

HOT TOPICS: 5 Top themes & questions for research project – Question 1

Q1 Hot Issue [*Thinking points: What is the common cause of frustration in your company? If it could be solved, what do you believe would skyrocket/revolutionise/ transform your company's performance? Just before you close your eyes at bedtime or as you wake in the morning what is the challenge that 'won't-go-away' one that pops up bright-eyed demanding to be dealt with? And the one you consistently ignore? What would you give to have that sorted?*] N

Here is a flavour of their **HOT** issue shared by those asked:

It is the issue of work/life balance. Right now in the organisation, when you step up to a higher role, the expectation and culture is such that you must accept that work will creep into your personal and family life, as if it is part of the territory. For me the hot issue is **how to change this management culture to enable people to move into the leadership sphere without sacrificing** their personal and family lives and sense of balance.

The main challenge we have is (re)defining our product and service offering that allows us to grow the business at a much faster rate. Finding the offering, adapting our business around it and developing an amended business plan that is accurate and practical in its execution. It's certainly not an issue that we ignore and it feels like we're making headway with it but it's hard work. It's worth it because at the moment our business model limits growth because of the direct correlation between developer hours and billable work.

Firefighting v time to think in the day!

Ownership of the company – part of 510 private equity backed so all separate yet report into Group which means there are individual company as well as Group issues etc. Group is the cost centre and these are shared across the operating company. What Group decides is what happens = legacy of the Group. One size doesn't fit all. Moving away from Group brings huge issues of cost. Communication around Group is a challenge. Individual parts don't have any idea of what is happening elsewhere in Group.

IF SOLVED: communication is hugely important. Group MD's don't communicate enough. Eg: new websites which weren't talked through. Need regular communication at Board level not just about the numbers but around the what and how. The why is way down the list and parked for now.

Productivity of people as a sales organisation; to be profitable not only hitting numbers but also across all offices. Worrying how embedded the mediocre is. For a long time as no communication no-one realised that London loses money every month = biggest challenge to change this. For sales teams focusing on accountability re their job & what they plan to achieve in a year. Issue of productivity is the 'won't go away'! IGNORE forecasting as losing money. Recruitment is so like retail very difficult to predict trends etc. How we forecast? No consistency across the business ... needs to have it be sorted. Next Senior Management meeting it is the only thing on the agenda. Life cycle of a search system; number to Board each Monday; forecasting broken across the whole business all related to productivity. Has to be sorted! What is the minimum to be done each month to cover operating costs?

For a young ish organisation (13 years old) that's going through a growth spurt, the hottest issues for us are **1) sticking to the strategy and 2) creating scale**. It's easy to get distracted by shiny new things or thrown off course without real focused attention. And it's a mind-set shift required to go from bespoke, unique approaches each and every time, to developing with scale in mind, without becoming cookie cutter or losing your edge. Doing what you set out to do and doing it well, is the ultimate goal.

Communication within the company is a big issue, upward and downwards, making sure everyone is on message. **Just reading and making sufficient client notes would be good.**

Keeping a **healthy pipeline of business & cashflow is always the 2am question!** And thinking creatively about how to do this to make the right decisions for generating new business with new business campaigns i.e. should we invest our time and money into content marketing, social media, networking, cold calling, pay per click etc. Who should we target next/which sector? Should we be upselling?

Long term adequate funding. **Obtaining buy in** from some key players as to the potential and the value for of the work we do. Maximising the potential. Getting our work right onto the agenda of people who have yet to be convinced about the potential value.

3 aspects = Frustrations: Too many work priorities + Not enough hours + Lack of cash + No marketing / sales support. Bringing more sales in. Cash-flow.

It's like a pie with segments and it depends where you are in the year. Dating app built for Ann Summers so just come out of a major project. It was a major step up over 2 years. Had to develop capacity quickly so a massive journey recruiting. Moved up a peg in project size now need more projects – chicken & egg. Noticed that I had burn out with that last project. Sales & Marketing – this is my anxiety – where to bring new projects from? Am I a group of companies so have good support from the Investor. Business is 6 years old.

One of the challenges of all small companies is that you have to do everything; jump across things quickly; have to learn lots & quickly. Challenge of getting work in to maintain staff retention as feel I now have the perfect team created after a few people challenges. Have to get out there – know what I need to do but it is a steep learning curve. I enjoy them. I don't clock watch.