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RETAILING

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Just have a go

IN 1995, Microsoft was about to launch its latest operating system — Windows 95. In the computer industry this was like the second coming and was what launched the success of Microsoft and Bill Gates.

With Australia being ahead of America for the launch, no one really presumed that it would be big in Australia until the 'real launch' in America. However, one of the Harvey Norman proprietors came up to me and suggested that we launch Windows 95 at midnight, so that we would be the first company in the world to sell the program.

I did not think much of it in the beginning, but then I thought, why not? So I took this idea to the other computer proprietors and they basically thought I was an idiot. The greatest thing about Harvey Norman, however, is that they create a culture that allows people to try new ideas and then gives them some leeway if they make mistakes.

This is how an entrepreneurial company is built — by giving people the opportunity to try new ideas and learn from the experience. (I also took this idea to the other proprietors — the franchise owners — and they wanted to lynch me!) But I stuck to my guns, and started to place advertisements in all of the major media outlets, and implemented an aggressive public relations campaign. The proprietors threatened not to open, but I forced them to anyway. This was going to work!

Midnight struck on the launch day and a mad rush of people, who had been queuing for hours, fell over themselves to get the new Windows 95 program. All of the major television stations and news outlets were filming the event and interviewing proud new owners of the program. The campaign also meant that Gerry Harvey was interviewed by the *Today* show, where he proclaimed, 'I love

Bill Gates! I wish he would bring out Windows every year!'

When I decided to launch Windows 95 at midnight, I could not tell you that it was going to work, but I thought to myself, '...just have a go'. You do not know what is going to work until you have a go. Retailers' fear of failure is what holds them back from achieving their potential; to break through you have to break with.

But I'm not Harvey Norman

You don't need a lot of money to be great at marketing, but this is generally the greatest excuse I normally hear why people don't focus their time and attention to growing their business. They make excuses, which cover their real reasons why they don't have a go, so I have uncovered the reasons why retailers make common mistakes in marketing their business. When reading these they are actually not mistakes but poor disciplines that get built up over time:

- A total lack of activity that slows down momentum and develops longer slow periods
- 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
- Not knowing the target customer. When we do strategy sessions with clients, the majority of them have poor marketing results, because they are spending all of their money on campaigns targeted at the wrong target market
- No sales/profit targets or marketing budgets. Treat marketing campaigns like going to gym to lose weight. You weigh yourself, set a goal weight, and plan the activities that you will do over a period of time. Exercising and marketing are the same; if you go a hundred miles an hour

at the start you will burn out, and be afraid to try again.

How to be a great marketer

Understand who your customer is:

Defining your target customer reduces the risk of wasting money on poorly targeted marketing campaigns, and ensures that your business provides a system that serves the customer according to his or her needs.

Set a sales target: A trained marksman plans the shot, and takes all factors into consideration, and then aims at the target. A smart business owner sets a sales target, and takes all factors into consideration such as past history, adjustments for seasonality and trends and major external events eg is the World Cup coming into town, and will it have an impact on business.

Set a marketing budget: Marketing your business takes time, patience and discipline, and the best way to ensure that you follow this mantra is to set a marketing budget for your business. This budget will ensure that you set aside money for marketing activity, so that you can continually work on growing the business, as well as ensuring that you do not send yourself broke.

The Principle of Multiple Touches:

How many ways can you engage an individual to enquire about your goods or services? The principle states that not every way will work on each individual, but one particular form of communication will eventually engage them to action. ●

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