Business Tips

Welcome to our monthly business newsletter designed to help you concentrate on working more "ON" your business, rather than "IN" it. Please remember our skills and experience can provide you with help and support, give you a strong shoulder to lean on and someone on your side, to bounce ideas off.

Best wishes

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Building a sustainable business

There is a trend towards businesses that seek to be more sustainable. These companies seek to have a minimal negative impact on the global and local environment, the economy, society and the communities in which they operate.

Sustainable businesses are focused on the long term. They seek to make a positive impact through doing their bit about climate change, recycling, human rights, ethical supply chain management and so on. This is fine if you are a global companies with thousands of staff and vast resources, but how do you create a sustainable small or medium sized business?

Small and medium sized business owners are starting to recognise that consumers and clients respond favourably to companies that place value on people and the planet, as well as profits.

For example, millennials won't just buy anything. They seek to buy products and services that come from businesses that are seen as authentic, that make a meaningful and positive impact and that are linked to important causes.

Small and medium sized businesses can tap into this by getting involved in corporate social responsibility (CSR), charity work, buying from fair-trade or ethical suppliers, hiring a more diverse workforce and so forth.

For example, if your company uses lots of packaging then you can start to make a positive impact by only using recycled / recyclable packaging. You can promote this fact in your marketing materials, corporate communications, website and so forth so that people know that you are making a positive impact.

## Dealing with Imposter Syndrome

"Imposter Syndrome" can be described as a pattern of thinking that leads people to lose confidence in themselves, in their accomplishments and in their ability to do their job.

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This results in individuals becoming stressed about being "discovered as a fraud" by their peers.

Imposter syndrome can be a very destructive disorder if left unchecked. It can turn positive moments into negatives and put a dampener on an individual's work related accomplishments. It can present itself as severe anxiety and self-doubt which can inhibit an individual's ability to perform at the level that they are capable of.

Most people suffer from a degree of imposter syndrome at some point in their career. It might happen when someone takes on a more senior position, and they wonder if they have the ability to deliver in their new role. For others, it can seemingly appear from nowhere.
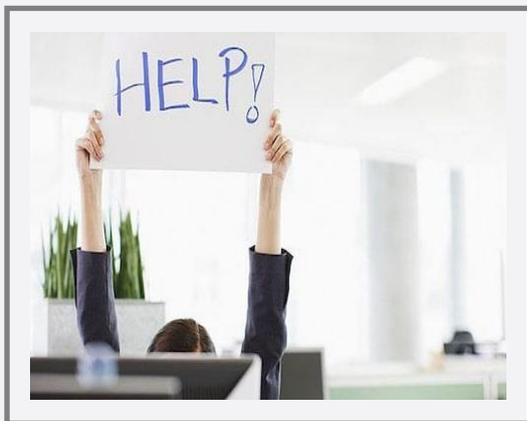
The important thing is to recognise that it is imposter syndrome and to take control of the situation in order to move forward. Although imposter syndrome is not considered to be an official "psychological disorder", it is a real occurrence and can often be identified as work-related anxiety or stress.

Like any other pattern of thinking, it is learned and reinforced in the individual's mind. Therefore it can be addressed through retraining themselves to adopt healthier patterns of thinking.

A good method of helping to deal with imposter syndrome is to track every accomplishment. Doing so in a way that is visible (in a notepad or on a whiteboard on your wall), can help you to remind people that they are doing well.

Another way to flex skills and make a positive impact is to reach out and help others in the company. Mentoring and developing junior colleagues can reinforce in an individual's mind that they know a lot about their specific subject matter. An additional benefit is the feel-good factor associated with bringing people on and making a difference.

If someone is suffering badly with imposter syndrome (to the extent that it is keeping them awake at night, for example), it may be time to seek help from a professional coach or therapist. The idea is to discuss the root cause(s) of the anxiety with a professional who can help to create an effective coping mechanism. They can help the person to move forward by finding ways to assist them in changing their pattern of thinking.

Keeping your company's mobile devices safe from Malware Attacks

Recent industry reports from cyber security firms such as McAfee and Kaspersky Lab have identified that mobile malware attacks are becoming increasingly widespread and more sophisticated.

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Most business professionals use smartphones these days. These devices are basically small computers and can be infected with malware in a similar way to a PC - usually through malicious links or attachments sent via email. As people are now using smartphones to access corporate email accounts, make online payments, etc. there is an increased risk for businesses. Another risk exists where an employee's device is hacked and the company's passwords and remote access logins are stolen. This can allow hackers to get inside a businesses' firewall and spread malware to computers across the company network.

So, what should businesses do to protect themselves? Mobile antivirus tools can help to a degree and all company data should be backed up regularly. That said, it is more important to teach your employees the basics of mobile security to eliminate putting themselves or the business at risk in the first place. Basic training can involve teaching your employees how to identify suspicious emails and to avoid clicking on potentially dangerous links on their smartphones

Fake apps are another serious risk. Cyber criminals often design apps that imitate legitimate apps or they might offer a game or utility app for free. In order to minimise this risk, your company should create and publish an internal list of approved apps.

All employees that use company devices should receive regular communication regarding which apps are approved for use on company devices. It should also be made clear that no other apps can be installed on a company device without express permission from the relevant person(s).

Finally, your business should have monitoring tools in place, which check for signs of unusual activity on the network, such as remote logins from unfamiliar IP addresses, large files moving out of the network over email, etc.