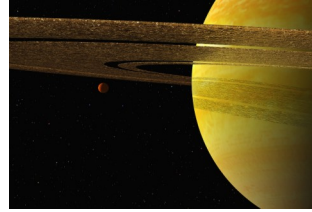




# TITAN TIMES

The monthly Titan Business Development Group, LLC newsletter  
coaching | consulting | results

September, 2011



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## What it Takes to Boldly Lead Your Business

As a business owner, do you ever find yourself asking "WWKD?" (What would Kirk Do?). If not, it might be a strategy worth considering – as Randy Pausch pointed out in The Last Lecture, Captain Kirk is a great role model for a leader. He knew it was critical to surround himself with people who were smarter than he was, he knew the importance of delegating and he had the passion to inspire people to greatness!

You wear a lot of hats in your business – you might be the rainmaker, bringing in new opportunities. Or maybe you're the lead production person – creating the goods or service. Or perhaps it's the little things, being the chief cook and bottle washer responsible for just getting stuff done! Or even more likely – you're doing it all and more!

However there's one responsibility that's unique to the business owner and it's the trait that Captain Kirk really excelled at. The one thing that makes everything else work. It's your job as a leader...the captain of your ship! As the owner you're the only one who can really do the critical leadership activities.

Running a business is kind of like running the Starship Enterprise – there are a lot of moving parts, sometimes people don't come back from missions and often times, things will go very, very wrong...but they can fixed with some hard work and the right strategy! As the leader – you've got to do the important things to make it all come together. But what does that really mean? What are the critical activities of a leader for a small business?

Here's a starter list of what's really important!

### 1. Be the Visionary

The small business leader must be the one to develop the vision of what the business is going to become. Just like the captain sets the course for the ship, it's up to the leader to determine the short and long term destination of the business.

The vision is the basis for everything else and it should reflect not only what should happen, but why that's the destination. And it can't be a lot of fluff – it must be something that people can understand and grab onto.

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It doesn't have to be as catchy as the Enterprises mission:

*“Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.”*

However, without a solid vision...you're not going anywhere.

## 2. Be Passionate

As the business owner you need to develop the vision and create something people can really understand. But just as importantly that vision needs to inspire passion...in you as the owner at a bare minimum.

Being an entrepreneur is often a pretty irrational thing – more than likely you've decided to leave a job with a steady salary in exchange for an uncertain future, long hours and less than stellar pay (at least up front). On top of that, you are also recruiting others to make that leap with you.

Your passion is the fuel that makes the whole thing run. If you as the business owner, founder, and captain of your ship can't get excited about where you're going, what you're doing...then no one else is going to get excited and it's likely that you're not going to get very far. If your current destination doesn't excite you, change it or get out – that's part of being the leader.

## 3. Repeat Yourself

In his book “It's Your Ship” Captain Michael Abrashoff talks about how he picked up the nickname from his crew of ‘Megaphone Mike’ because he was constantly communicating and reminding everyone of the big picture using the ship's PA system.

You have to relentlessly communicate your vision, repeating yourself over and over so that everyone knows, and really buys into why you do what you do, how you're doing it and what you're doing. You'll get sick of saying the same things – but that's your job as the leader!

You should be able to ask any employee what you're doing as a company, what's important for success and get consistent answers.

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## 4. Be Authentic

Small businesses have a big advantage over their corporate counterparts because it's possible to have personality and to be real people who authentically believe in something. Part of the reason Captain Kirk was so effective was because he didn't hold back – he let people know what he was all about.

As the world continues to get more complicated and smaller, there's a big advantage to being real. By being authentic, your employees, your partners and your customers will know what you're all about. They'll know what to expect from you. On the other hand, adopting some corporate persona isn't inspiring and will make you blend into looking just like everyone else.

As the business owner and the leader – it's up to you to set the example and put yourself out there. People want to buy from other people...not a nameless, faceless business. The best way to demonstrate who you are as a business is to be yourself.

## 5. Keep the Big Picture Perspective

This one is tough – most entrepreneurs want to get into the weeds. Most business owners started their business because they were really good at what they do...the ‘Technician’ delivering the goods or the service. It's ingrained that they want to be the Hero who saves the day, even if it is killing their business.

It's critical for the business owner to set the course up front; and it's just as critical that the business owner evaluates the big picture on a regular basis.

If you're not carving out a couple of hours a week to look at the big picture of where your business is going, then you're going to end up in the wrong galaxy sooner rather than later! As the leader it's up to you course correct and do the right thing for the business overall. No one else has the ability to see your big picture...if you're not doing it, it's not getting done...and that will be big trouble.

## 6. Keep Making Things Better

It's up to the business owner to constantly be looking to improve everything. There will be times when you want to rest on your laurels, to coast and just let things go. But as the leader you must have the fire to keep pushing things forward, improving outcomes even when things are going well.

A culture of continuous improvement must come from the top. Without the business owner constantly

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constantly asking how to make things better – the business, no matter how successful will start falling behind the curve and losing out to the competition.

One way to make continuous improvement tangible is to hold monthly ‘workshop’ meetings where you evaluate a key process or function in your business and collectively brainstorm ways that you could improve on it. There are a few keys to success for this kind of effort:

- Look at 10X changes – if you are just looking at slightly improving things, it will be difficult to identify game changing types of improvements. However an approach that focuses on making things a lot better...what if we had 1/10<sup>th</sup> the number of issues with this process? How could we deliver this 10X faster than we’re doing today? You don’t need to actually deliver 10X improvements, but the approach will get you different ideas and perspectives.
- You’ve got to take action. Although it’s great to brainstorm new ideas, it doesn’t count unless you actually implement the changes.
- Measure improvements – quantify how things are currently and then start measuring the improvements. If you don’t get an improvement, you can go back to how you were doing things.

These kinds of improvements almost have to be driven from the top – the leader needs to encourage the idea that a process that can be improved is accepted and expected, not an indication of failure.

## 7. Encourage Growth

Along the same lines, the business owner must create an environment and culture of constant learning and self improvement. A major part of leadership is growing people into new roles and responsibilities. Not only will that help the organization do more overall, it also gives people a reason to stay focused and motivated.

Change is constant and the successful businesses will stay in front of the trends and be better educated than their competition!

So the next time you’re struggling with a tough decision – maybe you should ask yourself ‘what would Kirk do?’ and remember as the business owner you are uniquely qualified to lead your business, set the vision, communicate, set an authentic tone, look at the big picture and constantly improve.

If you’re doing all of those things – chances are you are boldly going to a pretty cool destination!

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## *Masterful Quotes*

*“Business is a combination of war and sports.”  
- Andre Maurois*

*“Make the workmanship surpass the materials.”  
- Ovid*

## The Top 9 Easiest Ways to Increase Your Referral Business

1. See your clients NOT as just mere 'business', but as a budding friendship.
2. Tell you clients just how important their referral support is to your success.
3. Ask for them!
4. Begin TELLING your prospects/new clients at the very beginning that receiving referral support from your clients is HOW you do business.
5. Let your clients know ALL that you do.
6. Keep improving - go for mastery.
7. Create an experience for your customers/clients that feels (and is) exclusively just for them.
8. Think Life long relationship: Let your clients/customers know you are interested in serving them for the long haul.
9. Keep it Easy - Keep it Simple: People love easy and simple (isn't that why you are reading this list?). Whatever your product or service, make the experience of working with you as easy and simple for your customer/client as possible.

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