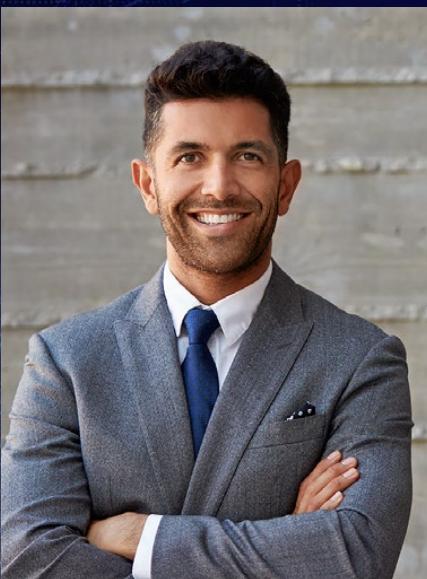


# BUSINESS IN ACTION



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WHERE NOSTALGIA  
MEETS INNOVATION

PG. 20



**AI: THE NEXT  
BUSINESS BOON**

PG. 14

ISSUE 26  
COVER PRICE \$6.99



678

678

## Front of Tear Out Card 1

**3**

### STEPS FOR CREATING HIGH- IMPACT BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Are you looking to expand your reach through collaboration with other industry professionals? These steps will help you create partnerships that truly pay off.

»



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## Back of Tear Out Card 1

Once you find brands you think might be compatible with your own, you may be eager to form partnerships with them. But how do you convince them to agree and make the most of such relationships? **Follow these steps to turn collaboration into a lasting alliance.**

**1**

#### RETAIN VALUE CONSISTENCY

Before you approach a potential partner, define your business's core values and mission, and explain how the brands are compatible. Plan joint initiatives, such as mutual outreach events, that align with both missions.

**2**

#### SYNCHRONIZE YOUR PROFILES

Establish cross-platform uniformity by agreeing on all public-facing branding. Each time you work together, post similar photos, hashtags, and captions on social media and be sure to link to each other's profiles.

**3**

#### STAY TOP OF MIND

Don't let a lucrative partnership fall by the wayside after one collaboration. Commit to keeping regular communication, and set dates for crafting new projects. Remaining consistent can build trust and keep all parties invested in the partnership.

Write down three potential brands you could partner with, then use this guide to build fruitful, long-lasting collaborations with them.



Dear Bill and Judy,

The months ahead offer fresh opportunities to evolve your business and strengthen its foundation. This issue of Business in Action highlights how embracing innovation and adaptability can help you navigate change with confidence, a quality every business owner needs in today's fast-moving world.

Artificial intelligence continues to reshape how companies operate, communicate, and grow. Business strategist Jason Pantana, a nationally recognized coach and trainer, explains how adopting the right AI tools can streamline workflows, enhance creativity, and future-proof your marketing strategy, turning uncertainty into an advantage.

Equally vital is the ability to stay focused amid constant noise. The enclosed feature on attention management explores how leaders can regain control of their time and energy by shifting their mindsets from simply managing hours to managing focus. Such an approach could foster better decisions and stronger performance.

Finally, this issue introduces you to FIT marketing, a framework built on frequency, impact, and trust. By maintaining meaningful, consistent communication with your clients, you can transform existing relationships into lasting loyalty and better ensure that your company stays top of mind.

Being a business success is not only about keeping pace but also about setting a bold forward momentum. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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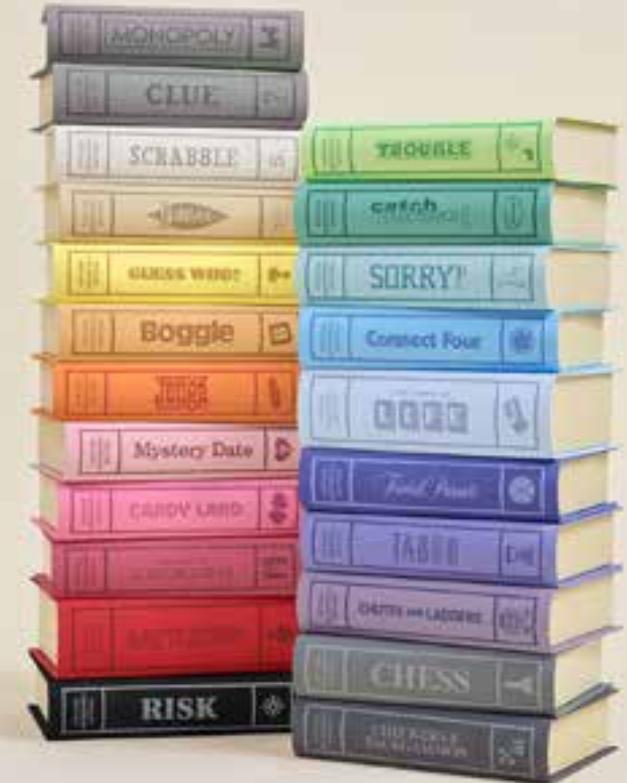
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# contents

ISSUE 26

## 20 Where Nostalgia Meets Innovation

Discover how WS Game Company  
reimagines classic games.



03

MARKETING

### Why Calls to Action Are Crucial

Don't underestimate this  
essential marketing tool.



04

MARKETING

### Marketing Lessons from Major 2026 Events

Learn how to use big-event strategies  
in your everyday marketing.



10

MARKETING

### FIT Marketing: A Framework for Success

Learn a secret to building  
loyal connections with clients.




**AI**  
**121** | AI: the Next Business Boon

Discover why utilizing this tech is crucial to future success.


**ENTREPRENEUR**  
**28** | A Century of Success

An executive explains what makes his family's amusement park popular.


**LEADERSHIP**  
**32** | The Business Founder's Evolving Role

Steps to take as your role changes in your growing company.


**SMALL BUSINESS**  
**20** | Sowing the Seeds of Success

Discover how Repeat Roses is thriving again after a three-year shutdown.


**PRODUCTIVITY**  
**212** | Get More Done with Attention Management

Attention is your most valuable resource—here's how to manage it.


**PRODUCTIVITY**  
**28** | Summer Strategies Crossword

Warm up strategies this season with our engaging crossword puzzle.

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# Why Calls to Action Are Crucial

Using these phrases in each of your marketing efforts can make the difference between you hooking lucrative leads and opportunities walking away. **BY ANDRE RIOS**

**W**HETHER YOU PERFORM

outreach to your target audience through social media, email campaigns, physical mailers like postcards—or, hopefully, each of these and more—your ultimate goal is likely tempting individuals into making a sale. That's where a good CTA comes in.

**Best practices**

To improve these directives in each of your marketing materials, make sure that your organization's CTAs:

- **Set clear expectations** of what a potential customer should do and what you sell (i.e., who they should call and which services they will access)
- **Share your value proposition**, or the various intrinsic benefits consumers can gain from working with you, like saving time or feeling peace of mind
- **Use clear, concise, and engaging language** that the customer will remember long after the touchpoint has ended



- **Are located at the end** of a published marketing material or pitch, leaving consumers enticed to buy as a final impression
- **Are fitted with a hyperlink** where possible, such as a blog that directs them to an online booking form

**TIP:** To refine your calls to action, try creating several versions and using A/B testing to find the one that drives the most engagement.

Enhancing these crucial marketing elements can encourage more potential customers to respond to your message and decide if your company is the right fit. ■



Share this guide with your marketing team as you craft lead-conversion strategies.

# MARKETING LESSONS FROM MAJOR 2026 EVENTS

Learn how to use marketing strategies from America's 250th celebrations and the 2026 FIFA World Cup to build anticipation, create memorable experiences, and connect with your audience in meaningful ways.

BY ALLISON GOMES



In 2026, two massive events are dominating headlines and social feeds: America's 250th anniversary and the FIFA World Cup. Together, they're drawing global attention to the United States, igniting months of buzz, and offering unprecedented visibility for their partner brands. And even if you don't have a multimillion-dollar sponsorship deal or access to global broadcast slots, you can still learn from the strategic thinking behind these major moments to help you make a lasting impact with your audience. Here's how you can bring that big-event mindset into your everyday marketing.

#### » **Build a sense of anticipation**

Major events don't simply appear. Instead, they're rolled out over time. The buildup to America's 250th, for example, has stretched an entire year and has featured months of parades, programs, and other happenings across multiple states. Similarly, FIFA dropped exclusive merchandise for each host city and launched the match schedule long before tickets were even available. This kind of anticipation helps stir emotional investment.

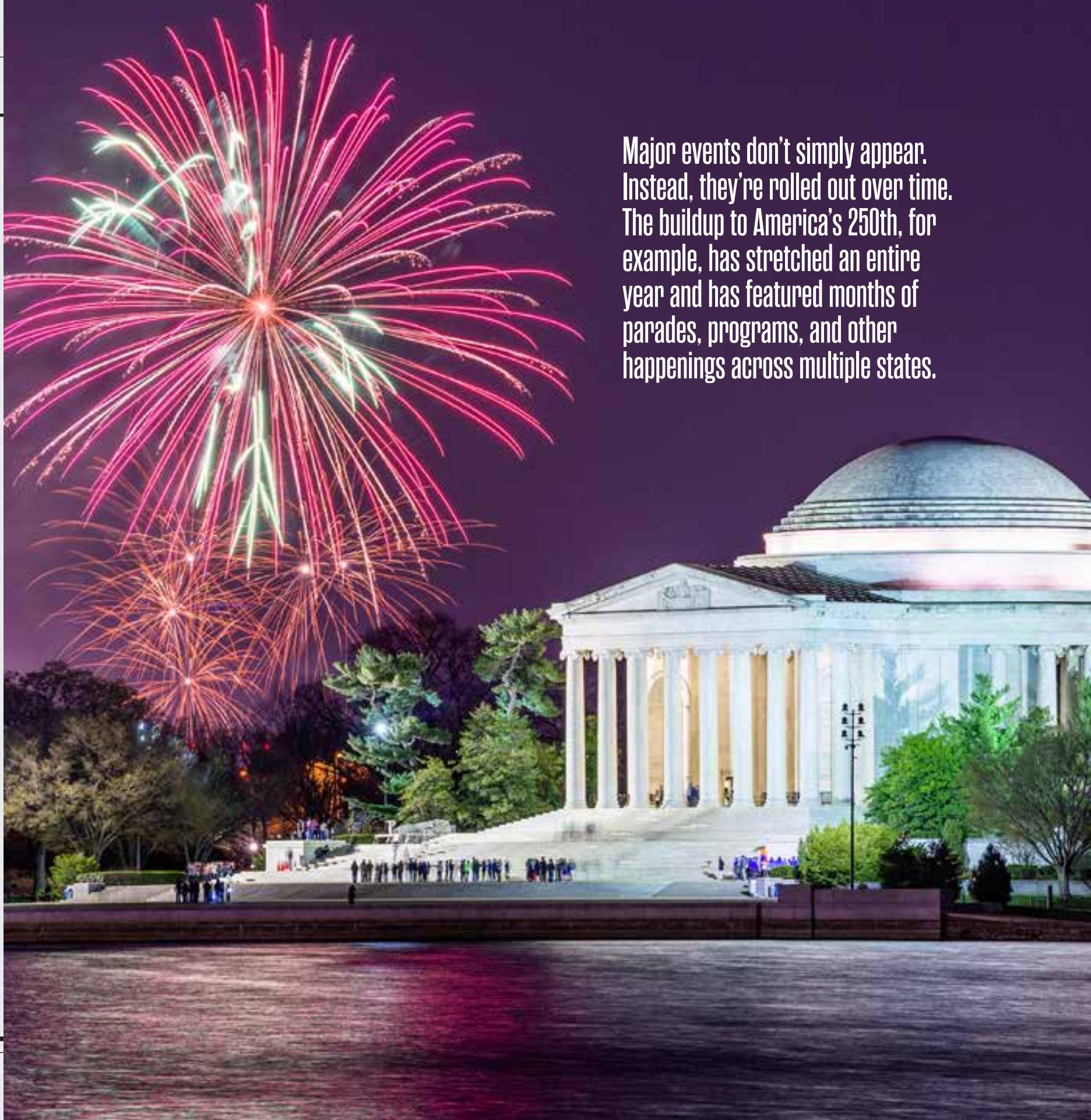
You can apply the same idea on a smaller scale. For instance, start building interest in a seasonal promotion early by sharing behind-the-scenes videos or using countdowns in your email and social media campaigns. Similarly, if you're planning a new product launch, let your audience in on the process. Offer a glimpse at what you're creating before it's available by posting early sketches or teasers of the completed item. The more involved people feel, the more

likely they are to engage with your brand and make a purchase when the moment arrives.

#### » **Create experiences**

Both of 2026's major celebrations are full of immersive museums and exhibits, pop-ups, festivals, and much more, which create an experience that's guaranteed to pull people in and invite them to participate in numerous ways. And the good news for small businesses is that your experiential marketing doesn't have to be this elaborate or expensive.

Instead, consider smaller objectives like hosting a live demo, local workshop, or social media campaign that gets your target audience interacting with your business. For instance, a coffee shop could run a "create your own latte" challenge on Instagram, with the winner's drink being added to the menu. Even simple, low-cost initiatives can deepen engagement, spark word of mouth, and make your brand more memorable.



**Major events don't simply appear. Instead, they're rolled out over time. The buildup to America's 250th, for example, has stretched an entire year and has featured months of parades, programs, and other happenings across multiple states.**



## » Leverage partnerships

This year's big national and international events thrive on collaborations between brands, cities, organizations, and influencers. Partnerships like this help extend reach and visibility, increase credibility, and even spread the workload across loads of hands. You can do the same on a smaller scale by partnering with complementary businesses in your area or industry to cohost events, bundle services, conduct giveaways, and cross-promote. A professional home organizer could team up with a local cleaning service to offer a "fresh start" spring promotion with a small discount if someone books with both businesses. These collaborations can help you reach new audiences and build relationships that can pay off even after the campaign ends.



## » Use timing to your advantage

In event marketing, timing is everything since successful campaigns tap into a moment people are already paying attention to, whether it's a national celebration or a major soccer match. Even more, they combine that momentum with a sense of urgency, and nothing creates urgency like the perception of scarcity. That's why World Cup packages with commemorative gifts and redesigns of our circulating coins for 2026 aren't just items—they're collectibles that people will scramble to grab before they're gone.

Your business can apply the same strategy by aligning promotions with shared moments and making them exclusive. A salon, for example, could promote a "self-care reset" package that's only available

during Self-Care Awareness Month, while a bookstore might launch a pop-up shop for National Reading Month with limited-edition merchandise. These timely, short-run campaigns get customers' attention and inspire them to act quickly before the moment passes.

## » Maximize

### multichannel promotion

No big event sticks to one platform; the organizers flood different media with promotions, including TV, email, social media feeds, outdoor signage, influencer collaborations, and news outlets, to make sure their message is everywhere. While your business might not need to invest in that level of saturation, consistency across multiple channels is key. If you're running a campaign, announce it on Instagram, reinforce it through email, include a banner on your website, and place signage in your store. This repetition across platforms can build trust and awareness, ensuring that your business stays at the forefront of consumers' minds.

Ultimately, you don't need stadiums, fireworks, or celebrity endorsements to market like a major event. Instead, by



**Repetition across platforms can build trust and awareness, ensuring that your business stays at the forefront of consumers' minds.**

mimicking its tactics, you can turn your everyday marketing into something memorable that customers don't just notice but get excited about. That's what great event marketing does—it turns a moment into a movement. ■



Choose an upcoming promotion or product launch, and apply an event-style tactic to it.



# FIT MARKETING: A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS

Some of your most successful marketing efforts may not be in new-client outreach but in making future business out of existing clients.

BY LUKE ACREE

In one of Aesop's fables, the author tells the story of a heron in a stream, standing there waiting for the right catch to come along. A school of small swimmers?

Next. A medium-sized fish? Not good enough. This bird knows what he wants, and he lets these opportunities swim by in pursuit of that perfect catch.

But the problem is that in all this waiting, the heron let plenty of good meals swim right between his feet—in fact, they all did. By the end of the day, he had nothing left to snack on but a tiny snail.

## The ever-pertinent lesson

A moral of Aesop's story that you can apply to your business is to take the opportunities that are already in front of you. After all, having an effective marketing strategy isn't just about directing your budget toward generating new leads; it's also about

nurturing the client relationships you *already* have. If you let what's in front of you escape, then you may be left with nothing but snails.

Thankfully, there's a framework that can help you stay on top of these connections, maintain them, and ensure that they keep coming back (and even refer you to their loved ones). It's called FIT marketing, and its three goals—frequency, impact, and trust—are all about focusing on your current sphere of influence. If you follow these tenets, your organization will always have plenty of fish to feast on.





KHANCHAI/PEXELS

## Frequency

You have to stay top of mind with your clients, being the first name they think of when they need the kind of product or service your industry segment offers. To do so, aim to make at least twenty-six quality touchpoints a year across multiple channels, including emails, phone calls, and postcards.

## Impact

Don't just contact your clients with empty, forgettable messaging.

Each time you reach out, make your communication meaningful, make it relevant, and bring some kind of value to them. This will ensure that your existing base remembers what you've offered them in prior sales—and how you've made them feel.

## Trust

Impart your knowledge for major impact. Clients should see you as the go-to expert in your field, someone who not only knows their stuff but also knows it better than anyone else in town (even

those larger competitors that may promise lower prices). Building a credible and confident reputation with your audience will keep them coming back for more.

## Getting FIT

Whether you lead a group of eager salespeople or are making your own client connections, these are some of my best tips for applying the FIT framework in your workplace.

### *Hit 'em from all angles*

Use a mix of communication channels to remain in touch with your base. Send them direct mail like magazines and postcards, and enroll them in targeted email and text-message campaigns, segmenting them by need. (A first-time homebuyer needs different info than a seasoned real estate investor, for example.) Further, ask your sales team to make follow-up phone calls to gauge product satisfaction and to reach out with new promotions to keep clients engaged. Invite them to events too; plan creative opportunities for face-to-face interactions like a food truck festival or cocktail hour at a popular local spot. The goal is to make sure that your marketing is always accessible and your brand remains memorable.

### *Plan ahead*

To make regular, ongoing contact in this way, you need a calendar. Sit down with your team to map out your year and fill in all kinds of multichannel touchpoints, aiming for at least two types per contact. Try shaping them around holidays, major market updates, and company changes like product launch days. Then add this plan to your CRM so your team members know who to contact when—that way, no one falls through the cracks. As you maintain this database, continually track what works, double down in these areas, and seek constant improvement.

### *Create content that connects*

Don't just make content for its own sake. Your outreach has to have value for it to be effective. To make this happen, try one of my favorite tricks of using the three Es.

### *Educational: Enlighten your base with information like market*

**Take Action**  
Reflecting on the tenets of FIT marketing, think of three new marketing strategies you could kick off today.

**Just remember that marketing isn't just about gaining new eyes on your business. It's about becoming a valued and trusted member of your community—like that classic mom-and-pop establishment the whole town loves to visit and would hate to lose.**

updates, product usage tips, and shopping guides by need; essentially, you should answer any pertinent questions before your clients even need to ask them.

**Entertaining:** Make customers smile. Share lighthearted content like funny clips of your team at work, glimpses behind the curtain at how your products are made, and more.

**Endearing:** Dig deep to create heart-to-heart connections. Share client wins, your team's community involvement, and personal stories about what your work and neighborhood mean to you.

Just remember that marketing isn't just about gaining new eyes on your business. It's about becoming a valued and trusted member of your community—like that classic mom-

and-pop store the whole town loves to visit and would hate to lose. FIT marketing helps you achieve such a result. Nail the three core elements of sending frequent, impactful, and trust-building communication, and you might just see exceptional results fall right into place. ■



**About the author:** Luke Acree is an authority on leadership, a lead-generation specialist, and a referral expert who has helped more than 30,000 entrepreneurs and small businesses grow their companies. He hosts *Stay Paid*, a sales and marketing podcast, and has been featured in *Entrepreneur*, *Forbes*, and *Foundr.com*.

# AI: THE NEXT BUSINESS BOON

Artificial intelligence is here, and it's not going away. Learn why you need to incorporate it into your business and how to go about it.

BY MATTHEW BRADY

GOOGLE/DEEPMIND/PEXELS



## “There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.”

**THAT'S A QUOTE FROM KEN OLSEN,** the founder, president, and chairman of Digital Equipment Corporation, back in 1977. Equally stunning, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak were famously rejected several times when pitching their idea for the Apple computer, including by the latter's employer, HP, five times.

These are just two examples of an unfortunate reality: game-changing innovation has not always been readily understood or embraced by the corporate world. Today, we're in the midst of another revolution, artificial intelligence, which is transforming businesses at breakneck speed. Ride this tech wave, and yours can become a superefficient machine that maximizes its full potential.

### → “But I don't use AI.”

You may have such a mindset; however, in reality, you're probably familiar with it, even if you don't realize it. For instance, if you ask your phone or another device for help (via Google Assistant, Siri, Alexa,

etc.), you're using artificial intelligence. Getting a medical diagnosis or test? AI is likely to be involved. You, your team, and most other Americans are already benefitting from its efficiency—you just need to apply it to your own business.

If you haven't, you may already be behind your competition. According to a 2024 McKinsey & Company survey, 78 percent of organizations said they were already using artificial intelligence in some form. The AI bug has hit consumers as well: another company, AltIndex.com, estimated that 378 million people would use AI tools in 2025.

### → Implementing AI

So perhaps you are now excited about the possibilities this revolutionary tool can bring to your company and are ready to apply it to your processes. However, your enthusiasm may be dashed by another hurdle: actually executing this goal. Per the business software company Vention, over three-quarters of business leaders find it difficult to do so.

But it actually may be easier than you think, says Jason Pantana, a coach, trainer, and speaker who cofounded AI Marketing Academy with legendary real estate coach Tom Ferry, which provides cutting-edge AI training courses. “Reluctance is the biggest problem,” he admits. “But AI is a tool to be leveraged. [Marketing pioneer] Seth Godin goes as far as to say that ‘AI is the biggest change since electricity—bigger than the internet.’

“I'd suggest recognizing it for what it is: an incredible opportunity that's going to help your team do more, do it faster, and do it better. AI will enhance your company, solving customer problems in the most optimized, efficient way. Every business owner should incorporate it into their marketing strategies.”

### → The tools on the AI shelf

The first step is to get familiar with the various AI programs available, which Pantana says is no different than “the tool section of Home Depot having different types of screwdrivers.” He suggests the following to help fill your AI marketing toolbox:

Video creation:  
ElevenLabs or Grok

Image editing:  
Canva

Video editing:  
CapCut, Descript,  
or Runway ML

Writing and  
brainstorming:  
ChatGPT or Gemini

Email and newsletter coding: Claude (“Prompting is the new coding,” Pantana adds)



“I'd suggest recognizing it for what it is: an incredible opportunity that's going to help your team do more, do it faster, and do it better.”



Just as important, he says, is familiarizing yourself with the six primary AI platforms people use to find businesses: ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok, Perplexity, Claude, and Copilot. While noting that each has its own strengths, Pantana says that optimizing your business for ChatGPT should be your initial focus due to its vast superiority in current usership—with an important caveat. “Focusing on ChatGPT increases your odds of success since it has the biggest market by far. But keep an eye on Gemini; once

Google has perfected it, it will be even bigger,” he predicts.

#### → **Supercharge your marketing**

In addition to knowing your customers’ resources, how can AI improve your marketing? Think of it from this perspective: Pantana says that AI products create outputs—words, images, sounds, and video—based of your input, so it’s simply an amplified result of your requests and goals. For example, a real estate agent can put MLS data or spreadsheets for a specific area into Claude or ChatGPT and then give it a detailed written instruction for what to do with the information (the prompt), such as creating a comprehensive email newsletter, and the tool will use code to deliver it within seconds.

**Pantana says that AI products create outputs—words, images, sounds, and video—based of your input, so it’s simply an amplified result of your requests and goals.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON PANTANA

**“Focusing on ChatGPT increases your odds of success since it has the biggest market by far. But keep an eye on Gemini; once Google has perfected it, it will be even bigger.”**

Likewise, you can prompt Claude to build a website within days. Just think of how that stacks up compared to traditional methods, freeing your team to accomplish even more.

No matter the format or function, however, Pantana stresses that you need to be very specific about your prompts. Doing so creates playbooks that AI can use to learn not only your efficiency and scaling objectives but also how to sound like your company’s voice in its output.

#### → **A final word and four innovator archetypes**

Perhaps most important of all is a key customer-facing change that Pantana says is on the horizon. “More and more consumers are taking their

searches to AI instead of traditional platforms like Google,” he reveals. “The key action word nowadays is becoming ‘Ask’ versus ‘Search.’ As a result, you’re going to see a paradigm shift where the message bar will replace the search bar, consumers will ask their questions and find their answers in AI chats, and answer engine optimization will be more vital than search engine optimization.” Much like you strive to do with SEO, you’ll soon need to discover how you can scale so that you get your business to be the result in AEO. “Everything will be retrofitted for an AI world,” he puts plainly.

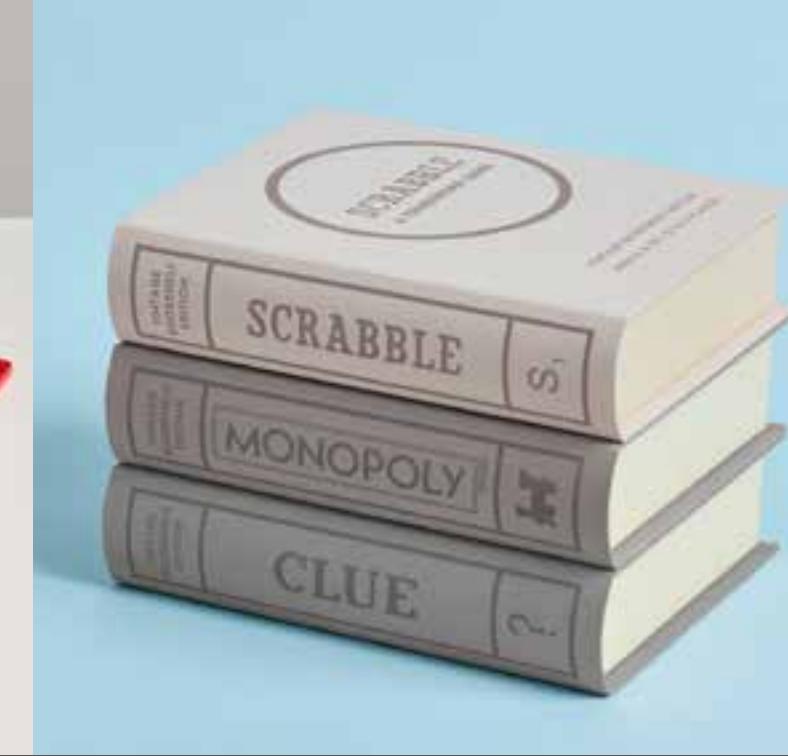
To help business owners get a grasp of their current status, the AI guru notes that innovation

adoption is often broken down into four phases: innovators, early adopters, late adopters, and laggards. Ask yourself: By name only, which category do you think you fall into? If it’s one of the latter, it’s not too late—but time is of the essence. “This tech isn’t the threat. It’s your competition using the tech to scale and leave you in the dust,” Pantana concludes. “However, as soon as you get accustomed to AI and master prompting it, your imagination will know no bounds. Any efficiency or tech ceiling you thought your business had will be in the past.” ■



**Determine at least two ways you can incorporate AI into your organization’s strategies to improve your business’s efficiency.**

For more info, visit [academy.jasonpantana.com](http://academy.jasonpantana.com)



# Where Nostalgia Meets Innovation

**Kerry Addis**, co-owner and chief operating officer of WS Game Company, discusses the organization's history and unique approach to designing new versions of classic board games.

INTERVIEW WITH **KERRY ADDIS** / WRITTEN BY **ALLISON GOMES**  
PHOTOS BY **WS GAME COMPANY**





## What sets WS Game Company's products apart?

As kids, we always had the latest and greatest board games at our fingertips, but the sheer number of them in our house got to be a bit unwieldy. They wound up living on huge shelves in our basement—out of sight and often out of mind. But at WS Game Company, our goal is to keep games at the *forefront* of your mind, and that's easiest when you see them every day.

Our Vintage Bookshelf collection is a perfect example of how games can live in your home as part of your decor. We have twenty-two in this line, including Risk, Boggle, and Trouble, that are packaged to look like fabric-wrapped, hardback books, blending nostalgic design with an upscale feel. They look amazing on a bookcase or shelf, and you can easily grab one to play anytime you want.

For all our games, we include storage for the parts so you can display the product without worrying about losing any pieces. The material choices and finishes are very important as well, and we offer products in a range of options—including wood, glass, metal, fabric, and vegan leather—so everyone can find something that matches their aesthetic. Many of our customers are looking to upgrade their gaming experience, so we thoughtfully design each one with these more premium materials while maintaining much of the original graphics from the games we all know and love.



## Tell us about yourself and your company:

I grew up in the board game business, learning the craft from my father, Dana Silva, who cofounded WS Game Company with Mike Doyle in 2000. They were both Parker Brothers and Milton Bradley employees until their office closed due to restructuring. They decided that instead of moving their families, they would use their forty years of combined experience to work as consultants for Hasbro Games to create premium games for their key national accounts.

The business earned a Hasbro licensee contract in 2009 and has collaborated with partners globally to bring board games into consumers' homes as functional decor ever since. Today, I'm co-owner and COO and run the company with my brother, Jonathan Silva. I help oversee the creative process from start to finish for our growing product portfolio.



## Was there ever a turning point for your business?

The pandemic. During times of economic uncertainty, people tend to scale back on expenses on things like travel, eating out, and other luxuries, but our games can provide hours of entertainment and a lifetime of memories after a single purchase. So when the global economy was at a standstill and most people were staying close to home, we were fortunate to have a lot of inventory available domestically. Game sales increased dramatically, and we were able to support that higher demand. It also opened up some additional retail partnerships that we've been able to maintain, and those opportunities continue to grow.



**“Our Vintage Bookshelf collection is a perfect example of how games can live in your home as part of your decor. We have twenty-two in this line, including Risk, Boggle, and Trouble, that are packaged to look like fabric-wrapped, hardback books, blending nostalgic design with an upscale feel. They look amazing on a bookcase or shelf, and you can easily grab one to play anytime you want.”**



## Would you walk us through the process of creating a new edition?

Each new project follows a slightly different path since it depends on whether we're developing for our general trade line or collaborating with a retail partner. For our line, we start by taking a wider look at our overall offerings to determine what's missing—whether it's a certain aesthetic, functionality, or price point. Our design team then explores color trends, materials, and printing techniques while always keeping gameplay and storage in mind. Based on all those details, we create samples and refine the design until we feel we've developed the best product for people to enjoy.

As a Hasbro licensee, collaboration is a key part of the development process for nearly every game we produce. When we have a new concept, we present it to the Hasbro team, which gives them a chance to provide feedback before we get too far along. We also stay in touch throughout development to ensure that we incorporate all their latest brand guidelines and they're able to approve every design component.



## What's your most popular item?

Anything from the Vintage Bookshelf collection, really. Board games as decor are very popular right now, so those editions are flying off the shelves. The wide selection in this line has sparked viral treasure hunts among collectors looking to complete their sets. Social media is also filled with videos of people styling their games in various ways throughout their homes. It's amazing to see how it's getting more people to play games with their family and friends!



## What about your retail collaborations?

Our collaborations with specialty retailers work a bit differently. We typically meet with the buyer, who gives us an idea of what products and price ranges they are considering. Many times, they'll share color palettes or patterns that will be used throughout their store during an upcoming season, and we'll work with them to incorporate some of those elements into our products. There can be a lot of back and forth until we land on the final design, but when we get to that point, we know that their customers will be thrilled with the result: a custom board game and home decor piece created with them in mind.

---

**“The wide selection in this line has sparked viral treasure hunts among collectors looking to complete their sets.”**





## What challenges come with adapting classic games into high-end formats?

The most difficult thing is adding value without adding a lot of extra parts. The game of Sorry!, for example, only requires a board, a deck of cards, and sixteen movers, but we also included a card box so the cards can be neatly stored when not in play and swapped out the standard plastic movers for painted wood ones. In addition, we generally use more premium card stock and printing techniques, improving the overall quality. These subtle changes can make a major difference in your tactile experience of a game and how likely you are to play it again.



## How do you balance maintaining the nostalgia of an original game while elevating the design?

The original versions of the games bring a sense of nostalgia and so many memories for people, and we think it's important to maintain that connection when possible. Fortunately, the early editions of many Hasbro games are simple and elegant, so it's not too difficult to incorporate their vintage looks into our premium designs. By switching up the materials, refining the color palette, and playing with scale, we can make something old feel modern but still classic.

For more info, visit  
[wsgamecompany.com](http://wsgamecompany.com)

“Fortunately, the early editions of many Hasbro games are simple and elegant, so it's not too difficult to incorporate their vintage looks into our premium designs.”





# A Century of Success

**Brian Knoebel**, co-owner and president of legendary Knoebels Amusement Resort in Elysburg, Pennsylvania, discusses what sets his family's park apart from the competition as it celebrates its centennial.

INTERVIEW WITH **BRIAN KNOEBEL**

WRITTEN BY **MATTHEW BRADY**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF **KNOEBELS AMUSEMENT RESORT**

## **WHAT DOES KNOEBELS OFFER CUSTOMERS?**

We have seventy-plus attractions, including over sixty rides, our kiddie play area, and a 900,000-gallon pool with four water slides. There are also over two dozen games to enjoy. Another big reason people come here is our food. We have thirty-eight food stands, and we've won twenty-two Golden Ticket awards, which name the world's best park food.

## **WHAT ELSE MAKES KNOEBELS UNIQUE AS A PARK AND A BUSINESS?**

For starters, parking and entry are free: instead of gates and turnstiles,

a gravel pathway and a canopy of trees welcome guests. I also challenge you to find another park that has as many benches as we do. We're perfectly content if they come in, find a shady spot, sit, and people-watch. Sure, we appreciate them buying an ice-cream cone or tickets for rides, but we don't force it.

We found our niche long ago—allowing folks to get away from life and remember simpler times—and we're not going to change that focus. We are a multigenerational family park: third and fourth generations run it, and third- and fourth-generation families visit it regularly.



“

We found our niche long ago—allowing folks to get away from life and remember simpler times—and we're not going to change that focus.



Our corporate structure, if you can call it that, is also different. Everybody is kind of equal; none of us in management has an official title. We don't have board of directors meetings. Instead, every meeting is basically a family reunion.

#### **HOW LONG IS YOUR SEASON? DO YOU HAVE A LOT OF SEASONAL EMPLOYEES?**

We used to have a hundred-day season, but now we offer Halloween and Christmas events. Starting January 2, we take the Christmas decorations down over the course of three weeks, take a breather, then in March start our hire and rehire meetings, job fairs, and onboarding process for bringing in the team—the last Saturday of April, when our season begins, comes on *real* fast. In all, we have a little over 2,400 seasonal staff and about 160 full-time and part-time staff.

#### **DOES YOUR PRICING STRUCTURE ATTRACT GUESTS? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TEMPTED TO TURN AWAY FROM THAT MODEL?**

Accounting firms have long tried to advise us on what to charge. But my uncle Pete, the former president prior to my dad, put his foot down when one insisted that he had to charge two or three dollars for a ride ticket instead of a buck. He insisted that people would get more satisfaction out of the

ticket at that price—that they'd not only repeat a ride but also come back to Knoebels and tell their friends and neighbors about it. So we've never even talked about charging admission. It's all about value. We could certainly charge more, but we flat-out won't.

#### **YOU'RE LOCATED IN ELYSBURG, WHICH IS IN A SOMEWHAT REMOTE PART OF PENNSYLVANIA.**

#### **WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF IT?**

Great question. Our primary challenge is that when we need staff to build our team, we're not pulling from Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, or even Erie. We're hiring from Elysburg and other small local towns. Even when I go to industry events, people tell me they've heard so much about Knoebels but that it's also tough to get to.

We have one road coming in and one road going out. There are no major highways—the closest interstate is probably twenty minutes away. We are also totally encapsulated by three different hillsides here in the valley of the Appalachian Mountains, so people will drive right by the park and not even realize it. There's no Uber or Lyft in our area, either. We're so remote, we don't even use city water; we make our own in-house and make sure that it meets all rules and regulations.

**“**  
**So many guests tell me Knoebels is where they go to get away from life—so we're able to create that place for escapism by being in Elysburg**

But, boy, the positives. So many guests tell me Knoebels is where they go to get away from life—so we're able to create that place for escapism by being in Elysburg. In fact, they'll also share with me that they love our environment so much, they won't tell friends and neighbors they went here because they don't want it to get too popular. Honestly, we're always balancing that as well: We're aware of profits, of course, but if too *many* people find us, would we truly remain Pennsylvania's Hometown Park?

#### **A CREEK ALSO RUNS THROUGH YOUR PARK, AND IT SOMETIMES FLOODS. WHAT SORT OF UNIQUE BUSINESS CHALLENGES DOES THAT POSE?**

Actually, more parks are lost to fires than floods. Because of that fact and our remote location, we have



fire equipment here 24/7. And the creek's location sometimes presents interesting billing challenges from time to time, regardless of conditions, since it separates Knoebels into two counties and three townships.

We're located in a valley, though, and in summertime, the creek and its breeze are usually our best

friend. But when the water's coming hard, it's our worst enemy, and, sadly, we've gotten way too good at flood preparation. To handle such emergencies, we have a couple of dams in the park. If the water's rising, the first thing we do is close those dams—you can instantly see the water drop. Still, we've had some devastation through the years,



especially in 1972 and 2011; we mark these historical flood heights in a few places throughout the park as a reminder of the park's and my family's perseverance.

If flooding happens on a busy week in July or August, that's obviously a big revenue stream hit in addition to the cleanup. But we're blessed with an amazing team, and the community shows up with shovels and boots, ready to dive in. That's pretty special.



**WOULD YOU SAY THAT KNOEBELS' SUCCESS OVER THE LAST CENTURY CAN BE ATTRIBUTED, AT LEAST IN PART, TO THAT RESILIENT MINDSET YOUR FAMILY HAS?**

Absolutely. Uncle Pete was in the navy, Dad was in the marines, and another park co-owner, my uncle Buddy, was in the army, so they have that military drive. My dad is also an overachiever with multiple engineering degrees, and Buddy was a two-time national champion in wrestling. So you're talking about some of the most determined people you'll ever meet.

For example, in the eighties, our fans said that they wanted a wooden roller coaster, so my dad found a defunct one in San Antonio and decided to



move it here. People said he couldn't move a wooden roller coaster thousands of miles, and he replied, "Watch me." You can't tell Dick Knoebel he can't do something. Thirteen truckloads later, the Phoenix was set up and debuted in June of 1985. It put us on the map, and it has since been named the world's best roller coaster several times.

That generation has always seemed to love working. I feel the same about Knoebels—there's nothing I'd rather do than get up in the morning and come to work here.

**CAN YOU REVEAL WHAT THE PARK'S GOING TO DO TO CELEBRATE ONE HUNDRED YEARS?**

We're not a major corporation like Herschend Family Entertainment, which owns Dollywood and Silver Dollar City; we need to do things on a much smaller scale. Though we're keeping the details under wraps, I can tell you that we're focusing on our history and tradition. We'll have special events and promotions and a great day of ceremony. ■

# THE BUSINESS FOUNDER'S EVOLVING ROLE

As entrepreneurs become leaders of growing enterprises, their ambitions may swell to pursue even greater heights. But to realize these aims, the part they play in the workplace must shift accordingly.

BY ANDRE RIOS



In the dawning days of an organization, it makes perfect sense that its founder may take it upon themselves to carry most, if not all, of the venture's responsibilities—everything from marketing to sales to client support and even to product manufacturing, depending on the business model.

However, as the seeds of an organization begin to bear fruit, an entrepreneur can step back from many of these specialist roles, delegating duties to others as they proceed to climb another mountain: acting as a visionary. If you find yourself in such a position, success doesn't depend on you having the longest duty list on the team; rather, transitioning to being a creative thinker frees you up to better realize your venture's truest potential.

### **Leading early efforts**

In order to get a rough idea off the ground, a founder has to do more than conduct initial steps like providing capital (whether personal, loaned, or invested) or filing paperwork for their business structure. Additionally, they will need to practice the diligent traits of a taskmaster leader.

There are several reasons why this is the case. First, fundamental efforts such as marketing, accounting, and sales aren't optional, and leaders who shirk these can fail to accomplish much at

all. Second, you may have had to satisfy multiple key roles before hiring a larger team. In the early days of Amazon, for example, every employee, no matter their position, took turns in fulfillment centers to satisfy orders since the staff size didn't yet meet their consumers' explosive demand. Every dollar counts for a brand-new business, and that may mean wearing several hats while only staffing cautiously to meet basic needs.

### **Scaling your business**

Once you notice certain signs of a golden opportunity, such as generous cash flow, high consumer demand, and simply having a "eureka" idea that could help you gain a stronger foothold in your industry, you can initiate a shift. A good example is Netflix's transition from competing in the physical video rental space to offering streaming media directly in consumers' homes.

Whatever sparks your belief that your company is ready for a pioneering phase, you will need to make certain immediate changes in order to set sail. That's

because, in a sense, your company is being founded again, and it will be time to leave your office and plant flags in untrodden territory.

Transitioning to such a visionary role will necessitate taking several key steps. Each of these is essential for shaping your ambitions and actualizing them while preventing burnout.

#### **Assessing capital**

The first question to answer is: How much fiscal freedom do you have to invest in potential efforts? Run income statements and balance sheets—or request them from the accounting personnel you hopefully have in place by now—to get a snapshot of your organization's performance. This will reveal how much cash you have to play with and how well your company could take on any new debt. For more guidance on the latter, calculate your debt-to-income ratio and take steps to optimize it for better creditworthiness. Discuss these figures with your team to determine a budget for your upcoming moves.

#### **Reorganizing staff**

Next, you'll need to delegate many of your current responsibilities to other



**Every dollar counts for a brand-new business, and that may mean wearing several hats while only staffing cautiously to meet basic needs.**

individuals, either by expanding your staff or simply adjusting current employees' workdays to handle key tasks. For example, enlisting a new VP of sales to review these team members' performance figures, train them, and overlook staffing can free up time for your visionary concerns. You could also promote existing staff to supervisory roles to fulfill ongoing leadership needs, a move

that could help you stay within your financial constraints.

#### **Brainstorming ideas**

Now comes the creative work of figuring out how to scale your business successfully. Where are your competitors' offerings lacking? What does your shared target audience seem to respond to most? Perhaps the most prudent place to



start is by gauging direct consumer feedback. Take, for instance, when health and beauty brand Touchland browsed social media to ascertain a customer demand: they were hungry for a unique line of carrying cases for their hand sanitizers—a change that they promptly made happen to much consumer delight.

#### **Seeking guidance**

Remember that, while good entrepreneurs are dreamers, they need support to stay grounded. For this reason, maintaining accountability and an objective audience for your plans is crucial. After all, trusted partners can help you remain realistic and provide constructive feedback where necessary.

You might choose to poll your team's opinions on forthcoming changes (especially those that affect the day-to-day experience in your workplace) while listening to any significant or commonly raised concerns as you tweak your strategies. Declining to do so could be disastrous. Case in point: David Novak, the creator of the failed (and oft-forgotten) Crystal Pepsi flavor, shrugged off criticism of his product idea from his own colleagues. The result? It fell short of projections to capture a mere 2 percent of the US soda market and was soon discontinued.

#### **→ Proceeding with caution**

Once you shape new ideas in detail, roll them out carefully. With each new endeavor you execute, you'll walk a tightrope between its establishment and strong profits. Because even a good tactic can

realistically fail, you'll need to continue tracking KPIs and financial reports, relying on such data periodically to measure your success.

As you test new ideas, remember to leverage your brand recognition in your marketing, which will help generate consumer excitement over your expansion into untapped markets or novel products. But listen as much as you speak; keep one finger on the pulse at all times, tracking feedback such as comments on your company's socials.

Likewise, keep tabs on dramatic fiscal changes since the costs of your new strategy may begin to outweigh its benefits, such as a certain project being far too costly to operate or failing to reap buyer activity. If you notice such signs, be willing to rework or even drop it and move on to another. Failure is possible, but it

**As you test new ideas, remember to leverage your brand recognition in your marketing, which will help generate consumer excitement over your expansion into untapped markets or novel products.**

doesn't need to be the end of your journey. Deftly pivoting to new approaches is ultimately crucial to being a successful visionary leader.

#### **→ Putting dreams into action**

As you grind toward your aspirational efforts, you'll need to be responsible for catalyzing change, creating new growth opportunities, and strategizing problem-solving should you hit snags in your journey. So rather than simply envisioning changes and doling out the work, step up your outreach efforts and maintain consistent communication with your various stakeholders and team members along the way.

Continue to lead by example, not just by order, and always remember that you, too, are under development. You might consider investing in workshops or taking on a professional mentor to help you develop your entrepreneurial skills, gain creative insights, and mature into your new role as a visionary forerunner. Pursue these new leadership duties diligently, and you could guide your enterprise to new heights. ■

VLADA-KARPOVICH/PEXELS

Consider how your organization could evolve and which practical steps you can take to transition from your current position into a more visionary one.

**Take Action**





# Sowing the Seeds of Success

**Jamie Seward**, owner of Repeat Roses, discusses the rewards and challenges of reviving the flower-repurposing company three years after its original owner closed it during COVID-19.

INTERVIEW WITH **JAMIE SEWARD**  
WRITTEN BY **MATTHEW BRADY**  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF **REPEAT ROSES**

## → Did you come into this venture with a business background?

I don't have a business degree, but my professional background provided me with a strong foundation for reinvigorating Repeat Roses. My experience as an attorney, an officer in the Navy JAG Corps, and in development and alumni relations at Johns Hopkins University (where I currently work) has equipped me with valuable skills in everything from operations and logistics to event planning to marketing to networking. Most importantly, I've learned a lot about working with and managing people.

## → Did you have any prior experience with flower arrangements?

Great question. No, I didn't. That's something I often share with people who sign up with us to create



JAMIE SEWARD



arrangements to be donated, emphasizing that you can't make mistakes playing with flowers, which are in and of themselves beautiful.

## → What made you want to restore Repeat Roses?

I knew [original owner] Jennifer Grove through mutual friends when she lived here in Baltimore. So I had heard about her company and its goal: providing a second life to expensive flowers being discarded after an event by giving them to nonprofits such as shelters and treatment centers. One day, I found myself in the exact same situation of throwing away flowers after an event, which immediately brought Jennifer's idea to mind, so I reached out to her about reviving the business, and I ultimately acquired it.



→ Did you ever consider using a different business name? What advantages were there in keeping the original one?

I did consider creating a new name but ultimately decided to carry on the Repeat Roses legacy. The main business advantage was the existing brand recognition, however dormant it might have been. The name still resonated with some people who remembered the original concept, which provided a starting point for re-establishing connections and credibility. It also clearly communicates what we do, which is a plus.

→ What were some of your biggest hurdles in the beginning?

Restarting the business three years after it closed and relocating it from New York to Baltimore both certainly presented significant challenges. We had to re-create awareness nationally, for example,



focusing on “replanting” Repeat Roses’ roots. This is an ongoing process in addition to rebuilding relationships with old clients and forming new ones—in short, getting the word out that we are back.

We work all over the country, so forging partnerships with nonprofits that not only receive the flower donations but also align with our mission is also crucial to our operations. Overall, society being even more focused on sustainability now than before the pandemic works in our favor since we’re an excellent solution to preventing floral waste.

→ Have you tweaked any parts of the business?

Yes. We are intentionally focused on two primary revenue streams: repurposing flowers and holding our Blossom Bar workshops, which are a significant addition. These

interactive events provide individuals and groups with materials, flowers, vases, and supplies to create their own arrangements, which they can either keep or donate to nonprofits. They’ve been incredibly well received as unique team-building and social events with a clear purpose.

→ Overall, what are the most challenging aspects of this unique business model?

Logistics and scaling. Coordinating pickups from various event venues, rearranging flowers efficiently, and then delivering them to multiple nonprofits, all within a narrow time frame, requires meticulous planning and execution. We’re committed to slow growth and finding the right partners to ensure that the business thrives and never closes again. Ideally, we’d also love to partner with supermarket chains and big-box retailers who discard unsellable flowers, which would present another layer of logistical and partnership development challenges that we’d enjoy taking on.

→ How does Repeat Roses impact everyone involved?

We call it a triple win. For example, those donating the flowers, our clients, receive a receipt for their in-kind donation, which provides a



For more info, visit [repeatroses.com](http://repeatroses.com)

tangible benefit. More importantly, they get the satisfaction of knowing that their beautiful event flowers, which might otherwise be discarded, are bringing joy to others and contributing to a sustainable solution for floral waste—a wonderful way for them to add another layer of purpose to their event.

For those receiving the flowers, the impact is often immeasurable. These fresh, vibrant arrangements can brighten sterile environments like homeless shelters, nursing homes, and hospitals, providing a sense of warmth, beauty, and unexpected cheer to people who are often going through challenging times. It is a powerful reminder that someone cares and is truly the most rewarding part of what we do.

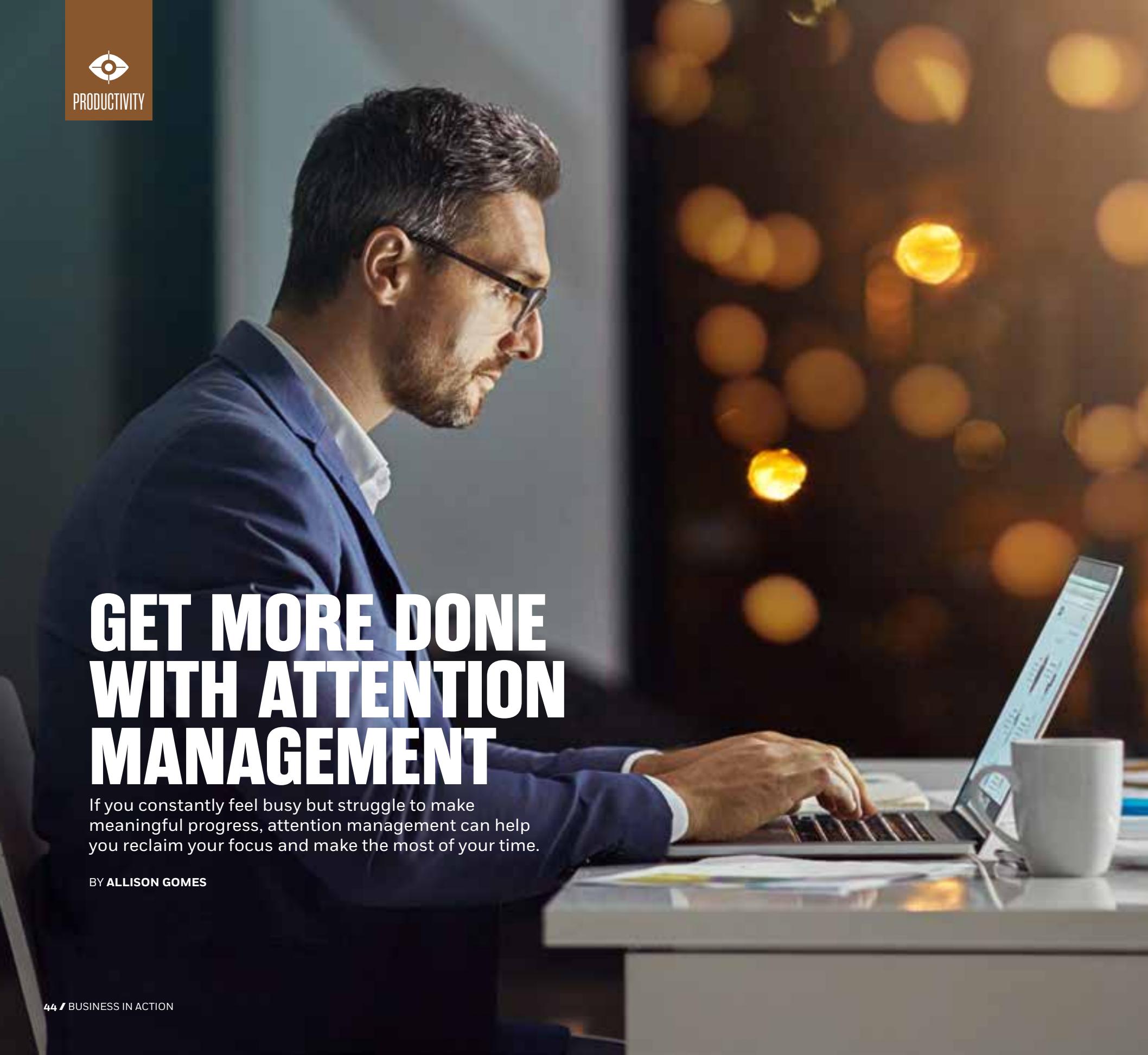
As a mom, daughter, sister, and friend, my goal is to leave this world a little better than I found it, and through this business, I genuinely believe that I can make a tangible difference. It’s about spreading joy, promoting sustainability, and transforming what would be waste into moments of beauty and connection. That mission means everything to me. ■



# GET MORE DONE WITH ATTENTION MANAGEMENT

If you constantly feel busy but struggle to make meaningful progress, attention management can help you reclaim your focus and make the most of your time.

BY ALLISON GOMES



**It often feels like there's never** enough time to get everything done in a workday, which is why time management has long been the go-to solution for boosting productivity. But no matter how efficiently you plan your day, you can't add more hours to it. You only have so much time, and most of it is already spoken for. The real challenge, then, isn't managing your schedule—it's managing your attention. When you shift your priority from how much you can do to how well you can concentrate on what matters, everything changes.



## What is attention management?

At its core, attention management means taking control of your focus so you're not just reacting to what's loudest but responding to what's most important. The reason for this is simple: even the most perfectly planned day can unravel if your attention drifts. That's why traditional time management, while helpful, doesn't always give leaders the edge they need.

Productivity and attention management expert Maura Thomas argues that it's not your calendar that determines

your effectiveness—it's your ability to concentrate deeply on meaningful work without being pulled in a dozen directions. That shift is especially important for entrepreneurs, who are not only completing tasks but also solving problems, making strategic decisions, and influencing others every day. Those responsibilities demand high-quality attention, not just an open time slot on your calendar.

So why does attention management outperform time management?

- You can't avoid distractions Even with the perfect plan, your day can be derailed by pings, surprise meetings, or mental fatigue. Attention management helps you *protect* your focus so those interruptions don't dominate your day.

- Your energy fluctuates It's a fact that mental focus varies throughout the day, so some hours are better suited for deep, creative work, while others are ideal for admin tasks. Attention management lets you align the right work with your peak focus.



- It tackles the real bottleneck

For most leaders, the problem isn't a shortage of hours. Rather, it's that the most critical work gets buried under urgent but low-impact tasks. Managing your attention ensures that high-value priorities rise to the top instead of being lost in the noise.

In a world flooded with distractions, attention has become your most valuable and limited resource. And managing it well is what separates *busy* leaders from *effective* ones.



#### How to incorporate it into your routine

Before you can change how you manage your attention, you need to become more aware of how and where your focus is currently being spent. Most distractions aren't huge emergencies; they're subtle, habitual shifts in attention that slowly chip away at your most productive moments. The good news is that small adjustments can lead to major results. Here's how to start putting attention management into action.

#### Identify your peak focus windows

Track your energy and concentration for a week. When do you naturally feel most alert? Many entrepreneurs find early mornings or late evenings are prime focus times. Once you know what time you're most focused, block it off for your most important work and guard it fiercely.



**You don't need to overhaul your entire schedule overnight, either. Start small: pick one daily focus window and treat it like a meeting with your most important client.**

#### Create "attention zones" in your day

Rather than jumping between different tasks on your to-do list, divide your day into different blocks to help you focus on one responsibility at a time:

- **A deep-work zone** for strategy, creative thinking, or problem-solving with zero meetings or notifications.
- **A collaboration zone** for calls, meetings, and team check-ins. (Just make sure you find a time that works for both you and your employees.)
- **An admin zone** for emails, approvals, and routine paperwork.

Batching similar types of work helps reduce context switching, which can drain your focus and increase fatigue.

#### Eliminate distractions

Every "quick" phone check, open browser tab, and stray thought can quickly break your concentration. Reduce these by closing unused tabs, silencing notifications, and keeping a notepad close by to jot down stray thoughts without acting on them immediately.

#### Practice "single tasking"

Multitasking might feel productive, but research shows it makes you less efficient and more prone to errors. Instead, commit to doing one thing at a time since focused work will always beat scattered efforts.

#### Take breaks

Your brain isn't a machine, so short breathers between work sessions can help prevent burnout and maintain mental sharpness. Even a two-minute pause to stretch or step outside can reset your attention.



#### Shifting your mindset as a leader

Attention management isn't just a personal-productivity tactic—it's a leadership skill. Your team takes cues from your behavior, so if you're constantly distracted and rushing from one thing to another, they'll feel pressure to do the same. But if you model focus, such as by blocking time, minimizing interruptions, and prioritizing deep work, you set a culture that values quality over constant activity.

You don't need to overhaul your entire schedule overnight, either. Start small: pick one daily focus window and treat it like a meeting with your most important client. Over time, you'll likely find that the quality of your output improves, decisions become clearer, and the stress of feeling "always on" starts to fade. ■



Track your energy levels for a week to identify when you feel most focused, then schedule your deep work during those times.



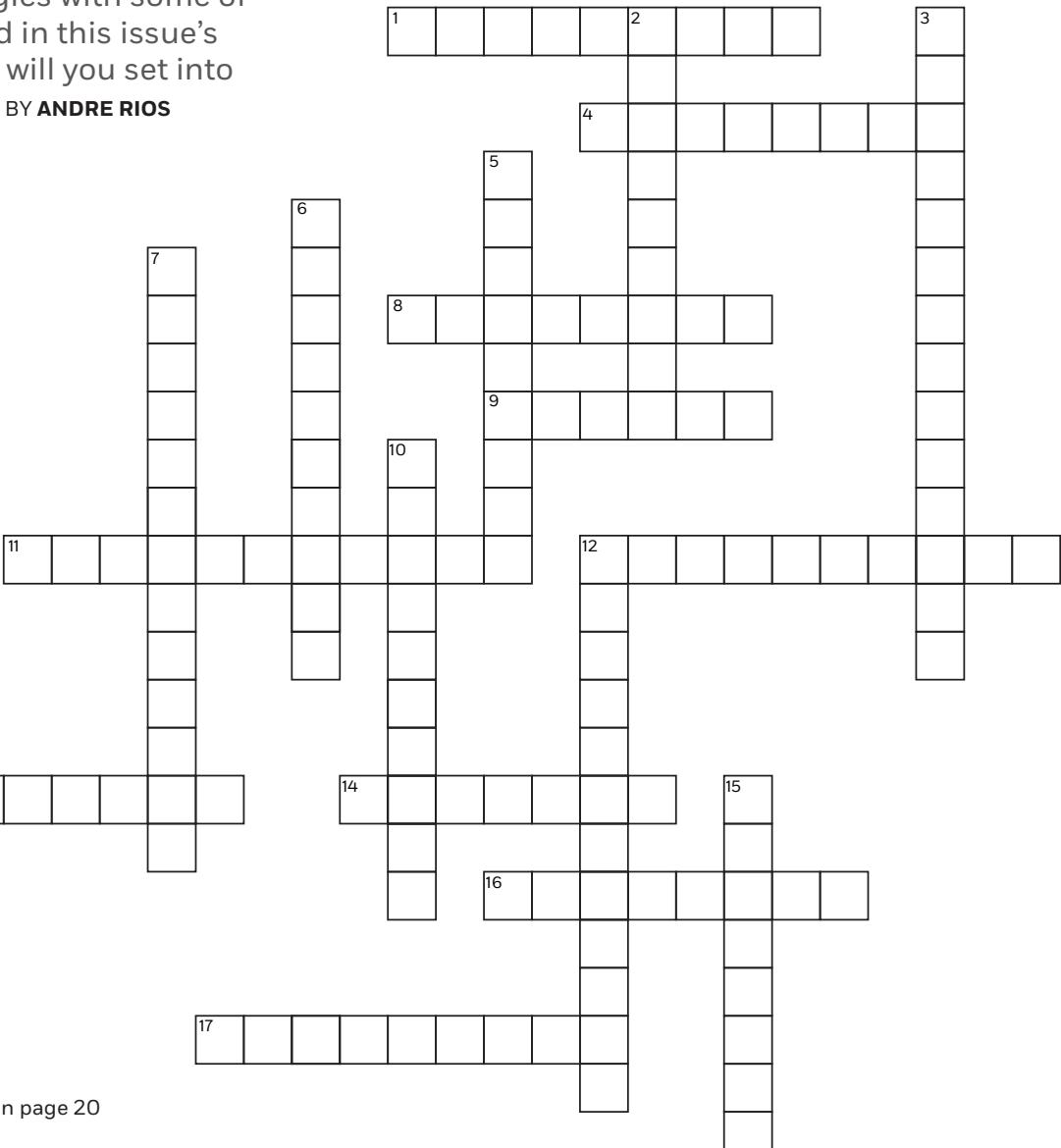
PRODUCTIVITY

# Summer Strategies Crossword

As warmer days approach, heat up your organization's strategies with some of the concepts featured in this issue's puzzle. Which tactics will you set into motion this season? **BY ANDRE RIOS**

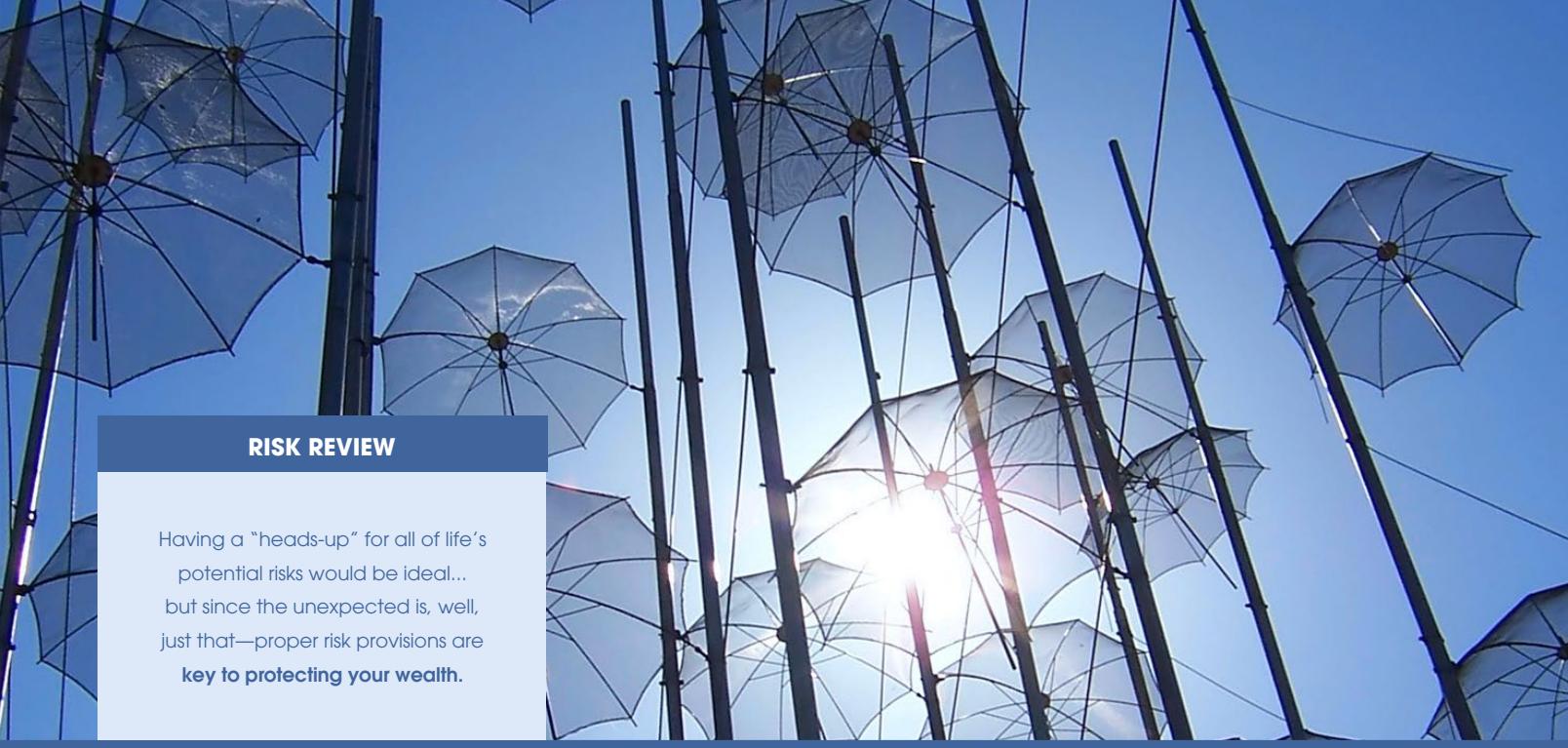
## ACROSS

- 1 The 'F' in FIT Marketing
- 4 Investments in new tech
- 8 A new marketing idea
- 9 Hosting your clients
- 11 Emails, calls, postcards, etc.
- 12 The directive in each article
- 13 Employee's ten-year anniversary, say
- 14 Total money earned
- 16 Random outreach
- 17 "Your product is too expensive."



ANSWERS

**Across:** 1. Frequency, 4. Upgrades, 8. Campaign, 9. Events, 11. Touchpoints, 12. Take Action, 13. Milestone, 14. Revenue, 16. Cold Call, 17. Objectives, 17. WS Game Company, 10. Management, 12. Team Building, 15. Branding  
**Down:** 2. Expansion, 3. Sustainability, 5. Warm Leads, 6. Brainstorm, 7. WS Game Company, 10. Management, 12. Team Building, 15. Branding



## RISK REVIEW

Having a "heads-up" for all of life's potential risks would be ideal... but since the unexpected is, well, just that—proper risk provisions are **key to protecting your wealth.**

**WHEN THE SKY IS CLEAR, CARRY AN UMBRELLA.**

For All of Life's Potential Risks,  
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There are many situations that can jeopardize your financial future; identifying these risks is the first step in protecting against them. Let's discuss your risks, and structure a comprehensive strategy for your financial longevity.

## DOWN

- 2 New products or locations
- 3 Eco-conscious efforts
- 5 Not cold leads
- 6 Imagine solutions
- 7 The company spotlighted on page 20
- 10 Attention vs. Time \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Icebreakers and group games
- 15 Your organization's identity



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## Front of Tear Out Card 2



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## Back of Tear Out Card 2



### COSMETIC ISSUES

While small cosmetic needs like touching up paint or replacing fixtures can make a major impact on buyers, they are generally easy on the wallet.



### ELECTRICAL AND PLUMBING

An inspector will determine if these basic utilities are in good working order. While some minor issues like clogs may pop up, major leaks or damaged wiring will need to be serviced.



### LOOSE FIXTURES & RAILINGS

If a shaky doorknob or wobbly deck railing are major safety concerns, you can rest assured that the inspector will report these to you.



### ROOF PROBLEMS

Worn shingles, loose weatherstripping, mold, and other roof issues can seriously impact structural safety. You'll likely need to have this feature repaired or even replaced before selling.

**Paul Sanders**

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