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**EDITOR** Gina Jaaskelainen

# from the editor

Another year has managed to slip down the stream and a new year has begun. How can it already be 2015!? Let's take a look at 2014: a year in review for small business.

2014 saw a rush of invention and business innovation. We experimented with new ways of working and interacting on 'the cloud'. Many businesses moved their entire workflow to the internet—or are now in the process of doing so. Business tasks such as accounting, invoicing, project management and customer service are all done on the internet now, and we're able to attend webinars and learn from the best teachers in the world, all without leaving our offices or homes.

The future has certainly arrived—or so it would seem. Despite the technological advances, business still happens in the human context, and business in the cloud is half the picture. The other half happens in real life—*it's still a people's game*.

We may not be exaggerating when we say that the death of Robin Williams in 2014 was a knock to humanity. Williams' death from suicide brought depression to centre stage again and reminded us that behind smiles and laughs may live sorrow and anxiety. Sydney Siege was an Australian catastrophe, and the national mourning and sadness further proves our next point: *it's so important to communicate and comfort*—and be reassured that there is help available.

This year, we're inviting small businesses to our *year of the personal*—our very own experiment in interaction: *The Lounge*. The Lounge will be a place for like-minded people to come together, drop their defences, and relate to each other on a personal level.

Our wish for 2015? Let's continue to innovate and invent, but let's also be comforters and understanders of people.

Gina Jaaskelainen, *Editor-in-Chief*

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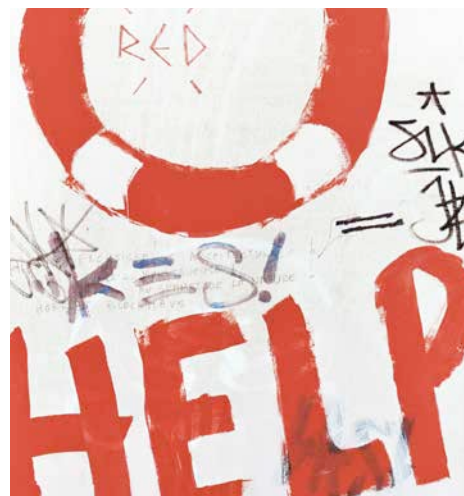
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# fashionably late: beating the cash flow conundrum

It's all very well to understand that cash to your business is like fuel to your car, but how do you manage the reality? Maintaining cash flow—getting paid in full, regularly and on time—is just not as easy as popping into the servo and filling the tank. **Matt Rowe** of FIFO Capital in Sydney shares his tips for keeping the fuel flowing.

According to Dun & Bradstreet, the Australian average for paying an invoice in the second quarter of 2014 was 53 days—and in NSW it was 55 days. And that, they say, is the fastest since 2007. For smaller businesses this 'cash gap'—the time between your outlay for goods or services and receiving payment from your customer—can be stressful in the extreme.

"In the 1990s I was in small business roasting and wholesaling coffee", says Matt. "For all small business owners, running your own business is the zenith—and I really believe that. However you can't always have the good without the bad, the pleasure without the pain, the highs without the lows. That's the addiction of business. I know the sleepless nights walking around the house, the knotted feeling in your stomach, the tension in your neck and shoulders and the headaches.

"Usually these problems came about when I didn't have any money in my bank account—although I had plenty of customers and sales—and I had bills to pay: staff wages, suppliers, rent, tax. Immediately I would contact the bank to extend my overdraft, use personal savings, use credit cards and occasionally hit up family and friends."

Matt's experience led him to find ways to protect his business—and his health—from these periods of 'running on empty'. "I learned to be smarter about my terms and my client base, more efficient with the time I was spending on money matters, and also to systemise my processes."



## Terms and conditions

It can be difficult to insist on payment if your terms and conditions are not clear, so the first thing to do is to make sure that you have a statement that spells out your terms, and that your client agrees to when they engage you. Many businesses include terms and conditions with their quotes, and include the statement that when the customer accepts the quote, they also accept the terms.

Standard payment terms are 30 days, and Dun & Bradstreet's data shows that the percentage of invoices paid in that time in 2014 was better than usual (47%). When you are dealing with a government or public sector organisation though, 60 days is more common—and there is very little you can do about that.

However, to help your personal cash flow, particularly for those 60 day payers, you may want to consider including payment terms that allow you to invoice the client in stages—for example half on commencement and half on completion—or at particular milestones in the project. This can be particularly helpful with large projects as it not only spreads the income ensuring your cash flow is more regular, but it can also spread your tax liability. To encourage prompt payment you might want to consider a 'carrot and stick' approach—though it's not for everyone.



## The carrot and stick approach

Early payment discounts coupled with late payment fees make up the 'carrot and stick' approach—rewarding clients for paying early but penalising them for slow payment. It's an approach that many utility companies use, and it can work well, but is it suitable for SMEs?

"You need to be careful on two fronts," says Matt. "The discount or late fee needs to be stated in your terms and conditions or contract, otherwise you can't legally enforce it. If you try to enforce a condition that hasn't been clearly stated in your terms or contract, your client has every right to refuse to pay it."

## Late payment legalese

If you're serious about charging late payment fees, then legal advice or advice from a reputable credit management firm is a must. They will help you craft your terms and conditions and contracts. Legally, late payment fees or interest can be charged on unpaid invoices:

- If you have included the amount that will be charged, and when it will be charged, in your terms and conditions or contract, and the client has signed off on the agreement before you provided the product or service;
- If, when dealing with an existing client (someone you were working with before you implemented late fees), you informed them of the change to your payment terms and they agreed to them; and
- If the charge would be deemed 'fair and reasonable' in a court of law. "My local council charges 9% per annum interest (calculated daily) on unpaid rates," says Matt. An excessive charge, for instance a quarter or third of the invoice, is not likely to be considered fair and reasonable.

## Know your customers

There is an alternative approach to making prompt payments more likely, and it is all about getting to know your customers. Firstly you want to avoid the ones that are likely to become debtors in the first place. The way to make sure you have good quality clients is to check them out—a quick internet search or use of a reporting service like Dun & Bradstreet can help reveal a poor credit history. "It's better to have a handful of good customers than a lot of bad customers," Matt says. Too much of your energy can be expended in chasing slow payers, rather than following leads and making worthwhile sales.

Building a relationship with your client is also important not just for customer retention and word-of-mouth recommendation—it also helps you get paid. "We do so much business via email these days," says Matt. "But a personal relationship is vital. The stronger your relationship, the better chance you have of being paid on time." While Matt admits this can be challenging with larger organisations—where accounts departments handle payment of invoices—he still maintains that this works. "Developing relationships with the accounts people can make a difference, even if just to find out where you are in their pay cycle."

We've all experienced the frustration and irritation of not being paid for our services, however implementing a few easy procedures and approaches can help to keep your cash flow topped up and your business running smoothly. You work hard enough without having to literally chase dollars. ●

# top 10 tips for improving your cash flow

## 1. KEEP TABS

Monitor your cash flow regularly, like fuel in your car. Your business depends on it, and catching a low cash level early is better than running out!

## 2. MAKE PAYMENT EASY

Make sure that at least two methods of payment are clearly visible on your invoice and statements.

## 3. BE FIRM

Have concrete terms of trade. Never be wishy-washy about how and when your clients should pay. Be very specific and clear—and put it in writing.

## 4. BE PROMPT

Invoice quickly and chase immediately. When a client has agreed to purchase your goods or services, invoice your deposit. Once an invoice is due and has not been paid, chase it immediately.

## 5. FOLLOW UP

Have a formal process for chasing up outstanding accounts—reconciling payments against invoices weekly will quickly show you who to chase.

## 6. BE WARNED

Doing a quick online credit check of new clients can save you from bad debtors—and it's better to turn down the business than not be paid.

## 7. GET PERSONAL

Building strong relationships with your clients will help you get paid, and, with large organisations, getting to know the accounts department can help too.

## 8. OFFER CARROTS

Offer prompt payment discounts—if you can do it without biting into your margin.

## 9. ...AND STICKS

Late payment fees should be clearly included in your terms or contract if you choose to enforce them—and ensure you stick by them. If you don't take your terms seriously, why would your clients.

## 10. OUTSOURCE

Outsourcing your collections can be a two-edged sword—it can seem heavy-handed, but it can also save you time, and speed up payment. If you do outsource, make sure the agency is professional—you don't want to damage your reputation.

# destination success: a business road trip



If you dreamt that you were driving your car but there was no steering wheel, you had no idea where you were going and could not see your speed and fuel because the windows and dashboard were covered, you would wake in terror. Yet, says **Rob Drage** of Thexton Armstrong Drage in Faulconbridge, that's exactly how some businesses start out—full of energy and forward motion, but with little sense of direction or destination.

---

Business planning is not a process that everyone with a brilliant business idea relishes—after all, putting your dream of a successful business through a serious planning process is a scary thought. What if you find out it isn't viable? What if it turns out you will need more capital than you have? How much nicer to have the pipe-dream, unsullied and full of hope?

But if you are serious about making your business dream a reality, launching without a rigorous planning process may well lead you into serious, and expensive, trouble—trouble that could have been avoided had you planned for it.

“A great analogy for business planning is taking the family on a road trip”, says Rob. “Before you set out, you will have:

- A destination in mind;
- Your travel companions;
- A time frame for the journey;
- Funds for fuel, food and accommodation; and
- A roadworthy vehicle with steering, accelerator and brakes—and a dashboard that tells you how far you have travelled, your speed and how much fuel you have left.”

It goes without saying that you will also know when you have arrived at your destination and what you intend to do when you get there.

But how do you create a business plan that covers all the bases and gives you the ‘road map’ you need? Aren’t business plans great thick documents, full of figures and charts, and that take aeons to produce?

Not always. Business plans can be brief and simple—as simple as the business idea they are about.

When you think about who will read your business plan, something concise and to the point will fair better than a lengthy, wordy document. In most cases the reader will be the bank manager that you hope will lend you funds, and they will want to grasp your idea and assess your forecasts quickly. They rarely have the time to wade through thousands of words and they do not judge a business plan by its weight.

In fact, Rob says, the business plan is not about the document at all. “By far the most important aspect of a business plan is the robust discussion, analysis and decision-making that takes place during the planning process. Having a workable business plan should be the written outcome of your planning discussion, recorded for others to understand.”

The key term here is ‘outcome’—the business plan is not a record of every thought you had in the gestation of your business idea. Instead, it is the clear, firm statement of what you have decided to do, how you will do it, with what resources and over what time period.

## What's in a plan?

When you work through Rob's 8 topics for your business plan on the following page you should have a business plan that is workable, flexible and current—and tailored to your personal business ‘road trip’.

There are many business planning templates available online that will give you the tools to create the beginnings of your business plan. However, says Rob, “working through these topics with a mentor who has taken time to know you and your business is by far the best way to succeed. You need someone who will ask you questions and make suggestions, based on their experience, in order to generate complete responses and avoid you just ticking the boxes.”

When you launch a business—or begin a new phase or project—it's very tempting to stick with the dreams and just keep your fingers crossed about the ‘boring’ details. But, on this ‘road trip’ you don't want to end up lost somewhere in the outback, out of fuel and with no clue where the nearest service station is—you want to get to your destination as smoothly and successfully as possible. ●



# 8 topics for your business plan

## vision

Write down what you want your business to look like in 3–5 years and what you see yourself doing as a successful business owner. When you write, use the present tense, i.e. “I employ someone full-time to look after my online store and I am cutting the ribbon at the opening of my first bricks-and-mortar store.”

## mission

State clearly and precisely what your passion is for your business and what its values are. Make sure that a stranger reading your plan can immediately grasp what your business is really about. The result: your staff will understand the culture of your business and your customers will understand its value.

## target customer

List everything you know about your customers. Answer the 5 Ws about them—and don't forget the how. How will you reach them to show them you have what they need? How will they reach you?

## product or service

What exactly do you offer? How is it unique? This is often called your ‘point of difference’ or ‘value proposition’, and it is key to making sure your customers come to you rather than to your competitors. You should also include any state, local or federal approvals or licences that you need to sell your product/service.

## sales and marketing

Knowing what you offer, how you provide it and to whom, have a direct bearing on your sales process and how you market your business. It is important to map the sales cycle and decide how leads will be generated. Will you gain custom via word-of-mouth referrals, online marketing (website or social media), direct marketing, networking, trade shows, retail displays, etc.?

## funding

Work out, as accurately as you can, how the money will flow in and out of your business. The goal is to ensure that the bank balance never goes into the red—and initial funding is very important here. Set up a 12-month cash flow forecast that shows how often you will invoice customers (this is where your sales cycle becomes important), how and when you pay for supplies, staff, utilities and insurances. Then expand that out to the time-frame of the business plan (3–5 years). This exercise alone will give you a funding target if you are seeking investors.

## measurement

What you put here will give you a precise picture of where you want to go. It is the voice of your GPS saying, ‘You have reached your destination’. You will need to set sales, expense and overhead targets, and include the stock levels that will ensure you can meet demand as your business grows. Importantly, be sure to include how you will monitor your cash flow and review your accounts—like checking your fuel and knowing you can reach the gas station before you run out.

## people

When you write about your people (and that may be only you), include their roles and responsibilities, skills and knowledge, accreditation and accountability—all in light of meeting customer needs. This will also define the types of team members, and how many, you will need in the next 3–5 years.

# SHAPE UP YOUR BUSINESS

## WITH THE DIY BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Modewest is focused on informing business owners on topics that most impact their day-to-day operations. We at **Thexton Armstrong Drage** have the same passion for business and want to see you achieve a sustainable and profitable business.

The **DIY Business Challenge** is a quick and easy way for you to check the health of your business by answering a few simple questions and adding up your score.

### WORK OUT YOUR SCORE:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree

### CHECK YOUR RESULT:

35-40 points. Excellent. Your business is in great shape and going in the right direction.

25-34 points. Good. You are doing a good job and your business is in fair shape, however there may be areas where your performance could be improved.

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### DIY BUSINESS CHALLENGE

I smile while commuting to work	
I have income to support my desired lifestyle	
I have plans for growing my business	
I manage people well and get the most out of my staff	
I understand my financial break even point	
I know my cash flow and can easily pay my bills	
I have effective marketing and easily win new clients	
I receive referrals from happy customers	
I have time for family, friends and holidays	
I always challenge myself to improve performance	

### YOUR SCORE

Contact Rob Drage on  
**0409 776 590**

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www.thextonarmstrong.com.au

# Looking for Instant Working Capital?

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# crowdfunding in australia: how to begin

From US\$89 million in 2010 to US\$4.23 billion in 2013, crowdfunding has quickly developed into a major global financial force revolutionising and democratising funding models for private individuals and businesses. After the recent release of the Federal Government discussion paper about equity crowdfunding in Australia, we may now begin to see crowdfunding embraced locally. So, **what is crowdfunding**, how can it help startups or other small businesses grow, and how do you go about preparing an effective crowdfunding campaign?

---

Crowdfunding is a practice of collecting sums of money from individuals or corporations for various projects or ventures typically on 'crowdfunding platforms' on the internet. It began in America in 2003 with the launch of a company called ArtistShare which allowed private citizens to make small donations to artists that they supported. Other crowdfunding platforms, such

as ChipIn (2005), Sellaband (2006), IndieGoGo (2008) and Kickstarter (2009) followed suit. Besides artists, these websites brought inventors, not-for-profits, citizen journalists, political campaigners, and others, in contact with the general public eager to fund a project that they believed in. In many cases funding was done purely on a donation basis. In other instances, the donors were able to purchase a new product at a discounted price—provided that the project reached its monetary target.

In 2012—which saw US\$2.66 billion collected by crowdfunding projects—there were more than one million different campaigns pledging for micro investors' money. In 2014 the Crowdfunding Centre in the United Kingdom estimated that the amount of money raised worldwide every hour exceeds US\$60,000. With this much money being raised globally through crowdfunding, why hasn't the crowdfunding model been embraced in Australia?

Equity-based crowdfunding (a way for unlisted companies to collect money from individuals in exchange for their shares, and, at the same time, for individuals to invest in unlisted companies) for small business in Australia has lagged behind the rest of the world, especially the United States. This is because of restrictive legislation which has forced companies to seek funding from investors through selling products, rather than selling shares.

The situation may now be changing after the release of the Federal Government's discussion paper about crowdfunding and the regulatory systems intended to protect investors from fraud. The discussion paper aims "to ensure that any crowd-sourced equity funding model appropriately balances supporting investment, reducing compliance costs—including for small business—and maintaining an appropriate level of investor protection," according to a joint statement by Finance Minister Mathias Cormann and Small Business Minister Bruce Billson.





Besides monetarily, pledging for crowdfunding could potentially be beneficial for small businesses as a way to test the viability of their ideas. Money is a great equaliser, and a successful campaign would be an indicator of the willingness of the wider populace to invest in a company's product.

## The importance of social media

For startups, a crowdfunding push will act as a marketing campaign, creating brand awareness and loyalty before the company has even started. To achieve any level of global loyalty or 'tribalism', a company must invest heavily in its social media presence. Marketing to crowdfunding investors stands—or falls—on the success of a company's social media efforts. If you're planning on starting a crowdfunding campaign for a new product that your company is offering, make sure that you know what you're doing on social media. If you haven't mastered the art of creating communities on social media your chances for a successful crowdfunding campaign will be limited.

A proper crowdfunding campaign starts with thorough planning. You need to know why you are embarking on a crowdfunding journey—for a journey it will be!

## Planning your campaign

"Do you have a legitimate ask besides 'we want money'?" emphasises crowdfunding consultant Sydney Malawer. What can you offer that makes people's lives better? What is it that you are selling that is so exciting and such a novelty that your clients can't wait to buy it?

Make sure you know exactly what you're selling and what your goals are. What will the money achieve that your campaign attracts? Show your results. Write an estimate for your product manufacturing expenses.

Research different crowdfunding platforms. Kickstarter and IndieGoGo are among the best international platforms. In Australia, VentureCrowd offers equity crowdfunding for businesses. Equitise will join the crowd next year and the employment website CareerOne has had plans to start facilitating equity crowdfunding.

An astute marketer is always a few steps ahead of their game in their thinking. You should consider writing a list of preferred investors, and have their emails and other contact details ready for when your campaign kicks off.

Employ a videographer. In addition to an active social media presence, your campaign will have very little, if any, chance of success without video. As a business, your video needs to be professional. Keep it short, 3–5 minutes is ideal.

A good idea is to prepare your pitch and tell your story to a five-year-old. If they understand what your campaign is about you're doing well.

Don't forget to use images. People's attention spans are limited and an image brings the point home better than a paragraph of text.

Make sure to answer the questions, "why should I care?" And "what are you going to do with my money?"

## Launching your campaign

Contact the people on your email list. Hit social media. Get the message out! Write a press release and send it to local newspapers.

Most of the work for a crowdfunding campaign happens before the campaign begins. If you're selling a product, instead of shares, it is extremely important to know before starting that you will be able to deliver on your product.

Crowdfunding is “potentially a very powerful tool for early-stage, higher-risk ventures to raise capital in Australia,” says Chris Gilbert, co-founder of Equitise.

Cost of entry for small businesses and startups is low and crowdfunding campaigns provide free publicity, if nothing else. As financial returns are not always required, crowdfunding is an excellent channel for funding projects that are more creative or even ‘out there’.

On the negative side, your crowdfunding platform may restrict payment of funds to campaigns that do not reach their target. In that case, your campaign will have produced nothing, however you may have avoided wasting money on an even bigger campaign.

It is crucial, therefore—before embarking on a crowdfunding campaign—to do your research, make sure your product is attractive to your target investors and to the public and, most of all, be realistic when setting your target sum. ●

## australian crowdfunding platforms

**VentureCrowd:** Australia’s first equity crowdfunding platform. <http://venturecrowd.com.au>

**Pozible:** An Australian crowdfunding platform launched in 2010. <http://pozible.com>

**Equitise:** An Australian equity crowdfunding platform launching in 2015. <http://equitise.com.au>



## dressmaker expands

Dressmaker Fame & Partners from Melbourne raised \$50,000 from a crowdfunding campaign on VentureCrowd, Australia’s first equity crowdfunding company.

Popular in Australia and overseas, Fame & Partners’ customisable dresses “are made on demand using a proprietary algorithm that determines the hottest trends.”

Fame & Partners founder and CEO Nyree Corby will use the crowdfunding equity “to expand to the United States.”



## band goes to canada

Musician, producer and publicist James Lees, drummer for the band ‘The Good Ship’, found himself in a frustrating dilemma. His band had been invited to a music festival in Toronto, Canada and the eight-member folk-rock band didn’t have enough money to travel there.

James launched a campaign on Pozible, a traditional crowdfunding platform, from Australia. The band managed to raise a third of the required sum and got to go to the music festival in Canada.

“Crowdfunding is different from funding that you might get from a sponsor or an arts organisation in that it involves a lot of goodwill,” says James.

While musicians garner a lot of goodwill from their fans, the band also used Facebook shout-outs and other incentives during their campaign.





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# **business** in the cloud



There you are, waiting for your third coffee of the day, a million 'to-dos' running through your head, and suddenly you hear the calm-looking guy in front of you say, "Yeah, I run my entire business from the cloud." Somehow, he looks more organised, more streamlined, more everything than you—but is it all a big bluff? And what is this 'cloud' thing, anyway? **Laurel Grey** of Get Digital Flow in Sydney gives us a weather forecast.

---

"The reality of running your business in the cloud is that, eventually, you will have to get there," says Laurel. "The even harsher reality is that the road to effectively running your business from the cloud might not be as straightforward as many IT gurus would have you believe."

Laurel warns that it is easy to get carried away thinking that your business is going to earn you money 24 hours a day on complete autopilot with just a few cloud-based tools. Getting to that point takes months and years of dedication and time set aside to get things in motion specifically for your type of business.

"Before you start," she says, "it's good to have an ideal end-goal to work towards. Setting clear milestones—or bite-size chunks—is probably even more important. Work at implementing one piece at a time so that you have flexibility to change things later."

That is not the information many IT gurus will have you believe. There are a lot of all-in-one solutions out there that look very tempting—solutions that will take care of all the systems you use—like customer relationship management, email marketing, web content management, accounting, file storage, calendar scheduling and appointment booking. A one package does it all philosophy.

But, "with the speed that cloud offerings are changing, it can be difficult for all-in-one solutions to catch up with the technological advances of dedicated software and apps that do one thing well," says Laurel. So what does she recommend? "Choose the 'best of breed' solutions that do one thing well, and that can play nicely with others."

## Moving into the cloud one step at a time

- Start by looking at your most commonly used tools, usually email, calendars, contacts and file storage. These can all be grouped into one cloud-based service. Google Apps, Apple iCloud and Microsoft365 are the main players, and Oracle have recently announced they are coming to the cloud party in force.
- Once you have the basics down (or up!), start to add other solutions based on urgency. If you are losing track of leads, add a customer relationship management (CRM) system. If you are losing track of invoices and payments, ask your accountant about cloud accounting with Xero or Sassu.
- When you are checking out the solutions, month-to-month subscriptions will enable you to switch, add or remove services and products as, and when, you need to. Avoid getting locked into long-term contracts unless you are sure you have the best solution for your needs.
- To avoid incompatibility headaches, choose software that advertises openly that it plays nicely with other software you might want to use, or use already. The companies that partner with other market players are the ones gaining most traction, market share and staying power.
- Most importantly, check that the software offers you the ability to export or migrate your data. Any worthwhile solution should give you full control and ownership of your information—and it should be easy to download or move your data somewhere new.

## What about security?

OK, so we do hear the 'but'. 'But what about security?' You cry. Naked celebrity photos stolen from iCloud is one thing, but sensitive business data is another!

InfoWorld, a leading technology e-magazine, says, "For all the fear of the cloud, the fact is companies are routinely hacked, and many never even know it. In reality, your on-premises systems are not more secure than the cloud... Cloud providers can have people working 24/7 to improve security. They can also invest much more money into data security than any individual company can." And, just to press the point, in recent scandals over celebrity photos, iCloud was not even hacked—its users were. People falling for phishing emails allowed the hackers to use their credentials to get in. This reinforces the reality that usually hackers get in through people, not the software.

So Laurel's advice to start small and go for 'best of breed' will also, perhaps, show you that cloud computing is mature enough to be both functional and safe. You won't necessarily be running your entire business from apps on your smartphone, but you will be less stressed and more in control of your business than you thought possible. ●

## what does it mean to be in the cloud?

'The cloud' is the term now used in IT for anything you access beyond the firewall of your own network—basically any software, services and data that are not locally stored are 'in the cloud'.

The cloud is particularly revolutionising the way we use, and pay, for software and services, and how we store data. No longer do you need to buy, for example, office software installations for all your office computers. You can buy monthly access to software for each user—and increase or decrease the number of users as needed—and it sits in the cloud. Your files are stored in the cloud but are shareable from every computer in your office.

Services like accounting are increasingly moving to the cloud to not only share data, but also to enable you to do all your accounting on the move and in real time—fully synced across your computer and smartphone, and with your bank and accountant.

Your contacts and calendar—and all those mental or notepad to-do lists—can also live in the cloud, again synced across all your devices and computers.

The best part of having your business in the cloud is that if your computer dies or you lose your phone, you don't also lose your data or software. Your workflow is uninterrupted, and you can be up and running in no time the moment you replace your computer that died or phone you lost.

In a nutshell, the cloud—something that was, until only recently, the preserve of Fortune 500 companies with deep pockets—is now an enterprise solution for the masses and a valuable asset for small and large businesses worldwide.

## 7 best tools for small business

### 1. GOOGLE APPS

Keep your email, contacts, calendar and files synced between your devices with this hosted email solution. \$50/year per account. <http://google.com/work/apps/business>

### 2. CAPSULECRM

Integrate this lightweight CRM with Google Apps and store important emails from leads with the click of a button. US\$12/month per account. <https://capsulecrm.com>

### 3. MAILCHIMP

Kick start your email marketing system with up to 2,000 free subscribers and begin to segment your list to send out automated reminders. From \$10/month for automation features. <http://mailchimp.com>

### 4. WUFOO FORMS

Sign people up for events, collect feedback or run contests with fully embeddable forms that even dump the data straight into your CRM. Free for up to three forms. <http://www.wufoo.com>

### 5. SHOEBOXED

Digitise your paper documents, business cards and receipts in the cloud. Shoeboxed scans and organises your receipts, invoices and documents securely online and pulls out the important data for export into Xero or a spreadsheet. From \$16.95/month for 50 items. <https://www.shoeboxed.com.au>

### 6. QUOTE ROLLER

Get instant agreement from your customers on proposals with a digital signature on your quote that dumps directly into Xero. From US\$14.99/month. <http://www.quoteroller.com>

### 7. XERO

Put your business and your finances on the front foot with leading accounting software Xero. From \$25/month. <https://www.xero.com/au>



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# the mystery of SEO



The acronym SEO stands for Search Engine Optimisation, and—besides your specific area of expertise—it is possibly the most important concept for today's small business owner to understand. "Search Engine Optimisation or SEO is the act of getting website pages to rank high in search engine result pages (SERPs) for targeted keywords," defines **Aaron Agius** of Louder Online in Sydney. Whether your clients find your business on the internet depends on how well you have managed your SEO—or whether you have managed it at all.

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If your business is online—and in this day and age it should be—it's time to get familiar with the way search engines work. When we talk about search engines we're really just talking about Google. While there are other internet search providers—such as Bing and Yahoo—they are still marginal compared to Google. What follows, then, is a short introduction to the internet as Google sees it, and as it wants you to see it.

According to Aaron, SEO can be divided into two broad categories, On-Page SEO and Off-Page SEO. Simply put, On-Page SEO is everything you do *on* your website. Off-Page SEO refers to any *activity that links back to your website* from others sites on the internet. To be successful in the internet search game, you must address both aspects of SEO. Fortunately, it isn't too hard for an average small business owner to do. All you really need is to know the rules of the game, draw up a plan and be prepared to spend a few hours each week to optimise your website.

"The million dollar question and the one I get asked the most from clients," confesses Aaron, "is 'how do we get the number one ranking on Google?' The answer to this question is the real mystery of SEO."

## Rising in search engine results—On-Page SEO

### 1. What are your clients searching for?

Building a website that gets steady traffic—and brings you a good return on your investment (ROI)—starts with finding out what your clients want and which search terms they use when looking online for your product or service.

### 2. Does your website address match their search?

Once you know what your potential clients are looking for, you would—in an ideal situation—include their main search term in the address of your website (URL). For instance, if you're selling hand bags to the Australian market, you might name your website `handbagsaustralia.com.au`. This would give you a running start ahead of businesses that also sell handbags Australia-wide but that do not have the word 'handbags' in their website address.

Obviously, if you already have an established business and brand name—and matching URL—it might not be feasible to start all over again just so you can include your main search term in your URL. Not to worry though, because the fact that your website is already established is already working for you—and coming up with a suitable URL is only the second step in making your website a visitor magnet. However, if you are just starting, it's definitely worth thinking about your URL at this stage, before you go any further.

### 3. The title of your page matters—a lot!

If you're familiar with HTML, you will know that your website consists of two areas: the head and the body. In the head, you will put all the content that, in most cases, is not directly visible on your public website. No longer are 'keywords' in the head area of your HTML considered important for SEO, however there are tags that are important.

One of the most important tags is the 'title' tag. This is the title of your page located in the head section of your website, and it is the only tag that a visitor to your website sees without looking at your website HTML (or code). This title is visible at the top of your browser window or on your browser page tab, and it will also show as the title of your page in Google search results. **The title tag has a direct effect on your search results and is something that you should consider carefully.**





The optimal format for a title tag is 'Primary Keyword, Secondary Keyword, Brand Name.' These can be divided by commas, dashes or a pipe, or not at all, but remember that your title should be understood when people read it in search results. As to the character count, Google has reduced the number of characters visible in search results since the beginning of 2014 and the current optimal title length is 48–62 characters. Not a whole lot, but enough to describe your page content, in most cases.

#### 4. The core of the matter—the body

On the visible side of the website, the body, there are three main things that you can do to make your site attractive to visitors and search engines alike.

**Number one is your content.** Remember that you are writing to fellow human beings. Google shuns websites it considers written by machines. While you should feature your keyword(s) prominently in the content of your pages, don't go overboard. Don't be afraid to use pronouns where the text calls for them. Make it a pleasure to read your text.

**Number two is the length of your content.** In today's 'content is king' crowded online marketplace, Google favours long content. The average word count for a page in the top 10 results of a Google search is 2,000 words. The higher the page ranks, the longer the content that is found on it. This predilection by Google is one reason blogs are so popular today.

**Number three is the use of images on your site.** Again, Google deems websites with on-page images more relevant than pages with no imagery. Your images don't need to be photographs alone. They can also be infographics and illustrations, and what is essential is that you add 'title' tags—and 'alt' tags for accessibility—to your images.

#### 5. Location, location, location

As well as the body inclusions on your website, Google does—of course—like to know exactly where your business is located. Apart from ensuring you have a Google+ Page and have listed and verified your business address on Google Maps, make sure you include a contact page with your business address and contact details—as well as an easy to complete contact form for visitors to your site. If you want to be extra thorough, also include your address information in the footer of your website on every page for Google to easily match your business to your other online presence.

#### 6. Be active—update your site regularly

Google loves fresh content and will rank websites that have 'living, breathing' content over those that are stagnant or forgotten.

#### 7. Google owns YouTube—enough said!

As difficult as it might sound to the more diffident among us, video is where it's at. You need to get on YouTube—now! Google owns YouTube and if you have video content on YouTube, Google will really, really love you—and reward you for it by showing your video—and subsequently your website—higher in search results.

You can start with a simple 1–2 minute video introducing yourself and your business, and hire a professional videographer to help you achieve the right look and feel for your videos. Write your script before hand and practice it at home to your partner or friends, or even practice with your business mentor to ensure you get it right when filming time comes.



You also don't need to personally appear on your videos if you find it awkward or uncomfortable. You can ease into this with other types of video, such as screencasts or image slideshows.

## The linking showdown—Off-Page SEO

Off-Page SEO can be summarised with one word: links. “Search engines look for signals to help determine what content is the most relevant for search results,” says Aaron. “Just because you have the best content for a specific keyword doesn't mean you will hold the number one ranking.”

**To get to the coveted number one spot, or anywhere near the top, you need links directing online traffic back to your website.** These are called ‘backlinks’. There are two methods of acquiring backlinks. One is harder than the other but both require work.

### 1. Killer content equals links

Creating killer content can attract heaps and heaps of clicks, and finally links to your website. The more established the websites that are linking back to your website, the better for your SEO. Backlinking farms, which were very popular even five years ago, are no longer viable or effective—plus Google has banned backlinking farms and harshly penalises this type of online activity. So, be careful not to opt in to anything you do not understand and ask your web developer before answering any emails that look like they are offering you backlinks to your site.

### 2. Get social like never before

The second way to increase links back to your website is by being active on social media, and making yourself known there. The more tweets from Twitter that link back to your website, the higher you rank. The more shares your website link gets on Facebook, the better Google feels about it. Facebook likes are nice—for building online credibility and popularity—but shares are what count for SEO. Get active on the social media platforms that are relevant for your business and think clearly about what you want to achieve by being on them. Considered activity, posting and content on your social media will do much better to be shared and reach potential customers, than haphazard, irrelevant or ‘spam’ posting.

Times have changed in the SEO world from the early wild days—and some would say for the better. Gimmicks don't work anymore. Whereas it used to be popular to use backlinking farms to direct traffic back to your website and enjoy a higher ranking, this—and other tricks—are useless nowadays. “What does work when it comes to SEO is identifying the keywords your target customer is searching for, creating the best content you can for those keywords and then marketing that content to build natural signals like links and social media sharing,” summarises Aaron.

Whichever way you look at it, search engine optimisation requires steady, long-term effort. You can either put in the hours yourself or hire an SEO expert to do this for you. Whichever way you choose to go, remember that your website content, and your social media activity alike, should be relevant to what your customers want and what they search for online. At the end of the day, ranking first on Google will get you found, but you still have to engage and convert visitors into paying clients once they reach your website. ●

# a workday siesta

In Australian business culture, we're used to getting up at the crack of dawn and working long hours. Proof of our dedication to early mornings and long work days is the tradition of 'breakfast networking', which usually starts at 7am. And yet, despite waking up so early, we work all through the day until late at night and become increasingly sleep-deprived in the process. Should we perhaps take a cue from the Mediterranean countries where the **Siesta—the combined midday lunch and nap**—has been part of the national psyche for hundreds of years?

According to CQ University's Professor Drew Dawson—author of the nation's largest study into Australian sleeping habits with over 13,000 respondents—the main reason for our stubborn refusal to sleep are gadgets with screens, such as iPhones and tablet computers, that we take to bed with us.

Staring at the light shining from iGadgets until late at night tells our brains that it's still the day. As a consequence, we find it difficult to fall asleep and end up staying awake when we should be sleeping.

"What used to be the bedroom," says Professor Dawson, "is now a room that happens to have a bed in it."



Dawson's study found that 30% of his respondents had called in sick due to insufficient sleep. 96% of the study participants felt tired when they woke up and 40% had actually fallen asleep during the workday.

So, if the figures are this serious is there anything that can be done?

A solution could perhaps be the Siesta. This afternoon rest—which has derived its name from the Latin term *Hora Sexta*, the sixth hour—is usually enjoyed at noon, six hours after dawn. The Siesta traditionally begins with a leisurely lunch which turns into a delicious nap. To enjoy the traditional Siesta, you would wear your pyjamas and hop into bed. Nowadays, however, it's more common to sleep on a sofa or in an armchair, fully dressed, and the time spent at Siesta has itself decreased.

Indeed, the tradition of Siesta is not without its detractors in Spain. Not everyone takes the time to rest in the afternoon, and, for a lot of workers, the extra hours spent during the Siesta are away from the time they could be spending at home, with their families. There is also growing pressure from government and big business to conform the Spanish work-life to the Northern European model where workdays last, more or less strictly, from 9am to 5pm.

However, it would be a shame if Spain and other Mediterranean countries completely did away with the Siesta. There are numerous health benefits to napping in the afternoon—not to mention the increase in productivity.

A NASA study from 1995 found that a 26-minute nap during the workday "improved performance 34% and alertness 54%." Prompted by the study, and forced to take action by occurrences of employees falling asleep at work, the Federal Aviation Association in the US now recommend that air traffic controllers take short naps during the day to stay alert.

The Siesta—or plain old napping—has also been associated with a 37% reduction in coronary mortality. In countries like Spain, Italy and Greece, where afternoon napping is a way of life, there are fewer incidents of heart disease. A study conducted by the University of Athens in Greece found that workers who took regular naps during the workday were 64% less likely to die of heart disease than those workers that did no napping.





In addition to cardiovascular benefits, napping raises the general mood, revitalises the mind, reduces stress and anxiety, and makes us more alert and thus better communicators and negotiators. On our roads, and in other traffic, where accidental nodding-off will too-often result in deaths and injuries, wakefulness is literally a matter of life and death. Approximately 20–30% of all accidents on Australian roads are due to driver fatigue. Many of these accidents would no doubt have been avoided with a different attitude to rest-worklife balance.

Some might argue, however, that, as business owners, we have no choice but to push through the workdays conforming to the 9am to 5pm (or 9pm in reality!) workday routine our nation—and indeed our clients—expect. After all, our competitors do, and work is not known to run out if you keep the cogs turning continuously.

As true as this may be, we don't have to become Spaniards in our habits to avail ourselves of the concept of the Siesta. The current studies recommend that the length of the afternoon nap be kept between 20 and 30 minutes. When the naps are kept this short we can avoid falling into deeper stages of sleep from which it is much harder to wake up.

We have only to look at Japan as a warning example if nothing is done and the current trend of long work hours and decreased sleep continues unabated. In Japan there is a term, *karoshi*, for deaths resulting from work-induced exhaustion. As language changes with changes in society, we can be grateful that the English language doesn't have stronger words than burnout and exhaustion to describe the results of overwork.

And yet, according to Professor Dawson, Australian's are at "an increased risk of diabetes and, what have been called, lifestyle-related illnesses."

"If you don't get enough sleep then you can have accidents or injuries in the workplace, but in the last couple of years we've started to see a link emerge between reduced sleep and carbohydrate metabolism," says Professor Dawson. Lack of sleep affects our hormones and makes us resort to quick energy sources such as fats and carbohydrates. As a result, we are becoming more and more obese and prone to contracting diabetes.

To be healthier and more efficient we should be sleeping more during the night, and also take a Siesta or a power nap in the afternoon.

Napping does not need to be something shameful. Some of the sharpest minds in history have made occasional short sleeps a way of life—as evidenced by Leonardo da Vinci, whose advice we would all do well to follow: **"It is also a very good plan every now and then to go away and have a little relaxation; for when you come back to the work, your judgement will be surer, since to remain constantly at work will cause you to lose the power of judgement."** ●

## further reading

### AUSSIES SLEEP DEPRIVED

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2012/04/10/3474170.htm>

### SIESTA AWARENESS - SIESTA FACTS

<http://www.siestaawareness.org/pages/siesta-facts.php>

### THE AMAZING 26-MINUTE NASA POWER NAP

<http://www.mikestevens.com/gutenblog/2011/08/23/the-amazing-26-minute-nasa-power-nap>

### WHO, WHAT, WHY: HOW LONG IS THE IDEAL NAP?

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-13232034>

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP: THE DANGERS OF DRIVER FATIGUE

<http://www.allianz.com.au/car-insurance/news/importance-of-sleep-dangers-of-driver-fatigue>

# the doctrine of signatures: healing foods

In ancient Greece, physician-philosophers were struck by how many plants looked like a body part. They wondered if nature was trying to tell them something. From this observation, they developed the ‘doctrine of signatures’—a claim that certain plants could heal the organ that they resembled of an illness. It may seem like nonsense, however, says nutritionist **Jane Hutchens** of Lemongrove Road Holistic Health in Penrith, it’s not so far-fetched.

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Two thousand years ago there was no division between the sciences as we understand them today and other areas of enquiry such as medicine, philosophy and astrology. Early physicians like Dioscorides (40–90AD) and Galen (129–200AD) knew that plants had medicinal and health properties. They understood that prescribing the right plant for the right ailment was a task made easier by the appearance of the plant—the ‘signature’ (distinctive mark) of the illness or organ could be matched to the ‘signature’ of the plant. “For example,” says Jane, “plants with yellow flowers, like gentian and dandelion, would be used to treat conditions that caused jaundice (yellowing of the skin).”

The 16th century Swiss-German physician Paracelsus (the founder of toxicology—as well as an alchemist and astrologer) said, “Nature marks each growth... according to its curative benefit.” A century later English botanist William Coles declared that this was evidence of God’s work—by making plants look like the body parts they were able to heal. He (God) was helping humans to help themselves.

Perhaps the most uncanny resemblance of a plant to a person is Korean ginseng. “Korean ginseng root can grow to look just like a human body,” says Jane, “and the ones that do are the most prized.” Perhaps not surprisingly, Korean ginseng has been used to treat ailments almost anywhere in the body, particularly in traditional medicines.



The doctrine of signatures was used right up until the ‘rational men of science’ of the 19th century dismissed all such old knowledge as ‘old wives’ tales’, but a resurgence of scientific interest in natural remedies, and the pharmaceutical properties of plants, has shed new light on the doctrine of signatures.

“Interestingly, we now have scientific knowledge of the constituents of plants that support their use in these conditions,” says Jane. “The doctrine of signatures has been used in many contexts, and is interpreted by the shape, colour and place of growth of a plant. While I wouldn’t base my diet on it—it is too hard to find foods for every organ—here are some ‘signatures’ that match our bodies with our dinner plates.”

## Matching our bodies to food

### Brainy walnuts

Crack open the hard shell of a walnut and inside you have a brain-shaped nut, with folds and wrinkles just like the cortex—and even left and right hemispheres. No prizes for guessing what these are good for! “Walnuts are one of the best sources of omega 3 fatty acids,” says Jane, “and omega 3 is concentrated in the brain. They are strongly anti-inflammatory and are important for memory, mental function, behaviour and reducing the risk of depression and dementia. Researchers also believe that walnuts help to make several neuron transmitters, which transport the messages from nerve to nerve in the brain.”







## Sharp-eyed carrots

Everyone has heard the old wives' tale that carrots help you see in the dark. Slice a carrot and you will see that it has a central core and radiating lines—like an iris and pupil. The origin of this claim is more recent than the ancient Greeks. In World War II the British mounted a propaganda campaign that attributed their ability to spot German bombers to their carrot-loving pilots. The truth was top-secret—the British had developed Aircraft Interception Radar and didn't want the Germans to know about the new technology. So, is there any truth in this one?

"Carrots have loads of beta-carotene, and other nutrients, that improve blood flow to the eye and can reduce the risk of developing cataracts and age-related macular degeneration," says Jane. They are also full of Vitamin A, which—if you are suffering from Vitamin A deficiency-related night-blindness—can improve your night vision.

## Female avocados

Turn an avocado upside-down and it has a similar shape to the womb. "The avocado has plenty of benefits for a woman's uterus and reproductive system," says Jane. "The healthy fats help reduce inflammation and pain, and also contribute to making hormones. The avocado also has good amounts of folate, which is essential in making blood cells and DNA, and is important not only for preventing neural tube defects in babies, but also for reducing the risk of cervical dysplasia (pre-cancerous changes in the cervix)."

## Dem bones, dem celery bones

Take a look at a stick of celery and observe how it is long and has a central hollow. "Not all bones are long and lean," says Jane, "but the long bones in your arms and legs are. Both have long channels that provide support and strength, as well as channels for nutrition. Celery contains Vitamin K which is essential in binding calcium and building strong bones."

## Citrus is breast

Citrus fruit has two signatures that correspond to health, and particularly breast health. Did you know that—like citrus—breasts are divided into segments, with fibrous connections maintaining the structure and shape? Or that women with low levels of Vitamin D are more at risk from breast cancer? "Citrus is a bright sunny fruit, and sunshine is the best source of Vitamin D," says Jane. "Citrus also has a compound called limonoid which can reduce the risk of cancer. The pith (the spongy white tissue lining the rind of oranges, lemons, and other citrus fruits) is full of flavinoids which help tissue strength and enhance lymph fluid circulation—and Vitamin C is an antioxidant good for tissue health."

## Heart-beet

Beetroots might be more purple than red, but they are heart-shaped and grow with long, artery-like rootlets. "Beetroot has betaine and folate which lower homocysteine—an amino acid that increases the formation of clots and atherosclerosis. Beetroot also contain nitric oxide which lowers blood pressure, and potassium which normalises heart rhythm, rate and blood pressure."

## Kidney beans

It takes a few steps to connect the 'signature-named' kidney bean to its organ, however the link can be made. "Kidney beans (and other legumes) are low-GI high-fibre foods, which means they help stabilise blood sugar levels, which can reduce the risk of developing diabetes. Kidney beans also help reduce blood pressure. Up to 30% of people with diabetes will have some kidney damage, and hypertension is a major risk factor for kidney disease too. So kidney beans help reduce the two main risk factors for kidney disease." ●



## healing snacks

### FERTILE CLAMS

Clams bear a passing resemblance to testicles, and contain folate, zinc and selenium for sperm health.

### I LOVE TOMATOES

Red and with chambers like a heart, tomatoes are rich in lycopene which reduces the risk of heart disease.

### BLOOD-RED WINE

Red wine is rich in antioxidants and phytonutrients (from grapes) called polyphenols, which reduce unhealthy cholesterol (LDL) and in turn reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. In moderation!

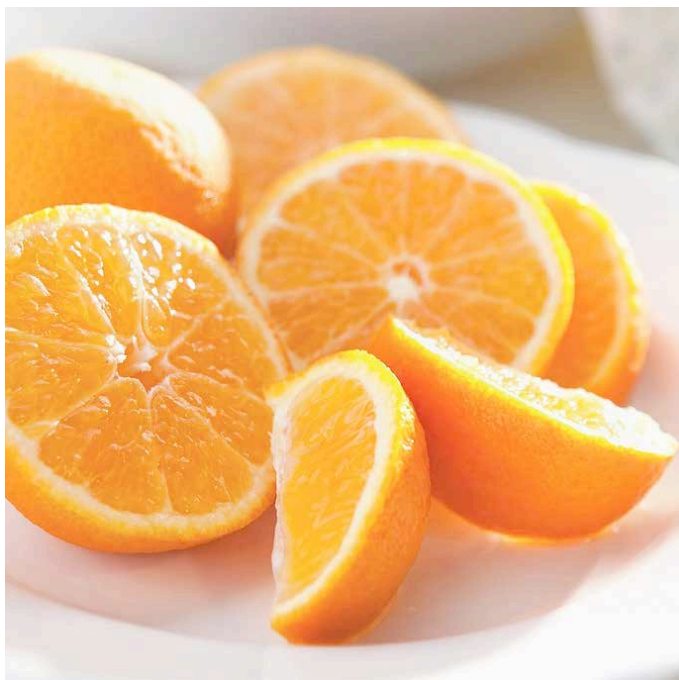
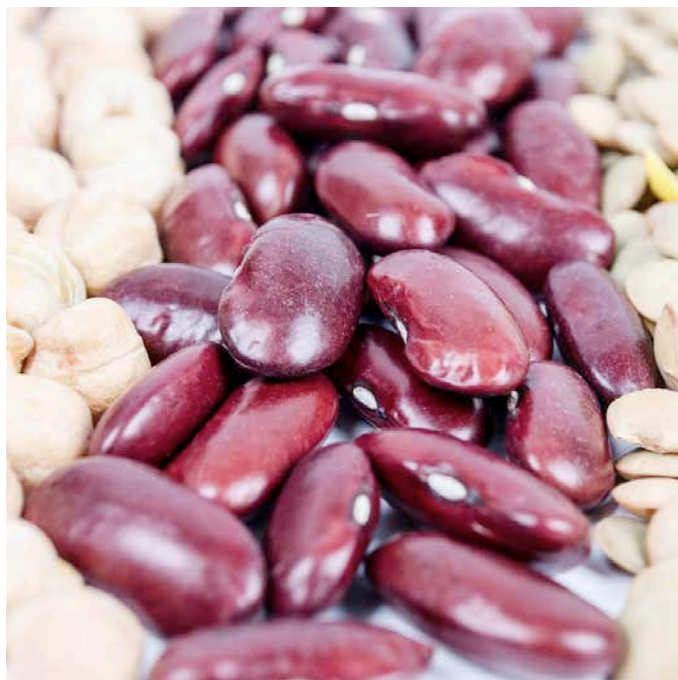
### A GRAPE BIG BREATH

The alveoli and bronchioles in your lungs look a lot like bunches of grapes, and grapes are great for lung health. They contain proanthocyanidin, which is anti-inflammatory, and helps the alveoli stretch as you breathe. A diet rich in proanthocyanidins is associated with a reduction in lung diseases such as emphysema, asthma, bronchitis and cancer.

### ALMOND EYES

Almonds are rich in Vitamin E, which slows macular (of the eye) degeneration.









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**Contact Liz on**  
0412 430 380  
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#### Jane Hutchens

Jane is an experienced naturopath, herbalist, nutritionist and RN who is committed to helping people achieve lasting health through sensible and realistic means. She has a particular interest in women's health, fertility, thyroid, digestive issues, stress and chronic conditions of ill-health.

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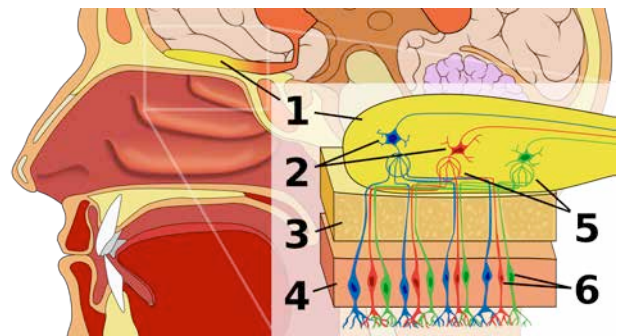




# basics of essential oils

## part 1: aromatic

Essential oils are unique in that their efficacy begins at the aromatic level. Unlike pharmaceutical drugs, an essential oil need not be ingested, nor even applied like a medical cream, to affect your body to heal. The **simple act of smelling an essential oil** begins its work to heal the area of your body that requires attention.



- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Olfactory bulb | 4. Olfactory epithelium |
| 2. Mitral cells   | 5. Glomerulus           |
| 3. Bone barrier   | 6. Olfactory cells      |

### Penetrating the brain barrier

The aromatic compounds in pure essential oils rise up the nasal cavity and are first detected by olfactory cells that are part of the olfactory epithelium. The olfactory cells are nerve cells with extended cilia (hair-like structures) which have receptors that bind to specific odour molecules. When a receptor binds to an odour molecule, the olfactory cell sends the signal through the cribriform plate (bone barrier between the nasal cavity and brain) to the olfactory bulb.

The olfactory bulb in turn sends impulses to five different structures in the brain. Each of these five structures has a different response to the impulse, and a specific function to undertake.

- **The amygdala** stores and releases emotions or trauma;
- **The anterior olfactory nucleus** processes odours;
- **The olfactory tubercle** is a multi-sensory processing centre however does not itself process odours;
- **The piriform cortex** sends signals to other structures; and
- **The entorhinal cortex** processes stimuli before sending them to the hippocampus, the memory centre of the brain.

The olfactory system is anatomically closely connected to the limbic system of the brain, as shown by the following structures that make up the limbic system. You can clearly identify the correlation between the olfactory and limbic systems of the brain by the function of each structure.

- **The hippocampus** is the memory centre of the brain—it is important in the consolidation of information from short-term memory to long-term memory and spatial navigation;
- **The amygdala** is involved with the experiencing of emotions—the storing and releasing of emotional trauma;
- **The hypothalamus** coordinates both the autonomic nervous system and hormones—body temperature, thirst, hunger, sleep and emotional activity; and
- **The cingulate gyrus** is involved with emotion formation and processing—learning and attention, regulating heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory control.

Simply through aromatic use, essential oils can have immense physiological and psychological effects. They contain aromatic compounds from nature, that, in many cases, provide nourishment, growth, protection and healing to the plant itself. Those same compounds have been found to work within the human body to similarly nourish, protect and heal.

Based on science, we understand that aromatically essential oils do have therapeutic or healing benefits to the human body. ●

In the next issue of Modewest, we'll be exploring the Basics of Essential Oils Part 2: Topical, how the application of essential oils directly to the skin—neat (undiluted) or diluted in a cream or carrier oil—can provide natural, healing benefits to the human body.



# the big screen: it should happen to you

I'd heard about Judy Holliday, but never recalled seeing any of her films. The thought of the name 'Judy Holliday' always struck me to match someone like a 'Rosemary Clooney'—or one of the Andrews sisters. I'd never imagined this Judy to be an endearing, bright-eyed, kind of wacky, atypical-looking—and speaking—comedienne of the big screen. So it follows then, that when Judy (let's call her that because she feels like a friend!) portrays a bright-eyed, aspirational and hopeful ex-girdle model, Gladys Glover, who merely wants to 'make a name for herself', in the 1954 film *It Should Happen to You*, all the actor's qualities shine through Gladys.

Directed by George Cukor and also starring Peter Lawford, and Jack Lemmon in his first major screen appearance, *It Should Happen to You* is a wonderful story of a young girl's dream for fame, and how she goes about achieving it in New York City.

Strolling through Central Park, feeding pigeons and taking off her shoes to 'help her think more clearly', Gladys is involved in an altercation with a fellow park-stroller listening to sport on his radio. He accuses her of trying to 'come-on to him'. This funny scene attracts Jack Lemmon's character, a pleasant, young documentary film-maker named Pete Sheppard, who films the incident. In Pete and Gladys' interaction that follows, we learn that Gladys is discouraged by New York. After being there only two years, she has recently lost her job as a girdle model and she still hasn't made a name for herself, despite her accumulated savings of \$1000. Pete's instant interest in Gladys is obvious. He obtains her address by offering to drop off a note when the documentary is finished so she can see herself on film, and before leaving he plants the idea in Gladys' head to follow her dream by willing a way to achieve it.

What results is Gladys' investment of \$630 for her name to be painted, and displayed for three months, on a large billboard overlooking Columbus Circle (a prime location) which happened to have a for rent sign on it.

Gladys now embarks, intelligently and innocently, on what becomes a strategic marketing campaign to create brand awareness, the brand being her own name, even if she doesn't know she is doing it. With gleeful excitement, she shares her new found fame with Pete, who is less than happy with her use of her money for signage. She meets the rich Adams Soap Company-owner Evan Adams III (Peter Lawford) who tries to convince her to give up the sign by offering her more money than she paid for it. But Gladys is not interested. She is eventually offered six signs, located across New York City, in exchange for the one. This time, Gladys accepts, and there are now six large signs in New York (one in lights), each saying 'Gladys Glover.'

While the romantic development of each male character with Gladys, and her responses to them—and their responses to her fascination with her signs—provides light entertainment, the true genius of the film is the plot itself. Gladys' initial investment in her brand and then her strategic up-selling to gain more exposure in broader markets is genius for Classical Hollywood film. She then begins to network, meeting influential people, and ultimately she rises to fame by modelling as 'the average American girl' for a series of advertisements for Adams Soap Company.

Although the fame begins to separate Pete and Gladys, and Gladys is deceived by Evan into an attempted—but failed—seduction, her integrity is maintained and she discovers that her advertising career is empty. The movie ends with a happy reunion of Pete and Gladys driving towards their new 'feet firmly planted on the ground' future, yet Gladys' eyes momentarily stray to a billboard with a for rent sign on it.

One can't help but wonder if her marketing campaign merely needed to be measured, reviewed and refined in order to keep her on the right track with her brand goals. ●





# photo focus: the new residents

When I arrived to photograph the house in Leura, the new residents were sipping champagne in the upstairs kitchen with the architect and the ever-jovial building company boss, my employer on this job.

Everything in the house was new. It had no curtains, no personal belongings. The owners had just been handed the keys and may not have felt the house belonged to them yet. That would come later, when the hustle and bustle had died down and they would have time to breathe and take it all in. But for now, by contrast to the empty rooms, there were people and action everywhere.

The downstairs garage floor was strewn with power tools, paint buckets, ladders. The radio was blasting 90s hits and sports commentary. The workers were busy packing up and making sure everything was in order before it was time to go and not come back anymore.

Later on, the friends of the new residents came in groups, walked from room to room, stopped to look at the empty walls, the uncovered floor, and to marvel at how much more there would be. And indeed there would be. The house was a huge two-storey building with spacious rooms and high ceilings. There was a lift between the first and second floor: the new residents from Sydney were starting their life in the Mountains in style.

Long after the boss and the architect had gone, and the workers had packed their bags and turned off the radio for the last time, I was still inside the house. I was capturing the final shots of the rooms with their views of the

Blue Mountains and the Three Sisters that loomed in the horizon like three fingers of a crippled colossus.

I was waiting for complete darkness. After the interior, I would still have the twilight exterior to photograph, my favourite part of the job.

I set up my camera and tripod in the sunken footpath at the front of the house, made sure I was happy with what I saw in the viewfinder and got ready to shoot.

It was a chilly winter night and I was wearing a T-shirt. My plan was to make a few dozen exposures of the same scene and on each exposure shine my flash on a different part of the house. Or the lawn. Or the brushes that flanked the fresh squares of turf. I would then combine these separate exposures in post-production and hope that I'd end up with a pretty stunning example of night architectural photography. So, cold or no cold, I had a job to do.

I finished the shoot, packed up my camera gear and walked upstairs to say good night to the new residents. They would now, finally, have a chance to enjoy their house without intruders.

As I was closing the door I heard the male occupant say to his wife, "Honey, where would you like to sleep tonight?"

In a house that size, I wouldn't know either. ●



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