

biz tips
2009

bizology *n* the freedom you need to take care of business

We can support your business success.

While every bizology client is at a different stage of the business 'life cycle', they have one thing in common - something needs to change. Our clients regularly confide that they know what needs to be done, but simply do not have the time, resources and sometimes expertise to make it happen.

Helping business owners stay focused is what we do.

Our unique consultancy offers a diverse range of services, from executive level management support, project management, governance and compliance through to business planning and staff, finance, payroll and business administration.

Supporting your business is our business.

PO Box 1711
Burnside SA 5066
Australia

T +61 8 8379 1783
F +61 8 8379 0837
E info@bizology.com.au
W www.bizology.com.au

Bizology Pty Ltd
ABN 30 117 579 138

JANUARY 2009

Healthy Resolutions

Have you caught your breath yet from a busy 2008? Are you ready for 2009 and whatever it may bring? Take time out now for a health and fitness check for your business. More ...

Analyzing your business critically while also working in it can be difficult during peak times. Hopefully, the New Year will allow you to develop a fresh outlook and regain new enthusiasm and ambition for the year ahead.

A common personal “new year’s resolution” is to get fit or fitter. We look at our general wellbeing, exercise regime and nutrition. We commit to a plan.

Just as you analyse your personal health, January is the obvious time to review the health of your business. Review your business plan, marketing plan and other plans, but also carry out a ‘health and fitness business checkup’ as your strategic preparation for the year ahead.

Make a list of the following:

- what is healthy about your business?
- can you recognize any ill-health or chronic problems?
- what has stagnated and what can be shed?
- what is good nutrition for your business?
- what good daily practices build your business?
- is your cash plan in good shape to support you through any challenges?
- look to the future - your business may be in good shape now, but are you ready to face a marathon?
- how can you increase your business stamina to see you through the distance?

Value, maintain and grow any healthy behaviours you identify, but focus on getting rid of the “unhealthy” behaviours and performances, too.

Even if your business is in good shape, it is always worth having a regular health check. Now is the time to position you and your business for a fit, healthy and prosperous 2009!

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FEBRUARY 2009

Bizology's favourite biz tips

If you are looking for inspiration and confidence in uncertain times, there is an enormous amount of valuable information and advice available on business support websites. More ...

We probably all subscribe to many e-newsletters and at times it can be a struggle to keep up with them all - but here are a few of bizology's favorites.

flying.solo.com.au

Flying Solo is a positive, fresh and punchy website aimed at solo business owners in Australia but it is an excellent resource for any small business.

Their weekly e-newsletter is both motivational and practical and jam packed with news, information, challenges and biz tips.

The website boasts over 600 articles and also features forums, blogs, live events and a book called Flying Solo – How to go it alone in Business.

myBRC.com.au

myBRC – Business Resource Centre is an initiative of MYOB Australia to create a small business community and a website as a one-stop resource for all things related to small business in Australia.

There is no requirement to be a MYOB user to join and receive their regular e-newsletters.

kirstydunphey.com

This is a very personal and promotional weekly e-newsletter from a young entrepreneur who started her first business at 15, owned her own real estate agency at 21, was a self-made millionaire at 23, self-made multi-millionaire by 25 and retired at age 27.

In 2002, Kirsty Dunphey was named as the National Winner of Telstra's Young Business Woman of the Year Award, the youngest ever recipient of the award.

smartcompany.com.au

SmartCompany is a free news, information and resource site founded by Amanda Gome, a former editor and senior writer at BRW magazine who is passionate about the success of Australia's entrepreneurs, small and medium business owners and business managers. This site's writers claim many years of experience reporting for Australia's best newspapers and magazines, including BRW and The Australian Financial Review.

Subscribe to the SmartCompany daily email alert and stay on top of all the breaking news that matters to SME's every weekday. Plus, check out their free report called 100 Tips and Secrets.

MARCH 2009

Protecting your Intellectual Property

What does Intellectual Property mean to your business? Are your inventions, ideas or even your logo protected? More ...

Intellectual Property, often known as IP, means the product of your mind or thoughts. In business terms, this also means your proprietary knowledge.

You have not protected your brand simply with a registered business name, company name or domain name registration. These are important but generally administrative or regulatory requirements.

There are laws in place in Australia to protect your IP and specialist lawyers available to provide advice in more complex cases.

Items covered by IP may include Patents, Designs, Trademarks, Copyright, confidential information and know-how, including:

- Patents for new or improved products or processes;
- Trademarks for letters, words, phrases, sounds, smells, shapes, logos, pictures, aspects of packaging or a combination of these, to distinguish the goods and services of one trader from those of another;
- Designs for the shape or appearance of manufactured goods;
- Copyright for original material in literary, artistic, dramatic or musical works, films, broadcasts, multimedia and computer programs;
- Confidentiality/trade secrets, including know-how and other confidential or proprietary information.

Only copyright is automatic. All other IP must be registered in order to protect your business.

IP Australia is a government organisation that provides much useful information and some general advice at www.ipaustralia.gov.au

You can also apply online for certain IP protection through this website, such as trademarks.

IP Australia also has a specialised site for IP matters when starting or buying a business. Visit www.ipaustralia.gov.au/smartstart

Is your IP protected?

APRIL 2009

Work/Life Balance - Federal Government Grant

Is your business striving to be family friendly and retain excellent staff? You may be eligible for a Government Grant - but you must apply this month. More ...

If you want to improve work/life balance for your staff, the Federal Government may help cover set-up costs to introduce new family friendly policies.

The **Fresh Ideas for Work and Family** initiative provides grants of \$5,000 to \$15,000 to encourage small businesses to use family friendly work policies and practices that will help staff establish a better work/life balance and help improve retention and productivity.

Work/life balance means achieving balance in a staff member's life that includes work, family, friends, health, relaxation, cultural and community activities and socialisation. Some examples of family friendly work arrangements include:

- establishing rosters based on school terms and alternative core hours, for example, 10am to 3pm;
- creating quality part-time work or job-sharing opportunities;
- developing policies regarding unpaid leave for staff who care for children with disabilities, elderly relatives or people with other special needs;
- providing facilities such as family rooms for staff with young children, and
- establishing a workplace mentoring program.

Grants are open until 24 April 2009 and conditions apply. The following businesses can apply for the grant:

- Small businesses in Australia with fewer than 15 staff;
- Not-for-profit and non-government organisations;
- Consortia of small businesses, and
- Sole traders and incorporated sole traders that employ between 1 and 14 staff.

This is a wonderful opportunity to gain assistance in building a more family friendly workplace - why not explore your options?

This program is run by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. For more information and application details, [visit their website](#).

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All information or advice provided as part of this document is intended to be general in nature. You should not rely on it when making any decision.

MAY 2009

Contingency Planning

Being in business at this time is tougher than ever and it is even more important to focus on the positive. Have you done your contingency planning? More ...

There are numerous checklists for business health and survival. For most businesses now is the time to be realistic but not overly pessimistic, to stay positive and be proactive.

A good approach is to take time out now to review your business and check your finances, especially cash flow planning, identifying opportunities and addressing weaknesses. bizology clients are focusing on;

- Planning strategically – undertaking various scenarios and developing contingency plans
- Anchoring your Product or Service - ensuring quality and consistency within costs, looking at new opportunities, questioning what needs to change
- Retaining Customers – ensuring customer satisfaction, nurturing them and acknowledging they are probably doing it tough also, reaching out to referral sources
- Scanning the Market – any emerging market, what are competitors doing, what marketing approach works and what else might work
- Trusting Financial Management reporting – this needs to be accurate, timely and looking at the right indicators – if not fix it!
- Controlling Cash – doing regular current and future cash flow planning, controlling inflows and outflows, reviewing trading terms and practice, invoicing promptly, focusing on debtors on a weekly basis
- Maintaining the staff team - aiming to retain and reward the right staff, not downsizing so you cannot deliver a quality service/product or meet the upturn
- Staying informed and seeking assistance – formally and informally through media, info websites, colleagues, professional advisors, industry bodies and government.

There is nothing new here, bizology would always recommend our clients do these things. However, focusing on these points is even more important now to remain confident and positive in the current challenging climate.

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JUNE 2009

Reportable Employer Super Contributions

Is your business ready for the new Reportable Employer Super Contributions? You'll need to have your payroll setup before your first payroll run in July 2009? More ...

The Federal Government has recently announced that businesses will need to report to the ATO any employer superannuation, in addition to the superannuation guarantee contribution or award super for its employees.

This is typically, but not only, salary sacrifice superannuation. Reportable employer super contributions are not included in employee assessable income. However, these contributions may be included in the income tests for some benefits and obligations that the ATO administer.

What it means for your business is that from 1 July 2009, employers must keep adequate payroll records for any Reportable Employer Super Contributions, so that those amounts appear on the new payment summaries that will be used for the payroll year ending June 2010.

Therefore it is very important that you have your payroll system set up correctly before you run your first 2009/2010 payroll in July 2009, so these reportable employer super contributions are recorded correctly for the full year.

The Australian Taxation Office website has a detailed article about this change - [click here](#).

JULY 2009

Fair Work Act

Workplace laws change 1 July 2009. Your business could face changes to rights and obligations in the workplace. More ...

From 1 July 2009, the Fair Work Act 2009 replaces the Workplace Relations Act 1996.

The Main Changes

The Fair Work Act 2009 brings about significant changes to the Federal workplace relations system, including:

- increased access to unfair dismissal for employees;
- expanded union right of entry powers;
- emphasis on collective enterprise bargaining and requirement to bargain in good faith;
- Fair Work Australia will be the new governing body enforcing legislation and will replace a number of government agencies including the Workplace Authority and the Workplace Ombudsman;
- the introduction of 10 minimum conditions of employment, known as the National Employment Standards (NES); and
- Modern Awards will replace all Pre-Reform Federal Awards and NAPSAs (Notional Agreements Preserving State Awards), with the exception of those awards confined to a single enterprise.

Please note that Modern Awards and the NES do not commence until 1 January 2010.

Fair Dismissal

Fair Work Australia has adopted a Small Business Fair Dismissal Code. From 1 July 2009 the code will apply to small business employers, defined as employers with less than 15 full-time equivalent employees.

An employee is not unfairly dismissed if the dismissal:

- is by a 'small business employer' as defined, and
- is consistent with the code, or
- involves an employee who has not completed the minimum employment period of one year.

An employee, who is not a small business employee, is not eligible to make an unfair dismissal application if they have not completed a minimum of six months employment.

Find out how your business will feel the impact. Resources and fact sheets are available to help businesses understand these changes at www.fwa.gov.au or call 1300 799 675. Many organisations and specialist workplace relations businesses are holding information sessions.

AUGUST 2009

Consider your brand

First impressions definitely count. What perception do your customers have of your business? More ...

In business, as in life, we judge people and businesses on the way they look and behave, whether it's in person, on the phone, through marketing materials or a website.

We all have plenty of examples in our professional and personal lives of the proverbial 30 seconds it takes to decide if you feel comfortable with a person or a business and whether you would trust and do business with them.

Of course, it's not just the first impression that matters. There needs to be consistency for every contact a customer has with your business.

Business branding is number one as a strategic tool. It must be well thought out and it must match your business product or service and your market. An excellent business name, logo, signage, website, marketing material and packaging are critical.

But beware - a good brand can be ruined by careless typos, inconsistent fonts and colours, dog-eared business cards or flyers, hand written envelopes, poor printing, fading or damaging signs, cluttered and untidy premises, weeds in the car park - even a dirty work vehicle.

The way you and your people are presented and behave is personal branding. This must be carefully matched to your role or your business. An edgy design company will do this differently to the big brand business or local hairdresser. None is better than the other, but it needs to suit your business and your brand and where you are positioning yourself in the market.

A successful business should include its people in the development of a clear dress code that is appropriate and safe whilst still allowing personality and style. A good dress code will be relevant to the industry and business and should include clothing, accessories, grooming or makeup. Even companies with uniforms can be let down if an employee is poorly groomed or doesn't take care of their appearance.

Good behaviour can include a positive, communicative attitude, good listening skills, appropriate language, being on time, not smoking (or quitting smoking) and not taking mobile calls whilst with a customer. So, how does your company image rate?

- Does your logo suit your business?
- Do you have a corporate style guide that ensures all branding is high quality and consistent?
- Are you modelling the branding and behaviour that you expect from your people?
- Do you have a clear dress code?
- How do your employees treat customers - for example, answering the phone?
- Does your premises need improvement, both inside and out?
- Have you asked a trusted customer for their opinion of your business image?

SEPTEMBER 2009

Internal Controls for Small Business

Does your business have internal controls in place to guard against theft or fraud? Is your cashflow not quite right, but you're not sure why? More ...

Whilst it's hard for a small business owner to contemplate a trusted employee is stealing from them, billions of dollars are lost to Australian small businesses in this way every year.

This is mostly because small businesses don't have or don't feel they need effective internal controls. Common types of fraud can include theft of stock; false invoicing; cash, credit card, cheque and petty cash fraud; manipulation of financial information and fraudulent access to bank accounts and credit cards.

Different businesses will have a variety of areas that present risk. For example, a family supermarket business needs to keep track of stock inventory and point of sale transactions, while a professional services company should watch out for payroll fraud or false creditor invoicing.

With electronic processing now easily available, tight control over EFT payments is essential - for example, to ensure a staff member initiates a payment and a business owner authorises the payment with a different secure log on and PIN. Systems must be tested regularly, passwords should not be shared and must be changed regularly. Another safeguard is to ensure that the accounts payable or payroll person has limited or supervised access to changing electronic banking details for creditors or employees.

Internal controls should be clear to all and documented in policy and procedures manuals. They should be modeled and managed closely and transparently by business owners and applied regularly and at non-routine moments, such as spot checks.

Common examples of Internal Controls include:

- Management Supervision – regular validation checks, independent checks of totals and spreadsheets, checking against original sources e.g. bank statements, original invoices, cheque registers, cash register reports.
- Management Reporting – from various perspectives, e.g. overall performance, against budget, comparative periods, specific business functions, bank and credit card reconciliations.
- Approval authority levels – clear lines of responsibility, purchasing authority levels, stringent and tested online and phone procedures.
- Know your staff – reference checking, watch out for those living beyond means, known gamblers and employees who don't take holidays.

SEPTEMBER 2009 (cont.)

- Physical control – limited access to equipment, petty cash, cheque books.
- Segregation and rotation of tasks - the person who does cash receipting should not do the banking and payroll preparation should be separated from actual payment of wages.
- Systems control – security on accounting software to track data entry and transactions in person, to preclude certain risky actions; use sequential numbering of documents e.g. cheques and invoices; always process on an original document; use a coloured stamping protocol at various stages of processing.

Good internal controls also make sure your operations are efficient and effective.

For further information consult the CPA publication Internal Controls for Small Business, which is available for download at <https://www.cpaaustralia.com.au/>

OCTOBER 2009

Make the most of networking

Do you get the most out of networking opportunities, or do you avoid them at all costs? More ...

Some people seem to be born networkers, while others find it doesn't come naturally. Networking can conjure up visions of a room full of people in business attire, talking about themselves and handing out dozens of business cards – something that can make some people uncomfortable.

Whilst it is a skill that may allow you to connect with a new client, supplier or strategic partner, networking is just as likely to have other benefits. You can meet people in similar businesses to yours, hear about their fantastic customers and/or suppliers, see who is doing what in a particular industry/region or importantly, feel part of the broader business community. You may even meet someone who could be ideal for your staff team, or just practice your elevator statement.

You don't have to be gregarious to be able to network - just curious about others and their work or business.

Here are some key tips -

- Don't make it about you – ask open ended questions to get people talking about their business or what they get out of networking events.
- Look at the person's name tag and say - "So George, what does <name of business> do?"
- Have plenty of business cards, but always ask - "Could I give you one of my cards?"
- When someone gives you their card, make sure you look at it carefully and comment on it. If they don't offer, you can always ask for one.
- If you meet someone even remotely interesting or in a beneficial business, ask if you can send them an email telling them more about your business. Of course, make sure you do!

Happy Networking!

NOVEMBER 2009

Reduce water usage

Summer is nearly here. How water wise is your business? No matter what size your business is, you can reduce water consumption and cut costs too? More ...

Have you considered how your business can reduce water usage, support a better environment for us all and reduce your water bill?

Even just paying attention to water usage can bring about simple changes and with some minimal or more costly outlays you could achieve a lot for the longer term. Consider these actions your business could take:

- Audit your business' water consumption by monitoring use both during business hours and other times
- Become aware of what aspects of your business are water hungry
- Upgrade to water efficient toilets, taps, showers and appliances. Install flow restrictors and dual flush toilets
- Install a drinking water filter instead of buying bottled water – it has a much higher carbon and water footprint than tap water
- Consider safe recycling and treatment of water used by dishwashers, hand basins, washing machines
- Consider rainwater tanks to capture roof water for use in gardens, flush toilets and other processes where your business may use water.

Involve your staff too - ask them for their water saving tips for the business and encourage them to report wastage, especially leaks.

Many fact sheets are available to encourage businesses to be water wise. Download the SA Water fact sheet here [Saving Water: Make it Your Business](#)

Is your business doing its bit to save our water and our world? Act now!

DECEMBER 2009

Fair Work Australia

Is your business ready for the introduction of new National Employment Standards, taking effect on 1st January, 2010? More ...

Most employers are covered by Australia's new employment legislation - known as Fair Work Australia - and are aware that the 10 National Employment Standards (NES) will take effect from 1st January, 2010. But many, especially smaller businesses, are not yet fully prepared and must maintain the effort to get ready.

These National Employment Standards will form the new safety net of an employee's minimum terms and conditions of employment and must be read together with Modern Awards. Employers who are 'award free' are also bound by the NES, which cannot be traded away by employment contracts or agreements.

The NES provides for:

- maximum weekly hours of work
- the right to request flexible working arrangements
- parental leave and related entitlements
- annual leave, personal/carers leave and compassionate leave
- community service leave
- long service leave
- public holidays
- notice of termination and redundancy pay, and
- provision of a Fair Work Information Statement, which will detail the rights and entitlements of employees under the new system and how to seek advice and assistance.

If your business is not fully prepared by early December, then clearly it's going to be difficult to achieve by year-end. Nonetheless, some suggestions are:

- keep focused - allocate more resources where possible and manage to task
- keep talking to your advisors
- ensure you have a clear implementation plan so that you can continue with the necessary changes in January, which may be a traditionally quiet time for your business.
- Resources and fact sheets are available to help businesses understand these changes. Visit www.fwa.gov.au or call 1300 799 675.

In South Australia, call Business SA's Business Advisory Centre on 08 8300 0101 or visit www.business-sa.com