

Verizon

The keys to explosive growth for your small business

CORPORATE PARTICIPANTS

Chris Serico

Verizon

Jeff Hoffman

CEO, author, Film/TV/Music Producer

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PRESENTATION

Chris Serico

Hi, I'm Chris Serico with Verizon. Thanks for joining our Small Business Webinar Series. With each webinar, we bring you the latest insights on finding success for your small business by hosting industry experts who share innovative and inspiring ideas. Our special guest today is Jeff Hoffman. As a film, TV and music producer, Jeff has won both an Emmy and a Grammy. He's also a founding partner for multiple startups, a CEO, a speaker, an author, and a passionate supporter of fellow entrepreneurs. He'll be sharing essential tips for how your small business can ignite new growth and thrive.

So, let's get right to it. Here now—

Jeff Hoffman

Thank you so much, Chris. I am so happy to be here today, and today we're going to talk about the keys to explosive growth. What does it take for you to take a small business, a medium-sized business, and grow it significantly to achieve that explosive growth, they used to call it a hockey stick, that takes a company to the next level, and I want to give you some of the keys for what it takes to do that, and it's even more important now, during times like this, where many people are trying to expand their businesses.

So, let's start with the first thing. First, what I want to talk about is making sure that you are solving a real problem. I see so many businesses that have a solution that's out there looking for a problem, and there's a really great way to tell whether you're solving a real problem as a small business out there, and that's this. This is my favorite test. Are you pushing people to buy your product, marketing, which is an essentially almost begging people, please buy my product, or are people reaching out to you and saying, please take my payment, take my credit card? You will know if you are solving a real problem because people in the world will be pushing you, saying is your product done yet, I want to buy it already, as opposed to pushing the product out there when you're saying, please trust me, just buy this product.

I'm going to give you a quick example. My first product and my first small business I ever built was standing in an airport where I noticed that back then everybody had to check in for a flight at a check-in counter and get a boarding pass from a human being, and I realized how critically inefficient that was, that I missed a flight standing in line for an hour, so I went home and started one of my first small businesses where I created these. I created these kiosks that are in airports all over the world now that allowed people to check themselves in, and because I was solving a real problem that had value for customers, the consumers in the airport, and it had value for airlines and airports, because it costs a lot of money to staff them with humans, everybody was calling me and saying, is your kiosk ready yet, please take my money. So, I want you to solve a real problem in the world and look around and say, am I solving something that everybody's complaining about that has true value to people, not just something that I thought was a good idea that I'm hoping people will want to buy when I push it in the market every day? You've seen real problems in the world that you encounter, and most people just complain about it and go back about to what they were doing, but the startups that achieve explosive growth, those are the small businesses that are solving a problem that everybody's waiting to have fixed and is willing to pay to have somebody fix it. So, solve a real problem.

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And by the way, I want to say this, don't chase money, chase excellence. I say that because money follows excellence, and so many small business owners are constantly talking to me about their profitability, and their balance sheet, and their breakeven, and they're focused so heavily on money, that they're distracted from the only way your small business is ever going to be profitable, or be the target of an acquisition, an IPO, or whatever it is, and that's by achieving excellence. Until you create some amazing product or service in the world, you're not going to make money anyway, so stop worrying about the money and worry entirely about creating something amazing in the world. When you do that, the money will come. Focus on excellence in everything you do as a business.

The next thing I want to share with you is stop trying to be good at so many things. So, many small businesses, and I have to be fair, small businesses react to targets of opportunity, and the reason that we react to targets of opportunity is because we're a small business and we need the money, and if someone's willing to pay us for something, we want to take the money. The problem is frequently those early revenue streams are to provide a product or a service that isn't really what we got in business for, and it's actually a distraction from our core product. So, I want to tell you that having studied and worked with thousands of businesses all over the world, in my role, and launched many companies myself, the companies that achieve, the small businesses that hit an explosive growth, and blow up into big businesses have something really typical and common, something in common that they all share. That is that they won a gold medal at one thing. So, what I want you to think about is, what is the one thing, what is your gold medal talent? What is the one thing you can do, the category you can crush, so people look at you and say, wow, that is an amazing company? That's really hard to do.

I use the gold medal analogy because of this guy right here, Michael Phelps. Michael Phelps won many medals in swimming, but you've never seen an Olympian who won a gold medal in swimming, one in tennis, and one in gymnastics. It's so hard to be a gold medalist at anything in life and in business, that it's nearly impossible to do it in more than one thing. So, sometimes when companies ask me how to grow, I tell them you have to shrink first, because you've got to win a gold medal in something. Sometimes I tell them, stop selling three products, pick the one that you are best at, make that your gold medal and do it.

I'll give you a couple of examples. Back in the day, a lot of people forget this, Jeff Bezos, and Amazon only sold books for like, I think it was seven years. What Bezos said, and I remember talking to him in the early days, was I want to be the best darn bookseller on the planet, and he achieved a gold medal, but he had the discipline to say not until I crush a category. I can do books better than anybody on the planet, and you know what you and I did? We said, wow, it was only a book, but you're a gold medal company, now sell me something else, and that puts you into a pull strategy, where customers are asking you to sell them something else, instead of a push strategy, where you're trying to beg customers to buy something else from you.

Similarly, I was out right before COVID out talking to employees at Tony Hsieh's company, Zappos. Early on, Zappos said, Tony said, I'm going to be the best darn shoe seller on the planet, and they focused on winning something they could be gold medalists that. So, what's my message to you? Win a gold medal at one thing, before you expand anything else. In some cases, you may never need to expand. I was part of priceline.com, which is also booking.com. That company does business in 190 countries now, and it really only sells one product, hotel rooms. It became a gold medalist in hotel rooms, and they did it so well, that it's able to do that all over the world without really having to... more than 90% of the revenue is from it's one gold medal product, with a gold medal at one thing.

Now, my next tip for achieving explosive growth is to build a brand for your company. A brand is the tipping point between linear marketing and exponential scaling, and the reason is marketing is linear because you spend... every dollar you spend in marketing has a CPM or cost per thousand. How many people did we market to? How many people saw my ad? How many came to my website or my front door, and how many did we convert for sales? And if you want to get more of all of those, you spend more money or you hire more salespeople, but brand is your messaging that lives out in the marketplace, where people hear about you, but you didn't spend any money marketing. When a company's hit growth, explosive growth, is when their outbound marketing turns to inbound calling because people you've never marketed to have suddenly heard about you in the marketplace, and they're calling you saying please, I want to buy your product. I heard about it yesterday. That's how scale is achieved when marketing turns inbound and not outbound, and that doesn't happen until you build a brand, and you build a brand by creating your brand promise.

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Your brand promise is the number one thing that most distinguishes you in the marketplace. So, pick a horse to ride and stop trying to be all things to all people. I'll give you two quick examples. You've never seen a Wal-Mart ad that says you'll love our high quality products. You've never seen a Wal-Mart ad that says we have the best customer service ever. Wal-Mart rode one horse in their race, always low prices. Their brand promise is you're not going to find it cheaper anywhere else. That's why we go there, because light bulbs cost more in the department store or the strip mall. We didn't go to the strip mall, we didn't go there thinking they had the best service or necessarily even the best products, but here's the flip side of that. When we go to Nordstrom, we don't expect a really low priced piece of clothing. In fact, last time I was there was a man with white gloves on playing piano in the women's clothing department, and I was buying a sweater back then for my sister's birthday, and I said, who's paying you to play that piano and he said, sir, the sweater you're buying is paying me to play the piano, and then I looked at the price tag, and when I raised my eyebrow, the sales girl said, dude, you came into Nordstrom, you weren't expecting a cheap product. Nordstrom is a high end service, that's the horse they ride. So, find out what your brand promise is, pick the one thing that most distinguishes you, and build a brand around that thing so that you become distinguished and memorable in the marketplace. Companies that try to promise all things to all people don't grow explosively, because nobody remembers them, because they sound like everybody else. Your brand promise.

Now, let's talk about how you achieve explosive growth by something called narrow-casting, and not broadcasting. We all have a tendency to broadcast and what I mean by broadcasting is I ask companies, small businesses all the time who will buy your product, and you know what you guys always tell me? You tell me everyone, and I always have to say you don't have the marketing budget for everyone, and when you create a marketing message that appeals to everyone, what winds up happening is it no longer appeals to anyone. Let me give you an example of that.

There was a company that was building a product, a small business, that was designed... they thought college students would buy it first, and so they created an ad that would appeal to college students. It used their look and feel, they used words that college students would use. I said, that's an excellent ad, college students will resonate with your marketing, but then they said we were thinking, and the parents of those students might buy our product too. So, they flattened the message so that parents would like it, not just college kids, and then they said, you know what, people at work, the office mates of the parents of the college kids might also use this product at work. So, they broadened the message again, and pretty soon, the message... I jokingly said to them, let me understand your marketing, your marketing is we are people who sell stuff to other people, and they're like, well, no, that's not what it says. I said, yes, it kind of does, because when you broadcast, you keep flattening your message and casting a wider net until you appeal to nobody, but companies that achieve explosive growth, they look for this.

We all know what a fan looks like in the sports world. Fans paint themselves in their school's color, they stand outside half naked in the winter at a football game painted in all these colors, because they love their school that much, but let me tell you something a lot of small business owners don't realize. Your business has fans too. Every business has people that absolutely love you and love your product. So, what do you need to do? You need to go find those fans; you need to ask yourself these questions. What are the easiest sales we've ever made literally? Talk to your team, and say, give me the names of the... these are the people who are the easiest sale you've ever closed? The people that said, wow, where have you been all my life? I'll take it. You didn't even have to finish the sales pitch. And likewise, if you have people that have already bought your product, ask your customer service department, your account managers, who are the people you think would paint themselves in our company colors they love us so much. Maybe not literally, but I do have to tell you, one of the companies that I'm a part of, we now have 34 people in the world that have actually had the company's logo tattooed on their body. Does that sound nuts? Yes. Why? Because they love the company so much. So, look for the people that love you. Write down the names of them, study those people and gear your marketing towards fans, the sale that you can close the quickest. Stop trying to convince people to buy your product until you've gone out to find all the people that when you look at their profile, you say I absolutely know she's going to love this thing, because you've studied the people that loved it, to figure out what people you should be selling to first. Don't broadcast your marketing, narrow-cast to your fans, and your growth will accelerate dramatically in the early phases. Later on, everybody else might use your product, but nobody that achieved explosive growth achieved it by selling to everybody by casting a wide net at the beginning.

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Now, how do you find those fans? I'm going to tell you create something called customer intimacy, and what I mean by that is getting to know your customer in a way that most of you don't. What I'm going to suggest is that you live a day in the life of your customer, and that requires you to do something that most of you don't. You're going to have to get out of your office. You're going to have to leave and go hang out with the customers, and I don't mean wearing your company's shirt and hat and selling them something. A lot of you say to me, small business owners say, Jeff, I talk to my customers all the time, but here's the problem, guys, you talk to them in sales mode and the whole dynamic's different when they know you're selling to them, or you talk to them in customer service and account management, where the dynamic's different because you're already in a business relationship, and they're contacting you with a problem, typically. What I want you to do is go spend a day in the life of your customer, and I want to share how I learned that lesson with you, because I was spending a day with a gentleman in the retail business, who built a retail company that achieved explosive growth, but like all of you, he started as a small business, and when I looked at the market he was in, I said you did something that all of the experts in the industry said would not work, but you tried it anyway and it worked. I said, how did you do this? Who told you how to do this? This gentleman I was spending the day with, he said, Jeff, I will tell you something, he said, a farmer in a John Deere hat is the one who told me how to grow my business, how to build it in the first place. I said, that's interesting, tell me the story. And he and I sat down to lunch and he said, here's the deal – and I want you all to think about this – he said, these people in this picture I'm showing on the screen, these are my employees. He said, they have degrees in finance and supply chain logistics and MBAs. I said, wow, that sounds like an opportunity not a problem, that's great that you have all these people like that in your office. I said, what's the problem? he said, the problem is that these are my customers. My customers are farmers wearing a John Deere hat across town in small town America and during the day they're not dressed like that in an office here. They're wearing a farmer hat, work boots, and jeans. He said, my problem is that my employees don't live in the same neighborhood as my customers, they don't eat at the same restaurants, they don't shop at the same stores, so how are you building products and services for customers that aren't you, that you don't really know. so, I said, what did you do? This man said to me, I bought a John Deere hat and some work boots. He said, every other Friday I would leave and I would go sit in a diner somewhere in their part of town and I would buy coffee and apple pie for these farmers and sitting and having a conversation of a day in their life, they helped me design their business.

The interesting part of about the story is the guy I was blessed enough to spend a day with was this man, Sam Walton, and I was asking him, how did you know how to build Wal-Mart, because everybody said you can't build big box retail in small town America. And his answer to me was, because I went and spent time with farmers who didn't know I was selling anything, I just listened to them talk about their life and ask them questions.

Schedule time to leave your office and go spend a day in the life of your customer if your business is B2B. one time that product that we were selling to vice presidents and CFOs, so I called one and I said, would you mind if two of my employees just did job shadowing, they were programmers, and I called her and I said, you know how they have take your kids to work day, she said, sure. I said, how about taking nerd to work day, there's two of my tech guys want to follow you around for a day, they won't speak, they're just going to see what a day in your life is like so we can understand how our customer actually lives, so we can better serve you. It was amazing what we learned when we got out of the office.

Next tip I have for you is to focus on operational excellence. The companies that I was part of that grew and became multi-billion-dollar companies, somebody said to me one day, what were some of the key things for you guys in really achieving that growth? My answer was that we were operationally efficient, meaning we did not waste time doing things that did not lead to our goals. And so, here's how I want you to achieve that goal.

The first thing I need you to do is ask yourself, what is the one fundamental thing that drives your business? In my business back then, until somebody buys a hotel room, we have no reason to be doing anything at work. Everything we do has to lead to someone buying a hotel room, that's the reason our business exists. Let me tell you where I learned this lesson from. By the way, this is what used to be written on the door of my office. I wrote, "Your ideas are welcome here, but execution is worshipped", because everybody brings me ideas, but actually executing is where the money is and where the growth is. Everybody has got an idea. Very few companies are operationally efficient at executing them. So, let me share with you how I learned that lesson.

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I was talking to a gentleman who had a company that started as one small flower company and eventually became one of the largest distributors of flowers in the world. I asked this gentleman a question, I said, how did you achieve this explosive growth? He said to me, come to the office and I will show you. And this is what I want to share with you guys. Written on the walls all over his office was the fundamental reason they exist, to sell more flowers. So, I want you to think about what's yours. Ours was sell more hotel rooms. Until somebody's head hits a pillow in a hotel room, we don't have any reason to be at work. He said, everything we do has to lead to selling more flowers. So, he showed me an example. He went out and asked an employee. He said, what are you doing right now? He stopped someone in the hall. And she told him, and he said, how does that help us sell more flowers? The rule in their company is if she can't answer it, she needs to put it down and go do something else.

So, you know what, I went back to my office and did what I want you to do. I wrote all over the walls the fundamental reason we exist as a company, and then every day I told employees, glance at it when you're working down the hall and ask yourself this, is the task I'm doing right now – how does it help us sell more flower? If I can't answer it, put it down and do something else.

By the way, I had a rule that even as the CEO, if I ask an employee to do something, they can say to me, Jeff, how does this help us sell more flowers? And if I can't convince them, they can say, you know what, I know you're my boss, I know you own the company, but I'm not going to do that, I've got flowers to sell, find something else to do.

Operational efficiency comes from making sure every task you do is leading to the fundamental reason that you exist. Write it on the walls so nobody ever forgets it.

Now, I want to move into our last piece for today before we go to some live question and answer. The best team wins. No matter how smart you are, or more likely how smart you think you are, you didn't get there yourself. No great company, no great deed was really ever done by one person. It's built by having an incredible team around you and one of the keys to scaling is recognizing that funding is not what makes small businesses grow. The media, when they say what's the key to growth for you as a small business, so many people say funding, and it's not guys. The key to growth is talent, the scarcest resource in the world. It's not money. It's talent. It's human capital. Giving a whole bunch of money to mediocre people does not achieve success. But giving even a little funding to rock stars has proven successful in many times. So, part of your job as a small businessowner is attracting and retaining talent.

So, what am I going to tell you to do? I need you to spend a little less time running the company and a little more time finding people smarter than you to do it for you. That doesn't happen when you're always so busy in the office because you're the boss, you're so busy running the company all the time that you never have time to go out and recruit really smart people to start running parts of the company for you.

By the way, the smartest people in the industry, you have to go find them. They're not going to typically respond – you might get lucky – they're not typically going to respond to a job posting, because they're not looking for one. Most of the people that respond to a job posting are people that no longer have their job. But the most talented people in the industry aren't looking for a job, so you need to leave your office and go find them.

I used to schedule days where I went out hunting talent. For example, a quick example, once when I needed someone to run HR for me, I signed up for the SHRM, I didn't even know what it was, Society of Human Resource Managers Conference, I went to their national conference. There were like a thousand HR managers and me. People said, do you do HR? I said no, I'm a CEO. They said, what are you doing here at our conference? I said, shooting fish in a barrel. I need an HR person, there's a thousand of you and one of me. Hunt for talent. Find people smarter than you, then trust, empower them and get out of the way.

And last, I want to leave you with one last thing that excellence is an attitude. I've given you tips on growing a business and many times people nod, they write it all down, but then they go back to what they were doing. Just being honest with you guys. But excellence is an attitude. Excellence is a commitment to following through on lists like I just gave you today, on the things you all nod and you intend to do just until you get back to your office and you're too busy.

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So, I will close with this story. I was working on a business deal long ago with Michael Jordan, the basketball player, and I had seen the play where Michael Jordan, who was already Michael Jordan, everything you could ever be in basketball. At the end of a meaningless game, the ball was going out of bounds, all the other players just turned and jogged off, but Michael Jordan turned, ran full speed, dove through the air, caught the ball, threw it to his teammates and crashed into all the laptops on the press table. I said, Michael, I don't understand. I said, you're already Michael Jordan, why on earth would you do something like that? He said, Jeff, you're right, you don't understand. He said, I'm Michael Jordan because I do that. He said, I've never hesitated to chase every loose ball in my life like it was the most important play of my career. That's how he became Michael Jordan.

So, I want to end by telling you guys to ask yourselves that. Are you chasing every loose ball at work? When you set the intent to say I'm going to go out and hunt talent, but then it's Friday and you're busy and there's too many things going on in the office and you will do it next week, and you don't get it done. Excellence is an attitude, it's a commitment to chase every loose end every day at work.

So, I want to thank you guys so much for listening. Obviously, thank the Verizon Small Business Series for having me here and now I would love to be able to take some of your live questions. Thank you.

All right, so... sorry about that, I had to switch to the other side of the room here when the light went out. Let's do some of these live questions here. By the way, on that last slide, you could see that if people need to follow-up afterwards, my Twitter is @SpeakerJeff. You can find me on LinkedIn or my email is just jeff@jeffhoffman.com, I also have the website www.jeffhoffman.com. But let's jump right into this.

One of the first questions – I'm going to keep an eye on your questions over here and read those. One of the questions was about the fact that you have limited funds. I talked about things that you should do in marketing and brand development. In marketing, somebody was asking the question that they have less than a 10K budget and they just don't have the money to market and to access high priced marketing programs or marketing people. What do they do?

I'm going to tell you, the answer to that is this. I want you to find adjacent businesses – I will explain that – who already market to the customers you want and cut a deal with them. Here is the example. Somebody is already spending a lot of money and already has a marketing program that talks to the market you want, the customers you want. I'll give you an example in a second here. Instead of you spending money you don't have, what you need to do is make a deal with them, make a list of people that are already talking to your customer. adjacent company means that their product does not compete with yours but helps the customer even more and pitch to them to add you to their marketing, which costs you nothing in exchange for a rev share for every sale they close for you.

Here is an example. Early on in my career when we were selling hotel rooms online, we didn't have a budget to market to all the people travelling. We looked to see who might be an adjacent business, and it turned out then it was AAA, the automobile association. They were sending maps back then and trip plans to 4 million consumers a month, I think it was. They were already spending that money; they had the budget. At the end of their marketing, it said, heres your plan for your trip today, and at the end of the day it said, find a hotel and start again tomorrow. So, what we said was why don't you add us into your marketing, costs us nothing, they marketed to millions of people that said, heres your trip plan for the day, but at nigh you should get a hotel from our partner. Then everybody they did, we gave a rev share, so it costed me like 20% of a rev share but zero dollars upfront.

So, the answer to that question is find a strategic partner with an adjacent business who already markets to your customer and cut a deal with them to co-market your product alongside. That's how you do it without money.

Let's see what else we have here. Somebody asked a question about being in the service business during the pandemic, and how do you survive that as a small business.

I will say, in that case, it's all about looking to see what additional revenue streams or services that you can create while you're doing that. I know somebody that was a restaurant and had a limited capacity and could not make his numbers from the capacity in the time that they were closed to keep the restaurant open, but he... first of all, the first thing he did was he never had delivery before, and he went online, created a website, began offering his service as a delivery, which he didn't do before. But he discovered another thing,

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when we started having this discussion, similarly about adjacent services, what other service could you provide to people. And what he discovered was that there were a lot of people that had other needs that either couldn't or get out of their house or didn't feel safe or were elderly clients, and so he added another service. In addition to bringing you food, he was picking up people's prescriptions all over town, and delivering prescriptions from pharmacies. Then, at some point, he was adding other services like running errands for some of these people.

My point was he was saying, I have a customer, I don't have enough of them, so since I can't bring in more customers due to limited capacity, is there something else that I can do for a customer.

One last example of that was a company that provided services in graphic design and in online marketing that couldn't bring in enough customers during the pandemic. I had them contact first responders in their community specifically, they started calling people like healthcare centers and hospitals where they live and saying, is there anything we could do for you? And it turned out that they were able to do contract their graphic designers and website developers to healthcare facilities in the community that had grant money from the Government to create COVID-19 awareness campaigns. So, he was able to contract out the unused time of his employees to receive grant money for COVID related projects.

So, look outside of your traditional business in your community, in your customer base to see what other revenue streams you might be able to generate during this pandemic time.

Somebody asked me up here, let me look at that one. They asked about the HR side, and asked about... I talked about going out and finding employees and somebody asked about tech employees, how do you find them.

The answer is the same way. I started asking people and Googling for every discipline you need. I told you in my talk how I found HR people, but then I needed tech people and I Googled, and it turned out, at the time (pre-COVID) that they have tech meetups all the time. They were usually pizza and beer things, and they were 15 bucks, so I just went to the tech meetup and it was the first one I went to was 200 developers and tech people having a social tech meetup. And I went there and started collecting names and talking to people and hiring people. Every industry has some form of trade association online during COVID, online event during COVID, or offline some conventions and conferences they go to that you can find the type of talent that you need by going to... by asking this question, where do those people hang out? And you need to go to them, like I said in the talk, not waiting for them to come to you.

Let's pick another question here as well. Thank you, Brian, by the way. Somebody asked what percent... I see some of your comments, not just questions in the chat and I greatly appreciate that. We're hoping that this content is helpful to you. Somebody asked about profit sharing here.

I'm glad that you asked about that, because I'm going to tell you what I see with small businesses all over the country, really all over the world. People are a little too greedy and you will wind up owning 100% of nothing. 100% of something really small is worth a lot less than even 20% of something massive. And so, the reason I'm telling you that when somebody asks this question for profit sharing, it's two ways.

First of all, the deal I told you about to give you kind of a rough range, that was a 20% deal. We gave somebody 20% commission - revenue share, not profit share to another business for marketing to their customers, so it costs me nothing upfront, but I paid 20% of what I got for every customer that came through them off of their website and their marketing. But I also wanted to mention that incentivizing employees, in other words, not being greedy and sharing some of the money you make as a businessowner with your employees is how you get the best talent to want to work for you because they're well taken care of. And sometimes people are greedy, and they tell me, well, I own the company, it's my equity, or it's my profit. And what I tell them is, one of the most successful startups I ever had, when we sold it, I was amazed to find out that at the time - from the day I started the company and the day I sold it, not one employee that worked for our company ever quit. We were successful because we had the best people. We had the best people and they never left because we were not greedy, and we took care of them and we shared. So, sharing with vendors, sharing with partners,

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sharing profits and revenues as well is a way that a small business can get a lot more bang for their buck out of everybody that you do business with. It's a good idea, better to own a small percent of something big.

Let me look for another question on here. Somebody asked what to do in operations if you have employees who think they know everything, but they actually don't.

And I'm going to pick that question and I'm going to tell you guys why. As a small businessowner, focus on results, less on process, and more on results. One day I had some people in my office, at my small business, and one of the employees on a Thursday said, I'm not coming in tomorrow, I'm actually going to the lake. I said, all right, whatever, enjoy. This person that was visiting me said, that doesn't bother you that he is not coming in tomorrow. I said, actually, I have a dashboard, I know what everybody's assignment is, what they're supposed to produce for me as a business, and I know what their results are. He is kicking butt. So, if somebody is doing an amazing job achieving clearly defined quantifiable results for the business, then I don't care if he needs a day off and goes to the lake. Don't focus so much on how they do it, focus on what they do.

So, this employee, in this question that claims to know what they're doing and know everything that they don't, don't even get in that argument. Simply say, here are the deliverables I need from you. If they deliver them, then suffer their attitude. If they're not delivering it, they don't make it anyway. Focus on results, measure results, remove the people that don't achieve them, communicate them clearly, and the ones that do, let them do it their way. There's that old saying that people believe that if you want something done right, do it yourself. That's horrible advice to grow a small business. The reason why is letting someone else do it their way, they might actually have a better idea than you. Just because it's your company, doesn't make you the smartest person. So, give people the freedom to do something smarter than you might have done it yourself.

Let's look at another one here. By the way, somebody asked about if they can get a copy of either the transcript of the presentation that I gave. I'm going to leave that to the Verizon team to reply in the comments or questions to that if that's possible.

Let's see. Somebody asked about press release. Especially, we're talking about small businesses who don't have big media budgets.

A press release, PR in general, is a really cost effective way to grow your business, but here is what you need to know. Human interest stories is what they care about. Public relations and media don't care that you own a business in town and that you want more customers, you care but they don't. So, PR is a cost-effective tool, but what they want is a human-interest story. So, I'm going to give you an example. I was running a travel business. Nobody wants to do a press release, they're not that excited about the fact that, hey, Jeff has a travel business and wants people to know about it and buy travel from him. But one of my customers, who was travelling that we setup the whole trip for at the time, went to a wedding, they went to a wedding at which she discovered she had a completely unknown twin sister who she met at a family wedding. That story and then what happened next, the story of the families, how they got separated, how they got reunited, that was a cool, feel-good human-interest story for the news. The press release that I sent to the news was one in a million shot that this woman goes to a wedding and runs into herself at the wedding, thinks she is staring into a mirror and discovers she has a long lost twin sister. They loved the story. But in the story, the customer, the woman said, well, all this was setup by Jeff's travel company. I wouldn't have been able to go to this wedding if they haven't been able to provide me with discount travel. So, the story wound up having my logo, my company, and me in the news, but the lead is a human-interest story.

Again, to reiterate for that question, press releases are good, media and PR is good, but it's got to be a story that someone cares about, which isn't going to be you.

By the way, I see now from our Verizon team that, yes, transcripts of these talks are posted on www.verizon.com about a week after the talk, so for those who asked, you will be able to get a copy of this.

So, somebody asked about better innovation practices and innovation management practices. Specifically, I'm reading the question, they talked about things like... well, the difference in family-run businesses and sometimes generational or cultural clashes.

I want to say this – we've got about five minutes left, so we will do a couple more questions here. I want to tell you that innovation needs to be part of your culture, and many small businesses are too busy running the business, you as the businessowner are so busy or

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even if you're a department in a bigger company, you are so busy running the business and making your numbers all day that somebody coming up with an innovative new idea is distracting. You feel like saying, look, can you just get back to your actual job instead of dreaming about stuff that we don't do. That is why the companies that have that DNA, that DNA of we've just got to make our numbers and we don't really want to hear your crazy ideas, those are not the innovators. Those are not the companies that scale and grow and make the news.

What you need to do is create, not only, a culture, but even a compensation structure that encourages everybody on your team, from employees to family members, if you're a family owned small business, to actually throw around crazy ideas, to think outside of the box, to look around. I do this thing every day I call "info sponging", where every morning I wake up and for 10 minutes before I go to my small business, I learn one new thing a day where I try to learn one new thing from some other industry or some other business that I don't even know why I'm learning it right now. I just want to see is the rest of the world doping and are there any great ideas out there in the rest of the world that I could adapt to my business.

So, make sure that your culture really supports and rewards and encourages crazy new ideas and don't catch yourself speaking to people, why are you even suggesting that? Why aren't you at your desk? That is not how we support innovation.

I think we can do maybe one or two more folks. Somebody talked about... OK, hang on. There's so many questions here, I really, really appreciate it. I just want to make sure I'm getting to some of the best ones, or the most repeated ones since a lot of you asked similar questions.

OK, so somebody asked about – that works for a business, it's a great business, but it's disorganized in execution.

I'm going to tell you... I mentioned about focusing on operational excellence and selling more flowers. Heres what I want you guys to do. Determine, like I said, the fundamental thing that drives your business every day. If you're a restaurant, it's maybe repeat customers, it's asking people, have you been here before? It might be if you're a service business, it might be getting an 8 out of 10 or better service rating, whatever it is. Or, if you sell flowers, it might be just selling more flowers, selling hotel rooms. Whatever you do, there's a fundamental reason you're in business. To improve your focus on execution, you need to literally post that on the walls so that every day while people are at business, they're constantly reminded of the reason your business exists. If your goal is, remember, we're here to make customers so happy they give us an eight or above happiness or service rating, that should be written on the wall. What are you doing today to get our rating up to nine? What are you doing today to sell more flowers? What are you doing today to make sure that that customer brings all their friends and comes back to this restaurant? You need to post on the walls every day for your employees and your whole team the fundamental things that make your business work, so people are focused on being more efficient and everybody is rowing in the same direction.

Let me see if I can get one more. OK, I will just do this one more, because we are at our time now. I will give you my contact info again before we close out.

Somebody asked, what company was it that we had 34 people tattoo... and that is a company I'm the founding board member of called the Unreasonable Group. It's www.unreasonablegroup.com, it's a business where we help small businesses solve the world's biggest problems. That's where we had people tattooing our company logo.

So, I'm going to say thank you guys so much for spending your time with me today. Thank you so much to Verizon for even inviting me and letting me share a little bit with these small businesses. Again, it's jeff@jeffhoffman.com, or you can catch me on Twitter at @SpeakerJeff. Thanks to everybody for your time today.

Chris Serico

And that will do it for today's webinar. Thank you so much, Jeff, for sharing these insights on how small businesses can generate growth during these times of change. We're so glad you could join us today.

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Now, in the Attachments tab, you will see that I'm sharing some links. You can catch up on all of our past webinars on-demand on the Verizon BrightTALK channel page or at www.verizon.com/webinars. You like that slash. Don't miss out on our next webinar on 6 October, we will be here with Rhonda Abrams to talk about smart ways that you can run your small business with a lean strategy. We will be offering a free eBook, *Now What*, to the first 500 live attendees.

We look forward to seeing you again for all of the events in our Small Business Webinar Series. Thanks again for joining us today.