



This article first appeared in the April issue of *My Business*
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RETAILING TONY GATTARI

There is no such thing as failure

I HAVE NEVER been skydiving. Maybe because I fear that the parachute will not open and I land face first into the ground. Many business owners have this fear when they plan to place a small quarter page ad in the local newspaper asking themselves “What if it does not work?” Then they don’t place the ad. We use this ‘fear of failure’ to justify why we should not do something.

Undoubtedly in all my experience people never achieve their outcomes because of the ‘Fear of Failure’. Many business owners and marketers spend most of their time worrying about whether their campaign is perfect, will it work, or procrastinate so much that they miss the opportunity or don’t carry out the campaign at all.

You are never going to get things right all the time, and if you make a mistake just learn from the experience. Also remember that failure is only an event, not a lifestyle. You can always pick yourself back up, and try again!

Below is a list of common mistakes that many marketers and business owners (and I have done these on countless occasions) make. When reading these they are actually not mistakes but poor disciplines that get built up over time;

- A total lack of activity which slows down momentum and develops longer slow periods of sales
- Not measuring results on a consistent basis. How do you know what works or doesn’t work if you don’t measure the results?
- Poor planning and execution of marketing campaigns
- Not knowing the target customer. When we do strategy sessions with clients, the majority of them show poor results from their marketing efforts, because they are

spending all of their money on campaigns targeted at the wrong target market, and

- No sales/profit targets or marketing budgets.

The word failure did not even get mentioned in this list. It was all because of poor disciplines and execution of marketing campaigns. The reason so many people have been skydiving and live to tell the tale, is that the instructor properly planned the training session, chose the right equipment to ensure that the jump went smoothly, and chose the right time and location to make the jump. It is all in the planning and execution.

Unfortunately I don’t have a story to share about my poor existence or limited opportunities in my early life, which drove me to be successful. In fact my parents were great to me. Even though they were not the richest people in the world, they always ensured that my brother and I never lacked anything.

In actual fact I was treated so well that I had some real troubles in my first year of marriage because I did not know how to make my bed or iron my clothes, and being the son of Italian mother, I also didn’t know how to cook!

My parents both came out to Australia in the 1950s on the £10 dream of a new life. They both worked hard in blue collar jobs, saved all that they could, and ensured that we had a comfortable life. Education was not a major priority to them, but I was the first person in the family to go to university.

When I was working as a marketing analyst for Ricegrowers’ Cooperative Limited, a friend urged me to approach Gerry Harvey, the chairman of Harvey Norman, with a business proposition that I was thinking about.

So I typed up a 120-page business plan on how Harvey Norman could improve its computer business. At the time, computers were located next to the toasters and kettles at the back of their stores, and were not seen as a profit driver for the business. It was doing around \$12 million in sales a year, which was only about three per cent of Harvey Norman’s total sales.

A couple of days after I sent the plan, I received a call from Gerry. ‘Tony, I’ve read your business plan. First of all, you have repeated yourself five times and your spelling is atrocious,’ he stated bluntly, ‘but I like what you had to say, how about you come and work for me.’

Well, I was knocked off my feet. I just wanted to be a consultant who writes the report and gets paid for it. I didn’t actually want to do the work. But I ended up accepting his offer and spent the next nine years working at Harvey Norman.

Herein lies a simple truth on how to be successful at marketing. If, in your gut, you believe it is the right initiative, be audacious and back yourself. Sometimes we can sit there and get all cranky about the youth of today, but instead we should take notice of their lack of fear, which creates greater opportunities for them.

You can read more about marketing techniques in my recently released book *Marketing Success*. ●

■ The author, Tony Gattari, is the Managing Director of the Achievers Group. He built Harvey Norman’s computer business from \$12 million to \$565 million in nine years.

Website: www.achieversgroup.com.au
Email: tony@achieversgroup.com.au
Phone: (02) 9440 7373