



TEN WAYS

to Improve your Personal and Business Performance

It's so easy to get caught up in the day-to-day challenges of running a business, that you forget about both personal and business improvement. It's important not to ignore learning and development. The more you monitor theories and happenings in the world, the more useful and interesting you are to your customers. Here are ten ideas to spark your imagination:

1 It's vital to talk in your customers' language

If you come across as just a printer then becoming a trusted advisor will be harder to achieve. Make time to read their industry news and stay abreast of what's happening in their markets. By subscribing to their trade publications and immersing yourself in their world you will learn first-hand how their sector works. All the better to innovate and to support them with their industry specific challenges.

2 Use social media in a focused way for your own benefit

Social media can be a great communication tool, and used wisely can add real value to your personal learning. Follow business leaders, competitors and suppliers on platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and even Instagram to pick up ideas that you can investigate further. Don't limit yourself, throw the net wide.

3 Explore new ways of interacting with suppliers

2020 reduced the opportunities for attending industry events, but the need to interact remains. Vendors are still innovating and launching new products, using a greater mixture of blended content, both live and remote, to push these out to the market. Keep in touch with them.

HISTORY SHOWS THAT SOME OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PRINT BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES.

4 Look for inspiration when innovating

Bookmark design sites to gain application inspiration – it's very difficult to sit down and think of new ideas. By monitoring the best of design and photography you can often see something that will spark an idea or train of thought. For example, look at Creative Review, and follow topics on Pinterest and hashtags on Instagram.

5 Collaborate to gain advantage

Many businesses practice some form of co-operation with one another, Bill Gates refers to it as "sometimes the lambs have to lie down with the wolves." A recent example is the pharmaceutical giants' development of a vaccine for Covid-19. Collaborating with competitors may not come easily but it can prove an important part of innovating and learning. And, if you choose wisely, could be a route to growth through shared resources.





REMEMBER...



It's vital to talk in your customers' language



Collaborate to gain advantage



Don't postpone investment

6 Explore your supply chain for allies

It's important to be customer centric, but be prepared to look elsewhere in your supply chain for valuable allies. Working closely with suppliers, understanding their priorities, and where they see future growth and innovation can be rewarding and valuable. History shows that some of the most successful print businesses have been at the forefront of technological advances. Be an early adopter of the latest ideas and equipment to gain a competitive advantage.

7 Widen your knowledge

Monitor platforms like TED Talks, Forbes and the Harvard Business Review – widen your knowledge through learning. Select business reading that increases your knowledge in areas where you are weaker. These can be soft skills books around sales and marketing, emotional intelligence (EQ) and psychology, or practical tomes on financial aspects of the business, or perhaps lean strategy or sustainability.

8 Don't postpone investment

Check out government backed loans and grants that might help you finance new equipment or software. It's in everyone's interest that businesses don't stagnate and come back strong and ready to trade as the economy improves. Now might be the time to replace ageing machinery and automate.



This article is one of a series supporting the **Canon Ascent Programme**, a business development initiative for Canon Professional Print customers. If you'd like to know more please contact your Canon Account Manager or search "Canon Ascent Programme".

9 Don't try and manage everything alone

Consider finding a business mentor or coach. Running your own business can be a lonely place, you might benefit from having another experienced person to bounce ideas off. Canon's Ascent Programme is designed to provide practical help to their professional print customers and offers mentoring, training and other support. Industry contacts may also be able to recommend mentors they have used to good effect.

10 Utilise industry memberships

Join the relevant industry bodies as they are on top of the latest news, government and regulatory changes and will be able to help with training, HR, legal matters and industry research.

.....
**This list is by no means exhaustive.
Use it to get you started.**
.....



SUGGESTED READING:

Daniel Goleman; *Emotional Intelligence*
Daniel Kahneman; *Thinking, Fast and Slow*
Stuart Mason; *How to Wreck your Business*
Darrell Mullis & Judith Orloff; *Basic Accounting: Fresh from the Lemonade Stand*
Patrick Dunne; *Boards: A Practical Perspective*
Seth Godin; *Tribes: We need you to lead us*