



The Pelican

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Gene Wesley, General Manager, Community Futures Lac La Biche

Taking AiM at Business

I visited *Harveys* in Edmonton last week and was shocked. It seems that they prefer to cater to delivery companies such as *Skip The Dishes* rather than in-store customers. In my case, I will not go back, but I'm happy they are getting sales.

Times have been tough, and businesses that have survived did so by adapting. Some are even thriving. All indications are that such trends will continue and that customer habits have changed permanently. Many of us have wondered how these trends will affect businesses in rural Alberta,

and that is why Community Futures offices in northeast Alberta and the Conseil de développement Economique d'Alberta have created the *Alberta iMarket* (AiM) platform.

The *Alberta iMarket* concept originated from a desire to promote local shopping while providing the opportunity to sell those products to even larger markets. You might say our solution is a not-for-profit (low priced) alternative to larger more expensive platforms. Better yet, AiM will provide one-on-one help to get your products listed and sold. Our platform is unique in that it can include not just items but also any services that involve bookable time (tours, haircuts). If it can be part of an online shopping transaction, AiM will accommodate it. Think art or artisan products, music events, workshops, and even things that aren't for sale like points of

interest. Included within the AiM services package are vendor training and support, and financial management tools, and a sustainable marketing plan for the website. We will offer shoppers an experience that mirrors the large online

retailers. Local shoppers will be able to shop for a specific item, but also search for it within a radius distance from their particular location. Each vendor will have an online store with their own

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Launching Soon**



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6 Great Ways to Make Social Media Work for Your Business



Most of us who own or manage a small business do our best to communicate through social media. Sometimes we have something great to share. Other times, it seems like we are just going through the motions just to show our business is still in operation. While this may not be your most strategic approach to maintaining your company's social media presence, at least it's better than not doing anything at all.

Businesses that genuinely engage their customers and successfully attract new ones through Facebook, Instagram, or the latest social media tool have similar traits. They either provide information like "how-to" or best practice, add value like deals or special offers, or simply entertain. Those businesses that are great at using social media do all three. Doing so keeps your business top of mind with your clients so that they will return and encourages them to share your site with others.

Here are six great ways to make your social media site more engaging:

CREATE A SERIES

On a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, develop a series of articles to keep people coming back for more. A simple way would be to create a top 10 list of something relevant to your business, revealing just one from the list each cycle.

HAVE A CONTEST – OR OFFER EXCLUSIVE DEALS

Find ways to reward those who visit your social media, whether it be a contest exclusive to your followers or a discount on products and services. You don't need to give away the farm. You just need to show that you appreciate your customers.

HOST AN "ASK ME ANYTHING" (AMA) EVENT

By using live-streaming tools on Facebook or setting up a Zoom event, it's relatively easy to put yourself in a position for an hour each month to answer any questions from existing or potential customers. Let them set the agenda while you set the time-frame. You'll be surprised to find out that there are more than a few things that you thought people knew about your business they didn't.

PROFILE OTHERS

Use your social media to profile your customers or community and share their success. By demonstrating a positive and cooperative attitude, your business will be associated with good things that happen.

CREATE SHORT VIDEO CLIPS

Simply put, people like to watch videos. Having short "how-to" segments on your social media, event interviews with the experts, or profiling customers is a fantastic way to get them to share your social media with their own contacts,

and a way that you can add value to your own sites.

PARTNER WITH OTHER BUSINESSES - CO-BRAND

While we've talked in past issues of *The Pelican* about the advantages of sharing your physical business space to increase traffic, the same can be said for social media. By using your social media resources to cooperate with other businesses in the community, the whole becomes greater than the parts. Don't be afraid to support your neighbour. When local businesses succeed, everyone wins.

As your clients start to share your social media with their own contacts, and your social media is connecting with people you have yet to meet in-person, you will know that you are well on your way to building an online presence that will help enhance and grow your business. ■



(Gene's column cont. from page 1)

store management interface and access to a support team. They will have the ability to manage their products and services, which will become part of the entire catalogue of items on the website. Vendors can even use a custom domain while being part of general item searches on the site.

Buyers can arrange to pick-up their purchases, or AiM can handle the transaction - as the seller prefers. When an item



sells, the platform processes the transaction. The funds will automatically move from the website master account into the Vendor's personal account, less only the merchant (credit card) fees if applicable. Shipping of products can be calculated instantaneously for vendors with a Canada Post, Fed-Ex or UPS account etc., (or set for "local pick-up").

Once a vendor finishes the on-boarding process, they will have a fully functional e-commercial website that includes group marketing and group-buying discounts (50% savings with Canpar at this point), and other initiatives (for example, we are exploring central locker systems). The *Alberta iMarket* is designed for any sale, whether you have one item or a entire store. It is a solution to creating an online presence, especially if you found alternatives confusing or costly.

Have you ever wished you could visit

just one website to find and buy something locally? AiM will allow you to do just that. We will offer all the benefits of the mega-sites while focusing on local



Alberta vendors and listing thousands of products ready for shoppers who are ready to BUY ALBERTA.

While we should emerge from the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 in the next few months, shoppers' habits, and the way we do business will have changed for the long-term. The *Alberta iMarket* is a tool designed to give us a local advantage and to help rural businesses succeed.

All we need is you!
Call 1 (833) 474-6722 (toll-free) to become a vendor today!

Upcoming Events and Webinars

POWER UP AB CHEERS TO CHANGE - CREATE YOUR OWN *POWERFUL* NEW STORY

In business or want to be? Prosperous or struggling? This mini-conference will entertain and inspire you as an Albertan and entrepreneur.

Join guest speaker **Graham Sherman, Owner of The Tool Shed Brewing Company**, as he leads a discussion on innovation, resiliency, and creating a powerful new story in the face of adversity.



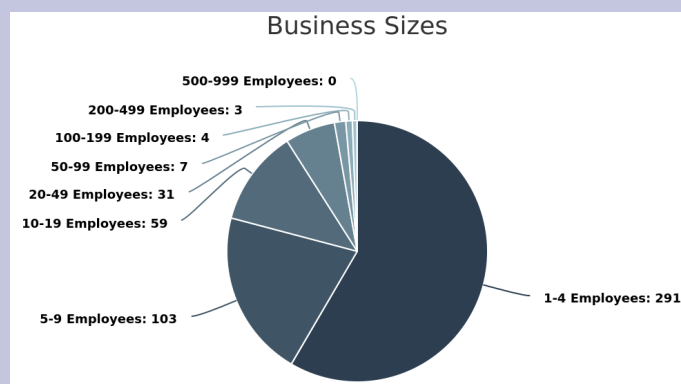
**Tuesday,
March 23, 2021
3:00 – 4:30 PM
MDT**

This is a virtual event.

Tickets: \$10.00

To Register visit:
<https://bit.ly/PowR-Up>

Didja **KNOW?**



The chart shows the distribution of businesses in Lac La Biche County according to the number of employees they employ.
(Updated Feb. 2020)

(From TownFolio <https://townfolio.co/ab/lac-la-biche-county/demographics>)

Recruiting for Customers - Setting Achievable Goals

Contributor: Shirley Leonard, Pinnacle Organizational Performance Solutions

SOME ASSUMPTIONS:

1. Our businesses execute our mission (the 'what' we do) and the vision (the 'why' we do what we do) through our employees and leaders' everyday, ongoing activities.
2. Presumably, we began our businesses because we saw an unmet need within society/community and knew we could fill that gap with a specific service (skills) or goods (products) or, more likely, a combination of both. Rarely does a business say, "I want to do only this to feel fulfilled in my life," without having a tangible knowledge and attachment to WHO is going to buy our specific service or products?
3. With planning, time, and intentional, focused effort on understanding our customers' needs, we can reach that place of satisfaction and doing what it is that we most love to do – and earn a consistent living from this simple formula.



1. The employee believes his/her time and effort will result in improvement/success for ALL parties (customer, business, self).
2. The employee can see or envision that the goal links to and supports the business's mission and vision.

The employee buys into and feels connected with the goal's relevance and the difference that achieving the goal will make. Our customers return to businesses that feel their needs are required to be known and are understood. Meeting the customer's needs is a driver for the business. Ensuring the employees understand and accept those needs is a driver for the business.

Goals are much more powerful than merely being boxes on the performance appraisal form to be ticked off once achieved. They are meaningful signals that we are each paying attention to what matters most.

SHIRLEY'S UNDERSTANDING OF SUPPLY & DEMAND:

Customer Needs Known (Information) + My Focused Effort with Customer (Goals) = Results Satisfaction

This approach works fluidly and well when I am the sole person fulfilling the goals and directly linking to knowing and understanding my customers' needs. While the formula still works when we hire employees to help us meet the increasing volume of customer work, it becomes more complex to instill and transfer OUR sense of passion and enthusiasm for the goals over to our employees and even our leaders.

A slight glitch, though: What if their reasons for joining our business are not as passionately motivated as our own enthusiasm? Another question is: Do we need our employees to be as passionately motivated as the business owner?

On the surface, 'No,' that is not a reasonable expectation.' However, what IS a reasonable expectation of our employees is that through the leader's engagement with both customers and employees, our job is to support the employee to determine his/her own intrinsic motivation - his/her own 'WHY' for wanting the business to succeed and grow and contribute to creating achievable goals through which:

Eleven months into the Covid-19 pandemic, what we know about employees, whether as owners, leaders, or staff, is that we are focused on pursuing and nurturing those things that add meaning and purpose to our lives and improve the quality of our lives. This has been a time of change for businesses, employees, customers as we create and achieve goals that result in positive change – within the limitations that we are each experiencing. The preciousness of life itself is at the forefront of everything we do, and time is not to be squandered. ■

Shirley Leonard is the Owner of Pinnacle Organizational Performance Solutions (Edmonton, Alberta), offering Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness consulting, coaching and facilitation services. Pinnacle provides leadership and team development, employee engagement and strategic change management planning to business, leaders and managers. She can be reached via: Shirley@pinnacleperformance.ca, (cell) 587-982-3314, or visit her website: www.pinnacleperformance.ca

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