

The value builder

There are many challenges involved in running a company but perhaps the biggest one is to build value within the business. Jason Rainbird has made a career out of helping companies to achieve just that.

Jason is the founder and director of Flowbird, a customer relationship management (CRM) and marketing automation agency, and his primary aim is to help clients develop, grow and maintain their existing customer base by using the information they have at their disposal.

He says: *"Customer information is held in numerous systems, including CRM, accounting/enterprise resource planning (ERP) and e-commerce platforms. Many companies that invest in these systems don't know how to get full value from them to improve business processes, sales and profitability.*

"Quite often managers are so engrossed in their day jobs that they overlook fundamental questions, such as: do we have a customer retention strategy? Most of us are aware that obtaining a new customer is far more expensive than retaining existing customers, yet little thought is put into the process of customer retention. It's estimated that around two thirds of customers will switch to a new supplier because of a perceived lack of appreciation.

"The most important asset in any business is the customer. With a CRM system in place, managers and staff can monitor all of the interactions with every customer, and find out

who said what and when. This is vital to ensure that customers are kept happy and nobody drops the ball."

Rather than just considering the growth prospects of its customers, Flowbird looks at their business from the point of view of a prospective buyer. The basic premise is that if they want to sell their business, or transition it to a new generation of managers, is it in good enough shape to tempt a buyer?

Jason says: *"We ask our customers whether their business could thrive without them if they left today. Are the right processes in place? Are they able to delegate with confidence? Our Value Builder tool helps them to address these issues."*

Value Builder is a 12-point test that enables businesses to check if they're doing things in the right way. Customers receive a score on eight key indicators that drive their company's value, as well as a comprehensive analysis of their score and a detailed action plan for how to improve their score on each indicator. This enables them to diagnose what may be holding them back from creating a company that can thrive without them. It also allows them to identify potential threats that could drag down the value of the business, see how a

potential buyer would evaluate their business, and to pinpoint the most valuable parts of the business so they can invest more resources in areas likely to be most attractive to a potential acquirer or investor.

"Our motto is: learn to love your business again," says Jason. "That's our message to our customers. We want them to enjoy running their business and to do that they need to see value in it. Our Value Builder helps them in that respect."

Born in Kingston upon Thames, Jason grew up in a children's home and *"loved every minute of it"*. After college, he moved into sales and started selling weighbridges for a firm in Scotland.

"They had a CRM platform along with the weighbridges," recalls Jason. "The guy who was selling the CRM software left so I took on his role."

As his career progressed, Jason sold various other CRM systems and helped firms to integrate them within their business, often training staff on how to get the best out of them. He launched Flowbird in 2013 and now the company, which has 12 staff, is one of the fastest-growing firms in its sector.

Jason says: *"COVID-19 actually helped us because companies had time to start focusing on streamlining their internal processes. Now, though, we're seeing the effects of Brexit on customer supply chains. A couple of our customers almost shut their business because they couldn't buy stock. Buying and selling stuff has been made much harder so we've had to adapt.*

"We're looking at the British market where buying and selling isn't a problem. We're also looking at niche markets, such as leisure and furniture, where people are still buying and selling lots of goods. Companies who operate in these markets need a good CRM to manage and monitor orders.

"In future we'd like to win more business locally, so being a Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce member will help in that regard."

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INSIDE STORY:

Jason Rainbird

Favourite food? Gambian Peanut Stew – mainly because it's a dish I can cook and people really like it.

Favourite tittle? I gave up alcohol when I had COVID, probably because of the taste, and I haven't gone back! I mainly drink water now. Before that, my go-to drink was probably gin & tonic.

Favourite holiday? For the last 25 years we've been going away in our caravan. However, a couple of years ago we sold the caravan and decided to try something else – various hotels and even a cruise! But I missed caravanning so we purchased another one and are using my wife's Mini to tow it.

Describe your family life? Both children have left home so family life is me, my wife and Dexter the Yorkshire Terrier.

How do you spend your downtime? Walking the dog and going to the gym three times a week. Apart from that, work!

What are your key strengths as a manager? An ability to motivate and retain a very relaxed attitude. I'm a great believer in giving people as much autonomy as possible.

And your limitations? Technically this would be coding. Also, I'm not as good a salesperson as I'd first thought!

Best thing about doing business in the borough? From a business perspective, we have very few customers in the immediate area, which is a pity. Through our links with the Chamber, we hope to change this.

Famous person you'd most like to spend dinner with? Carol Dweck – she wrote the book Mindset which fundamentally changed me and how I treat other people. I think it should be part of the school curriculum.

Most interesting fact about yourself? I spent most of my childhood in a children's home and was homeless at the age of 18.

