

MSP SUCCESS

MAGAZINE

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4 Big Lessons MSPs Can Learn From Living Legend Buzz Aldrin

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Tracy Hardin,
Founder & President,
Next Century Technologies

MSP SUCCESS

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TRACY HARDIN



You've Got To Be Able To Land

What Buzz Aldrin Secretly Shared With Me After Asking Him The Question He Hates But Constantly Gets Asked

I'll never forget the day I met Buzz Aldrin. At our annual member event that we call the IT Sales And Marketing Boot Camp, I hired him to deliver a keynote speech to an audience of roughly 1,000 MSPs. Standing off to the side and watching him speak gave me chills. Here, on my stage, was a true, living legend—a bona fide American hero and passionate public servant who had dedicated his life to big achievements and the betterment of mankind through scientific breakthroughs.

I was very fortunate to spend several hours with him back in the hotel suite, where he talked about his life and history, but more importantly, his continued big plans for going to Mars—a dream he talked about with the unbridled excitement of a 6-year-old boy on Christmas Eve, even though he was 86 years “young” at the time. His T-shirt read, “Get Your Ass To Mars.”

After we'd talked for a while, I asked him a question that I'm sure he hates: Does it bother you that you will always be known as the second guy to walk on the moon?

His reply was pure Buzz (and I'm paraphrasing from memory): “If I hadn't been able to successfully and safely land the module, no one would have been able to walk on the moon that day.”

There's brilliance in that answer. In business, we, too, have to be able to “land” if we are going to succeed. In sales, we have to be able to land the sale. As owners, we have to be able to land our business plans, or they're nothing but a wishful dream. We have to be able to land the key employee. We have to be able to land the interview, land the appointment, land the deal. Anyone can hope, wish, or dream about going to our own proverbial moon, but only those who can build a ship that will sustain the journey and land it get to enjoy fame and fortune.

Another big takeaway I got from Buzz is to think big. It seems to me far too many people have meek ambition. They want to just “get by,” happy to be “good enough” and maintain the status quo. Sad. One of the greatest burdens to mankind is unfulfilled potential. Henry David Thoreau correctly observed that “the mass



of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” How is that possible when the masses have their most fundamental needs met? A safe home, food to eat, entertainment on demand, and a warm bed to sleep in. What desperation could they feel? The desperation of a meaningless, purposeless life they are meandering through.

Human beings extract meaning from setting big goals and putting our full and complete effort behind our achievement, not by “taking it easy” or “getting by.” We gain self-respect, confidence, and pride by going after something big. We're inspired by people who seek excellence, achieve great things, and overcome impossible circumstances. A good question for you to ponder is this: What is your moon shot? What big goal or goals do you have for your life? Your business? Your wealth? Your health?

An easy, uneventful life is not all that exciting to live, and most of what you can get by setting your goals and standards low isn't worth having. Big dreams—big goals—pull you forward and give you purpose. For when you are truly giving it your all, you will succeed and you will win. ■

Sincerely,

Founder & CEO
Technology Marketing Toolkit, Inc



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HOW TO GET A CLIENT OR PROSPECT TO SAY “NO” SO YOU CAN GET TO “YES!”

BY CHRIS VOSS

Does yes really always mean yes? Absolutely not. When we say yes, we’re committing to something. And immediately after we’ve committed, we begin worrying about what we’ve just signed up for.

Which means, at best, every yes is a conditional yes. And oftentimes, it’s even worse: a counterfeit yes that’s uttered simply to get the other side to shut up.

Would it be ridiculous to find out that getting the other side to say no is actually what you should be gunning for when you sit down at the table?

THE BEAUTY OF SAYING NO

Whereas yes is a commitment, no is protection. There isn’t any shaky ground here, either. When we say no, we mean it. No is always no.

Why not use these three ways to make no work for you?

1. To break an impasse

2. To get someone’s attention, especially if they’ve stopped responding to you

3. To help someone think clearly

Getting someone to say no is easy. It’s one of the best communication skills you can possess. Just flip your yes-oriented questions into no-oriented questions. Instead of asking the maître d’ “Is it okay if we sit in the reserved section of the restaurant?”, ask them “Would it be horrible if we sat there?”

Pretty much every yes-oriented question you ask can be flipped around by adding phrases like these to your statement:

- Have you given up on ... ?
- Is it ridiculous ... ?
- Would it be horrible ... ?
- Is it a bad idea ... ?





**"GETTING
SOMEONE TO
SAY NO IS EASY."**



**CHRIS VOSS AT A
TECHNOLOGY MARKETING
TOOLKIT ANNUAL BOOT
CAMP EVENT**



HAVE YOU GIVEN UP ON THIS PROJECT?

When you ask the other side whether they've given up on the project—or whatever the issue at hand might be—it triggers the safety of no. At the same time, it also taps into prospect theory, the Nobel Prize-winning concept that loss aversion drives action more than the desire for gain. Did you know people are twice as likely to take an action to avoid a loss than they are to accomplish a gain? Use this knowledge to your advantage.

Our clients swear by this question of whether someone has given up on a project. In fact, it's one of the top email subject lines that produces results. There's one caveat here: make sure you're ready for a quick answer and are prepared to deliver a "That's Right" Summary™ before you move any further.

Check out these scenarios and think about how you can apply them to your business negotiations.

WOULD IT BE RIDICULOUS FOR YOU TO COME SPEAK AT THE NEGOTIATION COURSE I TEACH AT USC?

I asked Jack Welch, the legendary CEO of General Electric (rest in peace), this question when I approached him cold at a

book signing once. He stopped dead in his tracks and gave me his personal assistant's contact information so we could try to make our calendars sync. Unfortunately, the timing didn't work. But how many people can get digits like that?

Think about how many questions someone like Jack Welch is asked every day, and how almost all of them are yes-oriented questions: Would you sign this autograph? Being able to say no and feel protected makes us more open to other ideas.

I also got *Shark Tank*'s Robert Herjavec to buy tickets to The Black Swan Group's one-day negotiation training master class using this same kind of question.

WOULD IT BE HORRIBLE IF WE SAT IN THIS SECTION?

One day, a couple of colleagues and I had just come out of a conference. We were a bit thirsty, so we headed into a restaurant in search of a happy hour cocktail—just one. There was a problem: there weren't any seats at the bar. But there were seats in a roped-off section of the restaurant. So, I asked the waitress the above question, and she told us that it would be perfectly fine to sit there as long as we were out by six. We were, and I left her a great tip.

IS IT A BAD IDEA TO CUT A DEAL?

One of our clients used this during a break in a recent training session to cut a deal back home. She left the room during the break and used it to suggest an alternative solution that her colleague had been resisting. His reply was straightforward: No, it wouldn't be. And the deal was made.

THE POWER OF NO-ORIENTED QUESTIONS

I actually ask everyone who works with me to only use no-oriented questions™ with me late in the day. Science tells us we're only capable of making a certain number of decisions every day, and by the end of the day, our brains start to wear out. This is why people like Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs have been notorious for wearing the same thing every day. They're not interested in burning up mental decision power on what shirt to wear when the decisions they make every day are worth millions of dollars.

When someone asks me a Calibrated Question™ that begins with what or how and I'm fatigued, I likely won't answer until the next day. If they give me a "Is this a bad idea?" type of question, I actually find myself quickly focusing—and even getting a little bit of energy—and being able to answer.

Practice makes perfect. Use these communication skills in low-stakes scenarios, like the next time you're checking out with a clerk or on the phone with your cable company. (Think: Would it be ridiculous for you to give a loyal customer like me the same deal you give new subscribers?)

Is it a bad idea to leverage the natural human inclination to say no to get things done?

Well, what do you think? ■

Chris Voss is the CEO of The Black Swan Group, a firm that solves business negotiation problems with hostage negotiation strategies. Chris is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Southern California (USC) Marshall School of Business and Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, where he teaches business negotiation in both MBA programs. Chris is the internationally acclaimed best-selling author of *Never Split The Difference*.

Find out more at BlackSwanLTD.com



8 Unconventional Strategies For Captivating Your Customers And Crushing Your Competition

BY DAVID RENDALL

What would it be worth if prospects and customers truly saw your company as unique?

In her book, *Different: Escaping the Competitive Herd*, Harvard Business School marketing professor Youngme Moon argues that “the ability to compete is dependent upon the ability to differentiate from competitors.”

However, she goes on to say that “the number of companies who are truly able to achieve competitive separation is depressingly small.” This is because companies tend to define their strengths and weaknesses using the same measurements and standards as their competitors. This leads to homogeneity, not differentiation.

When everyone is trying to build on the same strengths and eliminate the same weaknesses, all companies start to look the same. Over time, the entire industry looks the same, feels the same, and sounds the same. There are no differences. Nothing distinguishes one brand from another.

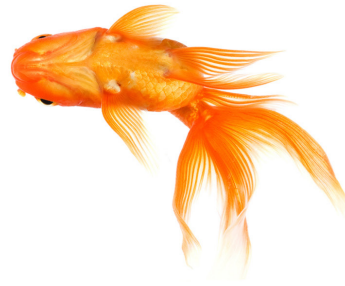
SO, HOW CAN YOU CREATE ONE OF THE FEW ORGANIZATIONS THAT BECOMES EXTRAORDINARY?

Maybe you could practice organizational *kintsugi*. In the 15th century, the Japanese Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa broke his favorite tea bowl. When he tried to get it fixed, he was unhappy with the way it was done. So, he gave the craftsmen new instructions. He asked them to highlight the cracks instead of trying to hide them. On the second attempt, lacquer and gold were used to meticulously fill the jagged seams. The result became the art of *kintsugi*, which highlights the broken as more beautiful than the pristine.

This is the foundation of our differentiation strategy. We believe companies can separate themselves from their competitors by illuminating imperfections instead of eliminating them.

A “pink goldfish” is a company that embraces this unconventional approach to differentiation. We gathered more than 300 examples and distilled them into a simple eight-part framework, which starts with flaunting. →





**“BY REDUCING
OPTIONS OR
COMPLETELY
ELIMINATING
THEM, BRANDS
CAN STAND
OUT AND
DIFFERENTIATE
THEMSELVES.”**

1. FLAUNTING

Flaunt means to parade without shame. Flaunting is being unashamed and unapologetic about your organization's flaws. You take pride in your organization's faults. You emphasize them, accentuate them, feature them, highlight them, call attention to them, and openly display them. You definitely aren't trying to hide them or fix them.

Alt Hotels is a great example of flaunting. They created a campaign that brags about all the things you won't find at their hotels. It's called We Do Less. Each of the five ads focuses on what they don't do, and what they do instead:

We **don't** have a minibar.

We **do** have a hip lounge.

We **don't** have a concierge.

We **do** have an app with all the hot spots.

We **don't** have a pool.

We **do** have a pool table.

We **don't** offer room service.

We **do** have fresh grab-and-go meals.

We **don't** have a bellman.

We **do** have a versatile, helpful staff.

Flaunting is the foundation. You can't implement any of the next seven strategies if you are unwilling to practice flaunting.

2. LOPSIDING

Lopsiding is about being unbalanced, imperfect, unstable, and odd. Lopsiding involves amplifying, not reducing, your brand's flaws. We want you to expand them, magnify them, increase them, turn them up, exaggerate them, and supersize them.

This is what Hardee's (or Carl's Jr., if you live on the West Coast) did with the Thickburger. When other fast-food companies were trying to create healthier options, Hardee's offered the unhealthiest option. And customers loved it.

3. ANTAGONIZING

Antagonizing is about polarizing, alienating, repelling, and taunting. We want you to deliberately exasperate, irritate, provoke, aggravate, and instigate hostility. Go out of your way to rub people the wrong way.

Try to earn a few more one-star reviews on Amazon or Yelp. Tell your employees to increase the number of complaints. Ring a bell in the office every time you get a nasty email. Try it. The more some people hate you, the more other people will love you.

The Alamo Drafthouse Cinema antagonizes when they kick out customers who talk or text during movies. Search YouTube for the angry voicemail a customer sent after being expelled. Alamo turned it into a PSA, warning people not to talk or text in Alamo theaters.

4. WITHHOLDING

Withholding is about limitations, restrictions, boundaries, and constraints. Withholding involves offering fewer options, fewer locations, fewer features, fewer products, fewer services, fewer hours, fewer perks, and fewer discounts. This is about deliberately and relentlessly shrinking the things everyone else is expanding. It is purposefully doing less of what is considered normal by others. By reducing options or completely eliminating them, brands can stand out and differentiate themselves.

Chick-fil-A withholds by being closed on Sundays, not serving burgers, and rejecting 97% of franchise applications.

5. SWERVING

As an example of withholding, we aren't going to explain swerving.

6. OPPOSING

Opposing is doing the exact opposite of what others are doing. Opposing brands are unlike other brands. They are contradictory. They refuse to give in, yield, submit, and surrender to the pressure to conform.

REI opposes when they close their stores and website on Black Friday, the biggest shopping day of the year.

7. MICRO-WEIRDING

As we collected examples for pink goldfish companies, we had some that didn't fit into any specific category but were too good to leave out. So, we created another category, micro-weirding. The Magic Castle Hotel's free popsicle hotline is micro-weird.

8. EXPOSING

Exposing is about transparency. Most companies try to hide their flaws. They market themselves as perfect and flawless. But prospects know that no company is perfect. People are looking for a company that will be honest about their imperfections.

Nebraska's new tourism campaign, which they admit that their state "isn't for everyone," is a great example of exposing.

To help you remember the eight steps, we decided to create an acronym:

F launting	S werving
L opsiding	O pposing
A ntagonizing	M icro-Weirding
W ithholding	E xposing

FLAWSOME is a combination of FLAWS and AWESOME. We believe your company's flaws are what make it awesome. Are you ready to start flaunting your organization's imperfections?! ■

David Rendall, our "Expert In Resident," has spent the last 20 years speaking on every inhabited continent. Some of his clients include the U.S. Air Force, the Australian government, and Fortune 500 companies such as Microsoft, AT&T, and Fannie Mae among others. His credits also include being a leadership professor, stand-up comedian, and managing nonprofit enterprises that provided employment for people with disabilities. David's educational accomplishments include a doctorate of management in organizational leadership and a graduate degree in psychology. To top that off, he is the author of four books. To find out more about David's coaching, keynotes, and workshops, visit him at DRendall.com.





Breast Cancer Survivor And Tech CEO: How Tracy Hardin Has Balanced Two Cancer Diagnoses And Motherhood While Building Next Century Technologies Into A Thriving IT Business

Overcoming unexpected challenges while pursuing your dreams is often the hardest part of anyone’s journey. Take Tracy Hardin, for example. After cultivating a lifelong interest in technology—and then subsequently realizing that corporate America was not for her—she decided to open her own technology company that focused on providing professional and personable client care. However, little did she know that over the next two decades, she would face breast cancer not once but twice while also navigating motherhood and business ownership. But thankfully, today Tracy is not only cancer-free and enjoying time with her soon-to-be 18-year-old daughter but has a successful IT business that has been committed to providing Kentucky businesses with comprehensive technology solutions since 2001.

A HOMEGROWN TECH LOVER

Tracy was born in Cleveland, Ohio, but her family moved to Kentucky when she was 10. “My father was an electrical engineer who got a job working for the University of Kentucky (UK) when we moved,” Tracy begins. “When my sister and I got older, my mom worked there too. They were the ones who first introduced me to technology. I remember my parents bringing home the first video game—Pong—and we played for hours. Then when I was 13, my dad bought me a Commodore computer, which further sparked my love of video games and technology.”

But this wasn’t Tracy’s only exposure to technology in her youth. “Our neighbor across the street worked at IBM and had a PC in his home,” recalls Tracy. “So I got to go over there and see it, which was a big deal.” She continues, “Then in high school, I took several computer math courses that I really enjoyed and excelled at. I also decided to take typing, which

thank God I did.” When it came time for Tracy to decide what was next after graduation, her dad urged her to get her bachelor’s degree. “My father only ever got his associate [degree], so he pushed me to do it,” explains Tracy. “He said, ‘You’ll make more money if you get your bachelor’s degree,’ so I went into computer science with a business specialization at UK because that starting point made sense.”

Now, armed with her degree plus three years’ hands-on experience as a student computer consultant, Tracy entered the world of IT and didn’t leave for 10 years. Throughout this time, Tracy received numerous certifications from Cisco, Novell, and CompTIA, and worked at a few different companies until she was a network engineer at a well-paying but thankless corporate job. “I just couldn’t keep doing it,” Tracy admits. “The corporate world was rough, and there was no overtime pay even if I was swamped with work. Not to mention, the users were ungrateful. So, I applied for an IT consulting firm that worked with businesses around Kentucky, and this was a complete turning point. The consulting firm’s business clientele were so happy to see me walk in the door, and showed appreciation when I fixed their computer problems. It was a totally different mindset, and I loved getting to peek behind the doors of these businesses and see how they really use technology to operate.”

While Tracy got experience across several industries—including construction, medical, and banking—the only problem was her boss. “Let’s just say, I learned how not to run a company,” says Tracy. “I was only upset when I was—wrongfully—fired from that job because of the clients I had to leave behind. I also had a noncompete, so I couldn’t work with them for 12 months anyway.” However, slowly at first through referrals and word of mouth, and then like a tide when the noncompete was up, Tracy got her company up and running and has had a bustling technology business ever since.

CREATING NEXT CENTURY TECHNOLOGIES

Since its inception in 2001, Next Century Technologies has experienced many evolutions. “When I first started the company, it was just me, a pickup truck, and a dining room I had converted into a home office,” says Tracy. “And today we’re sitting at eight employees with a proper office, a company van, and numerous amazing clients - including a couple of those that came back to me all those years ago.” She continues, “But there were also some dicier times, like in 2004 when I was still a company of one and got diagnosed with breast cancer. I would literally give my clients my chemo schedule and we would meet around my treatments. It was an extremely difficult time, but thankfully, with treatment, my cancer did go into remission and my clients were fantastic about it.”

Unfortunately, these treatments also pushed 34-year-old Tracy into early menopause, causing concern over whether

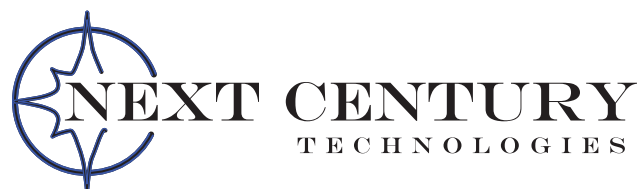
she could have kids or not. “Eventually, the menopause reversed, and I told my gynecologist that I wanted to have a child,” recalls Tracy. “She told me based on my cancer diagnosis, it was risky. However, when I asked my oncologist, he thought it was a wonderful idea but that I should do it as soon as possible. And now my little ‘risk’ is about to turn 18.” She adds, “I think my clients watching me go through chemo and then pregnancy only strengthened our partnerships, and I have fond memories of bringing little Sarah into meetings on several occasions.”

And this humanized approach to IT can be seen throughout all facets of Next Century Technologies. “First of all, we have a satisfaction guarantee on all our support agreements where we offer 24/7 support and try to answer all calls by a live human,” relates Tracy. “We also put real pictures of our staff on the website and always encourage our employees to connect with our clients—whether it’s over something like the latest UK football game or how to properly cage a tomato plant. Providing the best possible outcomes while being personable is always our aim.”

Looking ahead, Tracy plans to make her VP a partner in 2025 so she can take a small step back. “One thing that was and continues to be very important to me is that we don’t sell out,” says Tracy. “I’ve had hundreds of offers to buy my company, but it would derail everything. When you’re small like we are, you can be really hands-on and personable, which is our priority.” She continues, “Then personally, the priority for me is to get my daughter through high school and then to travel. After my second bout with a much more aggressive breast cancer in 2020, I feel extremely lucky and grateful to be here, so I want to embrace this next stage of life. But I will still want to work part-time, if Next Century will have me.”

Ultimately, Tracy’s journey is the epitome of, “It won’t always be easy, but it will be worth it.” Had she chosen another career path or stuck it out at that last corporate job, her story could’ve developed much differently. However, her innate love of technology, her tenacity to build and sustain a business even throughout the many personal challenges she faced, and her passion for providing not only professional but personable client care have culminated in Next Century Technologies as you know it today—a premier provider of robust technology solutions for businesses both across Kentucky and across the nation.

For more information about Next Century Technologies, visit NextCenturyTechnologies.com. ■





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Landing Your Moon Shot:

4 Big Lessons MSPs Can Learn From Living Legend Buzz Aldrin

WITH BUZZ ALDRIN

Fifty-five years ago this July, science fiction became reality when two men took their first steps on the moon's surface—an event that remains one of the greatest adventures in the history of mankind, even to this day.

One of those men, Buzz Aldrin, is a unique blend of scientist, pioneer, inventor, and daredevil. The lunar landing took an incredibly dedicated team of smart, courageous “dreamers” who were determined to make the impossible possible, and there are countless lessons that can be learned from this momentous accomplishment and the man who is the only surviving hero of that historic journey.

What follows is a high-level summary of a presentation Buzz gave at our IT Sales and

Marketing Boot Camp to an audience of over 1,000 MSPs. To watch part of that presentation, go to MSPSuccessMagazine.com/buzz.

LESSON NO. 1: THINK BIG.

As the saying goes, if you're going to be thinking anyway, might as well think big. President John F. Kennedy delivered a historic speech in 1962 in which he declared, “We choose to go to the moon,” acknowledging the difficulties of the task, rallying the crowd, and inspiring a nation to a bigger vision of the future.

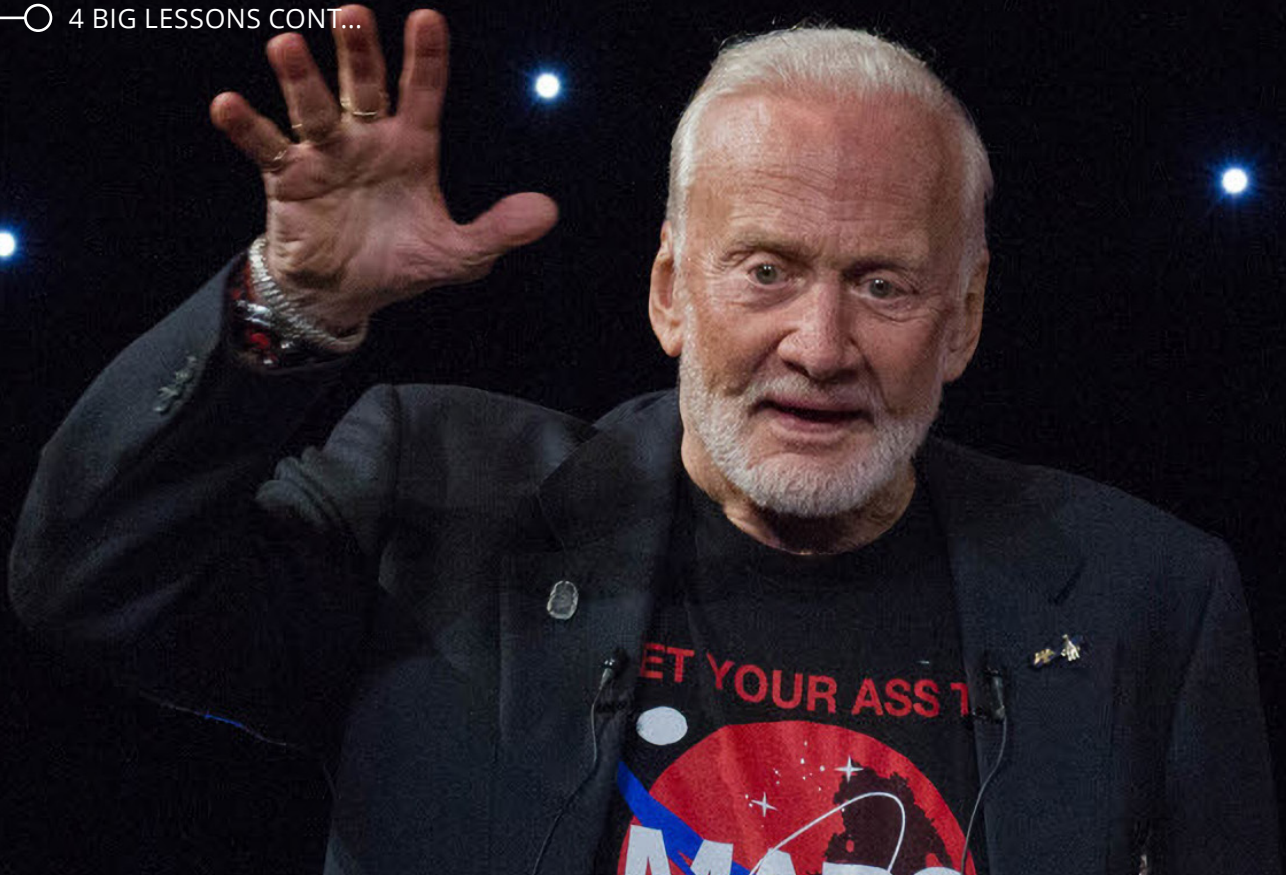
NASA figured it would take 15 years to land on the moon, but Kennedy's speech challenged them to do it before 1970. Aldrin watched in anticipation, pushing





GET YOUR ASS TO





his jet fighter abilities, his 2,200 logged flight hours, and his advanced degrees as reason enough for him to join NASA.

He was accepted in the third round of astronaut applications and began training for the mission to the moon. He took the president's challenge as a personal goal. As a career military man, he vowed to obey the order of his commander in chief.

"We didn't have the know-how, but we did have a leader with the vision, the determination, the courage, and the confidence that we could get there," Buzz said. "And by publicly stating our goal and putting a specific time period on a very specific achievement, President Kennedy gave us no way out."

Kennedy wouldn't live to see his dream fulfilled, but his leadership had sparked a fire. The United States was going to land on the moon, one way or another, using a spirit of determination that has long been the fuel for many entrepreneurs and business leaders who have pushed beyond the barriers set before them and built upon the American Dream. Kennedy knew this. Small, timid goals do not stir men's souls and won't rally people behind you.

In your business, what big goals have you rallied your team around? Do you have a shared, mutual goal that will stretch them, challenge them, and inspire them? Here's a little-

spoken truth about attracting and keeping great people on your team: they want to work on big things . . . challenging things . . . significant goals. They want to be in a place that is working toward a bigger future with more opportunities to grow and learn. If you don't provide that in your company, you'll have a difficult time keeping them on board.

LESSON NO. 2: YOU NEED A TEAM YOU CAN DEPEND ON.

In the case of the Apollo mission, a village. It's estimated that the project team consisted of 300,000 people—an incredible partnership between the government, private industry, and, of course, the three astronauts who executed the mission.

While Michael Collins orbited the moon and piloted the main ship, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin descended onto the lunar surface. Earth erupted in celebration. Three humans were up in space, and at that very moment, two of them walked on the surface of the moon, sealed up rocks to take back to Earth and took some of the most spectacular photos in American history.

The enormity of it all wasn't lost on Aldrin.

"Everyone felt like they had participated in this incredible journey, and the world welcomed us back as heroes from

the moon,” he recalled. “However, we understand that people were not just cheering for three guys but for what we represented. That, by the nation and the world coming together, we had accomplished the impossible, and the true value of it is the amazing story of innovation and teamwork that overcame many obstacles to reach the moon.”

Every entrepreneur knows all too well that you can only renegade and bootstrap your business to a point. If you truly want to grow, you need to build a team that can work together, despite differences in personalities, agendas, and preferences. You, as the leader, are the person responsible for setting the goal and direction, then putting the right team together who can work together, despite differences, to accomplish that goal.

As Buzz said, “Apollo is the story of people at their best, working together for a common goal. With a united effort and a great team, you too can achieve great things.”

On this same topic, I appreciated what Buzz had to say during an interview about dealing with tough situations and accepting help from others. He said, paraphrased:

“Take a good, long, honest, positive look at what good can come out of every situation you’re in. Wherever you are, that’s where you are. This is your history you’re living right now, so do what you can to make the most of what comes along. And please, don’t try to do everything on your own. There are a lot of people out there in the universe who wish you well and want to be your friend. Let them help you. You don’t have to carry it all on your own.”

LESSON NO. 3: FAILURE IS ALWAYS AN OPTION.

In the book *No Dream Is Too High*, Buzz said, “Some people don’t like to admit that they have failed or that they have not yet achieved their goals or lived up to their own expectations. But failure is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign that you are alive and growing.”

Everyone at NASA, including Buzz, knew of the high risks involved with their mission: the Saturn V liftoff, the lunar module ascent engine firing, landing on the moon, re-entry, and splashdown. Even at NASA’s famous 99.9% reliability standard, much could still go wrong.

Yet Buzz and the entire NASA team moved forward, relying on the technical competency of the people working to make the mission happen. They focused on removing as much risk as possible, with every system and component having the “living daylight” tested out of it. They thought through every “what if” scenario they could to make even the explosion of an oxygen tank survivable.

In business, there’s always a risk of failure—and that risk stops a lot of people from going all in, setting big goals, or taking action. They focus on what could go wrong instead of what might actually go right, and because of it, they inherently fail to accomplish their dreams.

High performers understand the risks but work to mitigate them—and move ahead despite them. They know that most failures are rarely fatal, unless you give up and use them as an excuse to hold back, not take action, or not try again. All businesses require constant course correction, cleaning up messes, righting the ship when it’s gone off course, setbacks, and disappointments. You’re never going to get everything perfect, and waiting until there is no risk before moving ahead is the only surefire way to do nothing.


LESSON NO. 4: ALWAYS HAVE A “NEXT.”

After returning from the moon landing, Buzz’s life was filled with ticker-tape parades, interviews, meetings with heads of state, and speaking tours. But despite all of his newfound fame, he felt unfulfilled. He had accomplished an enormous dream, an incredible goal, but what was next?

“I wanted to resume my duties, but there were no duties to resume,” he wrote in *Magnificent Desolation*. “There was no goal, no sense of calling, no project worth pouring myself into.”

As a result, he sunk into severe depression and started drinking; some days, not even getting out of bed. He nearly destroyed his marriage by having an affair. He worried about the mental health issues that ran in his family, with both his mother and grandfather committing suicide.

“Simply put, I was without a career, and I was feeling the aftereffects of it all. As always, I was standing by, ready for liftoff, but I needed to realign my direction and find a new runway.”

Encouraged by his then-girlfriend, Buzz sought help, checking himself into alcohol rehabilitation. It was a start to a longer journey of recovery. But after hitting rock bottom when he was arrested for smashing in the door of his girlfriend’s apartment, he finally got disgusted enough with his behavior that he gave up the bottle for good. 

Fortunately, his story ends well.

More than 50 years after our galaxy's most famous walk, Aldrin has refused to let that achievement be all he leaves behind. With the lessons he learned, as well as the funding, research, books, and collaboration he continues to do with experts in space travel and technology, he's built an empire. And at 94 years young, he's actively and passionately involved in a project he calls "Get Your Ass To Mars," a project that benefits his ShareSpace - Aldrin Family Foundation.

5 Fascinating Facts About Buzz Aldrin

We dare you to name a more fascinating human than Buzz Aldrin. From leaving footprints on the moon to exploring the depths of the ocean to influencing future space travel and exploration, Buzz has lived the past 94 years of his life to the fullest. Here are just five of our favorite facts about the man who defines what it means to truly live.

NO. 1: BUZZ IS HIS LEGAL NAME, BUT NOT HIS BIRTH NAME.

Buzz was actually born Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., but the name he would become most known for is credited to his sister, Fay Ann. According to family lore, Fay Ann struggled to pronounce the word "brother" and instead called Buzz her "buzzer." The name stuck, and in the 1980s, Buzz legally changed his name to Buzz Aldrin.

That's not the only instance of a family name carving out Buzz's future. Buzz's mother's maiden name was actually Marion Moon. How's that for a coincidence?

NO. 2: HE'S THE FEATURE SUBJECT OF THE MOON'S PAPARAZZI.

Some of the world's most famous photos of astronauts in space feature Buzz, but you wouldn't know it just by looking at them. (The big white suit tends to block any distinguishing features.) Neil Armstrong, Buzz's crewmate on the Apollo 11 mission, was tasked with documenting the first moonwalk, so many of the great photos we know and love today feature Buzz, who was just on the other side of the lens. Of the most iconic photos, the Visor Shot, is most celebrated because the Eagle Lander—the shuttle Armstrong and Buzz used to land on the moon—is shown in the reflection of Buzz's helmet.

Neil wasn't the only amateur photographer aboard the Apollo 11. Buzz's photograph of a footprint imprinted into the moon by either him or Neil is widely recognized as one of the most iconic photographs from the mission.

NO. 3: BUZZ HAS MADE HIS MARK ON POP CULTURE, TOO.

The world's second most-popular Buzz is actually named after the legendary moonwalker. Disney Pixar's Buzz Lightyear, from the Toy Story franchise, was given that name in honor of Buzz. He's also credited with being the inspiration behind the MTV Video Music Awards' "Moonman" statuette. Often referred to as "Buzzy," the award was a tribute of sorts from



BUZZ AND ROBIN ROBINS AT A TECHNOLOGY MARKETING TOOLKIT ANNUAL BOOT CAMP EVENT

MTV's former president, Tom Freston, who was said to admire Buzz. In fact, Freston even gave Buzz a special "Buzzy" with the engraving, "To the original Moonman."

NO. 4: THE BETTER QUESTION WOULD BE, "WHAT HASN'T BUZZ PILOTED?"

Buzz was destined for a life of exploration. The son of a career airman whose father's friends included Charles Lindbergh and Orville Wright, Buzz was first flying around the skies in the cockpit with his father at just 2 years old. He would later join the newly formed Air Force upon graduation from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1951. That's where his piloting expertise really took flight.

Since then, Buzz has piloted dozens of jets and other aircraft. He fought in 66 combat missions while piloting F86 Sabre Jets during the Korean War and flew F-100s as a D-Flight commander in Germany shortly after the war. Buzz's experience landed him with more than 2,200 logged flight hours and jet fighter abilities. That ultimately led to his career as an astronaut with NASA.

In space, Buzz served as a Gemini 12 mission pilot and a lunar module pilot for Apollo 12. Later, he also tested experimental aircraft as a commander of the Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, and in recent years, Buzz has flown a Cessna and an F-16.

NO. 5: BUZZ KEEPS BUSY—EVEN AT THE AGE OF 94!

After walking on the moon, Buzz continued to work with NASA and advocate for further exploration. He was later awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the NASA Exceptional Service Medal, and today, he funds the Aldrin Space Institute at Florida Institute of Technology.

Professional accolades aside, Buzz has helped design rockets, dove more than two miles underwater to explore the Titanic, authored six books, gone on a North Pole expedition, and spoken all over the world on the importance of supporting space exploration—just to name a few of the items he's checked off of his bucket list.

"People limit themselves to what their surroundings are, what they've gotten used to," Aldrin explained. "You can get beyond, you can try a little harder, and you'll find that no dream is too high."

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When Is Marketing To Blame When Sales Don't Happen?

BY ROBIN ROBINS





“IF YOUR TARGET MARKET IS “ANYONE,” YOU DON’T HAVE A TARGET MARKET...”

My philosophy about marketing is, and always has been, that if I spend a dollar on marketing today, I should be able to directly point to a sale and tangible ROI from that investment as quickly and efficiently as possible. In my world, we don’t count hashtags, likes, friends, and followers as “success.” Only dollars generated in sales from new customers count, and every dollar you spend should directly support the goal of driving profitable customers in the door and additional revenue from existing clients.

However, the simple reality is that marketing *can’t* always get that job done on its own. At some point, a *salesperson* needs to answer the call, book the appointment, conduct the demo or consultation, and ultimately, close the sale. Thinking that a great marketing plan will instantly produce more sales is asking it to do too much—a bridge too far.

In many cases, marketing is blamed for the failings of the sales team. “The leads were weak” is a very common complaint of crybaby sales reps who *only* want leads who are “buyers in heat,” showing up with a check in hand and unbridled enthusiasm about buying *today*.

And while marketing can certainly produce some leads that fit that criterion, it significantly limits the number of opportunities you’ll get, filtering out anyone who has a question, concern, or desire to talk to someone first before they buy. Candidly, if my marketing could produce those kinds of leads, I wouldn’t have a need for professional

salespeople. I could hire administrative assistants to simply process the orders.

So, what *can* marketing do, and where are its limits? Here’s a short list of what you can and should expect from your marketing efforts.

REPLACE COLD PROSPECTING

Great marketing can drive inbound leads of people who have a serious interest in buying or are at least open to the idea of a conversation. Even with all the available marketing media and strategies today, some companies still stupidly rely on salespeople to sift, sort, and trudge through an ice-cold list of names in search of a gold needle in a haystack. This is the fastest way to lose a great sales professional through burnout. Salespeople don’t get burned out from selling—they get burned out, tired, and frustrated from prospecting. When you finally get a marketing plan producing *and* you’ve built a great list of unconverted leads in the process of getting ready to buy, selling gets a lot more productive and easier because you let your marketing systems find, qualify, and cultivate buyers.

MAKE A GOOD SALESPERSON GREAT

Following on the previous, a good salesperson should spend the majority of their time talking to prospects who have some level of willingness and ability to buy what you’re selling. Really great marketing can presell and predispose a prospect to want to do business with your organization by answering frequently asked questions,



building trust, demonstrating differential value and USP (unique selling proposition), and creating urgency to buy. Great marketing can provide client testimonials and case studies to demonstrate competence, introduce risk-reducing guarantees and proof, reduce or eliminate fee resistance, and *educate* the prospect on what “good” is and what to look for when buying what you’re selling, which makes you the *obvious* choice regardless of price. All of this makes the actual process of selling *easier*.

Recently, I hired a top salesperson from a very well-known and well-run organization local to Franklin, where we have our offices. I was delighted to actually recruit their rock star and had great expectations for his performance.

However, it quickly became apparent that he didn’t know how to sell *at all*. I was actually shocked at how abysmal he was in his ability to have a consultative conversation, ask good questions, and *listen*. As you might imagine, he didn’t last long. So, what went wrong? To my estimation, the company he previously worked for was so well-known and great at marketing that he only had to take orders, not sell. When he came to our team, we grilled him on good sales processes, which he was unable to grasp, so I never felt comfortable putting him on the phone with a prospect of ours.

This is a very common scenario to be aware of when hiring salespeople. Many can be great if sufficient marketing props them up. If you don’t have strong name recognition and a powerful brand to support the sales effort, someone who was a rock star in another organization that has those marketing assets may turn out to be a terrible rep for you. Of course, if you build that level of marketing power, you have the advantage of hiring average people and getting them to perform brilliantly.

REPEL WRONG-FIT PROSPECTS

Most businesses *don’t* give much thought to who they don’t want as a customer, often because they’re starved for business to the point where they’ll take almost anyone. Big mistake. If your target market is “anyone,” you don’t have a target market—and part of communicating who is a right fit is communicating who the wrong fit is.

In my business, I make it abundantly clear that we aren’t selling instant rice. Success in marketing requires a commitment to doing the work and sticking with a

strategy long enough to get it to work. That is the extreme opposite of what many other marketing “gurus” will tell you. They’re selling easy buttons and quick fixes because those have universal appeal. Who doesn’t want a four-hour workweek or seven-minute abs? It’s hard to sell “homework” that will produce results over time. However, I know our best client isn’t one created with quick fixes and shortcuts. They want a *real* business and marketing plan that will actually sustain them and deliver consistent success, not a Happy Meal with a cheap prize in the box. ■

Robin Robins



Robin Robins is the IT industry’s most in-demand marketing consultant, sales trainer, and direct response marketing consultant who specializes in developing strategic marketing, sales and lead generation systems for MSPs, VARs and IT services companies.

Robin is the Founder of Technology Marketing Toolkit, *MSP Success Magazine* and Big Red Media. To date, her organization has coached, trained and consulted with over 10,000 IT business owners from all over the US and in 37 different countries. She currently runs the largest C-level peer group in the IT services channel for MSPs and her annual event, the IT Sales and Marketing Boot Camp, attracts over 1,600 attendees every year and is sponsored by the IT industry’s leading vendors.

This vast experience has given Robin a broad knowledge of hundreds of marketing and sales tactics used by some of the most successful, sales driven organizations in the world.

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