



March 2010

Turning Vision into Value

**Harvest Partners**

- David Karabinos
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Raising Capital off a Business Plan**David Karabinos**

Have you heard of Garage.com? Guy Kawaski and some pals founded this west coast venture capital outfit in the 90's. They focus on technology startups or early stage companies looking for 500k to 3m to break out. I am a big fan of Mr. Kawaski. He was instrumental in Apple's success with the Macintosh, is a proven venture capitalist and successful author with eight books in print.

Garage claims, "We are willing to invest in unproven teams attacking unproven markets with unproven solutions. We're not interested in teams that are creating the nth solution to the same old problem nor companies who are trying to improve things by only 10 or 20 percent." Hmm.

Not the same old tone we hear from the venture crowd is it? But is this a bait and switch? This will certainly draw the moths towards the flame. But from my experience I think professional investors (e.g. venture capitalists) really want the best of both worlds. I most often hear that venture groups in Garage's niche are mining that perfect nexus between breakout disruptive innovation within clear markets, but led by proven entrepreneurs who've done it before. "Unproven" really doesn't fit in this model.

Having said this, from their massive experience listening to endless pitches from entrepreneurs over the years, Guy and his gang have developed some nifty feedback for CEOs pitching their ideas and companies.

Check it out:

[Perfecting your Pitch](#)

[Writing a Compelling Executive Summary](#)

Partner Spotlight

We would like to introduce you to [Smith, Gambrell & Russell \(SGR\)](#) - a full-service law firm based in Atlanta, GA with offices in Jacksonville, FL, New York, NY, Washington DC, and Frankfurt, Germany.

We discovered SGR when Tony Rushin met [Jonathan Minnen](#) at a Technology Association of Georgia Entrepreneur's event a few years ago. "I knew SGR had a good reputation, but Jonathan was the first attorney I had met from the firm. For Harvest's clients, what impressed me from the start was his hands-on business experience. He was a senior executive at a multi-state chain of retail stores before commencing his legal career over 22 years ago. He then joined SGR and moved to Atlanta 10 years ago," states Tony. In addition, "Jonathan chairs the Corporate Practice for the Firm and has a focus on manufacturing and technology companies which is a good fit for Harvest clients."

SGR has the breadth and depth you would expect from a large, international law firm with over 175 attorneys, 5 locations and 45 different practice areas. This expertise is appropriate for many companies in the markets Harvest serves, especially leaders interested in achieving Breakout Growth. But just as important is SGR's surprisingly entrepreneurial culture that aligns well with our clients.

Trends in Physician Practice Management

Andy Karabinos

Since health insurance access today is primarily employer-based, unemployment conditions play a major role in medical care utilization. This, coupled with the economy in general, has a direct impact on the percentage of patients covered and thus accessing physician services. Depending on whose numbers you believe, unemployment is over 10%, and many economists believe the real number closer to 17% if you consider those who have given up searching, underemployed and other factors.

The result is more patients with reduced or no coverage. Virtually all Americans that are employed with health insurance coverage are being required to absorb a greater share of out-of-pocket medical costs. Changes in Benefit Plan design are a major focus of insurers today, as employers are fighting premium increases as never before. [Full Article](#)

Position your Company For Growth

Joe Shelley

So you have survived the "stormy waters" of this current recession. While you have hung in there with strong cost containment measures, you may not have been able to grow your revenue or market share. How have some companies continued to grow or position themselves to grow during this time? Here are a few ideas to consider as you begin to chart your growth going forward.

1) Listen to Your Customers

Customers real needs can be very subtle. Sometimes they express one thing, when their real needs are deeper. For example, they say cost when they mean value. They say quality when they mean prestige. You need to immerse yourself and your company into your customer's heads and get into their world. Go beyond surface impressions. Verify that their actions match their words. This is not an issue of deception, but sometimes customers don't fully understand their needs or what your product offers them. For example, it is possible they may be using features of your product in ways you are unaware and which you could use to capture new clients?

2) Know Your Customer's Real Needs

You have been paying attention to customer service and believe you understand your customer's needs. But - do you truly understand the real reasons why customer's buy your product (or service)? Sometimes the real reasons are emotional and subtle. They relate to a few key drivers that your client's decision-makers keep prominently on their "dashboards." These are drivers that keep them awake at night. Find the real reasons that drive customer behavior and build your product around them. Then develop strategies for marketing, sales and delivery to capitalize on your new insight.

3) Test and Retest

Once you are confident that you have a handle on your customer's real needs, test and retest your product to ensure it meets those needs. Strip out, modify and add where needed to gear your product to best satisfy the real needs.

4) Deliver Consistently

Once you have your product in tune with your customer's needs, review all aspects of your company to make sure your company is doing what it can to deliver on those needs. Make sure you have alignment of your reconstituted product with your business model, branding, marketing, sales, delivery, and customer service. Eliminate inconsistencies.

5) Get Your Entire Team on Board

Make sure all company team members understand these findings, their impact and your new strategies to satisfy these needs. Knowledge brings buy-in and consistency in purpose and delivery.

6) Manage the Growth

Growth goes to those companies that best satisfy their customer's real needs. If you put forth the effort to truly understand your customer's needs and position your company to satisfy these needs, growth will follow. Manage the flow. Revenues will be your reward.

7) Continuously Work to Improve

Customer's needs change. Build into your company the capability to continuously listen and respond to your customer's needs. When you believe you have arrived, start again at #1 above.

We at Harvest Business Advisors can help our clients with the approach above. We are interested in your thoughts on this approach. If you would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me at [256.683.4479](tel:256.683.4479) or Joe.Shelley@harvestbusinessadvisors.com.

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