

GFC or GFC...

Which Will YOU Experience?

Sign World – John Hadfield, KiM (Knowledge and Information Management)



How often do you run into a business colleague and the old question comes up, "How busy are you?" For decades the standard reply was "mate ... flat out like a lizard drinking," or "busier than a one armed drummer". Nowadays, for many those 'flat-out' days may seem a distant memory. I travel to sign and print businesses all over Australia and beyond, and in the GFC times there is a real and increasing gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots'.



GFC – many suggest it means Global Financial Crisis. Well I have a new one for you. GFC = GROWTH From Communication. That's not a missprint, I mean GROWTH!

Why? Well let me explain. Times are tough – YES you knew that, but where is the opportunity for growth? The answer is EVERYWHERE. In good times quality clients are making plenty. Clients may not be that bothered to grab five competitive quotes, they probably have built trust and a relationship with their sign and print supplier. They feel safe so they get lazy, let things slide a little. Effectively, they become loyal by default – agree? At the same time you become conditioned to accept the status quo. You let your guard down as all is good in sign and print land.

In tough times, the bean counters push suppliers for better deals, price becomes the focus and almost any aspect of loyalty goes out the window.

OHHH, poor old sign and print guys, will you have to wait till your clients bounce out of this slump? Well, I guess that's one method, I hope you get lucky. Stay on a road to "poor old you, your business is in a downturn, things are bad" and oh what a shame. Wake up! THIS IS THE ONLY time that it is generally easy to get an appointment with key buyers in top businesses across the country, because they are under immense pressure to deliver better value to their owners and shareholders.

So, let's GFC it: Growth From Communication. How hard can this be? Here are some real life case

studies from just a handful of my real clients; sorry can't tell you who, but they know who I am talking about. They are the ones rubbing their hands together with large smiles on their faces!

It's NO secret, there's no magic book, no secret formula – just good old common sense. Which is increasingly less common as good news doesn't sell newspapers or increase TV ratings.

Case One:

Sign Company 1: Gets more active in local affairs, he joins local organisations, becomes active in sporting groups. The net result is communication with the community. He builds trust and builds confidence, rekindles old friendships and yes you

guessed it, grew the business by 40 percent and importantly, he has broadened the range and scope of the businesses work style. This was just a small business with just a couple of people.

Case Two:

Sign Company 2: I love this one, a regional long-standing company has injected new growth into the business by the son of the original owner looking at new relationships. All he focused on is looking at whom he would like to do work for and what type of work suits their business either contracted or in house. By simply approaching a nationally recognised client, he was within days quoting their needs and, within the week had an order for over \$60,000. A couple of months later many thousands of dollars in orders have come through. This is a small to medium sized business with 7 – 8 people.

Case Three:

The other night I had dinner with one of the most visionary sign guys in the game. Far be it from struggling, in this economy he has doubled his sales staff, increased the huge family business and things have never looked better. Large business with over 50 staff.

So, if you want to believe all the doom and gloom, you just do what you have been doing. However, if you really want to take your business to the next level then get active, get moving and, let clients



know you are out there. The moment you hear “I didn’t know you guys did that sort of work” you should recognise your marketing and sales efforts are not getting through to your customers.

Now, here are a few tips to use as a checklist for you to grow through communication. At the risk

of repeating this important statement – **This is the ONLY time that it is generally easy to get an appointment with key buyers in top businesses across the country because they are under immense pressure to deliver better value to their owners and shareholders.**

Here are a few tips: (Also download our full communication checklist on www.kim.net.au/downloads)

- Get to know your Best 20 Clients.
- Get to know your Clients Better – Turn customers into clients.
- Get Social – Use Social Networking.
- eNewsletters – will drive your business.
- Website – Does it really look like you are in business.
- Dump your worst clients to have more time to develop better ones.
- Categorise your clients.
- Build your knowledge.
- Attend trade shows
- Consider exhibiting at an exhibition or tradeshow.
- Rebrand your business – Invigorate.

Summary: These are the cornerstones to successful business communication, not just in the sign and print game but EVERYWHERE. If you are walking around whining about no work or poor prices, the best trick ‘Get with the program!’ I can’t say this enough times, ‘tell your customer or clients YOU want their business and look like you deserve it. 

