

# Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

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FOUNDATIONS

## The Pedestal Group

### Beating the Low-Price Rivals

#### Special points of interest:

- *Windows 7*
- *Using the \* in searches*
- *Planning time*
- *Lead Nurturing*
- *Software and Tools*
- *AND MORE!*

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In every industry, companies competing solely on the basis of cost have sprung up in recent years. Hours and hours of research have been done on this phenomena and who wins, and who loses. One thing that is apparent is generally status-quo doesn't work.

Nirmalya Kumar in the Harvard Business Review Summer 2009 issue talks about four ways to combat these low-cost rivals:

Differentiate your offerings  
Add a low-cost business  
Switch to selling solutions  
Become exclusively a low-cost provider

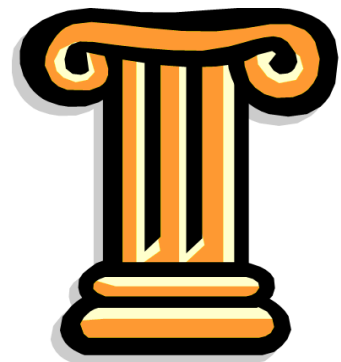
Most of the small businesses I know have been marketing a differentiated offering that is based on solutions right along so that leaves adding a low-cost business or becoming an exclusively low-cost provider.

If your marketing message all along has been about quality over price, now is not the time to dilute the message and change to a lower margin. When the economy comes back, your customers are not going to be happy returning to the higher margins so the

money you are costing yourself is for the long haul. Instead, adding that low-cost alternative means not diluting your brand, but providing an option.

Adding a low-cost alternative to your own offerings is an easy thing to do. Look at your process and determine what elements are must-haves and what are the extra services you provide. Once you have it down to the must-haves, you can price that accordingly and brand it with a unique name / package. The benefits to the clients include working with people they know and trust, working through a proven process and knowing the results are as important to you as to the customer.

Now when you are marketing to clients to use your services, you can offer two different programs / brands to meet their needs. The top-shelf, platinum, best quality costs more than the straight forward, lower cost alternative but gives the client the ability to choose. Target has held their own again Wal-Mart for years using this strategy. Selling housewares and clothing designed by famous designers



Rebrand a low cost alternative to keep the integrity of your main brand

allows them to sell those products at a slightly higher price than Wal-Mart but on the shelves right next to them are the lower-cost items as well. Shoppers choose which items they want and continue to go to Target.

Your marketing materials must clearly reflect the differences in the two brands as that will be vital to maintain both separately. And basing both brands on selling solutions solidifies your long term viability as you will always be solving a problem for someone.

Giving yourself the option to compete on price can help keep your options open when confronting price-buyer.

## Windows 7

There has been a lot of buzz generated by Microsoft's next operating system, Windows 7. Windows 7 has been billed as "simple" and "fun to use" by Microsoft.

In reality, users who have tested it have found it to be far superior to



Windows 7 reported to have a "Windows XP Vibe"

Vista. Several computers tested had a major increase in speed of applications opening, activities completing and generally running day to day activity. In addition, resource-wise it was clearly better than Vista in that it didn't use so much of the memory other applications stall.

Most of the reviews so far have said the changes in Windows 7 are not so much "wow" features but more under the hood to help users feel more comfortable. Several reviewers describe it as having a "windows XP

vibe" or feeling to it and have more confidence in it running.

Microsoft Office 7 is scheduled to hit the shelves in mid-to late October. If you would like to know if your computer can run Windows 7, check out <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/get/default.aspx>

This application checks your computer for compatibility and lets you know if you can upgrade. Here at The Pedestal Group, we will be upgrading as soon as possible!

## Using the \* in Google Searches

**THE ASTERISK STANDS IN FOR OTHER WORDS IN A SEARCH STRING. IT FILLS IN THE BLANKS**

So often what you need to find on Google can be worded multiple ways. Job titles, subjects, articles, etc. all have different ways to find them.

Trying to find

new clients or customers, candidates or prospects all come down to using the right key words. But sometimes, rather than performing multiple searches, you can use the \* (asterisk) function.

The asterisk stands in for one or more words and tells Google to "fill in the blanks". It is considered a "wild card" and can be used multiple times in a search or just once to represent something else.

For example, a search for

Food \* research

retrieves results on restaurants, food safety, allergies, distribution and more.

If you weren't sure how to search for something related to food research, using this search will help you narrow down what you need. Or, if you needed to locate companies in a specific geographic area that do food research, you could add a zip code search or state name to the end of your search string and find just what you need.

Now if you needed to find people who perform food research, you could use LinkedIn to narrow down the results. To search just the LinkedIn site, you start your search with the "site" command telling Google to only search that particular site for your results. Next comes the website you want to search, in this case [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com), and that is followed by the keywords. In this case we want people who list food research in their profile so we would use:

Site:[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) "food \* research"

While the breadth of results may be more than you need, seeing the variety

in information can help you make your search smarter and work more effectively for you. Now you can start removing keywords you don't need by adding them to the end of the string with a minus (-) sign in front of them or you can add key words to limit the results like states or cities.

Site:[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) "food \* research" -pet Cleveland

It does not appear to be documented how many words the asterisk represents, but one can get different results by adding multiple asterisks because it extends the number of words replaced. So for instance if we search for "food \* research" we get 25,700. If we search for "food \*\* research", we get 18,200 at the time of this writing. If you need someone who is a manager, this can be a great help as people list that function differently.

As you try to locate information for your business, it is vital to understand how to use these commands to get to the information you need quickly and effectively.

## Planning Time!

September starts planning season and this year, everyone is very happy to think of 2010. Seth Godin, speaker, writer and marketing blogger, describes the steps needed in planning as:

Attitude  
Approach  
Goals  
Strategy  
Tactics  
Execution

This “hierarchy of success” starts further back than the norm—beginning with the attitude you take when dealing with people’s problems or why you are doing this at all. Getting an understanding of that, in writing, can help you really focus on what is important.

Next, the approach focuses on how you solve problems, handle your career or handle your company. Do you prefer to follow your gut, do you consult others or do you read books on the subject? Is consensus important or do you prefer to make a decision and then get others on board? Understanding that process that makes you the most comfortable can help build your goals, strategy, and tactics.

Only now that you understand the first two are you ready to look at

your goals.

Based on your attitude and approach, what do you feel are the places you provide the most value? What problems do you want to solve? What do you want to accomplish in 2010? Obviously people’s goals have dramatically shifted since last year at this time. Looking back at some of the literature from September 2008, it was still positive, excited and much of it not seeing the downturn that had already hit. So make sure you set realistic goals based on where things could go in 2010.

Strategy is really how you want to achieve your goals. What approach will you take to make it happen? Your strategies dictate what tactics might work.

Tactics are what most of us are comfortable with and spend the most time planning. The day-to-day, how to get things done are so much simpler if you understand the attitude, approach, goals and strategy before you jump into tactics.

Execution is where the rubber meets the road. This is where we make decisions like colors, or styles, or words or actions. If your plan has

been built from the top down, your daily plans for execution should be extremely easy. If you’re in this to solve customer problems, and the approach is by listening and listening closely to your customers. Your goals naturally flow into what you want to accomplish in those interactions.

If you set a goal of one established customer meeting a week, then the strategy to set those up becomes clear, the tactics are set in place and the daily execution plan includes setting up those meetings so you have one per week. This helps you understand exactly what to do and when.

No plan is infallible but starting further back in the process can help you map it out and know where you are going. At the end of the process you know what to track and what to watch so you know where you are and can course-correct along the way. At the end of the day, planning



**“Give me 6 hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first 4 hours sharpening the axe.” – Abraham Lincoln**

## Lead Nurturing

There are cold leads, there are warm leads, and then there are those people who know who you are but haven’t used your service yet. Most companies have strategies for categories one and two, but what about group number three? How do you keep in touch with them so they continue to know who you are so that when the time is right, you are their go to source?

It is vital to have an on-going strategy to keep in touch with these people. That may be a newsletter every month, a phone call every three weeks, an industry note via email, or a combination of all of the above. But it is vital to create a campaign and stick to it.

This group of potentials are incredibly important because even if they never

become customers, they may become referrals. Create a contact plan and stick to it. These people can be gold!

Need help with a contact plan? Contact The Pedestal Group!

**Contact Plans are vital for people who know you but aren’t clients yet.**

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

## Software and Tools We Are Checking Out

Some of the software and tools we are playing with right now include ways to monitor your brand. Moitter.com is a way to search Twitter by keyword and location and then save the results



**Moitter.com,  
Addictomatic,  
CutePDF Writer  
And  
Printfriendly**

to be emailed back to yourself. So far this tool has been great for finding information on Twitter!

The second tool we are playing with is Addictomatic.com.

Addictomatic not only has a

fun name, but checks a variety of websites for references about your company. These sites include YouTube, Flickr, and many other news and blog sites.

After testing out a number of PDF creator tools, our favorite remains CutePDF Writer. This easy-to-use tool installs as a printer so when you want to create a PDF, you just "print" your document to the software. PDF's can be saved anywhere on your computer and are fully accessible by people using Adobe products. This is a great way to ensure your information gets to the recipient the way you intended.

Finally, we are still loving [www.printfriendly.com](http://www.printfriendly.com). So often we come across a blog article, news article or other document on the web we would like to print but hesitate based on the ads, messages, and other information cluttering the page. With Printfriendly, you just paste the URL into the box and Printfriendly removes the excess content. Now when you print you get just the information you wanted and don't waste the ink / paper to print all the rest of the information.

If you have a tool you would like us to review, just send an email to [kathy@thepedestalgrou.com](mailto:kathy@thepedestalgrou.com) and we'll let you know what we think!