



Radio Show Podcast



SHOW NOTES

Creativity, Creative Thinking Process, Exporting to Australia & How to Think Like Leonardo
Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius interview with Michael Gelb

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Here to Serve

Australia Office (Adelaide) +61 8 8121 5711
Europe Office (London) +44 20 3769 7425
www.thebusinessfirm.com.au

The Business Firm is an international business consultancy company based in Adelaide, South Australia. We provide business services to commercial enterprises, government agencies and non-profit organisations. Our mission is to help our clients achieve high-level outcomes. Phone +61 8 8121 5711.

BUSINESS PLANNING

We write sophisticated business plans for organisations that provide a blueprint to achieve its objectives. Documentation is comprehensive and easy to follow, like an operations manual – step by step. All our business planning is based on fact and real market conditions so they are relevant and achievable.

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We prepare strategic marketing plans for our clients that provide for growth of sales, increase in margins and growth of the brand. Our focus is not only to create wealth, but to create a brand that is highly valuable, so it is worth the most money possible in the event a business is sold – or the owner is no longer involved.

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Sales are the life-blood of all organisations; therefore, your sales staff (whom represent both your biggest asset and your biggest expense) out-performs your competitors. The Business Firm helps you achieve world's best practise in sales three ways: by creating a customised sales plan; by teaching super-effective sales technique; and training the entire organisation in customer service so your clients only ever experience total satisfaction and buy again when it is time.

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We create engaging, high conversion online broadcasts for organisations worldwide. We develop professional quality content that conveys your message with power. Whether you want to sell to businesses or individuals; educate and inform; influence public opinion; generate leads globally; stream your live event online to the world; record and post for open replay; or run an online summit; we have the production capability and online video capacity to be a global star.

PRESENTATIONS AND MULTIMEDIA DISPLAYS

We create stunning sales presentations that have high impact and get results. Public display kiosks (touchscreen information directories). Educational interactive learning aids. Shop window displays to sell items. POS displays. Shopping mall displays (for advertising and information).



About the Podcast

We produce a weekly radio show that is distributed globally through iTunes and on Stitcher Radio as a podcast. **The show is designed specifically for decision makers:** entrepreneurs, business owners, high-level managers and Board Directors who typically control significant plant and human capital.

If you have an Apple device (iPhone, iPad, Mac) click this link to listen:
<https://itunes.apple.com/au/podcast/business-firm-show-for-decision/id1164625597>

If you have a non-Apple device, click to listen using this link:
<http://www.stitcher.com/podcast/the-business-firm>

Each episode covers different topics related to running a high-performing business. You will get empirically proven, strategic advice that will result in more profit for you. **Areas covered include:** strategic marketing, business development, sales performance, advertising, public relations, social media promotions, eCommerce, large-scale fundraising, research and how to build a global business properly.

You will collect high-level content from host Mr Steven Mario Cavallo, The Business Firm's founder; and you will also get the opportunity to have a business problem you are dealing with, solved. **You can submit** an audio recording of a real-life business issue by emailing an mp3 file to: answers@thebusinessfirm.com.au

You'll also enjoy a sky-high view from the Tower of Success where you'll sit alongside Steven in The Business Firm Presidential Lounge and pick the brains of the very best business thought leaders in the world, during an interview. You are invited in every episode to listen to **interviews with incredible, world-leading information shared by some of the business world's most expert thought leaders.** Guests include top practitioners, entrepreneurs, Professors from the greatest Universities of the world, successful business owners, coaches and mentors, industry leaders, authors and other high-achieving, credible individuals.

If you fit the above description, have content of value to business owners and are a confident speaker, please apply to become an interviewed guest by emailing us at: guest@thebusinessfirm.com.au

This is the show that will help you in your duty, of being an effective business leader.

The Business Firm Radio Show is produced in Adelaide, South Australia weekly and released internationally to our worldwide audience: the decision makers and entrepreneurs who are building our global economy.

[Listen to the show](#) on iTunes and never miss an episode again, as it will automatically appear for you to listen to on your device, at your own convenience.

In addition to enjoying the free information on the podcast, you are welcome to a **free seat in the next Webinar** (online seminar) where Steven will be presenting [vital aspects of marketing science](#) and business development. Topics covered include: how advertising REALLY works and how to only spend money on what ACTUALLY gives returns. Learn how to sell 20% more without any extra customers; and we reveal the truth about consumer behaviour and HOW buyers actually choose between your brand and your competitors'. Plus, you'll learn the three biggest pieces of misinformation that wastes money and leads to nothing – things that nearly everyone has already been sucked into doing! This information is totally unknown by your competitors (and the false 'gurus'); so knowing it is a lucrative advantage you can easily get over your competitors.

Do yourself a favour and attend the next webinar. It will end your vulnerability to misinformation and can finally stem the flow of so many unnecessary expenses you are probably already incurring. There's no cost, no obligation and you'll make money from the information.

Check when the next one is on at: www.thebusinessfirm.com.au/webinars.html

Discussion

In this episode, Steven Mario Cavallo explores the power of creativity as the source that has propelled humanity from the cave...to the stars. It is the cradle of all invention; the wonderment that moves the child's hand to paint the pictures in their imagination; and it is the mind force from which emerges the greatest innovations in our world. From the improvised lullaby sung by a new mother to her child, to the convenience of driving across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, to the architectural marvels of ancient Rome; and to the ingenuity of the iPhone you hold in your hand...all of these things...in fact, all of *everything* ...comes from creativity.

As a subject, creativity has been studied for millennia by philosophers, politicians, artists, musicians and orators. In the modern context and as the driver of the most lucrative commercial achievements in the business world, creativity has been intensively researched by economists, marketers, technologists, cognitive scientists, educators, psychologists and manufacturers. It is the recognised catalyst for attaining market power, enormous wealth and has the capacity to transform an economy. Today on the international stage we see some of the greatest growth coming from economies that have invested in developing creative thinking across industries and across society, in schools, in universities and in the workforce. The push for people to learn 'how to be creative' is pursued vigorously now by all types of organisations...and if you do not already have a formal programme to cultivate creativity and innovative thinking in your own business, then you are putting yourself and all the families that depend on your leadership, at risk. The originality and individuality intrinsic in creativity affords a competitive advantage that is not as easily copied by other firms in your industry. Your competitors might also develop their creativity, but they won't have your particular creative abilities. The world is replete with genius, but in any particular industry the most creative, the most visionary, and the one that offers a true difference that is meaningful to its buyers...this firm often becomes the industry leader and can enjoy extraordinary profitability while the rest of the firms are left to compete on price alone as their sameness reduces their products to mere commodities. Case in point: Apple.

Of course, there are a number of amazing programmes and methodologies in the world today that help an organisation develop its creative thinking capacity. Highly credible systems exist whereby frameworks are given for the creative thinking process. Some techniques are for use in groups and others on an individual basis. Some focus on idea generation, others on divergent thinking, some on reframing paradigms and a great number use randomness or aleatoricism to provide unforeseen variety.

Improvisation, which is at the core of jazz musicians, is a natural way to create massive and unique inventiveness that yields a slightly different "product" with each production. But business executives often lack the creative brilliance of a jazz musician so instead prefer to use predefined, creative thinking systems that provide an existing structure they can use internally that is easy to follow and leads people through a process. Some of the best-known creative thinking frameworks are from Dr Edward DeBono (Six Thinking Hats system and the Lateral Thinking process); or the Brainstorming method (by Aex F Osborn); as well as the SWOT analysis (from the Stanford Research Institute) and Dr Stephen Covey's 'The Third Alternative'. All of these are powerful tools that can truly transform businesses and indeed, the outlook for a country. And some of these have found their way into mainstream educational curricula and are preparing an entire generation to naturally follow a creative thought process. In fact, in the private school my kids go to, they use the Six Thinking Hats as an integral part of their everyday learning to instil a multi-perspective approach to problem solving. Mmh...perhaps this explains why our buys are SO good at annoying their Mum and Dad on so many levels!

Then of course, as a business owner there are less formal ways to tap into the creative. I personally find that simple things like a walk in nature – along the beach where I live; or doing some exercise while listening to an inspirational podcast; or my putting half an hour aside to play the piano; or even holding my little daughter while she watches cartoons; or perhaps most effectively...doing some meditation to quieten the mind and allow the flow of creative ideas to rush into my head...all of these serve me greatly in generating creative thinking...which ultimately leaves me with a number of potential commercial and personal projects to consider. Of course, once you generate new ideas you then need to assess them in respect to their viability and then finally, to *do* something with them. This obviously leads into the product development process, which I've previously covered in depth, so I won't discuss in this episode, but clearly, is of vital importance to an organisation's commercial survival – and is in fact, the other side of the coin to creativity. I strongly encourage you to listen to episode 101 of this podcast: Disruptive Innovation, Product Development, 10x Thinking with Dr Michael Hewittson-Gleeson from the School of Thinking, the father of 10x Thinking and a major teacher to Larry Page from Google – it is definitely, definitely worth listening to as it goes into great detail on how your business can profit from

innovative, creative thinking and excellence in product development, which can give your business *enormous* market gains. That's episode 101 of The Business Firm podcast in iTunes or on Stitcher Radio and as always, detailed show notes are available at www.thebusinessfirm.com.au (on the podcast page).

I would like to give you the opportunity now to actually do an exercise in creative thinking – right here, right now in this podcast. If you are driving while you are listening to this, pause the podcast and pull over safely before attempting this – or come back to this again later. If you are doing exercise, perhaps slow down or stop entirely for a couple of minutes while you do this. You will need a pen and paper (or an iPhone or iPad) to write on. It's important to give yourself permission to simply sit down comfortably, gently close your eyes and take five slow breaths in and out...and just relax for a few seconds. Now give yourself a big smile. Hold the smile and count to ten in your head then let the smile go. You are now ready. Open your eyes and look forward, softening your focus into the middle distance.

First, a little test. While looking into the middle distance, take your finger, place it between your eyes and draw the letter Q on your forehead. There are only two ways you can do this: the tail of the Q can point either to your right eye or your left eye. Which eye did your Q tail point to? Your left or your right? There is a very big difference in the type of person whose Q points to the right and to type of person whose Q points to the left. I will direct you to the answer for this, a little later in this episode. Just remember which way yours pointed.

Now, remaining in this relaxed state, we will try one creative thinking exercise. Now, I must warn you, almost no managers ever solve this, so you may find this difficult. It's a set of questions; here they are:

- How do you put a giraffe into a fridge?
- How do you put an elephant into a fridge?
- The King of the Jungle is holding a meeting for all of the animals. One of them is not there. Which one?
- You are standing at the bank of a crocodile infested river and have to get to the other side. What do you do?

Now, if you had trouble solving these questions then you are likely trapped in the ordinary managerial mindset with its limitations and assumptions automatically built in to the problem solving process. And while such a mindset is great for breeding non-thinking conformists that abide to corporate dogma; this will not propel your organisation to leapfrog your competitors. You want your staff to think magical thoughts that can be developed into magical products and service. To a person in the 1950s, an 80s Walkman would have seemed like a magical, impossible device. To a person in the 80s, an iPhone 7 would have seemed a magic, impossible device. You need to free your own thinking from the belief systems endemic in modern business in order to think of tomorrow's magical devices so you can then start working on making them possible.

So while *you* may have had trouble solving those questions, almost all five year olds are able to answer them correctly. Why? Because they naturally have unlimited creative thinking not yet spoilt by the rigidity of common thought. Let's look at the answers, one by one.

- How do you put a giraffe into a fridge? Open the fridge, put the giraffe inside and close the fridge.
- How do you put an elephant into a fridge? Open the fridge, take the giraffe out, put the elephant in and close the fridge.
- What animal is not at the meeting for all the animals? The elephant...because it is in the fridge.
- And what do you do on the bank of the crocodile infested river? You swim across the river because all the crocodiles are at the meeting.

Clearly, sometimes a childlike, unbounded imagination is needed in order to escape your paradigm and think outside the box. This example shows how we automatically build in problem boundaries and make assumptions about limitations and it also shows how we jump to levels of complexity that blinds us to simple solutions. Nobody said the fridge wasn't big enough to fit the giraffe! This example also shows us that we should consider previous actions. Nobody said that these were four separate questions.

Now that we have forced upon the mind to broader possibilities, let me give you some questions that are directly related to your own business. In answering these, let your mind take a step or two back from normal reasoning so that you give yourself the lateral space to see both the fridge and the giraffe simultaneously. I'm about to ask you four questions for which I want you to write your answers. You might want to pause the podcast after each question so you give yourself the best chance of writing a creative answer. Ready?

1. Firstly, in respect to your industry, what are three different things that would cause its rapid decline? Write these down.
2. What three things can you do to survive such a decline if the industry were to collapse?
3. When people buy from you, what is the end outcome they are seeking to achieve through their purchase and what are three ways that outcome can affect their life?
4. Now, look at those three ways your customers' lives are affected and for each, list three new inventions that would achieve those same outcomes for them. Think laterally and without bounds. All things are possible.

The next step is to assess all that you have written down, but not now – do it in a couple of hours time; then again tomorrow *after* you have slept overnight. Don't worry about whether your business *can* accomplish them – instead, write down **three** different ways that **each** of them *might* be accomplished. Leave the door open to all possibilities, even if you think there is no way of doing it. The 'how' will come to you once you have worked out the 'what'. Your job as the leader of the business is to work out the 'what'; you will always find people who can work out the 'how'. This process of ideas branching off to other ideas follows the thought form of a spider diagram.

You should repeat this same exercise every month as it cannot but help generate relevant ideas and hypotheses of threats. But to make the most of this, have all your staff do this exercise – and I mean everybody. The objective of this exercise is to see the problem from as many different perspectives as possible, as each provides a unique vantage point and lifetime of creative insights, almost all of which you have no hope of reaching by yourself.

Perhaps the greatest creative thinking tool that I use is a specific type of spider diagram called the mind map. Mind mapping of course, is now very popular though Tony Buzan and the countless apps and programmes that are available. I use a programme called MindMaple on my Mac, which syncs with MindMaple on my iPhone and iPad. The software is excellent for making formal mind maps, but quite often I simply use pen and paper because it imparts a sense of freedom to me.

So in respect to thinking creatively in your business, you can give yourself an enormous advantage over your competitors by giving yourself the benefit of understanding the market, the world, the problem, the opportunity, the relationship, the war, the offensive and the defensive – all from the perspective of the other side. You should also try to imagine the perspective from a removed, third party that is not directly involved in the situation. When you gain these two extra perspectives, on top of your own; you achieve the advantage of seeing yourself and your strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of those you are trying to appear better than; and you also gain a clearer picture of what the buyer, who isn't invested in either your own or your competitors' perspectives, actually sees the market as.

So in thinking creativity, it is essential that we do not restrict ourselves to think in an ordinary, linear fashion. What we need is to be able to conceive of a very large fridge at the SAME time as how to reduce the size of the giraffe. The hardened picture of an ordinary fridge is so set in our mind that we instantly jump to the problem of the giraffe's size. This image of a normal sized fridge represents the rigidity of ordinary management thinking that prevents us from being as naturally creative as a five year old. But while we are all coaxed into the 'box' of common thinking, I truly believe it is possible for any person who *wants* to, to practise how to think more creatively. This is best achieved by adopting a thinking framework to become your new thinking process and then purposely applying that thinking framework in all problems that you solve – or opportunities you will to exploit. As I have mentioned, there are a number of well known frameworks such as the Six Thinking Hats, but I would like to discuss perhaps one of the most powerful – not only in terms of the incredible creativity that it can generate for commercial gain, but also in terms of the benefits across all the others areas of your life. I believe this to have the ability to transform your business/financial situation; as well as your health, relationships and ultimately, the happiness you experience in living. This framework represents the mind of the greatest genius and archetype polymath that ever lived...Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci. The Renaissance Man.

Leonardo Da Vinci is considered by most learned historians and scholars as the ultimate Universal Genius and possessed a 'feverishly inventive imagination'. Born in Florence in 1452 he created inventions and displayed intellectual and creative genius in all endeavours of human knowledge and his insatiable curiosity drove him to an obsession to learn...everything. In 1866 Hippolyte wrote of him, "There may not be in the world an example of another genius so universal, so incapable of fulfilment, so full of yearning for the infinite, so naturally refined, so far ahead of his own century and the following centuries". And as recently as 1967, Bortolon described him so, "Because of the multiplicity of interests that spurred him to pursue every field of knowledge ... Leonardo can be considered, quite rightly, to have been the universal genius par excellence, and with all the disquieting overtones inherent in that term. Man is as uncomfortable today, faced with a genius, as he was in the 16th century. Five centuries have passed, yet we still view Leonardo with awe."

Let's go back to that first test I gave you where you drew the Q on your forehead. Remember I said there is an enormous difference in people that make the tail of the Q point to left eye as opposed to the right eye? Well I promised you I'd direct you to the answer, so here's how to find it. This test comes from creativethinking.net, but to make it easy, I have already compiled the answer for you. Simply look at the show notes for this episode at www.thebusinessfirm.com.au (on the podcast page) and download the PDF for episode 105. The answer will freak you out!

ANSWER TO 'Q ON FOREHEAD' TEST (excerpt from www.creativethinking.net)

People who draw the letter Q with the tail slanting toward their left so that someone facing them can read it tend to focus inwardly. Wiseman describes them as high self-monitors. Their primary concern is "looking good" and "looking smart." They are concerned with how other people see them, are highly responsive to social cues and their situational context. Psychologist Carol Dweck describes such people as having a "fixed" mindset. Some of the characteristics of people with a fixed mindset are:

They have a fixed mindset about their abilities and the abilities of others. E.g., all talent is innate and static. You are either born intelligent or you are not. They do not believe people can change and grow.

They enjoy being the center of attention and adapt their actions to suit the situation. Ability is something inherent that needs to be demonstrated.

They are also skilled at manipulating in the way others see them, which makes them good at deception and lying.

They offer external attributions for failures. They are never personally responsible for mistakes or failures. To them, admitting you failed is tantamount to admitting you're worthless.

They are performance oriented and will only perform tasks that they are good at. For them, each task is a challenge to their self-image, and each setback becomes a personal threat. So they pursue only activities at which they're sure to shine—and avoid the sorts of experiences necessary to grow and flourish in any endeavor.

From a fixed mindset perspective, if you have to work hard at something, or you learn it slowly, you aren't good at it, and are not very smart. Performance is paramount they want to look smart even if it means not learning a thing in the process.

People who draw the letter Q with the tail slanting toward the right so they can read it tend to focus outwardly. In contrast, low self-monitors come across as being the "same person" in different situations. Their behavior is guided more by their inner feelings and values, and they are less aware of their impact on those around them. They also tend to lie less in life, and so not be so skilled at deceit. "Carol Dweck would describe such people as having a "growth" mindset.

Among the characteristics of people with a growth mindset are:

They tend to exhibit expressive controls congruent with their own internal states; i.e. beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions regardless of social circumstance.

They are often less observant of social context and consider expressing a self-presentation dissimilar from their internal states as a falsehood and undesirable.

They are generally oblivious to how other see them and hence march to their own different drum.

They believe the brain is dynamic and develops over time by taking advantage of learning opportunities and overcoming adversity.

They offer internal attributions to explain things by assigning causality to factors within the person. An internal explanation claims that the person was directly responsible for the event.

They take necessary risks and don't worry about failure because each mistake becomes a chance to learn.

The growth mindset is associated with greater confidence, risk-taking, and higher academic and career success over time. Ability can be developed.

High achievement comes from hard work, dedication and persistence to meet a goal.

"If you want to demonstrate something over and over, it feels like something static that lives inside of you—whereas if you want to increase your ability, it feels dynamic and malleable," Carol Dweck explains. People with fixed mindsets think intelligence is fixed from birth. People with learning goals have a growth mind-set about intelligence, believing it can be developed.

Reference: <http://creativethinking.net/new-q-factor/#sthash.DMCnYLWp.9mTFy0oQ.dpbs>

So clearly, to adopt the very system of thinking that was used by the greatest mind ever, is to find an excellent guide to model one's own creative development upon. I was lucky enough to come across perhaps the work of arguable the greatest scholar of Leonardo Da Vinci, Michael Gelb, in 1998 when I saw his ground-breaking book, *How To Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Everyday*. What Michael Gelb did was study Leonardo's mind and thinking extensively – more so than probably any person in history ever has. He sought to understand in full the very thought process that made Leonardo such an extraordinary genius; and after years of research and peering into the mind of the Maestro, he wrote this book which changed mine and millions and millions of other people's lives, all round the world. He was able to distil Leonardo's thought process down into seven key principles; which when lived in concert can arm you with the same view of the world as Leonardo. It is an amazing, amazing system of thinking that is surprising easily to understand. By following those seven principles, you will find incredible creativity and with it, the power to transform your business and all other aspects of your life. Of course, Michael has rewritten many other books on the subject of creativity, in fact, 14 in total. Some of which include: *Creativity on Demand: How To Ignite and Sustain The Fire of Genius*; *Innovate Like Edison: The Five Step System For Breakthrough Business Success*; *Discover Your Genius*; *Thinking for Change*; *5 Keys to High Performance*; *Brain Power: Improve Your Mind As You Age*; and *Wine Drinking For Inspired Thinking*. He is also a highly sought after keynote speaker, a presenter of corporate seminars and a coach and mentor. He consults to some of the world's largest companies, including Microsoft, IBM, KPMG, Nike, General Electric, Ernst and Young, Unilever, Roche, H&R Block, Xerox, the United States Army and the list continues. He has won numerous prestigious awards, including Brain Of The Year (1999) an honour bestowed by the Brain Trust Charity to very few, amongst which are Stephen Hawking and Edward De Bono. Without doubt, Michael Gelb is an extraordinary genius in his own right and perhaps one of the most qualified individuals from which you would want to learn creative thinking strategy. So...what are those seven, transformative Da Vincian principles?

Well, it is my very great pleasure to invite you to follow me into the lift as we ascend up to The Business Firm Presidential Lounge and there, awaiting us, is no other than the amazing, Michael Gelb.

www.michaelgelb.com

Email Michael Gelb: Michael@michaelgelb.com

Additional Resources

Ehrenberg Bass Institute: <https://www.marketingscience.info>

Your Business' Ability to Achieve Game Changing Innovation: www.gamechanging.com

Priority Matrix, personal productivity software that utilises the Eisenhower Matrix as described by Dr Stephen Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: www.appfluence.com

How to Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci book. www.michaelgelb.com

Interview

In this episode, we hear from Michael Gelb, an extraordinary individual filled with curiosity and fire and a lovely man with an incredible, infectious laugh. He is the author of the international best selling book, *How To Think Like Leonardo Da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Everyday*. He is also the author of many other incredible books that teach creative thinking and innovation. Listen to the interview with this passionate and learned man by downloading episode 105 of The Business Firm Radio:

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Audience Question

Today's question comes from Andeep who manufactures high quality timber stains in Chennai, India. His product is more expensive than most brands and while he currently sells in India, he's having difficulty competing with the cheaper brands in his domestic market, which is still in economic development. Andeep has just sent product into Indonesia as a first outbound test in Jakarta. He now wants to export to Australia and New Zealand and is seeking advice on what he should consider in making the leap into the Aussie market.

Well Andeep, thank you for your question mate. You are in the same situation of many manufacturers on the Subcontinent and also in China who have reached a limitation to growth, both in respect to sales volumes as well as profitability. So, you are not alone in your predicament and The Business Firm has helped a number of manufacturers enter Australia, which in every case I can happily report has enabled those businesses to increase revenue, but more importantly, to *dramatically* improve profitability. Of course, while Australian has a smaller population than India or Indonesia, the amount of income per capita here is much, much higher. Also, when you take into account the difference in the exchange rate between the Rupee and the Australian Dollar, the real amount you will earn per sale will be a great deal higher, while still incurring the very low cost of production in India against that higher revenue. Hence, if you can manage the transport and logistics aspect of exporting to Australia (which you might be able to minimise by shipping direct from the Indian port of Chennai to the Australian port of Darwin in the Northern Territory, which is actually a relatively short distance, if you use sea cargo), then you definitely have the opportunity to create a lucrative export programme for your business.

In Australia, all coatings (timber stains, house paints, direct-to-metal enamels and especially automotive two-pack paints) are very expensive. So there is likely plenty of room for you to play between your cost and the potential retail price. In fact, for pretty much everything you can think of, Australian retail prices are always significantly more expensive than any other country, including the U.S. and the U.K, even when adjusting for exchange rate and shipping. Australian simply dish out more money for stuff. This gives you the ability to make some strategic choices in respect the distribution, which quite frankly, is going to be the single most important marketing determinant of your commercial success – probably more so than promotion. The reason is that geographically, Australia is gigantic – an entire continent; and it is sparsely populated, except for the largest cities of: Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Darwin and Hobart. The smaller cities such as Albury-Wodonga, Geelong, Mount Gambier, Cairns etc. are spread all over the continent and to service these areas can be expensive, but you are usually able to charge higher prices to compensate for the higher distribution costs – something that is naturally accepted by most people in these areas. Hence, how you organise distribution is crucial.

You really only have two practical options: to try and sell everything yourself; or install distributors to do this for you. If you want to make any meaningful volume of sales, you really need to put on distributors and consider any sales you make direct to the public off your website, as a bonus – not to mention that even for your online sales you will still need to have a warehouse facility somewhere in Australia that is able to physically ship the product to your buyer, anyway. So, look for distributors in every state and territory; both in the big capital cities and also in the regional centres. Don't offer any distributor sole distribution as your product doesn't warrant it (i.e. you are not selling Mercedes Benz cars), unless of course the opportunity to sell in Bunnings (the largest hardware chain in Australia) presents itself only as an exclusive deal; but to be honest, even such a deal is unlikely to be an exclusive one because almost all of the products Bunnings sell are also available at their biggest competitor chains, such as Mitre 10 and Solver.

So you want to ensure that you have distribution for public retail (in places such as Bunnings), as well as distribution specifically for the trade market. In Australia and New Zealand, most trade buyers buy from specialist trade supply companies, not from big, public-going chains like Bunnings. You will need to find these suppliers and begin making contact with them. The main benefit of using trade suppliers is that your product will benefit from expert sales representation, as opposed to the blank stares you get from the staff that usually works at the big, public-going chains. The other benefit of course is that the trade suppliers are usually owner-operated, so they are much, much more likely to actively push your brand to buyers, as opposed to your tins sitting silently amongst the plethora of other brands' tins that sit alongside yours on the shelf at the impersonal, largely self-serve chain stores. However, don't get me wrong, you need both of these so don't for a moment think of choosing just one of these channels over the other.

In respect to promotion, you should budget for some advertising to build brand awareness and try and position your brand in the minds of the market. Because you are not selling a product with broad-based demand, you should narrow your spend to only target your niche; buyers of stains, French polishers, woodwork businesses, furniture restoration businesses, builders of outdoor decks and gates, businesses that make bookshelves, cabinet makers, builders of kitchens, as well as trying to get in front of members of the public, but *only* at the point when they are likely to be considering timber stains, such as when they are doing DIY wood projects, or resurfacing an existing deck, or renovating a wooden gate etc. Obviously, reaching trade targets is easy because you can find them in business directories, but getting members of the public specifically at the time when they are considering purchasing stains is more difficult, this is where very targeted advertising options such as search, FaceBook, YouTube, good text and video on your own website etc. is crucially important.

Finally, in respect to price, I've already mentioned that when selling into Australia there is usually a large amount of 'fat' between your cost and the retail prices that are tolerated in Australia. Now, if you want to make good money over a long period, then share that margin with your distributors. Don't try and hog it all yourself, leave plenty for them so that they are highly incentivised to push your brand over all the other brands that already stock. Assuming your stain is good, if they can properly service their customers and make more money from your product at the same time, then they will carve out market share for you – but you have to look after them. And looking after them does not just mean in terms of price, you need to provide them with all the promotional tools they need to sell your product. Have the brochures ready for them. Have the TDS and PDS sheets ready for them as a download, in properly spelled Australian English! Also, have high quality videos on YouTube ready for your distributors so they can send their customers there for tips, technical information, application methods, FAQ and so forth. You need to help them, help you.

I hope this has helped you Andeep, as well as anybody else that manufacturers products and is interested in selling into Australia and New Zealand. I can tell you that these are some of the things we have done for our own clients that have entered the Australian market and all of these are necessary in order to be successful. There is obviously more to it, but as a minimum these are the basics you need to consider in your business. I strongly suggest finding a marketing consultant that is local in Australia who has had experience in B2B or trade distribution because their local knowledge will best ensure the work they do for you is best suited to the Australian context; in respect to labelling laws, HAZCHEM compliance (this has to do with storage and transport of flammable or dangerous goods across Australia, which of course, includes paints), and in respect to creating videos with Australian voices (which is a must, by the way), and in respect to the most appropriate way to approach the local suppliers and how best to represent your brand to them, and also the best way to structure the pricing offer so as to engage them properly to actively sell your brand...plus lots of other important considerations that are essential if you are going to be successful in the Australian market.

So, I wish you all the best Andeep. Go forth mate, and conquer Australia and New Zealand!

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Mr Steven Mario Cavallo
podcast@thebusinessfirm.com.au

PO Box 7407
West Lakes SA 5021
Australia

Phone +61 8 8121 5711

www.thebusinessfirm.com.au