



- **Networking**

Invest your own time to spread the word about your business, after all you are your businesses best spokesman.

- **Make use of the Internet**

The e-commerce side of business is relatively cheap to operate. Perhaps you could design a new website that targets a totally different audience, or add more content to existing pages to bring in new customers. You can also tap social media and the power of virtual marketing to expose new customers to what you do.

Never forget that press releases and newsletters should be posted onto your website regularly. If there is some business news to release, make a few phone calls to your local media outlets, it could give some free publicity.

## Growing your business in these risky times

There's a mind-shift going on in the small-business community. Owners are finally coming out of survival mode and moving into growth mode. More small-business owners have got plans to hire now but, here comes the tricky part, fears about cash flow are at an all-time high. Putting it all together, it forms a picture of businesses that continue to be worried about the downturn but are unwilling to twiddle their thumbs any longer. In short, they are ready for action. The problem is, taking on debt while you are still concerned about cash flow can be a recipe for disaster.

### WHAT A CONUNDRUM!

Businesses that grow now without taking on debt are likely to thrive but by contrast, those that borrow to spur growth are basically playing with fire. If their investments do not pay off, the additional cost could take the business down. Given how shaky the economy still is, it may make more sense to find ways to grow with existing resources. We have a few ideas on how to grow without adding new costs:

- **Make every employee a sales person**

If your receptionist does not know your products or services, it is high time to hold a training session. The more people who can talk up your brand, the more sales you will make.

- **Be creative in hiring new people**

Why not hire sales people on a commission-only basis or contract labourers on a trial basis. Also, try letting new workers telecommute to save on office rent. While the economy remains weak, hedge your labour bets until your strategy starts paying off.

### Plan ahead for a possible tanker drivers strike

Businesses need to make contingency plans if they do not want to be adversely affected by potential strikes by fuel tanker drivers. Whilst a strike could cause direct difficulties with trading through restricted delivery of goods and supplies, the main problem facing companies would be staff unable to get to work. A simple way of coping would be for employers to encourage car sharing to save on fuel.

In the interim, the government are making back-up plans in case a strike does ahead.

One option being touted, if the strike happens, is to use army soldiers to drive the tankers to ensure there is minimal disruption.

The Ministry of Defence has already started to training a number of potential tanker crews to ensure that supplies keep running.

According to Unite, the strikes could go ahead as early as next month.

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