

THE BIG GROWTH GUIDE



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Where It All Begins ...

I have a friend named Phil. (Actually, he's kind of a friend. He was married to a girl I went to school with for a while, until she ran away with a guy from IT. I digress.)

Phil can most charitably be described as salt of the earth. He owns a large, loud truck with a number in its name. In 20 years, there have been four occasions on which I have seen him wearing anything other than plaid flannel or a Montreal Canadiens sweatshirt, and those were his own wedding, my step-father's funeral, divorce court and jury duty.

He is a millwright, he has not completed formal education past twelfth grade, and when he sends texts, they say things like, "r u comn over?"

To my knowledge, he has never considered running a business. When I was looking for someone to test a business theory on, he was my man.

I gave Phil an offer. I said, "Phil, I want to test a theory. I need 15 minutes or less. If you can answer two questions, I'll buy you a Guinness."

Long pause. "Sure." (Actually, he didn't say that. He said, "****, yeah!" but this is a family publication.)

Backstory: For a long time, the coffee shop in the neighborhood of my office was a community institution. For some reason, it is closed, and it has been replaced by a new kid in town, Fireroasted. Phil is a fiercely loyal customer, first of the original coffee shop, and now of Fireroasted.

Here's a little transcript of my exchange with Phil.

Naomi: Okay. Question number one. Do you have any ideas for how Fireroasted could grow their business?

Phil looks at Naomi like she has three heads. Or like he's waiting for her to stop speaking Aramaic and get to the question. The pause lasts a long time.

Phil: I have no ****ing idea.

[Naomi smiles.]

Phil: I guess I'm paying for my own beer, huh?

Naomi: No, you did great. You answered the question. Can I ask the next one?

Phil: Sure. Why the **** not?

Naomi: If they had between \$100 and \$250 to spend, can you name three things Fireroasted could do to increase their new customer base?

Phil: Like, new customers?

Naomi: New customers.

Phil: Like, people who don't already go there?

Naomi: People who don't already go there.

Phil: They could print flyers.

Naomi: Thank you. That's one.

Phil: They could put an ad in the Metro.

Naomi: Great. That's two.

Phil: They could hire a kid to stand out front and hand out coupons.

Naomi: And that's three. You did great. Enjoy your game.

Phil: That's it?

Naomi: That's it.

Phil got his beer and I got my point proven. Ask a specific enough question, and you start coming up with answers instead of "I have no ****ing idea".

Now, let's kick things off by talking about what this all means for you.

Part One: The Premise

If you happen to have taken any IttyBiz training in the past, you'll know that we cut to the chase pretty quickly. You've got things to do. We want you to get doing those things as soon as possible. So the cutting to the chase will now commence.

The task of growing your business is a relatively simple one. It is actually not as complicated or nuanced as most of us believe, and the path to growth is not a closely guarded secret, protected by dragons and watched over by vestal virgins.

As we said earlier, we've been through this discussion with a lot of people so far. The real roadblock people face when it comes to growth is getting the "right" level of specificity about what they're trying to do.

(Did you see how we put "right" in quotation marks? We want you to pay attention to this part.)

The more specificity you have about what you're trying to achieve, the more intuitively the answers will tend to come to you. Those two things are directly proportional.

- *Less* specificity on your part means that coming up with the "what to do" will be *less* intuitive to you.
- *More* specificity on your part means that coming up with the "what to do" will be *more* intuitive to you.

In other words, if you're having trouble growing your business – or even figuring out *how* to grow your business – **you probably don't have a growth problem, you have a specificity problem.**

The trick is in nailing down what *specificity* means.

Once you do that, the path to the growth you want will generally become clear in short order. And that's the premise of this whole thing.

We'll talk more about specificity on the next page.

A little word about specificity.

As far as we're concerned in this guidebook, specificity can be defined as either:

a) "Give me a specific *metric* with a specific number attached."

or,

b) "Give me a specific *action* that will cause a specific metric to increase."

This, in the parlance of our times, can also be called **"Tell me how to win the game."**

That part was in bold, because it holds the wisdom of the universe within it. If you don't know how to win the game, you cannot play the game with any hope of success, because the criteria for winning isn't clear. In fact, your goalpost itself can change at any time, based on whims and moods and how stressed you are that day.

And your brain, clever organ that it is, knows that.

And when your brain realizes that there is no clear way to win, you know what it does?

It bails on you, totally and completely. Just like it does in any other area of life. Let's look at relationships as an example.

Most people have had the experience of being in a relationship with someone who simply *cannot be satisfied*. They tell you they'd be happier if the house was cleaner, but even if you clean like crazy, they're still complaining that it's not enough. They tell you they want more time to themselves (or more time together), but even when you make that available, the complaints still come.

After a while, you start to tune them out. You know the deck is stacked against you. You stop trying so much, because you know you can't win. It's depressing. Because even if you were to ask them the question "Can you tell me *specifically* what would make you happy?" you wouldn't get a straight answer.

So you bail. You're not going to waste any more brainpower trying to play a game that has no objective criteria for winning.

Now, if that person were to *finally* answer something specific like: "You know what? I'd really like the downstairs to be clean enough for company, and I'd like to have a date night on Fridays", two things would happen.

One, the earth would spin off it's axis. (Let's not think about that too much.)

Two, **you would be able to figure out how to win.** And you'd likely feel very creative and very motivated to get things moving. Soon you're having company over more often and having Saturday hangovers that you don't regret one little bit.

The same is true for your business. Go figure.

Avoid specificity, and your brain will avoid helping you.

Get specificity, and your brain is off to the races.

Look! A little chart to help us over-hit on our point:

Your brain ignores you when you say this:	And pays attention when you say this:
"I want to make more money."	"I want to make \$10,000 more than I made last year."
"I want to get more people signing up for my mailing list."	"I want to increase my mailing list subscribers from 5 per week to 15 per week."
"I want to get more clients."	"I want to grow from 1 client a month to 3 clients a month."
"I want to sell a lot of books on Amazon."	"I want to get to my first 500 books sold on Amazon."

Take out the vague words, replace them with something specific and measurable, and wonder of wonders, you can now start making a plan.

Here's a little rule of thumb on specificity:

If a reasonably intelligent genie in a bottle were to hear your request and still need to ask "Before I get started, can you tell me what you mean by that so I get it right?" ... **you're not being specific enough.**

While we're down here: A note about the use of the word "more".

Tony Robbins used to have this little shtick where he'd ask someone "Would you be a lot happier if you had more money?". They would say "Absolutely!" He would then place a quarter in their hand and ask, "Are you a lot happier now?"

The person would then glare at Tony and say "You know what I mean."

No. Tony does not know what you mean. And neither does your brain when you phrase your growth goals as generalities.

Generalities in this context are the human animal's clever way to *pretend* that it knows what it wants instead of thinking clearly about whether that thing will actually be satisfying. It's like a mental shortcut that over-shoots to (in it's own dysfunctional way) guarantee success.

This why dreaming about winning the lottery is so attractive. You win the lottery, and you get to pay off your bills, your credit cards, your car, your house, and your student loans, all without thinking about anything. See how easy that was? And you'll never have to think about whether or not to add those extra items to your grocery cart, either. It's like your brain gets to retire from math, forever. Sweet, huh?

But if you were to take, say, five minutes, and add up all of those numbers – the bills, the credit cards, etc. – you'd have a specific number. Let's say it's something like \$126,343, just for fun. Now the human animal realizes that number is real, and it will take real strategic thinking to figure out how to do it. Where's the fun in

that? It was a lot more exciting to just think of “more”. Then it didn’t have to think about **doing** anything to make it happen.

The human brain will take every shortcut you give it permission to take. The trick you need to pull off is making it answer the question: **How much?**

Part Two: The Promise

It would be wonderful if we could promise you that at the end of this guide, you will have all of your hopes and dreams come true, you would have riches beyond measure and that your life was going to be paradise.

(It would also be wonderful if we had that genie we mentioned on the previous page. We have some very specific things we’d like to ask for.)

In lieu of that, we can offer you this promise:

If you answer the questions we give you in this guidebook, you will end up with three things:

- A significantly higher chance of success in getting measurable growth
- A much better plan than you have right now, and
- A plan that will require less work than you thought.

Notice that we only said “if you answer the questions”. You don’t even have to do anything yet. The doing is up to you and has nothing to do with the planning. All we’re talking about here is answering a few questions and putting a few things down in writing so they have specificity.

It is our contention that the real reason people aren’t growing their business is because they simply have not thought the process through.

Who's to blame for that? Everybody and nobody. It's not like they teach "Critical Thinking 101" to kids in school. (So don't waste any time beating yourself up.) The culture supports – and even encourages – not thinking so hard about the details. It kills the "lottery buzz" – and we all subconsciously know that kind of thinking is contagious.

But you're going to learn Critical Thinking 101 now. And once you learn to answer the right questions, the path typically becomes clear (or clear enough to get started with confidence).

So! Let's look at how we're going to make those three promises happen for you.

Promise #1: A significantly higher chance of success in getting measurable growth.

If you're in a "lottery buzz" haze, you're likely to be bouncing around doing a bunch of things that are "good things to do to grow your business". Anything that smacks of possibility will look like a good idea. Shiny Object Syndrome and distractions will do a fantastic job of seeming like A Good Idea Right Now.

Specificity turns that around. When you have a specific thing you're trying to do to create a specific result, **the only things that will seem like a good idea are the things that stand a very good chance of getting that result.** Distractions and shiny objects get exposed for what they are.

Plus, it's something you can actually measure. "Making it big" isn't measurable on an ongoing basis. "Getting the website up to 1,000 visitors a day" is. Guess which one is more likely to happen.

Promise #2: A much better plan than you have right now.

Remember what we said about the brain liking to take shortcuts? We're back to that topic again.

You have an idea (or a plan) for what you want to do. Your brain thinks you're done. (Yay! It can clock out for the day.) But chances are you haven't evaluated that plan more than once. (Actually, chances are you haven't really evaluated that plan at all.)

It is human nature – at least for a great many of us – to think we have the best or most appropriate plan after just a short window of consideration. But experience proves that wrong – just remember all the times you've said "I wish I would have thought of that earlier" or "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

We're going to get you thinking **now** about those things, so your "good idea" can become "very likely the best idea", before you even start taking any action on it.

Promise #3: A plan that will require less work than you thought.

We can promise this because a lightly-thought-out plan will generally require a lot more work than a well-thought-out plan, for a number of reasons:

- a) When you take the time to think out your execution and look for opportunities to do things faster or more effectively, you will usually find them.
- b) When you compare your current plan to entirely different options, you will likely find an easier way to accomplish what you want to.
- c) When you look for additional or supplementary "low hanging fruit" outside of your plan that will support your objectives, it takes the burden off your plan to produce as much.

All this means less work for you. That's in bold so your brain notices it, and says "Ooh, I like less work! I'm in the business of shortcuts!"

Except this guidebook isn't really about shortcuts. It's about thinking things through so you don't accidentally take the long way.

**Now, it's about time we
got this party started, right?**

On the following pages we'll walk you through the questions that you need to ask yourself when you're thinking about growing your ittybiz, and we'll explain what you need to do for each one.

Then you'll see a number of worksheets that you can print out and use to go through the process. (If you prefer not to print things out, you can just answer the questions on whatever medium you like.)

So. Let's get you on the path to faster, easier growth for your ittybiz.

(Cue fanfare, and turn the page.)

Part Three: Initial Questions

1a) What kind of growth are you after, *ultimately*? Is it money, for money's sake? Is it something else measurable, for its own reasons? Write down what kind of growth you are after, and why you want to achieve this growth.

What we're looking at here is your big picture, what this is all in aid of. We don't care what it is, and we don't care why you want it, but you're a lot more likely to get it if you can clearly identify those two things.

Example answers for your **ultimate** objective:

- "I want to grow my business to \$120,000, because I believe that will support a specific lifestyle I want."
- "I want to grow my website traffic to 100,000 visitors a month, because I think it will put me in the top tier in my industry."
- "I want to grow my list by 10,000 people, because I believe that will give me a base large enough to create the income I need to quit my day job."
- "I want to grow my sales to \$40,000 a year, because that will really stick it to a few key people who think I can't do it."

Again, we don't care why your answer is what it is. We just want to get a specific metric, and a specific reason why you want it. (Incidentally, that last reason was mine, many moons ago. I have a lot of Aries in my astrological chart. I'm childish like that.)

1b) Have you evaluated whether that objective will give you what you think it will? (Or that it at least stands a reasonable chance of doing so?)

We ask this question so you can double-check things right from the start and see if we need to modify the original ultimate objective.

Look at the examples above again.

- **We want to know if \$120,000 will truly support the lifestyle that person wants**, or if the truly accurate number should be higher or lower. Five figures a month sounds hot and sexy, but is it arbitrary?
- **We want to know if 100,000 monthly website visitors will truly put that person in the top tier of their industry**, or if they need more (or fewer), or if there are other factors they also need as well.
- **We want to know if there's data to support that 10,000 list subscribers will help that person quit their day job**. Could they theoretically do it with less? Do they actually need more?

Should they actually be looking at money instead? Is it a moot point anyway because they suck at selling, and they need to fix that first?

- **We want to know if getting an extra \$40,000 in sales will really give that person the ability to stick it to the naysayers**. Could they do it with less, because the issue is really one of proving viability?

Do they need that exact number because the person they want to stick it to said they'd never accomplish that? Will the people in question still scoff anyway, calling it a fluke, and it's all for naught?

Here's how you'll know you have a sufficiently strong answer to this question:

If someone asks you "Why will X lead to Y?", and you can calmly and confidently say "I'd be happy to show you the details", you're solid.

“Because I want it to work that way” doesn’t count. That’s just your brain trying to clock out early.

Once you’ve vetted your ultimate objective, you’re ready to move on to the next question.

1c) What kind of growth are you after in the short term? What feels like the path that gets you moving in that direction? This isn’t what you want to “do”, it’s what you want to “have.”

Here we’re looking for a clear picture of your path, or trajectory, with a specific reason why. (We’re not getting to the metric just yet, so you don’t need numbers here.)

Examples could be:

- I want to more people walking into my shop every month, because increased foot traffic will help drive up existing sales.
- I want to more people getting on to my mailing list, because that will give me more people to sell to.
- I want more people clicking through to my online store, because more traffic will help drive up existing sales.
- I want more potential clients getting in touch with me, because that gives me more people I can convert to paying clients.

1d) Have you evaluated whether that objective will give you what you think it will? (Or that it at least stands a reasonable chance of doing so?)

Here we’re doing what we did before – we’re double-checking to see if X leads to Y.

We’re specifically checking for two things:

One, is there an intermediary step we’re missing?

If you want to get more people to your website because you have a money objective, but you really don't have anything for them to buy yet, does resolving that need to happen first?

If you want to grow your brand recognition so more people will buy from you, does awareness really accomplish that? Or do we need to actually focus on getting more people into your shop?

Two, are we dealing with “zero data”?

Is this a situation where “growth” won't actually lead to the objective, because what you're currently doing is giving you zero in terms of results?

If you have 1,000 people on your list but nobody's buying, will having 5,000 people on your list help? Or do you really need to grow your sales skills instead?

If you have 100 people looking at your product or service each month but nobody's buying, would having 500 people look help? Or do you need to work on your packaging or sales copy instead?

Check for “zero data” here so you don't go down the wrong path. Make sure you're addressing the real issue.

1e) What are you thinking of doing in order to begin getting growth in that area, and what ballpark metric can you assign to that?

Here's where we look at your current plan or idea, and get specific about what you are going to do to make your short-term growth objective happen. (Here's where we get specific enough for the genie.)

Examples could include:

- I'm thinking of creating a free buying guide to digital cameras so that more of the people who already come to my website will sign up to my mailing list. I'd like to increase my current three signups-per-day to 15.
- I'm thinking of paying some college students to wear a dragon costume and hold a sign outside my store so more passers-by will come in. I'd like to take my foot traffic from 10 people a day to 20.
- I'm thinking of writing a book about yoga for back pain relief and launching it on Amazon so I can start generating some extra money that's not service-related. I'd like to generate \$500 in sales per month.

All three of those are specific, in two important ways.

- **They're specific in execution.** The genie would not have to ask "What's your free buying guide about?" or "What would the college students do?" or "What's the book about?". The genie would intuitively get it.
- **They're specific in outcomes.** Taking three signups a day to 15. Getting foot traffic up by 10 people. Making \$500 per month. The genie would know how to win the game.

Now, on to the final question for this section:

1f) Why did you pick that number as opposed to any other number?

What we're looking for is why this number made the cut, out of all the other numbers you could have chosen.

Why is it not double that? Half that? Three-quarters that? Is this a number that just popped into your head or sounds sexy, or is it a number that you believe will give you a certain thing? Or satisfy a certain desire? Or is it simply that the number sounded like a good place to start for the short term?

There's no wrong answer here. But we do need to have an answer that you could credibly say out loud to another person, with a straight face.

Once you can do that, you have a specific goal, with a specific objective, that has a credible and defensible purpose behind it.

Now you have something you can run with.

(But hold on, tiger - we're about to drop a bomb on the whole thing.)

Part Four: Evaluating Other Options

Now, we're going to do something really crazy.

We're going to take that wonderfully precise statement you crafted, the one that looks like such a good idea, and **we're going to pretend it doesn't exist**. It's currently off the table.

(Don't worry, though. It doesn't have to *stay* off the table. We're just going to put it down for the moment, and you can always pick it up again after you're done. There's no danger here. Nothing's being taken away.)

But for the moment, we're just going to play a little imagination game where we pretend that, for the immediate future, your current plan is simply not possible.

If it's hard to imagine a reason that could be, then simply imagine I'm waving a check for \$100,000 in front of you that you are allowed to have only after you answer a few more questions. (That's a lot better than the free beer Phil got!)

So, let's begin the imagination game with this starting point:

Think back to the short-term objective you wanted to achieve, outside of the execution.

For the purposes of this example, let's imagine we're dealing with that person with the photography website, who wanted to take his daily signups from three people to 15.

That's the "what", and we're going to put his existing "how" aside for the moment. Now he can't make his buying guide.

Picture your own short-term objective, if you have one already prepared, and turn the page to begin our imagination game.

Let the questions begin!

2a) If you excluded the thing you're planning on doing as an option, what other things could a person do to achieve your short-term objective?

(You don't have to consider doing them, but what things could a person do instead?)

What we're looking at here are alternate options that would do the same job of impacting the metric you are interested in. They do not have to be as effective as your original idea – we don't care about that for the moment – but they do have to be things that can move the needle in the same direction.

(Oh, and the reason the above question says "what other things could *a person* do" rather than "what other things could *you* do" is to free you from the limitations your brain has on what's possible or not possible for you.

This is an imagination game. We want your imagination to work at full capacity – so think of what *a person* could do, not what you feel like *you* could do.)

So, for our person who initially wanted to increase daily list signups from three to 15 with a shiny new incentive, here are some potential other things that he could do:

- He could put a note in his existing newsletters encouraging subscribers to share them with other people. That would likely increase traffic to his website and foster additional signups.
- He could also put a note at the bottom of his newsletters that said, “Did someone forward this to you? If you like what you see and you’d like to get on the list as well, click here to subscribe.” That could not only boost the chance of people sharing his newsletter, but also make it easier for new people to get on his list.
- He could add a pop-up to his website to encourage people to subscribe. That alone might take his signups up significantly, if he did it in a way that wouldn’t turn people off.
- He could revise his existing copy that entices people to sign up for his mailing list. Changing it from “Subscribe to my newsletter” to “Get free weekly photography tips that can take years off of your learning curve” might move the needle significantly.
- He could shell out \$25 or so to a freelancer to make his current signup box look much more compelling. If it’s rather uninspiring at the moment, adding some visual elements that pop might spike his signups right off the bat, with no other changes necessary. (Hint: When all else fails, add a red arrow.)
- He could check to see if there are places on his website where he could give additional calls to action. Adding a link at the bottom of every article saying, “Click here to get free weekly photography tips” or inserting a signup banner ad in the middle of his posts might get even

more people signing up.

- He could add a picture of himself in his website header to boost the personal feel of the place, which might increase a sense of friendly rapport and make people more interested in signing up to his list.
- He could change his website tagline from “Photography tips to help you take better pictures” to “Great photography tips (and even more available in my free newsletter!)” and pre-warm new visitors for signing up, right from the start.
- He could add a link in his email signature so that every person he is already personally emailing sees “Click here to get free weekly photography tips” at the bottom of his emails.
- He could make an online archive of ten of his previous newsletters so that people could see what’s inside and decide if they want to join – and then link to it frequently in his regular content. A few simple cuts-and-pastes, and he’s primed to get more signups.

Now these are just ten things that flew off the top of my head. Notice how almost all of them would require less than 15 minutes of work. (Or a very small amount of money for those who don’t do their own tech.)

These 10 things could potentially take this guy’s signups from three people a day to 15 people a day, with almost no significant work involved. Sure, he could do the new incentive and accomplish the same thing, but it’s very helpful to know that there are already other, easier options available if he wants them.

On to the next question!

2b) If you excluded your original short-term goal as an option, what other things could a person do to achieve your ultimate objective?

(Again, you don't have to consider doing them, but what things could a person do instead?)

Now, we're taking a step back from your short-term objective – the initial trajectory you hope will take you to your ultimate goal – and we're looking at what you want to accomplish in the long run.

That means we're excluding both your original idea AND your original trajectory. So let's say that the person we're using for our handy example ultimately wants his list signups to increase because that's a trajectory that will take him to growing to an additional \$40,000 in revenue.

(This revenue, for the sake of example, might come from selling photography training books, affiliate links to cameras and equipment on Amazon, and his own local photography business. And while we're at it, this guy needs a name. Let's call him Mike.)

So, Mike wants an extra \$40,000, and he's currently thinking it will come from list signups where he can pitch his books, insert affiliate links, and grab local clients.

But what if we took the trajectory of "increasing list signups" off the table? What else could Mike do to grow revenue by \$40,000?

Well, let's play our imagination game again. Here are a few ideas:

- Mike could create a few more books and sell those, too. Provided his existing books are selling reasonably well, adding a few more could boost his income. So that's one option.
- Mike could run some Google or Facebook ads that target local people searching for a photographer. Forget about the people who already visit his website – this could be a perfectly straightforward path to more

clients.

- Mike could print a t-shirt that says “Professional Photographer For Hire – Come And Say Hello” and wear it when he’s out and about. (Don’t laugh – many successful service providers created their original stable base of clients by doing this *one* thing.)
- Mike could up his game and write more review articles on his website, giving him more opportunities to make money off of people buying tripods and lenses and whatnots. Instead of once a month, he could do one a week and stand to make more money.
- Mike could also take a single day off work and cruise SEO websites to learn more about search engine optimization. That alone could get all of his review articles ranking higher, getting him more traffic and more affiliate sales.
- Mike could also link more liberally to his books on his website, which would get more people seeing the books in the first place. He could do the same in his newsletter and see existing sales increase.
- Mike could decide to raise his profile and reputation online by contributing guest articles to other photography-related websites. If Mike starts showing up everywhere, people are going to start assuming he must be a bit of a thing, which could lead to higher conversion when those people visit his website via backlinks. (This would probably also boost his mailing list signups as a delightful side effect.)
- Mike could start giving free talks in his local area about how to take better pictures. Most people scoff at the idea of doing this, but you’d be surprised how effective this can be, from a word-of-mouth perspective alone. (If he wears his custom t-shirt during the talk, and has copies of his books on hand to sell to those who are interested, he could have money flowing before you

know it.)

- Mike could make a “round up” page on his website with all his reviews in one place, separated by category, and link to it liberally. The increased traffic would stand a great chance of driving up sales. He could even take it further by making a nice big banner in his sidebar that says “All my reviews, all in one place! Click here.” That’s money in the bank.
- Mike could pay (or barter with) someone to help him with his specific sales techniques, whether it’s a copywriter helping him improve the sales copy on his website, or a sales coach who could help him improve his ability to close the deal with people he talks to.
- Mike could raise his prices. Most people are undercharging for their products and services, even if it’s just a small amount like 10 or 20 percent. By bringing his prices up to what other competent photographers are charging, he could get an instant raise. He’d just have to get over the natural squeamishness of doing so.
- Mike could offer additional photography services as upsells, maybe even creating bundle packages to boost his local clients’ spending. He could also do the same online with his books. Packages and bundles often convert at a higher percentage rate than standalone items.

There. Another 12 ideas off the top of my head, and all of them have nothing to do with the original short-term trajectory, but still support the ultimate growth objective.

Now, we’re done with this part of the imagination game, and now we move on to the next part to see what we do with all of this.

Part Five: Comparing Your Options

Holy smokes, we have a lot of options now compared to when we started, and this is very good news for you.

We have your original idea, all nice and neatly set up with specificity.

We have lots of other options that can also accomplish (or support) your short-term growth goals.

And we have a whack of options that can also accomplish (or support) your ultimate growth goals.

The picture looks very good for you.

Now, it's time to talk about gladiators.

If you've ever seen the films, or just heard the stories, the gladiator arena is where two rather unlucky fellows have to fight it out to the death for the entertainment of the masses.

Ignore the carnage for a moment, and let's look at how these things play out.

- Sometimes the strongest gladiator wins.
- Sometimes the smartest gladiator wins.
- Sometimes the more creative gladiator wins.
- Sometimes the fastest gladiator wins.
- Sometimes the gladiator who was three inches closer to the pile of weapons wins.
- Sometimes the gladiator who didn't twist his ankle three minutes in like that other poor sap did wins.

- Sometimes the gladiator who simply benefitted from dumb luck wins.

Whatever happens, someone wins. All roads may indeed lead to Rome – each gladiator has his own set of assets and liabilities, and you can never be sure who is going to win.

Nobody with any experience just looks at the two guys and just says “Oh, the guy on the left is going to win because of _____.”

If that were true, sports bets would be a lot easier to collect money on. You have to look at all of the assets, and all of the liabilities, and make an intelligent judgment if you want to boost your odds of being right.

This is true when it comes to sports, it’s true when it comes to investments, it’s true when it comes to gladiators ... and it’s true when it comes to your decision on **what to do to grow your business**.

So, now we’re going to ask two more questions:

3a) Given your ultimate objective, would it make more sense to focus on one or more of the other options you came up with earlier?

Here’s where you’re going to want to take your time and really think about each of those options, based on a few criteria:

- Some options will be easier for you to execute than others.
- Some options will get you results more quickly than others.
- Some options have a higher return on investment than others.

- Some options have a higher probability of success than others.
- Some options will be more likely to succeed because they don't weird you out or make you uncomfortable enough to bail.
- Some options will be out of your comfort zone but still accessible because you're willing to move out of your comfort zone.
- Some options you're naturally suited for and can excel at.
- Some options you already know how to do, and require no learning curve.
- Some options only require investing some money, which is good if your time is limited.
- Some options only require investing time, which is good if your money is limited.

Remember, every option has upsides AND downsides. The important thing to do here is to look at both for each option.

You can't say "Well, advertising costs money, and that's a downside" and "Writing another book is free, so that's a better idea." That's cherry-picking and a very effective way for your brain to avoid doing math.

Doing the math makes it much more likely you will grow. Otherwise your decision making will be on par with the person who buys stocks solely on the basis that he recognizes the company's name. Not exactly the most effective way to make money.

Look at each option and ask yourself what kind of work it would take to do it, what that work would look like, and what the likely outcome is.

Do that for each one.

Then consider whether you want to pick your original trajectory back up, or select one or more of your new options, based on your own personal math.

(This is 50% percent of your grade for Critical Thinking 101. You'll be graduating in mere moments!)

Now, we have the other question, which counts for the other 50% of your grade.

It's on the next page.

3b) Now that you happen to have a handy list of those other “low-hanging fruit” from question 2a (alternatives to your short term objective), does it make sense to do some (or all) of those as well?

Let's say in our imaginary world, Mike decided that he was going to give free talks locally and wear that fetching “Professional Photographer For Hire” t-shirt while selling his books and booking new clients in the back of the room.

Let's also say that it seems to be working quite well for him. Way to go, Mike. And you didn't even have to pay for this guidebook, you little scamp.

Given that a fair number of the alternatives to his original idea (the new list incentive) only required a few minutes of effort and could significantly increase his list growth, would it make sense for him to do some of them too?

Depending on the item, the answer may be yes or no. But there are probably a lot of easy “yes” answers on that list.

Now, once you've gone through the process, you'll have your list of alternative options to your original short-term idea. That leaves you in one of two spots:

- Maybe you've chosen a different trajectory at this point, and you have a whole new path to growth that looks

like a better idea.

- Maybe you've decided to stick with the original idea, but now you have all these low-hanging fruit that could boost your growth numbers if you do them as well.

Either way, now it's time to look at those items and ask yourself if you want to *also do* those things. Whether you're sticking with the original plan or doing something else entirely, they may end up doing a lot for you.

Congratulations! You now get your Critical Thinking 101 course credit. And you stand a chance of making a lot more money to boot.

Before We Get To The Worksheets

You've read this far and you know what to do – all that's left to do is to go through the worksheets and think through your answers.

Again, you can print them out and write on them, or just answer the questions somewhere else. It doesn't matter as long as it gets done.

Before you do that, we have a few recommendations for you:

- 1) If it seems like this will be a lot of work, remind yourself that this is actually much less work than your alternative.**

Remember the examples we went through, and how our imaginary friend Mike found himself with much simpler and much easier options to execute than his original plan.

Every minute you spend thinking about a more intelligent way to proceed saves you hours (or in some cases, weeks or months) going down a more difficult path. *This process is about making sure you don't accidentally take the long way to growth.*

2) If you find it difficult to work through the questions on your own, get someone else to be with you while you do it.

Sometimes just having another human to hang out with you while you talk through the questions can make the process a lot easier. (They're also really good for coming up with additional ideas.)

All right, we're ready to roll. On to the worksheets!

We've provided more space than is needed on these worksheets so you don't feel like you have to write down the "perfect" answer all at once. There's plenty of room to brainstorm, ramble, cross things out, and start again.

Initial Questions

1a) What kind of growth are you after, ultimately? Is it money, for money's sake? Is it something else measurable, for its own reasons? Write down what kind of growth you are after, and why you want to achieve this growth.

1b) Have you evaluated whether that objective will give you what you think it will? (Or that it at least stands a reasonable chance of doing so?) Once the answer is "yes", write down why.

1c) What kind of growth are you after in the short term? What feels like the path that gets you moving in that direction? This isn't what you want to "do", it's what you want to "have."

1d) Have you evaluated whether that objective will give you what you think it will? (Or that it at least stands a reasonable chance of doing so?) Once the answer is "yes", write down why.

1e) What are you thinking of doing in order to begin getting growth in that area, and what ballpark metric can you assign to that?

1f) Why did you pick that number as opposed to any other number?

Evaluating Other Options

2a) If you excluded the thing you're planning on doing as an option, what other things could a person do to achieve your short-term objective?

(You don't have to consider doing them, but what things could a person do instead? Write down as many as you can. Try for at least 10.)

[illegible]

2b) If you excluded your original short-term goal as an option, what other things could a person do to achieve your ultimate objective?

(Again, you don't have to consider doing them, but what things could a person do instead? Write down as many as you can. Try for at least 10.)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Comparing Your Options

3a) Given your ultimate objective, would it make more sense to focus on one or more of the other options you came up with earlier?

Think about that and write down what you think you should do, in what order. Make the list as long as you'd like, with as much detail as you'd like. (This might just be your "To Do" list for a while.)

[illegible]

3b) Now that you happen to have a handy list of those other “low-hanging fruit” from question 2a (alternatives to your short term objective), does it make sense to do some (or all) of those as well?

Think about that and write down what you think you should do, in what order. Make the list as long as you'd like, with as much detail as you'd like. (You can add this to your well targeted "To Do" list.)

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

Final Words

Remember as you move forward that the basic rules, concepts, and strategies of marketing your business have not changed all that much in the last few thousand years.

Regardless of new technologies, changes in consumer behavior and spending habits, mega-trends and flash-in-the-pan fads, your job still boils down to getting people's *attention*, giving them a reason to be *interested*, connecting with their *desires*, and giving them an opportunity to take *action*.

Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. That's all you need to take care of.

You can certainly do that with new technologies and all of the latest marketing strategies. You can also do that the way they did it 100 years ago, before anybody complained that their wi-fi was too slow.

Growing your ittybiz is only as complicated as you make it, and as you go through this workbook we hope that you'll see that when you look at all the options available to you – and when you think them through – the choices become pretty intuitive. You'll generally know *what* to do (and *why* you want to do it) once you've looked at things from all angles.

How to do it may be another matter. But as many people have said before, when you know the “what” and the “why”, the “how” usually takes care of itself.

Our best wishes go to you as you grow your ittybiz. You can do it. We believe in you.

- Naomi @ IttyBiz