



# 31 DAYS

— TO A —

## BETTER BUSINESS

IN 2014

**ÜBEROFFICES**

# Welcome to 31 Days of Blogging!

There is no better time than right now to bear down and dedicate yourself to your goals – both personal and professional.

As a coworking space, UberOffices plays a big part in the day-to-day life of its members and encourages each and every company to reach its potential.

Businesses operating out of UberOffices have access to mentors, pitch rooms, an endless supply of caffeinated beverages, and industry networking events. The perks of growing a business in a diverse coworking environment are numerous and undeniable.

The success of UberOffices' members proves that these benefits help drive innovation. Companies operating out of UberOffices raised millions of dollars in 2013, and more promising startups and young businesses join weekly. The numbers speak for themselves – UberOffices is the place to be.

So, follow along reading one chapter per day from entrepreneurs, UberOffices members, founders, and managers alike. Use the hashtag #BetterBiz2014 on Twitter to share anything that stands out to you.

For Day #1, write down two goals for your business that you can achieve by the end of these 31 days.

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# The OHIO Rule – Only Handle It Once

Email stresses me out. I'm an inbox zero kind of guy, so when I receive a new email, every ounce of me is compelled to act on it. While this was a-okay when I received a smaller amount of daily email, a constant increase in daily email has pushed me to implement guidelines for myself so that I don't lose control over my precious inbox.

I started with the old standards – unsubscribing from useless mailing lists, setting up filters for certain recurring emails, and disabling social media notifications. While those helped, the one that really made a difference for email management (and my sanity) was implementing OHIO.

The OHIO Rule is simple – when you open an email, you handle it right then and there with one of the following 'Ds':



image via Flickr/OzinOH

This eliminates that brain-drain that occurs when you read an email and just say to yourself, "I'll get to that later". For me, that always meant that it occupied some of my mental cycles until I finally dealt with it. It also meant I had 'email bloat' – stuff I was aware of but didn't want deal with yet. OHIO meant I dealt with it.

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- 1 Do it – Do whatever it is in the email that needs to be done
  - 2 Delegate it – Forward it on for someone else to do
  - 3 Delete it – Get rid of it
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This has also helped me to not bury my face in my phone at every waking moment. Because of the rule, it means that I'm only going to look at an email on my phone if I'm prepared to act upon it. I'm not big on doing a lot of work on my phone, so I just don't read email on my phone as much. This is a big win in the 'be more social' department!

## 80/20 It

I'll be the first to admit that I don't always OHIO. Sometimes you simply have to leave an email in your inbox, or you need to check a new email on your phone even though you know you won't be able to act on it. But, if you simply do the 80/20 rule and use OHIO 80%

of the time, I promise email will stress you out a lot less.

Email still stresses me out, but a lot less than it did before.

DAY 3 - Bill Slawski

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## Small Changes, Big Rewards

Let's start with a story...

A few years ago, I was visiting a friend at his office, and he tossed me a business supply catalog and asked me if I had any ideas about what he should order for his business. I didn't have a clue, but I leafed through the pages past printers and desks and networking equipment, and stopped on a page about electric letter folders. I thought quickly about how useful the electric stapler I had was (I received a lot of work-related mail at the time, and attaching the envelopes to those letters was a good way to make sure that the return address was easily findable.)

I jokingly suggested one of the electric folders, and laughed as I did so. Except, he took me seriously. He took the book back, and read

about the different folding machines, and said, "Good idea." He placed his order shortly afterwards. I didn't think about it for a few weeks, and then he told me that he had received his folder, and that it paid for itself within a couple of hours, and that the time it was saving him folding client invoices would help him focus on more important ways to grow his business.

💡 *What small changes are you going to make to your business this year that can help you focus more upon actually doing business, or can help your clients? Solutions are out there.*

## Small Changes

As timing would have it, the beginning of a new budget was about to start in my office, and we were asked if there was anything that we wanted on a “wishlist” of new purchases for our office, and were given an office supply book to help inspire our choices. I thought about what might be helpful, and then about how many documents the people I supervised mailed out daily, and quickly turned to the section on electric paper folders and made a choice.

It was approved (after I made a quick business

case for it and repeated my friend’s positive experience), and when we received our electric folder, my team looked at it suspiciously. I had six people who were spending around 45 minutes to an hour a day folding subpoenas and summonses and letters to people on a daily basis, and stuffing them into envelopes with windows in them to show addresses. The electronic letter folder shortened the task to around 10 minutes daily for each of them. The time savings were substantial, and the cost was slightly more than \$100.

## Big Rewards

A co-worker was tasked with sending out notices to contract attorneys at the end of each year, printing out labels for their addresses and affixing those to envelopes, and mailing them. There were around 500 of them, and the addresses were in a plain text database. The program used to print labels was dated and almost obsolete, and I was asked if I could help. The notice was a copied version of a copied version of a copied version, and looked like it had seen a few too many copy machines. I suggested just using mail merge into a fresh new Word document, and envelopes with windows for addresses. I made a new template, ran a mail merge with the address database, and printed out 500 personalized notices. She used the electronic letter folder to fold them, and stuffed them

into the envelopes. A task that used to take her around a week was condensed into less than a day, and the notices were much more professional looking.

Small changes can have big rewards. Not every problem can be solved with something as simple as an electronic letter folder, but many solutions start with understanding the tasks that you or your employees or your customers perform, and the pain points involved with those, and solutions that help make those better. What small changes are you going to make to your business this year that can help you focus more upon actually doing business, or can help your clients? Solutions are out there.

## Quote of the Day

Some good advice to take to heart  
right now...

As we learned in yesterday's story from Bill,  
even small changes can lead to substantial  
rewards. Take a chance. Make a change. It's  
time.



*If you* **CHANGE**  
NOTHING  
NOTHING  
-----♦ *will* ♦-----  
**CHANGE**

## 3 Google+ Communities to Get Active in Today

We've been guiding all of our clients towards building up a strong and active presence on Google+. It's not necessarily because we think it is the new Facebook, nor because we think it is particularly cool. It isn't (yet).

The reason for us promoting G+ in this way is simple - Google WILL eventually use the social signals they get from Google+ as ranking factors in the search engines. Put simply:

**How your website ranks in Google's search result will be impacted, positively or negatively, by your activity on Google+.**

If you are an expert, they have reason to believe that you should rank better - and thus, you will rank better. This re-ranking is already happening today for some users (who are logged in and connected to others on

Google+), and it is my belief that eventually this will affect every search done on Google. So, what can you do to get out ahead of this?

### Make It a Goal to Be Active on Google+ Every Day

I know, easier said than done. But look at it this way... the people who jumped on Twitter early had a great advantage in getting tons of followers and developing influence before their competitors had a chance. This is your time to beat the gold rush and be a first mover on an up-and-coming social network.

The best way I've found to be active on Google+ is to join and participate in communities. Communities on Google+ are just like groups

on LinkedIn. They are likeminded people who come together to discuss topics, share links, and network. All you need to do is search communities on Google+ and click 'join' on those you are interested. Once there, find posts from other people and write smart, thoughtful comments and simply engage people. Before you ever post any content, just get a feel for things by watching and commenting for a week or two.

## Communities to Join

To get you jump started, here are 3 great, active communities that you can join today and start posting/commenting on.

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- 1 Entrepreneurs, Self-Employed, and Small Business** – Almost anything goes in this community as long as it is related to topics that are of interest to small businesses. This means marketing, employees, administration, and lots of other fun stuff. At over 41,000 members, you are sure to find something on here for you.
  - 2 Strategic Social Networking** – This is an active community that covers everything related to social media. There are tons of great tips and best practices from this 39,000-member community to ensure that you get the most out of your social campaigns.
  - 3 Building a Company** – Interested in growth hacking or lean startups? Want to know how to build and grow to the next level? That is the topic of conversation in this group, and over 50,000 members are there for you to engage and communicate with.
  - 4 Bonus** – Search for your industry buzzwords and join all of the relevant communities you find. This is a great place to connect with colleagues, influencers, and potential customers.
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Google+ is unlike any other social platform in that it is owned by the major source of traffic for most small businesses, Google. All of our clients want better rankings in Google's search results,

👉👉 *I know, easier said than done. But look at it this way... the people who jumped on Twitter early had a great advantage in getting tons of followers and developing influence before their competitors had a chance.*





# Don't Scoff at Social Media When it Comes to Marketing Your Business

You've heard it before, but I'll tell you again: Social media can be one of the best marketing strategies around. Especially when it comes to small business, social allows you to reach your customers and stay in touch consistently. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Youtube can help promote the business

in Google rankings, improve customer service interactions, and push out engaging ad campaigns at low or no cost.

Here are five tips for doing it right and ways to avoid outdated, ineffective social media marketing tactics.

## Figure out where your audience is.

This is the first step for every successful content marketing program. Are your clients and potential customers on Facebook? Instagram? LinkedIn? Figure out what your key demographic is and go after it hard. Be innovative. Do research and figure out what brought the competition the most success in

the online space and only emulate the tactics that increased their followings or generated a high amount of customer satisfaction. Programs like Social Crawllytics can help you see what has worked for your competitors and then you can adopt those strategies for yourself where applicable.

## Post regularly.

It's so easy to get wrapped up in a big promotional campaign and then totally drop the ball once it's over. Effective social media marketing is regular and reliable. You want to continually post useful, informative, enjoyable content to keep your followers interested. Some of the best and most engaging posts and

pictures of what goes on "behind-the-scenes" in your office, or industry-specific inspirational quotes. These are easy to find, and typically well-received on social media.

## Take up space.

There is a lot of content out there. To make your voice heard, do what you can to take up space and promote high quality content. Work with a designer to create several professional cover photos, background images, and logos for each social site you plan to use. Post images often. These tend to do well and are shared

most often on social sites. Create a hashtag. Start using it on twitter and include it in cover photos and promotional materials. The point is to gain brand recognition and familiarity with the business across each social network. Have a presence in your field.

## Promote social IRL.

Encourage your real life customers to also follow on social media. Offer deals and discounts to existing customers only and make it clear that you appreciate their continued business and online support. When customers see the people behind the social sites, they're more likely to follow and check in from time to time.

## Don't outsource (unless you absolutely have to).

Social media is great because anyone can do it. If you're a small business owner and you hire an expensive firm to be the voice of your company online, you're likely not portraying your company the best that you can. To truly better your business, you need to find someone within the company to lead the conversation in the online space. Current employees know the most about the business and they can accurately and effectively convey the key messages. That doesn't mean you should dive into social media before you're prepared or

hire an intern specifically for the role of social media manager. Get expert advice or bring in an industry consultant to explain the do's and don'ts of using social to promote services and you'll maximize the value of this marketing strategy.

Don't let social media marketing get pushed to the side simply because you haven't seen instant success. It's truly one of the easiest, least expensive ways to get eyes on your offerings and raise overall brand awareness.

Start slow, be consistent, and be natural. Lots of humor and plenty of photos go a long way. Good luck!

# 3 Ways to Leverage Technology to Improve Business

Over the last year we were introduced to new ideas and technologies that will change the way we interact with the world. Computers were added to eyewear (Google Glass), and Robots started delivering products (Amazon). The next five years will be filled with new technologies and concepts that will change the way we live and do business.

## Accurately Track Progress

Businesses of all sizes need to collect data that will allow them to measure success and failure. Gone are the days of spending marketing budgets with no sense of the Return on Investment (ROI). Tools like Google Analytics and CallFire make it easy to track the way marketing is impacting business.

Keeping up with top technology firms is unattainable for most of us. However, we can take advantage of new products and services to improve business right now. Three quick things we can do include accurately tracking progress, making work easier and accessible, and providing our products and services to individuals on the go.

Every marketing campaign in 2014 should be tracked for its effectiveness. Wasting money on campaigns that do not improve your business should be a thing of the past.



## Make Work Accessible

Cloud based services are becoming the norm and employees will now expect to be able to access their work information from anywhere, at any time, and on any device they may have access to. Web interfaces, desktop applications, and mobile apps allow users to quickly get to information that they need when they need it.

If you have not done so already, make the investment to move your software packages to

cloud based services. Microsoft, Google, and Apple all offer cloud based access and support for their office suites. Data storage is available for corporations through services such as Dropbox or Google Drive. Even accounting solutions are available through companies like Intuit.

A business will quickly thrive once it is possible to easily access important information on any device and any platform.

## Be Mobile Ready

A recent report estimated that 7.3 billion mobile devices will be in use in 2014. That's more than the entire population of the world.

If your website isn't mobile friendly, then you're already far behind the times. If you haven't yet, check your web analytics data to see how the number of mobile visitors to your website is growing. Updating your website to be mobile friendly can help you increase sales and improve the user experience for current customers.

If your business can offer a mobile app that would improve a product or service that you offer then take the opportunity to create that app.

Through accurately tracking data, making that data accessible, and simplifying employee and customer interaction with your business while on the go, you can improve your business and bottom line.

## 3 Ways to Leverage Technology to Improve Business

Regardless of the type of business you have, I think it's really important to understand in a reproducible way how to sell your product or service. This becomes critical if you have any desire to grow your company by adding sales staff, large numbers of customers, or different channels.

I look at the sales process as an old fashioned flow chart: at one end is a raw lead and at the other is either a paying customer or someone that you may get to become a customer in the future. In between are the various decision points and attributes that must be collected in order to move that lead into the next stage.

By breaking down the sales process into stages you can begin to understand what it will take to move prospects through those stages. What is preventing them from moving forward? How many prospects can you expect to see go from one stage to the next? This is where the ability to capture the data in a consistent way becomes critical. If you are regularly capturing what happens to your leads at each stage of sales process you can begin to see trends and start really forecasting your sales efforts. You can see which of your sales activities is paying off and which doesn't have the impact you think it should.

This is where having a decent CRM (Customer Relationship Manager) application is a great investment. There are a huge number of tools on the market for this but I'm particularly fond of HighRise from 37signals.

If you own a small business that depends on more than a handful of customers coming in the door every month you owe it to yourself to set up a well documented and managed sales process. There are lots of books and articles on how to do this but my view is very basic and can be distilled down to four pointers:



## **Keep it simple!**

You know your business – break down why you are successful selling your product or service today, create some metrics so you can measure it and then experiment. Each of your steps in the sales process should have a measurable outcome that can be recorded.

## **Document it!**

You need to put pen to paper (or bits to disk) and keep track of your sales process. It's a living document that should always be current and becomes the fundamental guide for your sales people as your company grows.

## **Track your metrics!**

It's hard to know what to do next if you don't have a stable base to draw from. Compile data regularly and consistently on your sales. Over time you will begin to see trends that may have not been obvious. At a minimum the data will present you with confirmation about your gut feel on why you are successful or not selling.

## **Be patient!**

If you want to improve, you need to see the impact your changes are causing. Don't jump to conclusions because a change you made isn't having the immediate impact you think it should be having. Continue to monitor your metrics and adjust things at a reasonable pace. This may feel like it runs counter to popular thinking that decisions should be made based on gut instinct and in the blink of an eye.

I have always tried to keep everything as simple as possible and the advice I'm providing is about as simple as it gets. If you're not using a well defined sales process now, at a minimum following the steps I have outlined above will give you a great start in getting it under control.

# 5 Sales Strategies for Startups Without Leads

I prop my laptop up to a comfortable level using the book: The Ultimate Worst-Case Scenario Survival Guide. On the first page it lists three basic principles for surviving life or death scenarios such as angry jungle animals, sword fights, and volcano eruptions. The principles are:

**Be Prepared | Don't Panic | Have a Plan**

For startups, having absolutely zero leads is a worst-case scenario for hitting your sales goals. Here are my five basic principles to help you survive and even thrive, despite an empty lead list.

## 1) Family and Friends

Many people are hesitant to ask family/friends/classmates for referrals. Get over it! You provide a valuable service or product that will help people and/or businesses. People will appreciate it if you solve a problem for them. So shoot your friends and contacts a quick note, letting them know about your company and

ask if they know anyone who could use your service. If they give you a recommendation, you've now got lead. Treat it like gold and you'll get more from them.

As my father always reminds me "It never hurts to ask".

## 2) LinkedIn

Investing in a Premium/Business Account is worth it, especially if you are going after difficult-to-reach decision makers for your sale. A Premium Account allows you to send a certain number of direct messages to individuals even if you're not currently connected to them. Keep your message short,

professional...and short. I've received positive emails back from decision makers who would have been impossible to track down by phone.

For example, we noticed Qantas Airlines didn't rank in Google when someone searched 'flights to Australia.' I sent a direct LinkedIn

message to the VP of Marketing titled 'Your website does not rank for 'Flights to Australia.' We were in their London corporate office the next week.

### 3) Conferences and Trade Shows

I'm not talking about setting up a booth, I'm talking about turning off your computer, shaving your face, and going to a conference your future customers are attending. Check out the calendars of a few of your closest convention centers. Many times the general trade show exhibit sections are free or greatly discounted. (If you happen to put on a suit, throw on a couple of old conference badges, and walk into an event with confidence, I hear many times they are even free....)

75% of the people at these exhibits are going to be sales people. You can't waste your entire

day getting pitched to, so just be upfront with the sales people. They will appreciate it and you can become genuine friends. They may even have start-ups on the side! Ask them who the decision maker is, write down their name and see if they are at the conference or left any business cards behind. You can also ask who they use currently for the service you offer, if they are happy with it, and how best to get in touch with the decision maker. Now, when you call the company next week you have a name to ask for, and a background story from the industry conference.

### 4) Chamber of Commerce or Networking Group

Every county has a Chamber of Commerce, and the reason they are popular is because they work. My advice is to have fun with it. These are local companies, people in your community, neighbors, and friends. Go in trying to help THEM. If you take that approach, time will fly by, you'll make friends, and after a short time, get leads and business. Check out your local Chamber of Commerce or BNI Group.



# SALES

## 5) Cold Calling

Cold calling does work if you do it correctly. Here's how:

Have a business reason for calling them! Check out their website, blog, Social Media pages, press releases and you'll learn more than you ever wanted to know.

I'd recommend cold calling companies within an industry where you currently have a happy client who is willing to be used in a case study, if possible. Not only will you have the facts from the case study to mention but you'll also be familiar with the industry vocabulary.

Examples: New product, new store opening, new hire, recent funding, recent business win, big new competitor....you get it.

Cold call similar companies, make it part of a 20 company 'campaign'. This makes it easier to track your results.

80% of sales do NOT close, so study how to disqualify prospects quickly and what characteristics make up your best prospects.

Hope these tips help you plan out your roadmap. With some determination and a positive outlook, getting leads for your business is easier than it seems. See you at the top!

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