOS

You recently raised your prices due to COVID-19. How did this price increase affect the franchise's messaging and brand?

We knew we had to make price adjustments due to the increase in supply costs and the difficulties with the supply chain as a result of COVID. We did a small price increase a while back but finally increased our price per garment to \$2.99. And, yes, we were definitely concerned about how our customers would

react, but after explaining the reasons for the increase, our customers understood, and we were surprised that there was no pushback. I wish we had raised them sooner, but with having the opinions of fourteen different franchisees to consider, it took time to come to an agreement.

What do you look for in a potential buyer?

We have a committee that performs due diligence for that. The committee checks to make sure the potential buyer has the financial capability and stability and that a viable business plan is in place. Also, if the buyer wants to open a new location, it must meet certain franchise requirements. They must also understand that it's a huge undertaking and what it takes to make a franchise successful.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to buy an existing franchise?

Regardless of the business, you must be 100 percent committed, have an entrepreneurial spirit and strong work ethic, and be willing and able to work long hours. Our advice is that you should also know why the current franchise owner is selling and that they can prove the business has been on a successful track. Also, shadowing the current owner will help shed light on how the franchise works in real time.

What are the costs and royalties?

Start-up costs and royalties vary widely from franchise to franchise. It's important to know what the franchise fees cover. For example, do the fees include all your advertising

“Start-up costs and royalties vary widely from franchise to franchise. It's important to know what the franchise fees cover.”

ANGEL RAMOS PHOTO COURTESY OF ZIPS CLEANERS



and marketing costs? What support is available if you run into a problem? These fees are usually a percentage of your monthly revenue, so it's important to know what to expect up front.

What are the risks of franchising?

Most people sink a good portion of their savings into the purchase of a franchise. If it turns out that the business is not right for them, it could be devastating. You also

have to be prepared to wait months before you break even, so doing due diligence is absolutely critical.

If you could do it all over again, would you?

Most definitely. This was a great opportunity for us to make a good living here in America and provide for our children. Granted, the early years were extremely difficult, but we wanted to give our kids whatever

we could; we knew this wouldn't have been possible if we remained in El Salvador. For us, it is truly the American dream.

As a husband-and-wife team, we have found ways to make it work even with our diverse backgrounds and personality differences. We are respectful of one another and have always viewed ourselves as a team and equals.



Experts in the franchising business recommend the following steps if you are thinking about or have decided to purchase a franchise:



Take your time, and do your due diligence.



Check into the corporation's systems to be sure it has a robust and clear description of its company, expectations, products, and systems.



Read through the Franchise Disclosure Document (FDD), which provides an in-depth look into the business's financial performance. Make sure the business's valuation is accurate, there is a proven track record of sales, and there is a return on investment before you proceed with the investment. Also, ask the current owner why they are selling, and determine if there are any red flags.



Explore your financing options and what your buy-in will be. This includes the start-up costs, monthly fees and what they cover, and support systems that are available to you as a franchise owner.



Select a location that has foot traffic, is easily accessible, and has other businesses in the area that will complement your business and attract the customers you are looking for.

The opportunities for franchise ownership are vast. Whether you choose to purchase one from an existing owner or buy the rights for a new location, having a complete understanding of the benefits, risks, and financial commitments will be key to making it a successful endeavor. ■

“

As a husband-and-wife team, we have found ways to make it work even with our diverse backgrounds and personality differences. We are respectful of one another and have always viewed ourselves as a team and equals.”

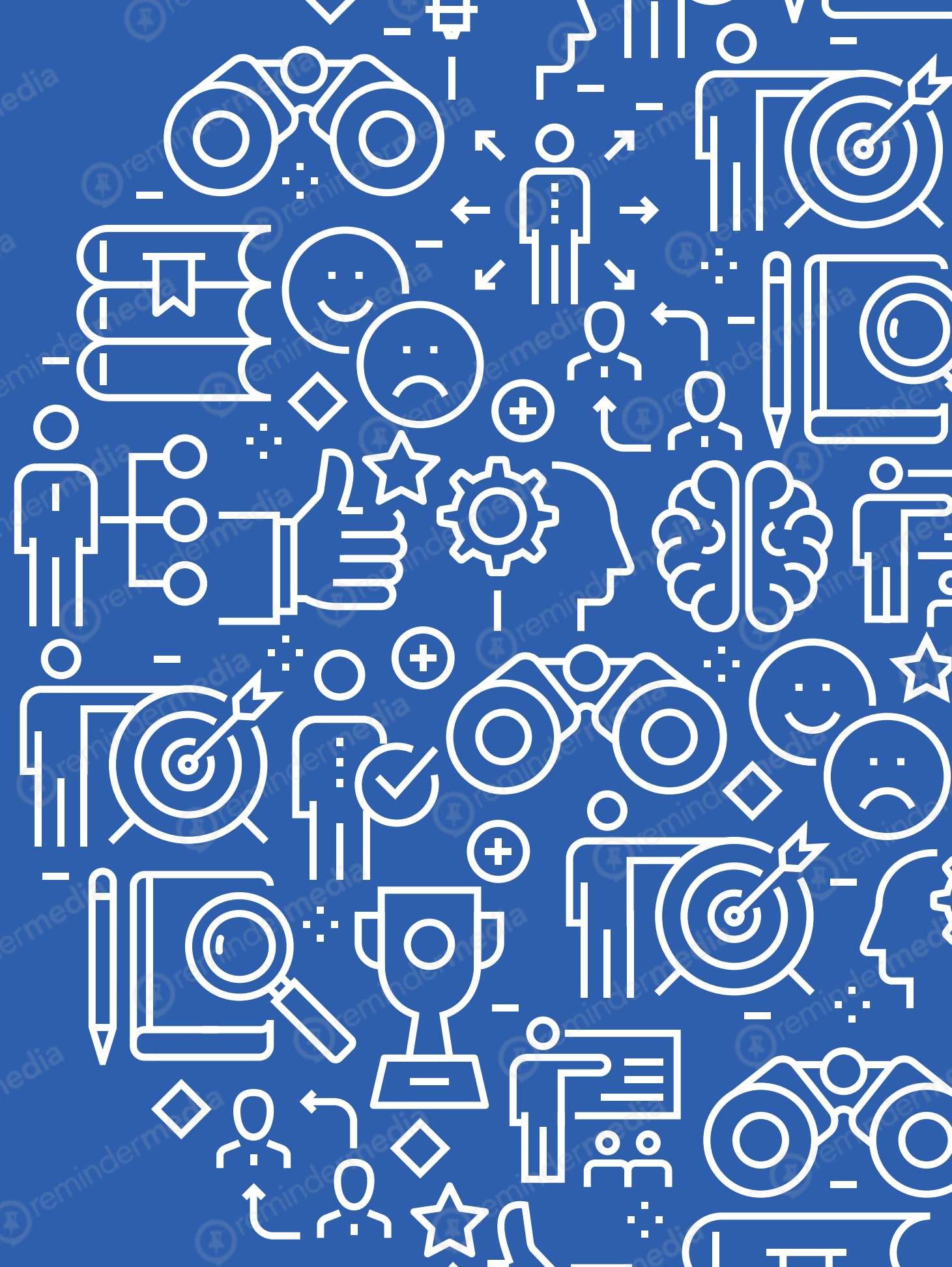
How to Recruit a Quality Mentor

A mentor can help propel your career, but finding one can be difficult. Use these tactics to enlist someone who can provide the guidance you need to succeed. BY LAUREN KIM

W HETHER YOU ARE just starting out or have years of experience, having a mentor—an experienced person in your field who can guide, motivate, and educate you—can help you reach your professional goals. But recruiting a mentor who is the right fit can be challenging: 76 percent of people think it's important to have a mentor but only 37 percent have one, according to an Olivet Nazarene University study.

How to begin

As you progress in your professional life, it will be helpful to have an experienced and supportive person on your side who can be a sounding board, offer perspective when you face big decisions, and give you the contacts and resources you need to advance in your career. To find the best mentor for this point in your life, envision what you would like to accomplish and determine the skills you will need. It might be helpful to first focus on the next five years so you can pinpoint a mentor who can be most helpful to you now. As you move up the ladder, your mentoring needs may change, and it may be best to recruit new mentors.





🕒 Where to look

There are many places where you can look for an individual who can skillfully mentor and support you. Cheryl Gilbert, quality control advisor of development and expansion for IKEA Indonesia, says she has sought the advice of various mentors throughout her professional life and suggests first searching your own extended network of contacts for a mentor. This network could include your business associates, friends, family, neighbors, and former classmates. These individuals may be able to mentor you or may know of someone who could. Business

associations and clubs are other good sources for a mentor. You could also try contacting the human resources department at your employer or the alumni office for your alma mater, as both may already have mentoring programs in place. If they don't, they still could identify individuals who may be able to serve as your mentor. If you own a small business, SCORE is a nationwide network of volunteer business mentors that could pair you with a suitable individual.

🕒 Find the right person

The next step in your search is to identify an individual who could give

you applicable career advice. Such a person could be just a few or many years ahead of you in their career, and each will have their own unique perspective to share; the former will have recent experience that may be helpful, while someone who is much further along might be able to help with both your immediate goals and your distant ones. Your mentor doesn't have to work in your field, either—you could consider recruiting someone with a background in an area in which you could use advice, such as how to manage cash flow, hire staff, or improve customer service. Look for a mentor who has the willingness and time to work with you, is easy to talk to, and is somebody you admire.

🕒 Reach out

Once you have identified a potential mentor, reach out via text, email, phone, or social media. Share that you admire their work and would be interested in a quick conversation or meeting. You might not want to bring up the word "mentor" right away; you should first determine if your contact would be interested in mentoring you—bringing it up point blank is a big ask for a huge commitment. If you do secure a chat or meeting, "interview them to see if they are a good fit," Gilbert says. "If the mentor

Take Action

Honestly evaluate your career and areas you need to improve, and begin your search for a mentor today.

spends the first session lecturing you, run. Your mentor should be interested in what you want and need." Be sure to follow up afterward with a short note of thanks, a quick text, or an email.

🕒 Let a relationship develop

If your initial conversation with a potential mentor goes well, ask for another meeting. When you get together again, keep it casual and conversational; you don't want to ask for too much too soon. Building a mentoring relationship takes time and can't be forced. Just as in any relationship, both parties must be interested, communicate well, and get along well for it to work. If your second meeting is positive, consider asking the person if they would be open to mentoring you—successful individuals are often happy to help others rise through the ranks. From the very beginning, discuss what



you want from the relationship, how often you'd like to meet, the advice you'll be seeking, and whether you'll want their guidance for important career decisions. This way, you can determine whether they are truly

open to such a commitment. As your mentoring relationship develops, regularly assess how it's going for both of you, and remember to be gracious for the assistance and time they devote to you. ■

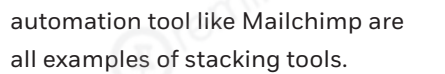
Having a long-game mentality is necessary to be a successful content marketer. You need to be disciplined and consistent and have a well-thought-out plan for your efforts to pay off.

BY **BONNIE JOFFE**



know, content marketing is an invaluable tool for reaching customers and driving growth. However, before you can begin putting it into your business, it's important to know how you will deliver the content, who your audience is, what message you want to convey, where and when you will deliver it, and why someone will want to share the content you are creating. Dan McGaw, owner and CEO of McGaw.io, content marketing expert and former US ambassador to entrepreneurship, offers some valuable insights on how to become a master content marketer.

To get started, the first questions you will want to ask yourself is, “What am I trying to accomplish?,” and “How am I going to get there?” McGaw believes in “stacking” marketing technology, also known as Martech Stack—a term used to describe a group of marketing tools for businesses to analyze, execute, and improve their marketing strategies to achieve their marketing goals. Having a professional-looking website, a customer relationship management (CRM) system such as HubSpot, an analytic tool to measure your successes and pitfalls such as hotjar.com, and an email marketing



Always have a carefully crafted plan before launching any marketing program. Know your niche audience and what will move them to trust you enough to read and share your information.

McGraw recommends creating a list of people you know, such as friends, family, acquaintances, and business connections, and gathering as much customer data (email address, phone number, social media pages, etc.) as possible about them so that your database becomes your marketing gold mine. This will provide the information you need for marketing to and acquiring new customers; the more information you procure, the more you'll be able to market to your target audience. Leverage your LinkedIn contacts, import them into your CRM, and then categorize your clients and prospects into hyper-targeted lists. You will then be able to share high-quality, personalized content with them.

Determine what topics you believe will resonate with your audience.
McGraw says the best way to do



this is by using a keyword research tool called Google Trends. Compare keywords and search terms to see how many times topics have shown up in other searches over a specified period, explore which keywords and hashtags rank high, and then research other similar articles and determine what's missing from them. Then construct your content with those missing keywords in mind, making sure you incorporate them into your articles or posts. By consistently doing this over time, you'll improve your ranking on the search engine results page (SERP). To better understand what's working and what's not, you can also analyze your content's performance through a tool like Google Analytics before creating additional marketing or content pieces.

When

Each marketing platform has its own benefits depending on the audience you wish to reach. Whether it's your social media or email marketing campaigns, determining the best days and times to post and share your content for the highest engagement will likely influence the success of your marketing goals.

Almost four billion people are engaging on social media platforms, so posting your content on the right



Almost four billion people are engaging on social media platforms, so posting your content on the right platform at the right time will more than likely have a direct impact on the success of your marketing goals.

platform at the right time will more than likely have a direct impact on the success of your marketing goals. Also, research has been conducted to determine the best and worst days and times to post on individual platforms like Facebook and Instagram. For example, Sprout Social recommends Monday through Friday at 3 a.m. (CT) and Tuesday at 10 a.m. and noon for Facebook, with Saturday being the worst day to post. For Instagram, it says the best days and times to post are Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., with Sunday being the least desirable. Email marketing has a different timeline for garnering the most open rates, with the best overall days thought to be Tuesday and Thursday. Make sure to do your research before launching and paying for any advertising or boosting posts.

Where

Where to place and share your content is just as important as the content itself. Tracking data by implementing analytical strategies will help you to understand where your leads and customers are coming from and what their behaviors and interests are. You will then be able to see if you need to make any adjustments. Implementing a targeted email marketing

campaign and posting on social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or Twitter are easy, effective ways you can share your content.

- **Email Marketing**

Most people are overwhelmed with the number of emails they receive daily. McGaw says that “No one really wants to read your newsletter,” but he believes email marketing is not dead—you just need to be better at it than your competition. By creating hyper-targeted content, you stand a better chance of your database opening your emails. There are several email marketing platforms to choose from, including Mailchimp, Constant Contact, and HubSpot. Each has its own pricing structure based on the size of the database, frequency of emails, and custom design templates. You'll need to research which platform best suits your needs.

- **Social Media Posts**

Because most small-to-medium-sized businesses do not have hefty marketing budgets, they can still reap the benefits of social media marketing without having to spend too much money as long as the postings are methodical and intentional. Sponsored ads on

Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter tend to be affordable and can be worthwhile if you are consistent in your efforts.

Why

Why would someone want to open your emails, click on your social media posts, read what you have to say, and then take the extra step to share your content? To answer this question, you need to know what to write about and how to build authority, create awareness, and position yourself as an expert in your field. The why circles back to the idea of creating content that is hyper-focused on the segment of the market you are targeting, hence McGaw's earlier suggestion to turn your database into a gold mine by collecting as much customer information as possible to better understand their interests and purchasing habits.

Any successful content marketing program must always be strategic and well planned out. Understanding your target market and what content resonates with the people within it will keep them coming back for more information. McGaw believes that you must “Act, track, and pivot” so you can make the necessary adjustments to your approach to be a master of content marketing. ■



Foster Connections

with the

FORD Method

Following this strategy can help you drive conversations to grow your personal and business relationships.

BY LUKE ACREE

MOST SALESPEOPLE don't have trouble talking; it's often an innate skill, and it might even be the reason they got into sales in the first place. However, when it comes down to it, smooth talking and a bubbly personality can only get you so far. You need to know *how* to talk to people and *what* to say to make a memorable impact and connection.

Whether you're networking, pitching your product, or prospecting, the FORD Method is a great way to keep dialogue flowing and establish a strong rapport. Here's a closer look at the basics of this approach and how you can start implementing it in every conversation.

The 411 on FORD

Let's start with what the acronym FORD stands for:

Family
Occupation
Recreation
Dreams

These four words are the building blocks of a person's value system, and each is relevant to every person you'll meet, no matter their age, who they are, or what they do. That's why this method works so well; it's a starting line for getting to know people and allowing them to get to know more about you, ultimately building trust. You can use the four components of FORD to draw up questions to ask in any conversation at any time.

This method is a two-way street, though. A good practice exercise is to jot down your own responses to these or similar questions:

- **Family:** Who in my life is most important to me? How often do I see them?
- **Occupation:** What do I do for a living? Does my career fulfill me?
- **Recreation:** What do I like to do for fun? What is my overall favorite sports team?
- **Dreams:** Who do I aspire to be in five years? What are my goals?

It will be easier to ask these questions to other people once you've practiced your own responses. If you're worried about getting too personal too soon, know that you don't have to open with the most personal questions (dreams); start slow (family/occupation), and work your way up. This method allows you to lay the groundwork for establishing a bond early in your relationship so you can present yourself as more than a salesperson pushing a product.

Put FORD into Practice

Are you ready to take a crack at the FORD Method? Try these ideas for inspiration.

On social media

➡ Your social media pages are the perfect place to put FORD into action. They are often used as a communication platform,



but they also can be an opportunity for you to open a window into your personal and professional lives.

→ Use the 80/20 rule to highlight aspects of your business and life that you want clients and prospects to know about. Following this rule can help you ensure your content is informative but also relatable. For example, you could share industry insights and business updates five days per week and post something personal (e.g., pictures of your family, fun videos of your pet, or a look at your daily routine) the other two days.

→ Make it a habit to direct-message new connections on LinkedIn or Facebook to thank them for following you. Review their profile, and ask them a question using FORD that relates to something they’ve recently posted about, such as a child’s graduation, a family vacation, or a personal achievement.

In conversation

These days, face-to-face conversations can be more intimidating than those on social media. But the FORD Method can be used to help you avoid awkward silence and prevent you from asking the wrong questions at the wrong time.

→ Some networking events and conferences will post a list of attendees beforehand. Take a look at the list, and jot down the names of any individuals you think would be particularly valuable to talk to. Look at their business and personal profiles, take notes on questions you can ask them, and practice asking those questions to help you prepare for the event.

→ You can use the FORD Method in different ways for different types of conversations. If you’re meeting two clients at the same time, such as a couple or a parent and child, you can ask questions with FORD related to their



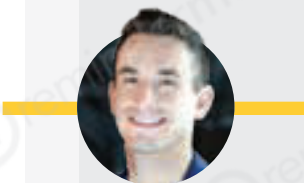
Come up with a list of questions for each area of the FORD Method that you can routinely ask prospects in new conversations.

relationship. For example, “How did you two meet?” could be an icebreaker for the couple, and “Do you have any other children/siblings?” could work for the parent and child.

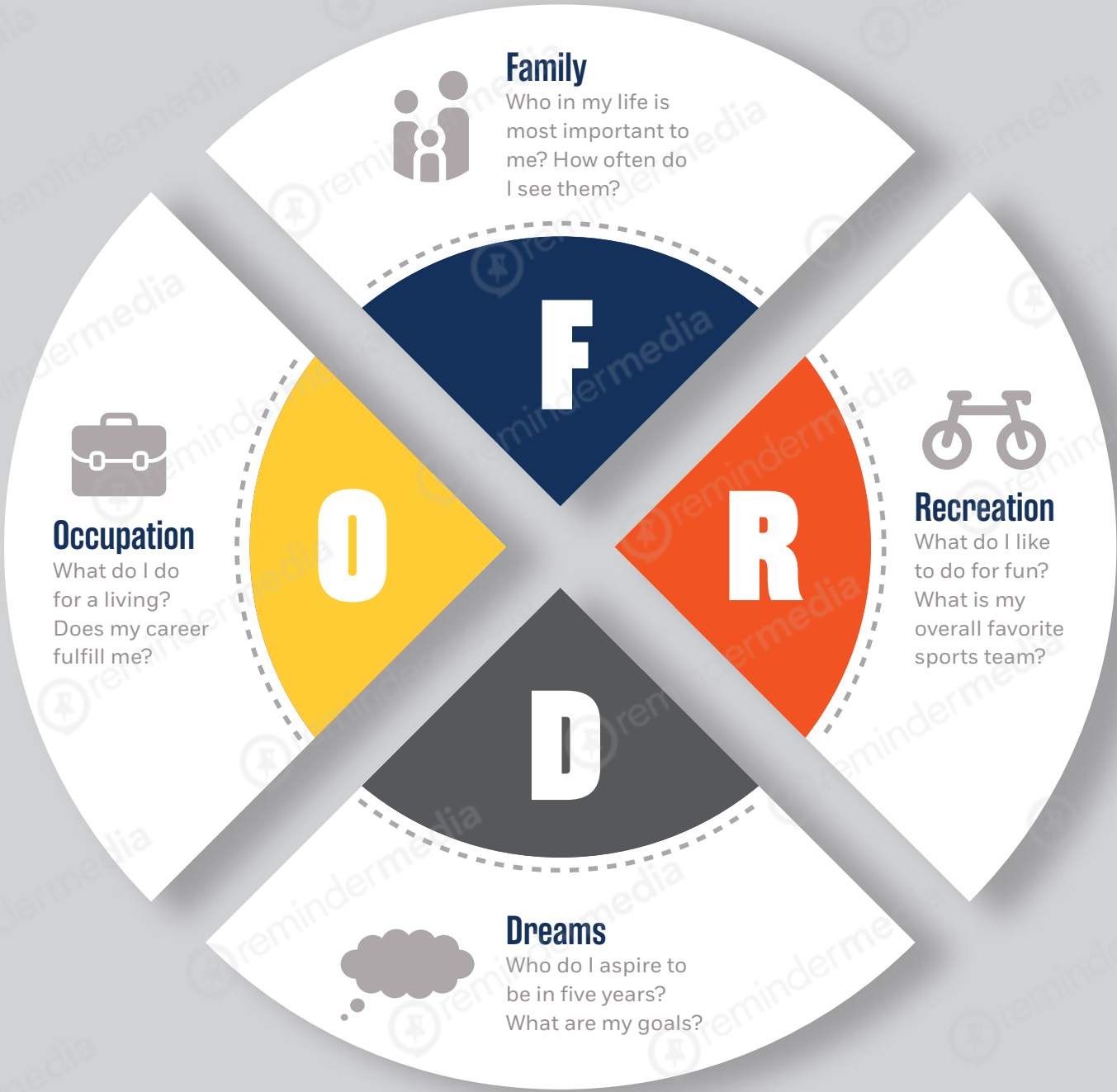
→ FORD can be particularly useful for gauging a person’s place in life and the likelihood of needing your services. A financial adviser, for instance, may want to ask a potential client “Where do you see yourself in five years?” to help identify the prospect’s goals and present a plan to help them achieve them.

As a business professional, you’re likely having dozens of conversations every single day. If you want your conversations to stand out and lead to lasting relationships that drive sales for your organization,

effective communication is key. Keep track of any new information you learn about a client or prospect in your CRM so that you can reference it in future conversations. Soon you’ll have a database full of helpful information you can use to maintain these powerful connections. ■



About the author:
Luke Acree is an authority on leadership, a lead-generation specialist, and a referral expert who has helped more than 100,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses grow their companies. He hosts *Stay Paid*, a sales and marketing podcast, and has been featured in *Entrepreneur*, *Forbes*, and *Foundr.com*.



Motivational Quotes from Top Financial Experts

Motivation is the key ingredient for success, but it can also be easy to lose. Motivational quotes are often inspirational, helping to keep you on track to meet your goals, or they can give you a boost if you need a reboot. BY **BONNIE JOFFE**



“
Attitude is everything. The glass always has to be half full, and you have to believe in yourself that way. You have to go out on a limb because that's where the fruit is—take that risk.”
DEAN THURMAN
Cofounder of White Glove Workshops; Co-owner and Senior Partner of InvestWise Financial



“
Believe in yourself more. Write down the six most important things you need to accomplish that day. I call it my 'six most,' and if I hit that, then I have had a successful day.”
JAMIE HOPKINS
Managing Partner of Wealth Solutions at Carson Group



“
I strongly believe that how you begin your day determines how it will end. Every morning, I deliberately surround myself with positivity, and I take the first hour of my day to do things for myself.”
ERIC FENG
Global Motivational Speaker



“
Number one is attitude—you have to keep your attitude positive. The riches are in the niches. Find the successful people who have made a shift, and then you might have to do things a little differently.”
TOM HEGNA
Economist, Author, and Retirement Income Expert



“
Too often, we only look at outcomes in terms of revenue or expenses, but other outcomes can be just as or even more valuable when it comes to getting closer to what you really, truly want.”
DAN NICHOLSON
Founder and CEO of Nth Degree CPAs; Creator of The Certainty App



“
Just stay the course. There are no shortcuts. It's the little things I did consistently day in and day out that got me here.”
ESZYLFI TAYLOR
President of Taylor Insurance and Financial Services



“
Find some golden nugget each day, and find a way to use it to make a real difference.”
ED SLOTT, CPA
President and Founder of Ed Slott and Company, LLC



“
Starvation is a wonderful motivator, and staying in your comfort zone will never drive people to greatness. None of this is rocket science; it's intentionality.”
ERIN BOTSFORD
Founder of Botsford Financial Group; CEO of The Advisory Authority

THE 4 U'S: Tips for Writing Irresistibly Clickable Email Subject Lines

FOLLOW THE 4 U's BY ASKING YOURSELF THESE 4 QUESTIONS EVERY TIME YOU WRITE A SUBJECT LINE AND WATCH YOUR OPEN RATES SOAR.

- USEFUL:**
Will your recipients find value in what you've written?
- URGENT:**
Does the subject line compel recipients to open your email now?
- UNIQUE:**
Does the subject line promise something recipients won't find elsewhere?
- ULTRA-SPECIFIC:**
Have you told your recipients exactly what to expect?





Patrick Yanahan
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Front of Tear Out Card 2

Whether great leaders are born or made isn't as important as knowing what great leaders *do*.

Flip the card for a list of **5 BEHAVIORS** that turn good leaders into great leaders, then post it where you can see it every day.





Patrick Yanahan

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Back of Tear Out Card 2

SIGNS OF A GREAT LEADER

- ✓ **Great leaders take extreme ownership.**
They own the problems, solutions, failures, and decisions that affect their team and their organization *regardless* of whether what happens is under their direct control.
- ✓ **Great leaders lead by example.**
They demonstrate by example what is possible when there is a task to be completed or a goal to be reached.
- ✓ **Great leaders speak using radical candor.**
They are direct about what's not working and are still able to show they care.
- ✓ **Great leaders give recognition to others.**
They ensure that they recognize others in ways that continue to inspire good work, *including* that the recognition is proportionate to the achievement.
- ✓ **Great leaders trust their people.**
They demonstrate confidence in their employees. They let people fail and encourage them to learn from their mistakes. They listen to others' ideas. They don't micromanage.



Tear out this card and post it where you can see it every day!

Patrick Yanahan

Unlimited Sales Assistance Strategies, LLC
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KING OF PRUSSIA, PA 19406

THE 3Es OF CONTENT MARKETING

Your marketing should provide
VALUABLE CONTENT your sphere will find
useful. Typically, that includes content that is
educational, entertaining, or endearing.



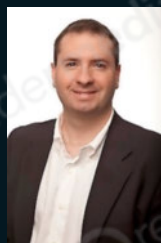
EDUCATIONAL CONTENT is information that your readers can use to solve a problem or meet a need. An example of a written blog with an educational intent might be "5 Questions to Ask Before You Hire a Financial Advisor."



ENTERTAINING CONTENT is any content your ideal client would find enjoyable. A video blog of this type might review "The Top 5 Places to Get Real Barbeque in Nashville." (Notice the focus on the local area.)



ENDEARING CONTENT lets your readers know that you aren't just about making a buck. News about the community, your office's involvement in a charity, the accomplishments of a local school athlete or musician, the success of a volunteer drive—there are countless ways you can share content for which your followers will appreciate you for caring about things they care about too.



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