

the
serious
business
of serious
business.

mychael

mychael. the serious business of serious business.

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'Not being rude.

But I was just wondering.

Do you actually take your business seriously?

Do you take your brand seriously?

And do you take the growth of your business and your brand seriously?

Or in actual fact.

Are you just pissing about?

Conversation.

I asked someone these exact questions recently.

And it was a hard conversation.

I asked this person if they actually knew what the hell they were doing.

Or if they were just smiling through the big.

Shiny.

Artificially whitened teeth of a well constructed and presented but wafer-thin brand.

A brand that.

Behind the scenes.

Didn't have a fucking clue how to grow.

A brand that.

Behind the scenes.

Was scared to ask for proper help.

Because, (they thought) asking for help would make them look silly.

And it was a hard conversation.

What About You?

So what about you?

If you want, you can ask yourself the same entry-level questions that I asked this person.

I've listed them below.

Entry Level Questions.

Here are a few Entry Level questions.

Questions for any business.

Including yours.

You can ask yourself the same questions that I asked.

To discover if you are taking your business.

Your brand.

And the growth of your business and brand seriously.

Or you can of course discover if you're just pissing about.

And since you are putting your own time, money and energy into this thing you're doing.

It'd be good to know.

Questions.

OK.

Here goes.

Rudimentary questions, studies, approaches, touchstones, documents and frameworks:

- **Organisational Objectives.**

What do you and yours actually want from this venture?

And when do they want it?

You, your family and fellow shareholders.

- **Customer Avatars.**

Who will buy from you?

Do you understand them demographically?

And by mindset?

How do they live their lives and how do they actually behave?

As people and as consumers.

How are you going to get them to notice you, buy into you and buy from you?

(And then buy from you again).

How are you going to get under their skin?

So that they become fans and tell others.

- **The Competitive Environment.**

Do you understand how readily your target customers can get the same benefits that you are offering from elsewhere?

Have you identified both direct and indirect competition? And do you understand their trajectory?

Have you developed strategies to corral competitor audiences to defect to you?

To become your customers instead of their customers?

Have you developed a circle of brands with whom you should be associated, so that their audience can be encouraged – by you – to become your audience and customers as well?

- **A Brand Strategy.**

What do you stand for?

What is the change you want to make?

What is your distinct, ownable, memorable, compelling and motivating reason for being?

What is your purpose?

And who gives a shit about all of that?

(If it isn't your customer avatar – you really are screwed).

And how do you propose to embed all of this into the fabric of your organisation (even if it's only you) and into the minds of your segmented marketplace?

How are you going to find and engage with those that believe what you believe?

Do you even understand how you are different and better?

And if you do, is this point of difference something you can own?

And is it communicated and indeed strengthened via every single touch point?

- **A Marketing Strategy (and tactics therein).**

What will you say? To whom? When? Why? And how?

What combination and schedule of marketing tactics is best?

And how do you know and review this?

How will you even be noticed? And how persuasive are you thereafter?

What five different strategies, and associated tactical approaches do you have in place for your five different kinds of customer? (There are only ever five kinds of customer. In any business).

- **A Messaging Framework.**

What will your brand actually say? What are the actual words and phrases?

What is your leading edge proposition? And what are your trailing edge propositions? Those things that focus on customer acquisition.

And those that will consolidate a sale and build loyalty, repeat business and reputation. So you will be remembered.

- **Sales Strategy.**

What are your platforms/routes/channels to market?

How does your selling machine actually work? What does it look like?

What do you (and others) do when?

Who else is involved?

How do you ensure consistency and coherence?

How can you ensure that intermediaries can sell as well as you can?

What are your sales targets?

How are they broken down by market segment, size of customer and more?

Do you understand, and have you accounted for, the differences between customers and consumers?

- **Organisation.**

How does your business machine work and fit together?

Who do you need and who do you have? To make all of this work?

- **Money.**

Sales targets, profit targets and all margins. Are they targeted?

Are your target reserve levels high enough to get you through tricky times? And for how long?

Are the key ratios correct?

Does your pricing policy allow you to flourish in the channels you have chosen? Or are you restricted?

How are you in the context of industry norms?

Is cash flow OK?

Are you planning for organic growth or step change?

If you are good with 80% of this, go for it.

If you're not, get help.

Get someone that will help you then hold you to account over time so you don't drift.

Strategy

And one more thing.

Strategy.

There is a lot of overcomplicated shite written about strategy.

And there are a lot of rooms filled with people.

All talking about strategy.

Yet all working to different definitions of strategy.

So here's a simple description of what it is.

How it fits into your organisation.

And how you should address it.

In three simple steps.

- 1. Set a Goal.**
Describe the change you want to make – clearly.
- 2. Strategy.**
Describe what the best things to do are, in order to achieve your goal.
- 3. Tactics.** Describe how you'll achieve each thing you identified in your strategy.

And that's it.

Play Bigger.

The only other thing I'd add is to do with the goal you set.

Whatever it is - Play Bigger.

Make the goal more ambitious.

Make the goal even more worthwhile, significant and hard-hitting than you have already.

If the goal doesn't sound 'wow'.

If the goal doesn't make quite a few people laugh at you.

And if the goal doesn't sound world changing.

(Your world.

Or 'the' world).

Then don't fucking bother.

Because you're not playing big enough.

Change the World.

Change the world.

Someone is going to change the world.

So it might as well be you.

This Conversation.

This conversation is hard.

It's thorough, though.

If you cover what I've covered.

So it's a conversation worth having.

Because if you take business seriously.

And manage to keep things light.

Whilst developing your determination and resilience.

And address all of this.

Properly.

Business building and brand building can be great fun and really rewarding.

The Person I Was Talking To.

I told all of this and more.

In no uncertain terms.

To the person I was giving a fucking good talking to last week.

Asking them every single one of these questions – and more.

And I thought you might benefit from listening in.

Because the person I was talking to.

Was me.