SPEAKING EVENT NOTES
presented by mike michalowicz

SESSION: **Introduction to The Pumpkin Plan**
The method for rapidly growing a business that (for now) has plateaued.

LENGTH: 1 Hour Presentation

PRESENTER: Mike Michalowicz, Author of The Pumpkin Plan | CEO of Provendus Group

CONSULTING: Want to discuss ways to grow your business? Contact Mike and the team!

MORE INFO: Mike's Bio (Wikipedia) | Mike's Bio (PDF) | Mike's Website

BOOKS: The Pumpkin Plan | The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

Predicting the business owners future

1. Where you are in business today is a direct result of your last 5 years of decisions and actions.
2. 5 years prior to that was predicated by the decisions and actions you made, and so on, and so on.
3. If your pattern of decisions and actions stay generally the same, the results 5 years from today will be exactly as the results you are experiencing now.
4. 5 years from that the results will be the same, too. The pattern will repeat until you can no longer work.
5. For many business owners the result is exhaustingly hard work that has resulted in little savings and little to show for it. Many entrepreneurs look back on their business life with regret.
6. This is the trap of the "time for money" entrepreneur and the "if only" entrepreneur.

The change required is only 5%

1. A successful change for a business that is plateaued or an entrepreneur who is stuck, typically only requires a 5% change.
2. Most of what they are doing is right, but changing that 5% results in a 95% improvement. The 5% change is the method of The Pumpkin Plan.

3. Analogy – A plane that is flying from New York to Los Angeles that starts off and remains off course by 5% will actually fly to Canada or Mexico. The longer you are off by 5% you get further and further from your actual goal.

4. A pumpkin farmer grows ordinary pumpkins. A colossal pumpkin farmer grows pumpkins that are more than 100 times larger, by only changing 5% of the pumpkin growing strategy.

5. The parallels between growing a pumpkin and a business are nearly identical. Change 5% of the growing steps for a pumpkin and it responds with explosive growth, naturally. Change 5% of the growing steps for a business and it responds with explosive growth, naturally.

SECTION 2 – SEED SELECTION

Ordinary versus colossal farming

1. The ordinary pumpkin farmer is in the “quantity game.” The more seeds he can plant the better he is served.

2. The ordinary pumpkin farmer wants cheap, easy to attain seeds, so he can plant them everywhere in his field.

3. The colossal pumpkin farmer is in the “quality game.” She plants only the few seeds that have the greatest likelihood of growing explosively. The rest of the seeds are ignored.

4. The colossal pumpkin farmer wants the seeds with the most potential. Seeds that are suited best for the environment, the soil, and the climate.

5. The ordinary entrepreneur is defined as the entrepreneur stuck in the “time for money” trap of trying to grow by working harder or the “if only” trap of wishing that if they only had one more big client, or a company to buy them out, or a few more hours in the day (none of which every happens).

6. The colossal entrepreneur is defined as an entrepreneur who has a scalable business that can grow to any size or quality they want, without them needing to work harder.

7. Colossal, in the business sense, doesn’t just mean the largest company. It also means the healthiest, the strongest, the most heralded. It is the leading company in its niche.

Finding the Sweet Spot

1. Ordinary entrepreneurs follow trends and “get rich quick” opportunities with disregard for their unique strengths and differentiators. Recent trends included real estate, web development and social media.

2. Colossal entrepreneurs pick the most promising “seed” which is the Sweet Spot for their business. The match their Unique Offering (Passion/Style/Tone) with their Top Clients with their ability to Systematize. Download an example chart of Sweet Spot.

3. Any business in any industry, established or new, can find a sweet spot. For example, Vibram shoes did it with the 5 finger shoe, while Ugg did it with boots and Crocs with sandals.

4. ACTION – Identify your Sweet Spot (use this graphic for assistance). Any business, old or new, can and must have clarity on it’s Sweet Spot.

SECTION 3 – SPROUT OBSERVATION

Help the weak versus focus on the strong

1. As ordinary farmers look for sprouts coming through the soil, they look to help the weakest ones to take root. The logic is that the strong sprouts can fend for themselves, but the weak ones need help.

2. As the colossal farmer looks for sprouts coming through the soil, he looks for the strongest. His logic is that the strongest have the most potential to grow to extraordinary size. He ignores the weak sprouts and lets them die. He caters to the strong and does everything to make them stronger.

3. The ordinary entrepreneur focuses on the weak. He puts his efforts in serving the “squeaky wheel,” and the most demanding clients. In his business he tries to constantly fix what is broken. He does not try or even have time to improve what is working (he believes, it is working after all so there is no need to work on it).

4. The colossal entrepreneur focuses on the strong. He puts his efforts in serving the best clients even better. He builds systems and methods that streamlines what is working. At the same time he seeks ways to remove what is not working. He quickly gets rid of the weak “squeaky wheel” clients. He masters the process of servicing the best clients better then they could imagine. Then he sets out to clone his best clients.

Clone the best, dump the rest

1. Imagine your best client. The one that pays you well (potentially the most) and you love working with them. Now imagine having 10 of those clients. How about 100 or 1000? Your company would skyrocket in success and growth. You would likely lead your industry. The colossal entrepreneur sets out to "clone" his best clients.

2. Imagine your worst client. The one that barely pays you (possibly not even paying you on time or at all) and you hate working with them. Think about how much wasted time you spend on them and never make up for in revenue. Now imagine the time and anxiety that would be freed up if you removed your worst clients. Your company would now have the space (time and resources) to take on more of your best client.

3. The colossal pumpkin farmer and colossal entrepreneur remove the weak pumpkins (clients) as fast as possible, since they drain growth potential from the pumpkins (clients and niches) with the most potential.

Finding the best clients

1. People "speak" the truth through their wallets, not their words. Judge clients by their actions. Repeated purchases is strong indicator of the customers adoration for your offering. Affirming words like "I love what you do" or "I would absolutely buy what you have" are of little value. Money talks.

2. Assess your existing clients using the Client Assessment Chart. A spreadsheet for this process can be downloaded on this resource page.

3. The top clients are the ones that generated the most revenue over the last 12 months (or 24 months) AND you love working with (you don't cringe when they call) AND nets you a top hourly wage (the revenue they generate divided by the time you spend on them).

4. With the top clients identified, set out to learn EVERYTHING about them. Why do they use you, what can you do better, what other vendors do they use (for other services/products), where do they network, where do clients like them congregate, etc.

5. The extraordinary entrepreneur knows that when he learns everything about his best client, he will find the client's clones. Birds of a feather, flock together.

6. ACTION – Conduct the Client Assessment on your clients now.

SECTION 4 – WATERING

Water in smaller amounts more often

1. Ordinary farmers use massive watering systems that drench the soil (and the sprouts) one time per day. The water “everywhere” with one “big dose.”

2. Colossal farmers water the promising sprouts frequently in smaller “doses.” They may water a plant up to ten times a day, with just the right amount. It keeps the plant quenched and constantly growing.

3. Ordinary entrepreneurs use the same broad/massive watering system by marketing everywhere. The run an ad, they go to the chambers of commerce, they start a networking group, they are active in all forms of social media , they start a blog. They do all they can in every area. In other words, they are not in any one spot long enough, and when they are doing something they do too much for a too short period of time.

4. The extraordinary entrepreneur focuses their marketing efforts on where their top clients go. If the top clients go to specific trade shows, the entrepreneur goes there. If the top clients are active on a specific social media platforms, the entrepreneur goes exactly to those spots. Where the top clients are not, the extraordinary is not.

Frequency

1. The colossal entrepreneur leverages the behavioral influence of frequency by “watering” the same spots.

2. Frequency gives prospects and clients the sense that “you are everywhere.” Since they see you often, they feel you are everywhere.

3. When a prospect or client sees you often they begin to automatically know, like and trust you more.

4. Prospects and clients are much more likely to buy from companies they know, like and trust - even if that companies offering costs more than alternatives.

5. As an example, Coca-Cola sells more than generic brands of soda because it uses frequency through advertising.

6. Small businesses can use this technique just a easily by achieving frequency in their niche.

SECTION 5 – THE ROOT SYSTEM

The "Vendor Well" source of "clones"

1. Ordinary farmers determine the health of plants by surface level observations. The health of the leaves are a quick indicator of a plant's health.

2. The colossal farmer looks under the soil (using special gear) to determine the health of the root system.

3. Ultimately damaged leaves or even pumpkins can sustain, but if the root system gets cut the entire vine will die immediately. The root system is the key to growth of colossal pumpkins (or any pumpkin for that matter).

4. The ordinary entrepreneur focuses on surface growth. She looks for client referrals (just like we all have been trained).

5. The ordinary entrepreneur often builds a process to get referrals, and he is surprised when referrals don't happen or bad referrals are made.

6. The truth is customers feel uncomfortable about giving you referrals when you ask for them. In short, you are saying the money they just paid you for your service/product is not enough and that you want a referral to their friends and contacts also.

7. The colossal entrepreneur looks to build the "root system". The root system is complementary vendors, other vendors provide different products/services to your top clients.

Creating the Vendor Well

1. Colossal entrepreneurs ask clients for the other vendors they use and recommend. These are "complementary vendors", ones that service your client (and likely clients just like them) and provide a service/product that your client also needs along with yours.

2. Top clients will gladly refer you to complementary vendors, since by knowing each other you can likely serve that top client even better.

3. When you call upon a complementary vendor you explain that you have a mutual client and want to serve them better by knowing (and serving) the complementary vendor better.

4. Now you are networking with a vendor that is likely to have more clients just like your shared Top Client. Ask the complementary vendor for introductions to other Top Clients. Since you are not a threat, but a complement, they will likely refer you.

5. Repeat this process with all Top Clients and identify each and every complementary vendor they use.

SECTION 6 – PULLING, PRUNING & KILLING

The biggest killers of pumpkins

1. Do you know what kills more pumpkins than a dry season, bad soil or limited sun? It's weeds and other pumpkins. Weeds and other pumpkins steal nutrients and light from each other. Diseased pumpkins spread the disease to other pumpkins.

2. The colossal farmer looks for diseased pumpkins and at the first sign of disease removes it from the vine.

3. The colossal farmer constantly yanks weeds, prunes useless growth and kills inadequate and diseased pumpkins.

4. The colossal entrepreneur constantly yanks "weeds," which are often distraction that are labeled as "opportunities." She prunes and removes processes and actions that are not bringing results. She instantly kills off pumpkins (niches, clients) that are pulling resources from her colossal pumpkin.

The 3 Questions

1. Colossal entrepreneurs use three questions to identify if a new "opportunity" is truly an opportunity for their business, including:

    - Does this opportunity better serve my Top Client niche?
    - Does this opportunity better differentiate my AOI (Area of Innovation)?
    - Does this opportunity maintain or grow my bottom line?

2. Only when the colossal entrepreneur can say yes to all three of these questions about any new opportunity do they decide to proceed.

Yes vs. No

1. Ordinary entrepreneurs are yes men. They say yes to "opportunities" ten times more then they say no.

2. Colossal entrepreneurs have exclusive focus on growing what is working. They say no to "opportunities" ten times more then they say yes.

SECTION 7 – ALL THE ATTENTION

All-in-bet

1. Colossal farmers do everything to make the colossal pumpkin a prize winner. They make an "all-in-bet" on it. The protect it with shade tarps, fences and even pitbulls.
2. Ordinary farmers know "many will make it" and many others will die. It is a quantity game after all.
3. The only way to ever grow a colossal pumpkin is by going all in on making it happen.

The Guarantee

1. At the end of the day there is only one guarantee and, ironically, it is for the ordinary farmer. He will NEVER grow a colossal pumpkin. His process prohibits it. From the seed on, he is guaranteeing he will not grow anything beyond ordinary.
2. The colossal farmer might not grow a colossal pumpkin. The climate may not allow it. Hail may kill it. The pumpkin may split under its own weight.
3. But the colossal farmer knows that if he fails to grow a colossal pumpkin this season, she will try again next season. There is always another season. She also knows that the formula works, it was just other external factors that prevented it from happening.
4. The colossal entrepreneur uses The Pumpkin Plan in their business. If the business fails, they simply go for it again next year. They know the formula works.

SECTION 8 – CONCLUSION

1. The Pumpkin Plan is a "natural" formula that results in colossal growth. Just like the pumpkin organism responds with rapid, strong growth, the business organism responds the same way.
2. Business leaders are often afraid to try The Pumpkin Plan, because of the risk that it might not work. The remedy to the fear is simple, turn fear on itself.
3. Simply think about where you are today. It is the result of what you have done the last 5 years. If you continue to do what you are doing, 5 years from today you will be where you are today, and will stay stuck there until the end.
4. Become more afraid of where you are today and of staying there, then taking the "risk" of Pumpkin Planning your business.



DIG DEEPER

Do you want to have Mike Michalowicz speak at an event for your association, group or business?

Mike presents keynotes and workshops to groups of all size throughout the country and internationally. Please contact melanie@mikemichalowicz.com to book Mike for your event!

Need a professional consultant to help you Pumpkin Plan your business?

Provendus Group provides consulting services for businesses and corporations looking to apply The Pumpkin Plan method in their business. For more information contact us at Info@ProvendusGroup.com.

Want to help others Pumpkin Plan their business?

Provendus Group is seeking the most talented and professional business coaches and consults to work with us at our rapidly growing firm. If you would like to be considered for a consulting partnership with Provendus please contact Donna.Leyens@ProvendusGroup.com.

MIKE'S BOOKS

THE PUMPKIN PLAN



Who would have ever thought, that the key to explosive entrepreneurial success was held by pumpkin farmers? Just as almost every pumpkin farmer grows ordinary Halloween carving pumpkins, most entrepreneurs grow ordinary, unremarkable businesses. Yet by tweaking their approach in small ways, farmers can grow giant, prize-winning pumpkins that get all the attention and press coverage. In The Pumpkin Plan, Mike Michalowicz—author of the perennial "business cult classic" The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur—reveals how applying the same few simple methods farmers use to grow colossal prize-winning pumpkins can lead entrepreneurs to grow colossally successful businesses.

Read It Now!

THE TOILET PAPER ENTREPRENEUR



It is real. It is raw. It is entrepreneurship. Never started a company before? Struggling with little or no cash? Have no experience, no baseline to judge your progress against? Thank God! You've got a shot at making this work." So says Mike Michalowicz, author of The Toilet Paper Entrepreneur, a business book that is so uniquely useful, so raw and entertaining, it reads like the brainchild of Steve Jobs and Chris Rock. Whether you're just starting out or have been at this for years, Mike's "get real" approach to business is a much needed swift kick in the pants.

Read It Now!

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