

It's all in the swing

Being successful in your business is just like the perfect golf shot – It takes practice but also comes naturally in time. Paul McKibbin explains how.

Professional golfers have an abundance of skill, as do business owners. The golfers, however, use a coach to drive home the basics. A small tweak here or there works wonders on the win-lose ratio. Ask Tiger Woods!

Golfers spend many hours on the practice field. There is a fine line between success and failure – the player who wins the British Open may win by only one shot in 270.

Use a coach to drive home the basics – a small tweak here or there will work wonders

So how can you find more time to spend on the basics and deliver success in a live, business environment

The first point about a golf shot is the stance – addressing the ball properly.

Get on the course

Get this right and you have improved your chance of finding the target. Get it wrong and you will never hit that perfect shot.

Your stance is about knowing where you want to take your business. Do it well and you should deliver successful growth for your business. Address the ball incorrectly and you will miss the target and possibly end up in the low margin rough of your customer portfolio

An IBM motto is “He who aims at nothing is bound to hit it”. All owner managers should take some time out to understand where they want to

Know where you want to take your business- he who aims at nothing is bound to hit it!

take their business. The rest is just about making sure you get there

My second golf tip is to know

how to hold the club properly. Too much control with either hand or selecting the wrong club may undo everything you have previously done.

In business, your grip is equally important. Too much control can be as bad as no control. Put in place people with the right abilities and guide

Now that you know where you are going how will you get there?

them in the correct direction. They will respond properly but still allow you the opportunity to make those tweaks and changes to maximise the business' potential.

We now know where we are going and have the skills to deliver but we haven't done anything yet. Start to swing the club back and up over your shoulder, keeping your eye on the ball at all times.

Your backswing is your production or office process. It is also where your costs are more likely to run away from you. Success in delivering

The foundation of your business success

your product on time, on budget, to the right quality is just the same as getting your backswing right. It becomes the foundation of a business' and a golfer's success.

Over time your body will change as the muscles age. When this happens some fine-tuning will be required to your swing. Similarly, in your business over time, you'll be challenged to innovate, reduce costs and so on. You have to

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accept change will happen so embrace it upfront and lead that change process.

At last you get the chance to start the downswing and strike the ball. If you have taken heed of my earlier tips there is no reason why the ball should not travel 250 yards, straight down the middle of the fairway.

The business parallel is that when you know how to deliver the right product or service to the customer, at the right price and on time, there isn't much else to do – at this stage anyway.

deliver your product on time and on budget

A smooth and efficient delivery process gives you more time to plan your next shot which is, of course, seeking and making that next sale.

Hitting the ball is not the end. Your follow-through is of equal importance to everything that has gone before. If you fall over at this point it could be due

The 'follow through', or after sales care, is vital in business

to a hasty shot; if your club finishes in the wrong place, the ball may well do too. You have to learn to hit the ball on the sweet spot every time

Learning to play a good 'follow through' in business is vital. It gives you the opportunity to gain customer feedback, or to ask for more business, either a repeat order or by cross-selling another product.

Businesses under-estimate how powerful cross-selling can be, yet it is often the easiest of sales.

never underestimate the power of cross selling

Put in place a "keep in touch" programme for your customers. Tell them you can solve their needs and then tell

them again. For more sophisticated customers, do something more in keeping, such as providing a dedicated team to look after them.

Putting all of this together is never easy, especially if you expect to play that perfect shot first time. Yes, we see the worst of all swings producing an

The Greatest chances of success

amazing shot sometimes, but rarely. The better the stance, the swing, the strike and so on the greater the chances of a successful outcome. If, in business, you can improve your conversion rate by 5% in a simple 5 stage process, you could have 100% more customers. Tell me you can't find that 5% to give you 100% more success!

When all is working well and you start winning business that's fabulous. But what do you do when things start to slip and you don't achieve the same results again?

Professional golfers, despite their skills, still use a coach for different aspects of their game. In business you should do the same. Recruit a specialist advisor who brings objective advice and views. They will help you to see things differently, from an outsider's point of view, and encourage you to make those little changes that are often the difference between success and failure. Take it from me, they do make a difference, and will provide you with a competitive advantage.

More about Paul McKibbin

Paul has more than 25 years' experience in industry in both plc and SME environments. Before joining SPS, Paul spent 5 years assisting an SME to deliver European growth. He now works with a variety of businesses across the UK to ensure they achieve the levels of growth they aspire to.

During normal working hours you can talk to Paul on any matter affecting your business.

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