



16 Learning from others in your marketplace

All successful business owners have been through a learning curve to enable them to get to where they are now. You may be just about to start that journey. There are many sources of learning for you if you know where to look and are prepared to go out there and ask for the information you need.

Who can you learn from?

Depending on what you want to know the sources are endless.

Role models

Find a number of potential role models, people who are currently doing exactly what you want to do and doing it well. When I wanted to get a book publishing opportunity I asked a number of published authors about their experiences and how they went about getting a book deal. I am now doing the same for other information products that I wish to produce. Model the best.

Real-life experiences

Read books about the 'real story' behind businesses that have achieved phenomenal success in the marketplace. Most you will find started from humble beginnings. Read about Sahar and Bobby Hashemi in their book *Anyone Can Do It – Building Coffee Republic From Our Kitchen Table*, Richard Branson and Virgin and Anita Roddick and The Body Shop.

Entrepreneurs

Do you know any entrepreneurs? They make their ideas happen. Most entrepreneurs you will find have had a number of failed experiences before their big break took place.

Marketers and specialists

What about successful marketers who will also have plenty to share? These are specialists in the particular areas of expertise that you know you need to make your business a success.

Other business owners

Somewhere in the country there will be other businesses just like yours which are successful. They may be willing to share their secrets with you as long as they see that you are not a competitor. Many people like to help.

The media

There are marketing ideas around you everywhere you go. Notice what has an impact on you. Could you adapt that idea in any way to work for your business?

What can you learn?

You will need to be clear about what it is that you need to learn before you embark on your quest. Here are some suggestions.

- Systems and methods.
- Problems that you might come up against and how others found a way through.
- Marketing ideas.
- Typical mistakes to avoid.
- Suppliers of services you need to make your business a success.

Why is learning important?

Why reinvent the wheel? If what you want to do is currently being done successfully somewhere then it can save you enormous amounts of time, energy and resources if you can find out where and learn from the person who did it. It can take a long time to work it out for yourself. There is so much information available and so many ideas that you can benefit from that you don't need to feel alone with the thoughts in your own head and a blank piece of paper.

Your challenge

Be careful to choose the right sources and people to speak to. Some people may put you off with too many negative experiences. You need to be selective about what you take on board and what you let go.

What can help you to learn?

To start with accept that it is okay not to know all the answers. An open, inquisitive mind is the best place to start from. It is useful to have a structure to your quest. Know what you want to find out. You also need a plan to do something with the information as you get it. Remember ‘what you don’t use you lose’.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS IN YOUR MARKETPLACE – SPECIAL RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ▶ Write a list of all the things you want to know.
- ▶ Write down some questions you want answers to.
- ▶ Decide how you are going to find this information.
- ▶ Find out who are the best people to speak to.
- ▶ Who do you know who could help brainstorm?
- ▶ Decide on the best sources of the information you need.
- ▶ Make a plan.
- ▶ Decide how you are going to keep a record of it.

Questions for your role models and similar successful and respected businesses

- ▶ Looking back at your success what was the most important thing you did?
- ▶ What were the biggest challenges you faced?
- ▶ How did you overcome these challenges?
- ▶ How did you build a successful marketing system?
- ▶ What is most important to set up initially?
- ▶ What works best for you?
- ▶ Looking back, knowing what you know now, what would you pay most attention to?

How to use this information

It is important to take what learning you need from your role models and do something with it as soon as you can.

Take other people’s ideas and make them your own. Use their experience to stimulate ideas for your own business. Make it a goal to practise life-long learning.

Think role model and learn from what already works