

OPEN Forum Growth Guide:

The Art of Getting Customers

Guy Kawasaki



STRICTLY BICYCLES
NELSON AND JOANNA GUTIERREZ
MEMBER SINCE 01

As any business owner can tell you, acquiring new customers is the driving force behind successfully growing a company.

Thirty-five years ago, I started in the fine-jewelry business, schlepping rings and pendants around the world. Since then, I've won customers across the spectrum, working with some of the most well-known brands as well as numerous small businesses.

Through these experiences, I've learned that there are two kinds of businesses: those who are winning new customers, and those who are dying. There are also two kinds of entrepreneurs: those who want more customers, and those who are lying. This guide can help you grow your business by expanding your customer base.

ABOUT GUY KAWASAKI:

Currently the chief evangelist of Canva, Guy Kawasaki has been helping companies get more customers for over two decades. He is the author of thirteen books, including *The Art of Social Media*, *The Art of the Start*, and *Enchantment*.



Roll the DICEE

It's much easier to win new customers when you've got great stuff or a great service. Everything flows from quality—mediocrity is the enemy of small-business success. Great products and services embody five attributes: depth, intelligence, completeness, empowerment, and elegance (DICEE).



DEPTH

lots of features and power.



INTELLIGENCE

a solid understanding of people's needs.



COMPLETENESS

all the necessary support and services.



EMPOWERMENT

making people's lives better.



ELEGANCE

a beautiful and simple design.

No matter what product or service you offer, you can use the DICEE framework to help locate the sweet spot for your offering.

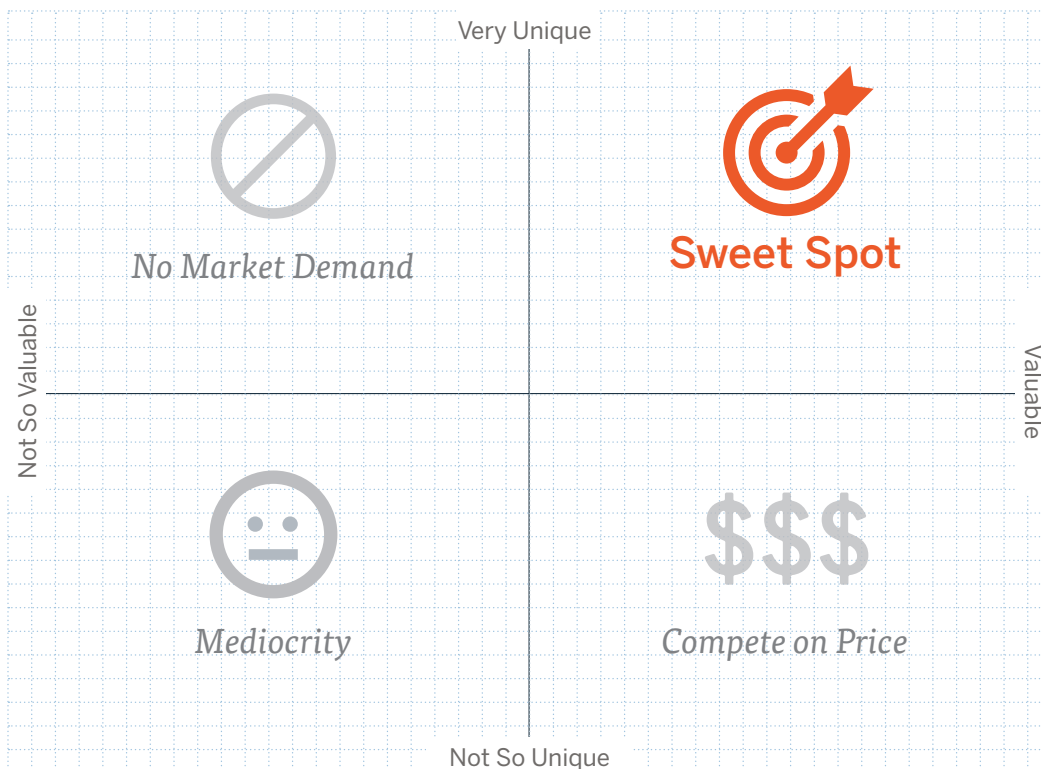
Take a look at the chart below. In the bottom right corner you have a valuable product or service, but it's not unique, so you always have to compete on price. In the upper left corner, you have a mediocre product or service that's unique—you own a market that doesn't exist.

In the bottom left corner, you have a mediocre product or service and other companies are doing the same mediocre thing. You want to be in the upper right corner, where you have a great product that's also unique. This is the place where margin, money, and history are made.

Once you've settled on a great product or service, let it bloom. When new, unintended customers use your products in unexpected ways, don't freak out. Instead, accept this change and be happy that any people are buying your products and using them in any way.

For example, when I worked for a then-little-known computer company, we thought Fortune 500 MIS employees should use our device as a database, spreadsheet, and word-processing machine. We were zero-for-three there. Luckily, writers, authors, publishers, and designers used our product for desktop publishing, and the company was saved.

DICEE Framework



Don't Worry About Scale—Yet

People worry too much about scaling—their ability to expand a business rapidly. Their thinking goes like this: “I can put in a lot of effort to close a sale now, but what happens when I’ve got to handle thousands of customers?” Or, “I can put tender-loving-care into baking cupcakes now, but what happens when I have 500 stores around the world?”

These shouldn't be the issues you focus on.

Instead, do whatever it takes to close each sale now and to make that one cupcake store successful. If you can't close one sale or make one location a hit, it won't matter if you can scale. But if you can land that sale and make one spot a success, you or someone you can hire will figure out how to scale. I have never seen a company fail because it couldn't scale fast enough, but I've seen many companies fail because they couldn't get off the ground at all.



BONOBOS
ANDREW DUNN
MEMBER SINCE 03



ZINEPAK
KIM KAUPE AND BRITTANY HODAK
MEMBER SINCE 08

Make Mantra, Not Mission

You'll want to have a mantra that communicates to your customers and employees—the whole world, really—exactly what you stand for and why your company exists. Your mantra will act as a guiding light for your employees and set expectations for your customers.

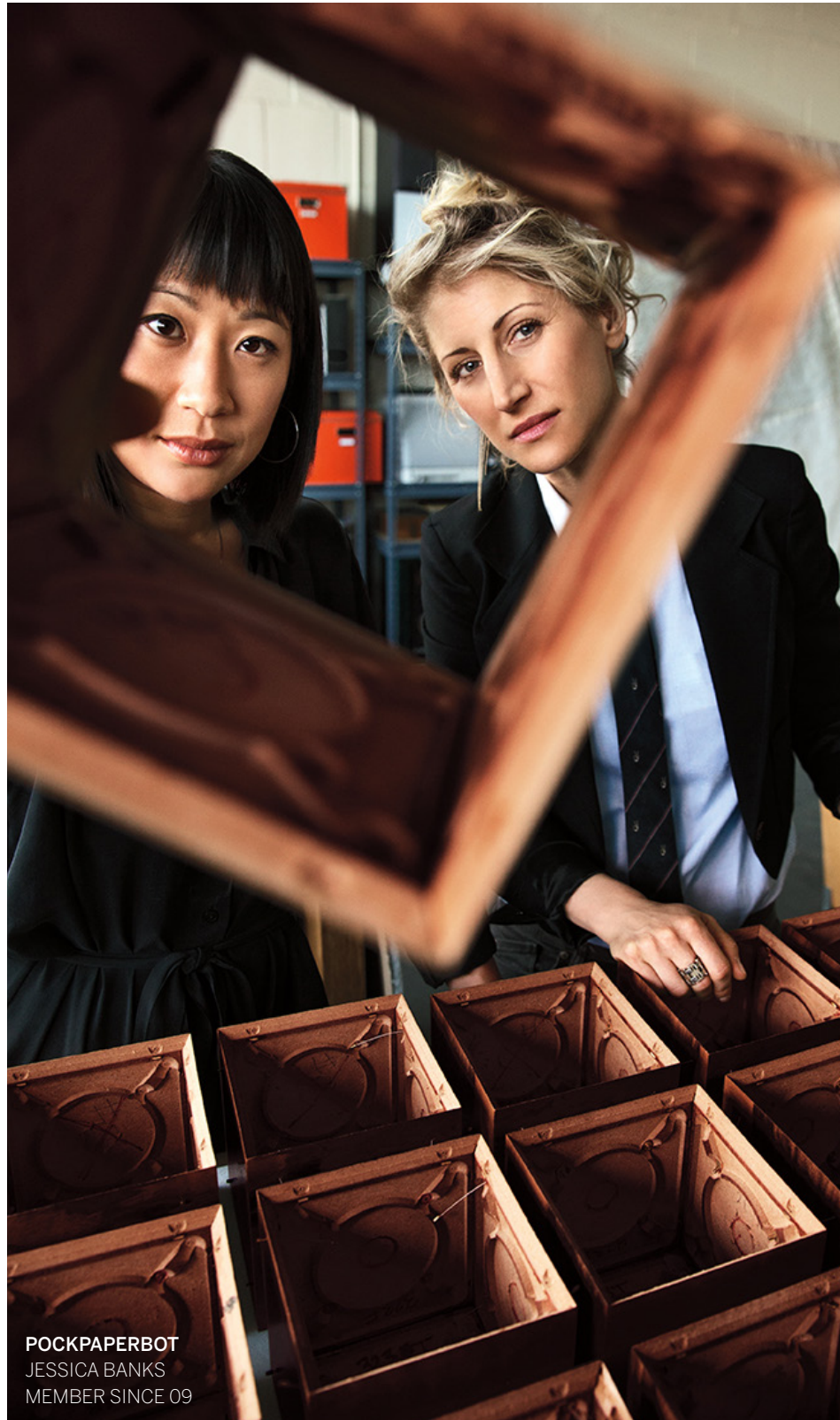
Unlike a cumbersome, page-long mission statement, a mantra is three or four words that capture the essence of your business and the positive impact it can have on customers and the world.

Start with the benefits people receive from using your product or service. Once you've pinpointed the traits that make your

product unique, extend them into ideas that can serve as your mantra. For example, if your e-commerce business sells high-end cosmetics at an affordable price, your mantra might be "Make everyone beautiful."

Open the Door

The next step is to open the door and make it easy for people to become your customers. First, figure out ways for them to test-drive your product or service.



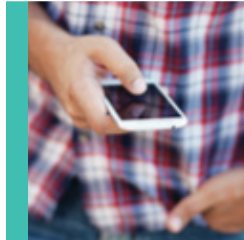
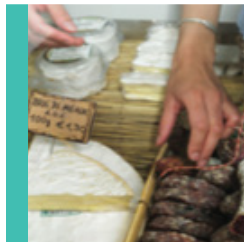
POCKPAPERBOT
JESSICA BANKS
MEMBER SINCE 09

The point is to communicate a respectful and flattering philosophy to your prospects: “I think you’re smart, so I’m not going to bludgeon you or trick you into becoming a customer. Try it, and then you decide.”

Second, remove all the speed bumps to buying your products or services. In the online world, an obvious example is CAPTCHA a security step in the registration process that forces people to prove they are not bots before they can sign up for an account.

The problem is that CAPTCHA usually takes three or four attempts to get it right, and that throws up a hurdle for potential customers who might want to do business with you.

Here’s a good example of removing obstacles: Rather than making you go over the speed bump of setting up an appointment, one solar-panel company asks you for your home address and then looks you up on a satellite photo to create an estimate. What speed bumps can you remove to deliver a smooth customer onboarding experience?



If you’re in the food business,
offer free samples.

If you’re in the dry-cleaning business,
clean a garment or two for free.

If you’re in the software business,
let people use your app for a few weeks before they have to pay for it.

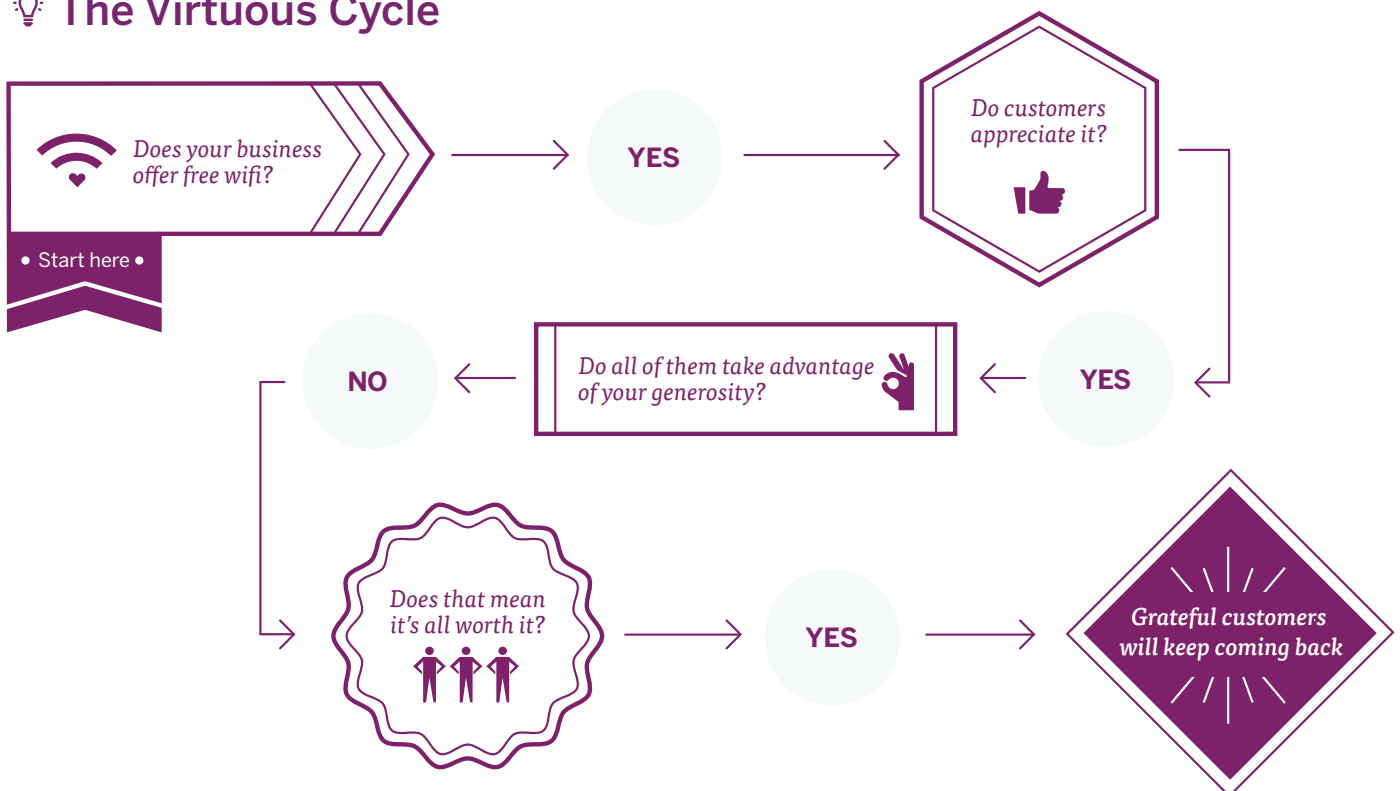
If you’re in the car business,
let people drive your cars for more than a block.

Take the High Road

If you want to win customers, take the high, optimistic, and generous road. Don't be paranoid—assume that people are good until proven otherwise.



💡 The Virtuous Cycle



The key to receiving help is to provide a great product or service.

Your business may be ruined if everyone who walked past your restaurant decided to use your bathroom, if everyone used your Wi-Fi for hours after buying a single cup of coffee, or if everyone returned everything they bought. But everyone isn't going to do this.

Have you noticed that the most successful companies tend to have the most generous policies?

Generosity goes in both directions. This may come as a surprise, but you can ask your customers for help getting more customers. If they like your product or service, they will want you to survive, and one way to ensure this is to encourage others to do business with you.

The key to receiving help, though, is to provide a great product or service in a generous, non-paranoid way. This creates what's called a "virtuous cycle."

While it may take a while to put every piece in place, following these recommendations will set your company down the path of growth by winning over customers who not only want to buy from you, but are eager to do so.

WINNING CUSTOMER CHECKLIST

- SELL SOMETHING UNIQUE AND VALUABLE**
that customers can't get anywhere else
- FOLLOW A COMPELLING MANTRA**
that customers can relate to
- FOCUS ON EXISTING CHALLENGES**
to better benefit the customers
- BE AS GENEROUS AS POSSIBLE**
- MAKE IT EASY**
for customers to do business

*Remember...
Building a successful business is a marathon, not a sprint, but even a marathon begins with a few steps.*

About OPEN Forum

OPEN Forum is an online community designed to help small business owners find new ideas that can make a difference for their businesses. [Learn more at OPENForum.com](https://www.OPENForum.com)

The information contained in this guide is for generalized informational and educational purposes only and is not designed to substitute for, or replace, a professional opinion about any particular business or situation or judgment about the risks or appropriateness of any approach for any specific business or situation. THIS GUIDE IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE USED FOR PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS ADVICE. The views and opinions expressed in authored guides through OPEN Forum represent the opinion of their author and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions and/or judgments of American Express Company or any of its affiliates, subsidiaries or divisions (including, without limitation, American Express OPEN). American Express makes no representation as to, and is not responsible for, the accuracy, timeliness, completeness or reliability of any opinion, advice or statement made in this guide.