

# The truth about business.

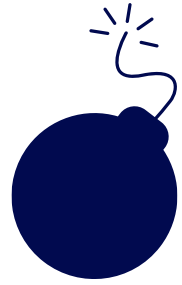
CENTRAL HIGHLANDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
WORKFORCE LUNCHEON  
FRIDAY 19 APRIL

**INFINITUM**  
PARTNERS 



**KATE ISLES**

**WIFE**  
**MOTHER OF TWO**  
**FORMER SMALL BUSINESS OWNER -**  
**TWO COFFEE SHOPS (10+ YEARS)**  
**CURRENT DIRECTOR**  
**- INFINITUM PARTNERS**



TRUTH BOMB 1.



**Being in business is tough.  
Owning a business is  
tougher.**

60% of businesses in Australia will fail within their first three years of operation, with 20% of businesses failing in their first year of operating. Source: ABS



## BE TRANSPARENT WITH YOUR TEAM. HOW MUCH DO YOU SHARE?

As an example, in my business we share the fortnightly target and report back on how we went. We talk around costs of doing business and we regularly review projects to review our pricing.

Share your company vision and goals – and ensure that the team understand how they will contribute to success.

Ensure any changes in structure or to the team are communicated in a timely fashion.

Sounds silly but be transparent about leave as soon as you can.

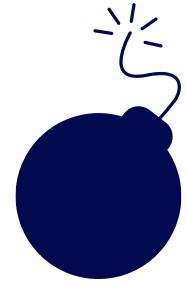
### WHY?

It supports the team with a clear goal and understanding of expectations.

It enables us as owners to better understand utilisation.

We use the outcomes as part of performance partnering and when it comes to negotiating annual reviews having this information is key to reviewing bonuses/ salary increases.

*(But don't stress I can assure you its not all about numbers and targets)*

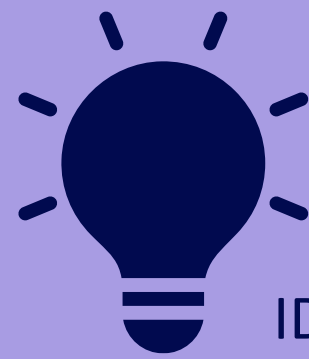


TRUTH BOMB 2.



**Effective communication  
is more than an email.  
Come out from behind  
the screen.**

71% of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) won business using face-to-face networking.  
Source: Big Small Business Survey



IDEAS BANK.

**PICK UP THE PHONE.** Check in with your clients see how they are going.

Surprise your customer with something extra. Maybe its a free coffee on you just because you appreciate the business. Maybe its additional advice or an article that would be of interest to them.

A handwritten note and a chocolate to say thank you for your business. Or offer to deliver the product to them for free instead of them picking up.

**BE TIMELY.** Deliver something ahead of schedule. If you have sub-consultants / supplies and you can pay ahead of invoice date.

## REVIEW YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE. HOW PROACTIVE ARE YOU WITH YOUR CLIENTS/ CUSTOMERS / TEAM?

At several Councils I have worked in we have prepared and developed together as a team and with our clients a Customer Service Charter.

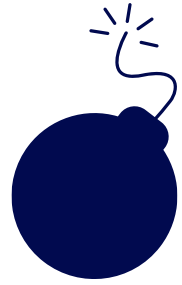
One of the principles we adopted was being "Transparent and Accessible". This included simple measures like signature blocks with direct phone numbers, a commitment to ring before we would write. We would use the charter to measure against but also check in with our quarterly reference group and our annual customer survey.

### WHY?

Face to face / voice to voice communication when you have a fee paying customer cannot be understated - its a relationship and that needs to be respected whether the news is good or bad.

Being accessible builds rapport and more likely when that customer is looking to spend again you will be front of mind.

It saves time. A quick phone call (and if needed a quick follow up email) will be fair quicker than thinking through an email especially if its not great news. Be honest on your call and I guarantee whilst the client may not be accepting they will be grateful and respect that you called and didn't hide before an email.

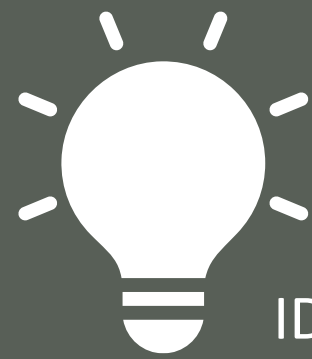


TRUTH BOMB 3.



**Local business is  
always preferred.**

68% of consumers prefer to discover products in-store  
48% of consumers say they prefer to shop at local businesses even if prices are somewhat higher.  
Source:- SocialCast



IDEAS BANK.

**Emerald Community Awareness Board (New)**  
Anonymous member · 36 m ·

Shop local - buy local would be wonderful if the local businesses even took the time to message or call back on enquiries and availability. Three business just today which doesn't include the previous weeks or months ago so far have not even moved a finger to reply to any voice messages and or text/fb messages. Such a shame to have to go further afield to buy and employ ppls services. Business goes bust then remember all the messages that you all could not be bothered to reply to. 6 weeks is a good time for patience. Done now gone to Rockhampton.

Like Comment Send

4

Top comments ▾

**Nakita Van Leeuwen**  
I had the same experience  
No one calls back  
Took business outside of town  
31 m Like Reply 1

**Anonymous member**  
Author  
[Nakita Van Leeuwen](#) its rude. I guess maybe our money or enquiry isnt to their liking.  
29 m Like Reply

# WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF YOUR BUSINESS?

I was involved in a recent panel for a council. Three companies bided on the work. 1 local in the town, 1 local to the broader region and 1 in SouthEast Qld. The local business was the most expensive (nearly 3 times) and they also had the highest rate for travel even though they were local.

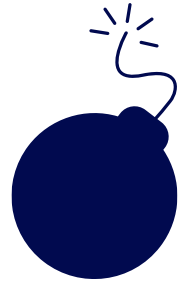
The company from SEQ didn't charge for travel and were actually the cheapest. The work ended up with the broader region firm who had the better experience to deliver the work.

Companies like mine want to give back to regional / rural Australia and we have a philosophy that the same access to consulting and strategy advice should be afforded. That's why we heavily discount our rates, don't charge travel time and don't charge for meals.

## Why?

Businesses will always prefer to buy local and seek local products. How many of you are actively putting your business out there so people know you exist?

Government has a legal obligation to ensure value for money is achieved. This doesn't always mean the cheapest because its about overall value. Even though you are local are you still offering value for money?



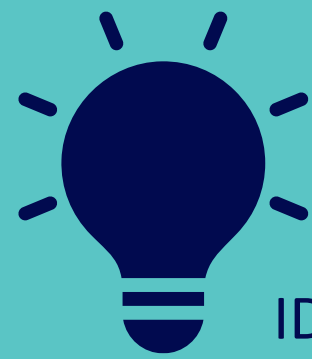
TRUTH BOMB 4.



**Businesses rarely  
celebrate the small wins.**

69% of employees would work harder if they felt like their company better appreciated their efforts.  
Source:- SocialCast





IDEAS BANK.



When someone does a great job. Tell them.

Share customer feedback on your socials. Will make you both feel good! How about Emerald Raves, Praise and Hooray's.

Maybe you know about your clients / customers birthday or a win they have. Why not share with them - a phone call or a text will be really appreciated.

## WHAT DO YOU CELEBRATE AND HOW DO YOU CELEBRATE?

As some examples, at our work we celebrate birthdays, we have quarterly lunches where we invite a client / customer to provide us feedback or talk about a interesting topic - changes in aged care reform and on occasion we would randomly pay for the teams lunch which we would order.

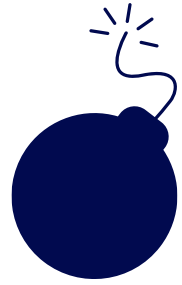
When at council I would circulate to the WHOLE team positive customer feedback/ complements when received.

### Why?

Celebrating shouldn't be just about the reaching a \$ target or securing a big project or new customer.

It's about creating a positive workplace culture that is consistent and being valued and appreciated as a team member.

Recognition, acknowledgement and sharing good news was a key response when we interviewed all the team 240 at council.



TRUTH BOMB 5.

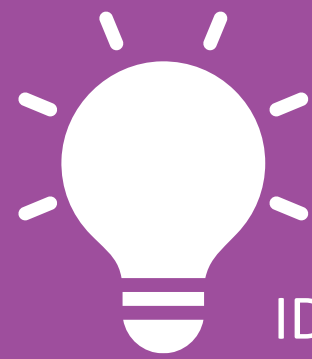


**You can't expect the team  
you have now to be your  
team forever.**

Current turnover across big business in Central Highlands is on average 20%.  
Across key sectors of education, child care and health the average stay is 18mths - 3 years.  
Source: Surveys as part of WDAS development

"An employer once said, "What if I train my people and they leave?" I say, what if you don't train them... and they stay..." - Evan Kirshenbaum

"Train people well enough so they can leave. Treat them well enough so they don't want to." - Richard Branson.



IDEAS BANK.

Whilst it might not be a salary - is there a bonus you can offer after 3 months of good work?  
A gift card/ dinner on you?  
Opportunity for higher duties?

What is your succession plan?

Do you have an owners plan? Are you setting the business up to sell in 5 years / are you looking to get more shareholders on board / are you looking to reduce debt over time? This will impact on what your workforce looks like.

When you go on leave who has your back?

## WHAT IS YOUR OWN WORKFORCE PLAN?

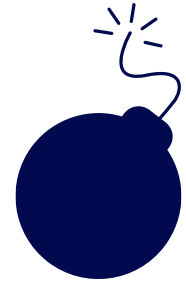
In our coffee shops as we were “absent owners” we hired a manager and put them on a good salary (unusual in this industry). We gained three great and loyal years with them and whilst their career aspirations changed they had already trained a successor. We continued with good success until the pandemic - (that's for another day). Those managers are still in our network.

Another company I was working with had the ability to have access to someone for only six months before they headed overseas. The capacity and contribution gained in that six months was incredible and set the company up for success. They still talk about Simone's input to this day (10 years on).

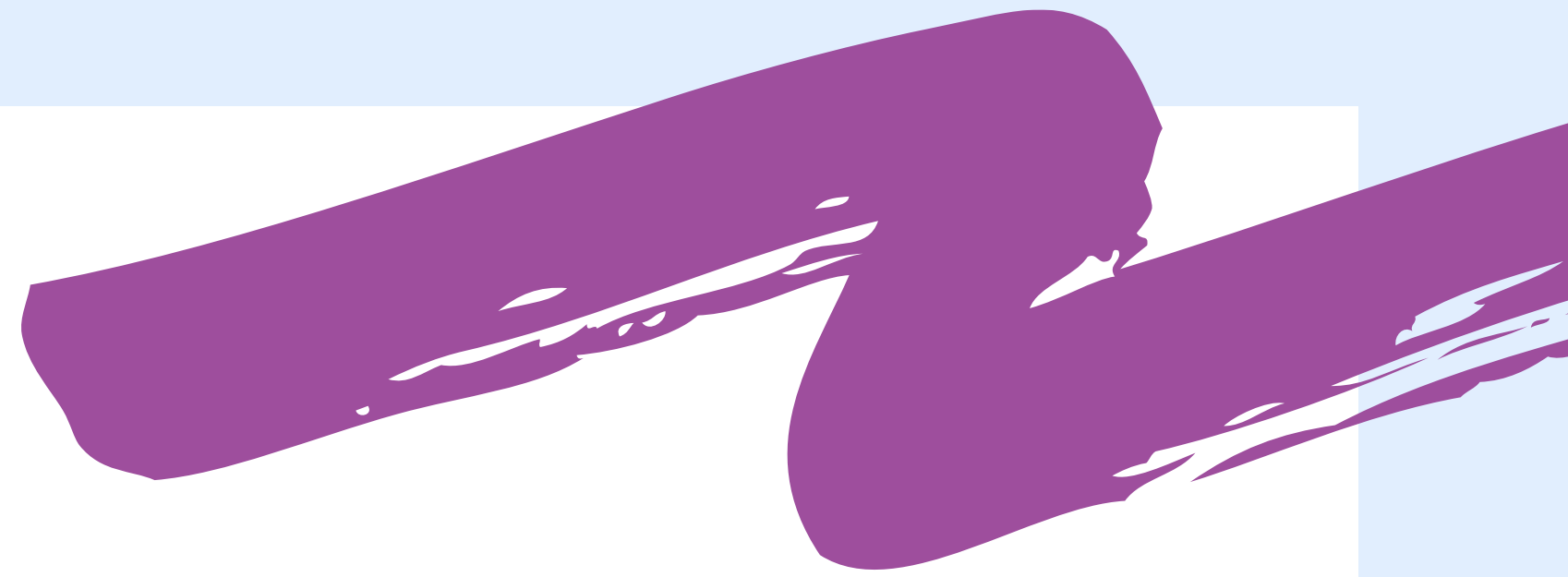
### WHY?

We need to acknowledge that just as individuals grow and change over time, so do teams and organisations. Be grateful for the loyal members of the team and enjoy what time they have with you. Don't burn the bridge because someone may look or take up a new opportunity elsewhere.

It's either about the long-term or short-term with your business - or is there a combination of both?

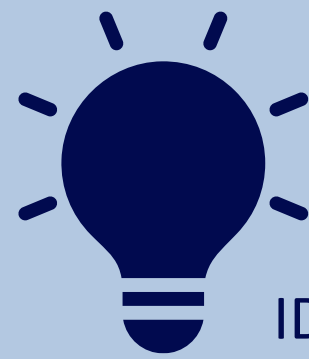


TRUTH BOMB 6.



**Embracing technology will help your business - if you do it right.**

The artificial intelligence market size is estimated to grow to \$1.3 trillion by 2032.  
Source:- Bloomberg



IDEAS BANK.



You can integrate ChatGPT into Salesforce, Microsoft Teams, Google Workspace, and CRM systems.

Develop interview questions - quickly and promptly.

Check wording of documents, letters, statements.

## HOW DO YOU THINK CHAT GPT COULD HELP YOUR BUSINESS?

For my business, as we expanded and bought on new employees we embraced Chat GPT to support the development of internally policies and procedures. We inputted our information which then developed drafts. We then amended where needed and then had them reviewed by our HR advisor who then charged us 2 hrs review not 16 hrs for development and review.

This saved significant time and resources. It's not for everything but there are some fantastic ways you can use in your own business including handling customer complaints.

### WHY?

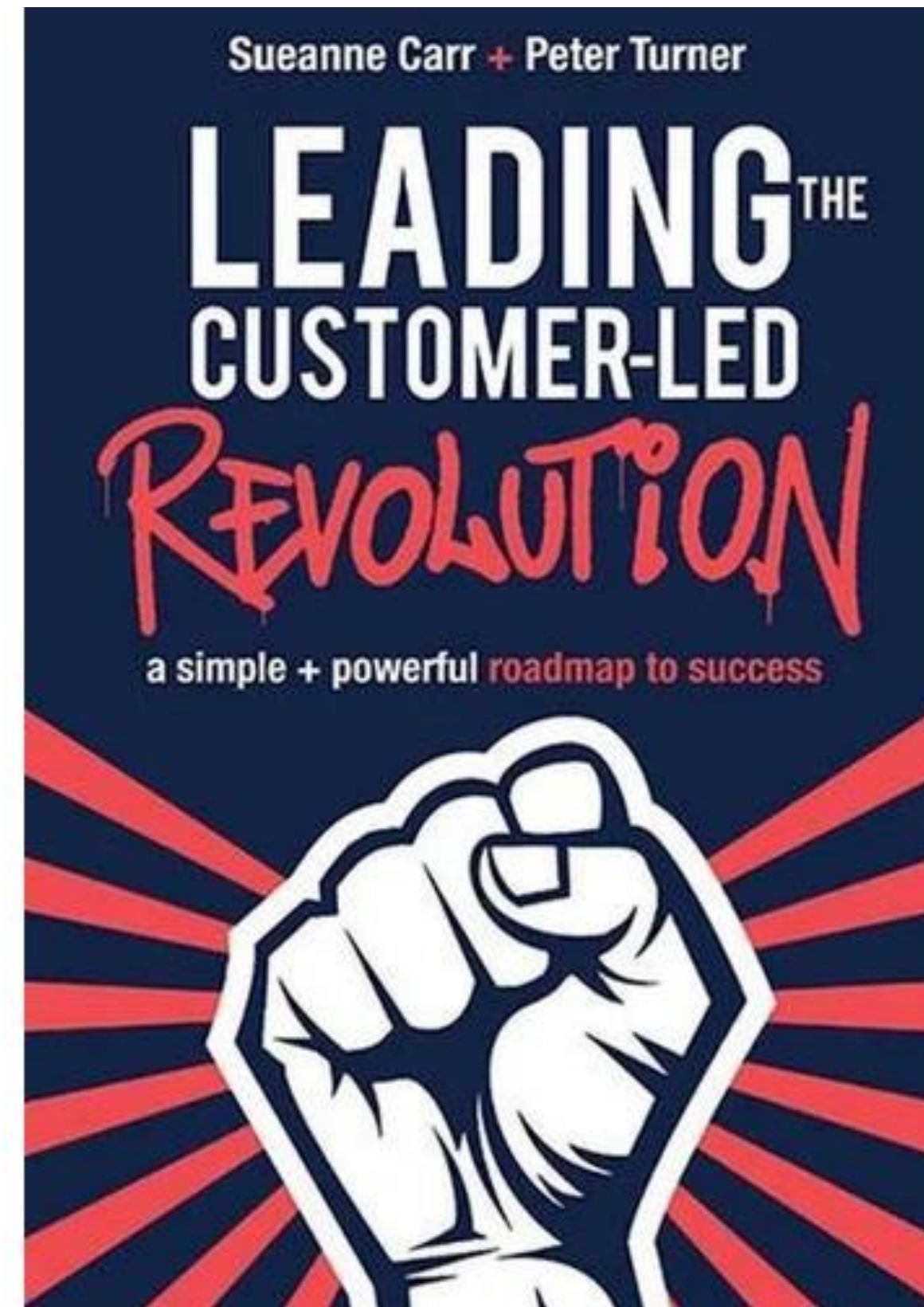
We are already busy and our time is precious. Why start from scratch on something that other businesses have completed 100s / 1000s of times before.

Using Chat GPT, Open AI in fit-for-purpose ways can boost your performance, efficiency and effectiveness.

# Read.

**SO MANY GREAT RESOURCES OUT THERE BUT I DO HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS BOOK. I GUARANTEE EVERYONE IN THIS AUDIENCE WILL GAIN FROM THIS BOOK.**

**ITS FOR EVERYONE WHO ENGAGES WITH A CUSTOMER NOT MATTER WHO YOUR CUSTOMER IS.**



# Network. Network. Network.

Active professional networking is vital to career growth.

If you are in any business, and we all are (government is business too) you need to have the confidence to “sell” yourself and therefore “sell” your organisation.

Don't shudder when you hear the term networking, or associate it with awkwardness and cheesy events your next clients / customers / suppliers could be here. Networking = business

It's also about establishing a good professional reputation over time. You never know when you might need to call upon your network to help.



**Lastly**  
**remember we**  
**are all human.**



Everything is relative.

Everyone has something going on.

**As a colleague of mine said before his life was cut short from bowel cancer.**

***Be kind; but be fierce.***