



## Can You Call It a Business If It Isn't Making Sales?

*Why So Many Business Owners  
Find Selling Difficult  
and What To Do About It*

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# You are a business person. As such, what's the most valuable thing in life to you?

Like most business people, you're probably thinking *time*. And you're right. Nothing and no one can give it back, no matter the costs you are willing to pay for it. Time is our most valuable asset.

You are passionate about your business. That's a great thing. Passion is the reason most people start a business. They simply get a feeling that they are fulfilling a purpose in life.

What that means is sometimes unclear, and how the voyage begins is often a mystery. Some people start a business because they have a particular skill to offer. Other people start a business because they get tired of having their life dictated to them by others. But people almost never start a business because they really like, want, or know how to sell. That's why so many business owners find selling so difficult.

When you consider this perspective, it's easy to see why resistance to selling quickly becomes a stumbling block and the cause of most of the day-to-day stress and worry for a lot of business owners.

Is there a way to minimize selling challenges, and the time we spend on them? I believe so.

I've started a couple of businesses in the last 10 years, so I know that there's a lot involved with starting and running a business. But if there's one thing that stands out the most from my experience as a business owner, it's this: Sales make it possible for a business to exist.

Consider Google: AdWords is still Google's flagship product.

Why? Because it's still Google's main source of revenue (read sales). Without Google AdWords, would Gmail, Picasa, Google Voice, or Google Chrome have happened?

Okay, never mind Google. One way or another I'm sure they'll be okay. But what about your business?

Is selling a tug of war, convincing people to buy things they don't want or need, hard closing, or a combination of the preceding? Is this how you define selling right now? I'm not surprised.

There are, of course, good reasons why so many people feel this way about selling. The good news is that the world of selling has changed, and to minimize selling challenges and the time you spend on them, you first need to reconsider the way you currently think about sales.

I could tell you stories about the companies that are still unwilling to accept this new reality. But what would be the point? "Let's not spend time dissecting the losers," declared Rich Karlgaard in the Feb 28 2011 issue of *Forbes*.

Rich is right: for progressive business building ideas that last, we need to study the winners. Consider companies such as Apple, BMW or Starbucks—one of the first things you notice is that people who like them (and there’s a lot of people who like them) tend to really connect with them.

In Karlgaard’s article, Rich quotes Helmut Panke, the former chairman and CEO of BMW: “I want to be able to blindfold a person, set him down in a BMW and have him know it’s a BMW by the feel of it.” He concludes that segment of the article with this great insight: “The best brands are not shallow. They touch a customer’s every sense.”

*“Nothing and no one can give it back, no matter the costs you are willing to pay for it. Time is our most valuable asset.”*

One thing you notice about those brands and companies right away is that there is something beautiful about them.

You maybe a little surprised by that last statement, but let me remind you that one of the definitions for the term beautiful by the Oxford English Dictionary is: “Excelling in grace of form, charm of coloring ... and other qualities which call for admiration ...”

Upon hearing the word beautiful, it's tempting to first think about beauty in terms of physical beauty. But actually, there are many other things and qualities that we find beautiful, that we admire.

Think authenticity.

Think trustworthiness.

Think clarity.

Think commitment.

Think ease of use.

Think simplicity.

Think consistency.

Consider FedEx—is there beauty in its promise “When it Absolutely, Positively has to be there overnight”? Said differently, is there beauty in having peace of mind? Absolutely! There's nothing shallow about the FedEx level of commitment and consistency. What FedEx stands for is essentially truly beautiful, and those are the main reasons why FedEx has been so successful.

It's clear to me that beautiful businesses touch our senses because they give pleasure to our senses. It's clear to me that every business has a personality.

Your business is no exception. Your business is what people see and feel.

Are they seeing authenticity?

Are they feeling trustworthiness?

Are they experiencing clarity?

Are they sensing simplicity?

Are they perceiving consistency?

This is how the best brands sell, through innovation and marketing. Peter Drucker gave birth to an incredibly empowering idea that every business has only two functions that create value—marketing and innovation. Now-famous Dyson vacuum cleaners are an excellent case in point: They've designed and delivered a genuine promise compellingly through innovation and marketing. Let's first take a quick zoom-in on the two terms.

First up, innovation. Often when people hear it they think: Google, GE, Apple, Dyson, Facebook, etc... People think about businesses that dazzle with high-tech ideas.

But what if you were to take a quick zoom-out on the term innovation? Let's do it together right now. What do you see? What unifies all innovative ideas since the beginning of time? Are you seeing it too? The essence of all innovative ideas is simple: they offer a remarkable value to the end user.

You can be innovative even if you are running a very small business in a super competitive industry. But don't take my word for it. Consider the story of Tom Monaghan as told by author Mark Joyner in his book *The Irresistible Offer*. Ever heard of Ypsilanti, Michigan?

If you own any other kind of food establishment—Chinese, burgers, barbecue, seafood, you name it — then you are listed under restaurants. You're in the restaurant business. If you own a pizza parlor, you're not in the restaurant business—you're in the pizza business.

Only one type of food has such a dominant role in the American culture that it has its own category in the phone book.

Pizza.

So, would it be possible for one man, one business to come out of nowhere and utterly dominate such a pervasive, nationwide, household-name type of industry?

And what if I told you he was up against several extremely well-established national brands? Most people would say “impossible” (especially if you understand the power of branding and positioning), but perhaps they don’t know how Tom Monaghan used The Irresistible Offer.

Here’s the story of a pizza chain that was relatively unknown for years until it launched a now legendary marketing campaign. Tom Monaghan started this business in Ypsilanti, Michigan in 1960 with the purchase of a single store called “Dominick’s.” When Tom chose to expand, the former owner of Dominick’s wouldn’t let him keep the name, so he had to come up with a new one. One of his employees suggested “Domino’s” one night, and it stuck.

... In 2004, there were 7,000 Domino’s pizzerias, and they grossed \$4,000,000,000 in sales annually.

What allowed him to build a \$4 billion business from a single store?

*“The 30-minutes-or-free guarantee was as responsible for our growth as anything.”* —Tom Monaghan

Tom Monaghan knew people wanted the convenience of delivery pizza. They also liked their pizza piping hot. So he created the guarantee: “30 minutes or less ... or it’s free.” [...] And the “30 minutes or it’s free” guarantee became part of our lexicon.



I share that story with you because I wanted to encourage you to see the whole concept of innovation in a different light. Innovation is not just reserved for high-tech gadgets such as the iPhone. Conceptual innovation can spring anywhere. If you can deliver hot pizza in 30 minutes and all your competitors take 45 minutes or longer, that's innovation—and a beautiful one at that.

Next up, marketing. Understanding something often starts with a good analogy, so let's think of marketing as a cake. Inside that cake you should have a number of amazingly potent ingredients: Positioning, Packaging, Pricing Strategy, Advertising, Sales, Customer Service, PR, etc.

Sales are only one ingredient in the marketing cake. Here's why I like this analogy: In a good cake, can you pinpoint the spot where flour ends and sugar starts?

Is there any reason why your business shouldn't use this approach in marketing and sales?

For the best brands, selling is not an isolated activity. It's beautifully integrated into all customer touch points.

Your customer touch points can and should be mapped out, designed to be enjoyable, productive and attractive, and actively managed to maximize customer value. There are two simple questions you can ask yourself to accomplish this.

## **Does your business look beautiful across *all* of its touch points?**

While this is primarily a how-to-think-about manifesto, not a how-to manifesto, I'll share some simple suggestions about how you, too, could make your business more beautiful.

First, as the author Guy Kawasaki suggests, "Get better reality." Better reality in this context does not suggest doing something disingenuous. Far from it. Better reality simply means making something truthful and meaningful more engaging.

*“Your customer touch points can and should be mapped out, designed to be enjoyable, productive and attractive, and actively managed to maximize customer value.”*

You draw conclusions from clues. We all do. It's only natural. Are you happy with how your product or service is showcased on your website? How about your sales brochures? What happens when someone calls your business? Beautiful companies are not shallow; they touch customers consistently across all touch points. Do you have your customer touch points mapped out? Do you deliver what you promise? Be honest.

## **Does your business sound as great as it is across *all* of its touch points?**

A true story, well-told, resonates with people. Consider an excerpt from a remarkable campaign David Ogilvy put together for Mercedes-Benz: “You give up things when you buy the Mercedes-Benz 230S. Things like rattle, rust, and shabby workmanship.” Isn’t a true story well-told a beautiful thing?

Is your story as well-told? One of the biggest challenges entrepreneurs face in growing their businesses is that they fail to appreciate the importance of telling their story well. And if purposeful storytelling is not your strong suit, why wouldn’t you hire a professional to help you articulate your story? How can you afford not to?

But please remember that the icing is not the cake, and the icing does not make the cake. Said differently, your story is just the icing. Your product and/or service must be the cake. But when the two come together, you’ve got a beautiful package that’s hard to ignore.

As Peter Drucker once said. “The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous.”

Let me expand on Peter’s idea: the purpose of marketing is to attract and keep customers while making hard selling unnecessary. And that’s not an easy thing to do. But it’s a must-have in

today's marketplace. Why? Because nowadays people tend to avoid brands that still use the hard selling approach.

Learn from Apple. Do people who walk into Apple stores need to be sold hard?

Why not? Consider the iPod. Apple was not the first company to produce an MP3 player. But is there a more beautiful MP3 on the market? Simplify. Apple makes everything simple. A case in point is the movie function of the Apple iPod. To promote this feature, the folks at Apple could have focused our attention on how many gigabytes of storage the device offered (this is, by the way, what their competition does). They could have mentioned which and/or how many thingamajigs it had built-in. I could go on, but you get the idea.

Instead, they simply said "Movies in your pocket." Beautiful, isn't it?

Apple has in place a stream of consistent touch points grounded in a clear sense of priorities. Learn from Apple: Your first job is to clearly and simply define your brand's promise.

Are you good at explaining to people what they'll get from you? Are you direct about that? If not, then why not? Tell people concisely and vividly why should they buy from you. Think "30 minutes or it's free." Just like parallel parking, the idea is to get to the point where you are successful slightly more often than not.

No matter what your first job is, your second job is self-promotion. Said differently, your job is to create a constant stream of opportunities for your target audience to experience your brand. To do this effectively, you need to have ALL of your touch points mapped out, and they need to be designed and actively managed.

Make sure that you clearly and compellingly articulate your unique brand promise across all touch points. **Keep doing all of this constantly, and hard selling will become unnecessary, saving you time and improving your business.** 📌

# Info

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** | Jenan is a passionate storyteller with many exciting stories to share, and he brings a unique blend of professional business experience, passion and expertise to all of his consulting engagements. In addition to co-founding the first eco-friendly packing company in Saskatoon ([billyboxx.com](http://billyboxx.com)), he has worked with a number of world class organizations in the past (e.g. BMW Group, The University of Saskatchewan, ideas inc, Royal Bank of Canada, London Life Insurance Corp., etc.) on an array of interesting projects. Jenan holds a Master Of Arts degree in Adult Education and Work, Organizations and Leadership. Jenan is also a mentor with [The Canadian Youth Business Foundation](#). CYBF is a national charity that provides pre-launch coaching, business resources, start-up financing and mentoring for youth age 18-34 to help start a business. You can keep up with Jenan at [sneezr.ca](http://sneezr.ca).

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