



# Empowered

A monthly online publication for small business change makers

January 2014

## In This Issue:

**Page 1** *Be Empowered*

**Page 2** *Build Your Brand in 2014*

**Page 2** *Small Business Healthcare, and the Affordable Care Act*

**Page 3** *Size Matters: The Power of Bandwidth*

**Page 4** *Business Marketplace*

**Page 4** *Business Marketplace*

## Upcoming February Contributions (subject to change):

The U.S. economy in 2014

The African American impact on business development in the U.S. (Black History posting)

Proper healthcare management and its contribution to successful business ownership

How small businesses grow local economies

Grow your revenue through effective sales management

## Be Empowered

*Austin E. Thompson, Jr.*



When you think of the change makers of our world, the first thing which comes to mind are those who dare to be different, are risk takers, and step out on faith with a bold vision and ambitious plan to create an opportunity for themselves as entrepreneurs. Most important, entrepreneurs contribute to growing our economy. These individuals are the innovative leaders who exercise true determination to make our lives better. Furthermore, entrepreneurs are leaders with imagination and a tremendous sense of independence and high self-esteem. Empowered is a new online business newsletter published by Thompson Management Consulting, LLC, and dedicated to placing a spotlight on the hard work and contributions of our small business owners. According to a Small Business Administration report in 2012, small businesses have created 64% of new net jobs in our country between 1993 and 2011 (11.8 million jobs out of 18.5 million new net jobs), and comprise 99.7% of U.S. employer firms. This new business publication is dedicated to the small business change makers who are reshaping the American economic landscape, and who are empowered to grow their businesses with value-added services and products which create a competitive advantage in their respective industries, and create jobs to drive our economic engine.

Empowered will identify guest writers to contribute articles each month. Guest writers for consideration will be recruited from among our successful entrepreneurs and small business owners in the Metro Atlanta area. We also invite representatives from the academic and political community to contribute balanced/non-partisan articles. This guest writing initiative will provide an opportunity for business owners to contribute toward a publication established to promote small businesses and entrepreneurs, while providing critical decision-making information to the readers of Empowered to positively impact their lives and businesses. The primary target market for Empowered is small business owners for B2B engagement. However, the publication will target the consumer market for B2C marketing efforts. We invite you to help grow Empowered with your enlightened articles, and professional insight, which will contribute greatly to the overall success of all who are involved in being change makers. Additionally, we hope our readers find value in the articles published in Empowered. We look forward to a long-term and sustainable presence in the immediate Metro Atlanta area, with opportunities to grow into a major global media publication which serves the small business market. Get empowered, stay empowered, and own your success.

## **Build Your BRAND in 2014**

**Austin E. Thompson, Jr.**

At the beginning of each New Year, it is very common for us to make resolutions for such things as losing weight, looking for a new job, finding love, purchasing a new house, and pursuing a plethora of other opportunities. Whether our resolutions are consistent and maintained throughout the year, one thing you can't ignore is what image you are setting for yourself. How you are perceived, and in what image someone has set in their mind about you are very important to your BRAND health in 2014.

Kick off 2014 with a new attitude and style to compliment all the great things you wish to accomplish in the New Year. Your personal BRAND value and the way in which you present yourself can be the difference between experiencing success and experiencing marginal gains. For instance, if you plan to find a new job this year or accept a new position in your organization, what helps you to stand out from among the other candidates? If your desire is to increase your visibility for the sake of being recognized for a promotion, what competitive advantage do you have to set you apart from others seeking the same position? What makes you exceptional? What is your value proposition, and how do you recognize your BRAND value assets?

One way to determine what you offer is to identify the core strengths you possess, and the weaknesses you can work on to strengthen. Your strengths are what comprises your value proposition, and if you can recognize them, bring them to the forefront to help promote your BRAND. Your weaknesses can become strengths, if you are honest with yourself and identify those traits and qualities that compromise your opportunity to experience life-changing success. Work on those things you identify as a weakness, and your competitive advantage will increase as you grow and develop them into strengths. One final thing, have a winning attitude and confidence in your ability to be a change maker. People have confidence in those who possess strong qualities and a high self-esteem. So, take on this New Year with confidence, and develop your weaknesses. Capitalize on your core strengths to build a personal BRAND that radiates and leaves a positive footprint on the minds of those who come into contact with you. Let this be the year you become a change maker. Happy 2014, and make this year....YOUR YEAR!!!!

## **Small Business Healthcare**

**Austin E. Thompson, Jr.**

On March 23, 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the most important and historically significant bill addressing the healthcare needs of Americans since the Social Security Act Amendments legislating Medicaid and Medicare, which were signed into law on July 30, 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), infamously called Obama Care, has faced staunch opposition by those who are concerned about the bill's impact on the U.S. deficit, potential loss of jobs, patients not having proper access to healthcare providers, and for other reasons they oppose this legislation. Like the Social Security Act of 1935, which was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the PPACA is perceived as government intruding on the private sector's free market ideals.

What the PPACA does is provide healthcare coverage to over 7 million uninsured Americans and provide an open market place for Americans to pick and choose coverage affordable to them, and enroll in services which are better suited to their medical needs. For entrepreneurs who are sole proprietors (self-employed) with no employees, this is an opportunity to venture onto the open market place and select healthcare coverage suitable for your needs. For small business owners with employees, there are many options on healthcare.gov to explore, and from which to choose for your small enterprises. There are options for small businesses, such as those with over 50 employees, a variety of benefits offered, choosing insurance that is right for your business, and much more. Log on to [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). It works, and people are enrolling.

The important things to highlight are options for every type of small business. Despite the disappointment of the PPACA rollout and the website challenges, many are very hopeful that in one to two years from now, all will be forgotten when the website overcomes the shortcomings in its infancy and develops into an efficient resource through which many can enroll into affordable healthcare coverage. Log on to [www.events.sba.gov](http://www.events.sba.gov) for the upcoming Affordable Care Act for Small Business Seminar in Atlanta, and outside of Atlanta, check for similar SBA events in your local area at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov). Since the rollout, over 1 million Americans have signed up. 2 million short of the goal, but it is improving. Make informed decisions by educating yourself on the issues and the abundance of opportunities which await you.

## **Size Matters: The Power of Bandwidth**

**Austin E. Thompson, Jr.**

What can small businesses learn from the disappointment of the healthcare.gov website roll out and the recent failure of UPS to fulfill its promise of delivering packages on time for Christmas? Bandwidth is power, and without sufficient network capacity to accommodate the volume of customers or users logging on to your website to conduct business transactions, your site will be rendered inaccessible and those expecting to carry out their transactions on your site will become intolerably frustrated. Fortunate for UPS and the U.S. government, they are big enough to absorb these hiccups and keep moving, while mending their major bruises over time. Customers were angry at UPS for not getting packages delivered in time for Christmas as they promised, and they vented their frustrations in large numbers on social media sites. Amazon refunded delivery costs, as their customers relied on UPS for delivery of those packages. UPS' network challenges affected Amazon's customers, which resulted in Amazon losing money, as the online retailer offered \$20 gift cards in addition to refunding shipping costs to its customers; a modest public relations strategy. As for the U.S. government, the failed roll out of the healthcare website caused a major tsunami of frustrations for those who could not log on to the website, had their current healthcare coverage canceled without the ability to apply for new coverage, and could not meet the December 24, 2013 deadline to sign up for open exchanges on the marketplace. Any small business that relies on online sales or online business activity as part of its operations to drive revenue, a misstep of this magnitude can be catastrophic for a small to medium sized enterprise, from which recovery is a mere possibility. The public relations effort of both the U.S. government and UPS will influence a successful recovery as the resources are there to drive both. A small business may not have the resources or capacity to initiate a public relations campaign to repair the company's brand, if such a disaster occurs. Television ads, interviews, and other public relations media efforts to repair a damaged image are not possible with a small business.

Businesses that operate largely as pure-click ecommerce operations, where buying and selling occur primarily over the Internet on computer networks, can learn from these two examples. The IT challenges of the U.S. government and UPS is a lesson learned for all of us, and offers effective case studies from which to learn how to avoid major network catastrophes by properly managing our IT infrastructures in preparation for increased traffic to our business websites. If there is anticipated increase in volume because of special sales offers, event registration, or expected last minute rush for online purchases of your products, make sure you have the proper bandwidth to accommodate the expected volume. If your site crashes, you lose customers who will find alternatives to doing business. Winning those customers back will be a challenge. Small businesses do not have the budget of similar capacity to UPS or the U.S. government to pay for a "damage control" public relations campaign. In today's competitive market, there are a plethora of options from which to choose, so do your best to keep your online customers happy and coming back for continued services. Maintain the proper bandwidth, because size does matter.

**Happy New Year**



*Wishing you all a very prosperous and healthy New Year. May your dreams be fulfilled and may your aspirations for 2014 be achieved. All the best, and much thanks to those who have supported Thompson Management Consulting, LLC throughout the years. Be Empowered!*

# Business Marketplace

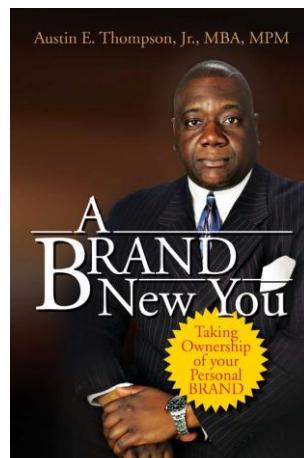
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