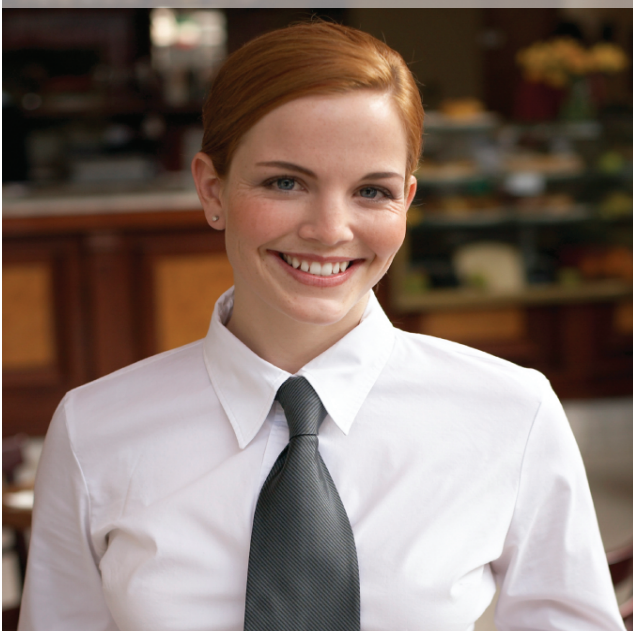




WOMEN **IN** BUSINESS



The Mendota Reporter • Wednesday, October 9, 2024



Ways to make sure your business stands out among competitors

(StatePoint) Staying competitive in today's market can be a challenge. As the business landscape continues to evolve, paying attention to the competition is more important than ever. Business isn't run in a vacuum and understanding what's working — and equally important, what's not working — for other successful companies is an integral step in staying ahead of the game.

Here are some ways to do that from the experts at PNC Bank:

Set a Google Alert

One of the easiest things you can do, setting up a Google alert, allows you to immediately be alerted of big news that's being reported about you, your industry or your major competitors.

Follow Websites and Track SEO

Poor user experience on a website can drive 50% of potential customers to competitor businesses. "Track what your major competitors are doing on their websites — taking special note of anything new or innovative — to ensure you stay viable in this area. Start by paying attention to their SEO. Compare web traffic and look for similarities and differences in your online strategies," says Marc McAndrew, head of small business, PNC Bank.

Go Through the Customer Experience

Consumers have indicated in any number of surveys and forums they would leave a brand they've been loyal to after three

or fewer bad experiences with customer service. It is worth running through your competitor's customer experience from time to time to see how smoothly it operates and what they're doing differently.

Invest in Data Technology

There are plenty of automation tools on the market that help track how competitors are doing in various areas. Look for companies that offer things like competitive and social post analysis, social media audits and social listening for the most complete overview.

Track Pricing

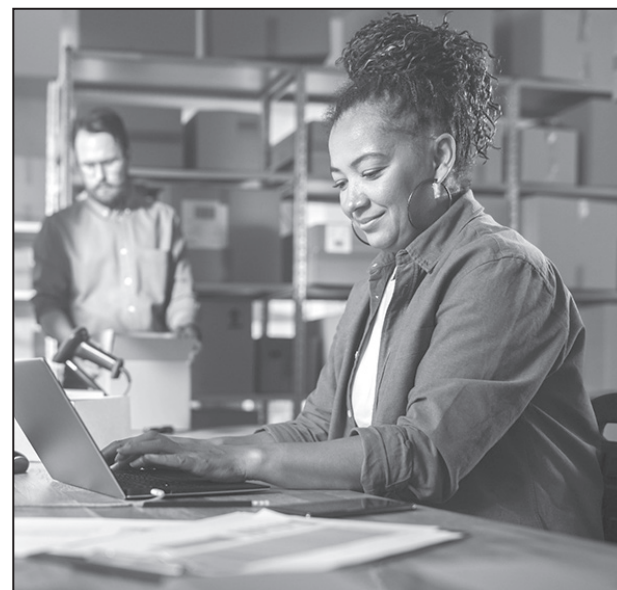
Technology aside, pricing is one of the most important aspects of a business. Understand where your company falls by comparing pricing strategies

among your competitors. Customers are willing to pay more for certain things, so understand your customer base and price accordingly for best results.

Just having the above data on-hand isn't enough to make a difference. Besides assessing your competitors, institute the following as benchmarks for your business to keep customers coming your way:

- Provide unparalleled customer service;
- Define and build your brand based on the value you provide;
- Position yourself — and your business — as experts in the field;
- Put a face to your product or service; and
- Have a clear and unique voice in the market.

Check out PNC's Small



Business Insights for more topics to explore on managing, running, and growing your business.

Running a successful business requires a strong

business model, a willingness to keep a keen eye on the competition, and the ability to adjust as needed to stay one step ahead of the game.

The Kurt Bruno State Farm Team Salutes Women in Business

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From left to right:
Samantha Bowne •
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A Salute To Our Working Women



Left to right, Anna Arteaga, Whitney Stiles, Michaela Olson, Tammy Gibson, Katie Brandner, and Keri Weber

We would like to take this opportunity to salute these women who are such an important asset to our business.



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Want happier employees? New research says it's time to get personal

(BPT) - In an eye-opening look at workplace well-being, researchers have found that only one-third (28%) of knowledge workers globally say they have a healthy relationship with their jobs.

The culprit, according to HP's 2024 Work Relationship Index (WRI), is an outdated, one-size-fits-all approach to the employee experience. The data shows that offices, company culture, tools and leadership styles have remained nearly the same while the world's expectations of work have evolved. To keep up, businesses must prioritize what today's workers really want. (Hint: It's not just free snacks.)

The future of work?

It's personal.

Gone are the days of cookie-cutter career experiences. Modern employees are looking to be treated as individuals, rather than simply part of a collective workforce. According to HP's 2024 WRI, at least two-thirds of knowledge workers and business leaders want tailored professional experiences, meaning choices across workspaces, tools, schedules and trainings that meet their unique needs and goals. It's all about options, customization and autonomy.

And if you think this only applies to the younger generation, think again. While more than 70% of Gen Z and Millennials say more personalized work would improve their overall well-being and relationship with work, more than 65% of Gen X and more than 55% of Boomers agreed, too.

"This shift toward personalization reveals crucial insights for employers," said Anneliese Olson, senior vice president and managing

director, North America, HP. "Tailored experiences could be the key to unlocking workforce potential and employee longevity."

Harnessing AI's workplace potential

AI usage at work has exploded among knowledge workers and emerged as one tool helping create more personalized work experiences. The study found that nearly 7-in-10 (69%) knowledge workers who use AI agree they can customize their use of AI to be more productive. Many knowledge workers who used AI in 2024 saw other benefits too, including better work-life balance, new opportunities to enjoy their careers, and 73% said AI makes their jobs easier. Notably, the Work Relationship Index score for knowledge workers who use AI is 11 points higher than that of their colleagues who don't.

Trust at the top

Today's workers want a company they can believe in. They seek out strong,

confident leaders who will make the right decisions for them and their businesses. In fact, trust in senior leadership was one of the most influential factors in determining WRI scores, highlighting the pivotal role executives play in shaping the employee experience. Despite a clear demand for bold leadership, the data found that less than half (44%) of business leaders felt confident in their "human skills," including mindfulness, self-awareness, communication, creative thinking, resilience, emotional intelligence and empathy; and only 42% were confident in their hard or technical skills.

Women leaders, however, emerged as a bright spot in the research, displaying greater confidence in both human and hard skills compared to their male counterparts. In fact, female business leaders were found to be 10 points more confident in their hard skills, and



most notably 13 points more confident in human skills than their male counterparts.

Empathy and the employee experience

Feeling seen and heard by management is another top priority for workers across generations - and one that greatly impacts not only their desire to stay put, but also their overall well-being and their professional growth. It all comes down to empathy. The 2024 HP WRI data shows that

while 78% of knowledge workers say it's important to have senior leadership who demonstrate empathy, only 28% say their executives consistently demonstrate it. This empathy disconnect is further underscored at the leadership level. While many leaders lack confidence in their human skills, at least 90% acknowledge empathy's positive impact on employee well-being, professional growth and retention.

"Today's workforce wants so much more than a paycheck," said Olson. "The 2024 HP Work Relationship Index (WRI) highlights a clear demand for choice, individualization and a human-first approach to leadership. To realize this vision, we need empathic leaders and the right technologies to meet these evolving needs. The moment has arrived for businesses to fundamentally redefine relationships with work."



Left to right:
Julie McConville, Cristina Valdez, Kim Hight, Dr. Tara, Nikki Evans, Peggy Halbmaier

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Nurses serve in a variety of roles providing vital services

Nurses are invaluable professionals within the medical community. Whether they work in hospital settings, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, doctor's offices, or elsewhere, nurses provide vital services to individuals in need every day.

Nurses wear many hats, and that's evidenced by the different types of nurses making a difference each day. Individuals considering a career in nursing should know that talented nurses are in high demand and career opportunities in the field are expected to grow

in the years to come. For example, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that employment of registered nurses will grow by 6 percent between 2022 and 2032. That growth rate exceeds the average expected rate for all occupations. Whether individuals want to become a nurse or gain a greater understanding of the many ways nurses contribute each day, this rundown of the various types of nurses can shed light on these unsung heroes of the medical community.

- Pediatric nurse: Pediatric nurses make a strong

impression because they are the first nursing professionals many people recall interacting with, and those interactions may last from early childhood through adolescence. Pediatric nurses perform a range of tasks, including the administration of medication; monitoring of vitals like temperature, pulse and blood pressure; health evaluations to identify symptoms; and even speak with parents to calm any nerves or anxieties they may have. Pediatric nurses typically work in doctor's offices or hospital settings.

- Geriatric nurse: Geri-



Brenda & Kourtney selected the
2025 Chevy Equinox
as their favorite new vehicle.

atric nurses figure to be in especially high demand in the coming years, as an analysis from the Bipartisan Policy Center indicates more than four million individuals in the United States will turn 65 in 2024. AARP has characterized that surge in the over-65 population as a "silver tsunami," and

geriatric nurses will play pivotal roles in ensuring the aging population gets the care it needs in the decades to come.

- Family nurse practitioner: The American Association of Nurse Practitioners® notes family nurse practitioners (FNPs) provide a wide range of

family-focused health care services to patients of all ages. FNPs perform physical exams; order or perform diagnostic tests; prescribe medications; develop treatment plans; and treat acute and chronic illnesses. If that sounds like a role played by physicians, it's not far off, making this among the most challenging jobs within the nursing profession.

- Emergency room nurse: Individuals who think a fast-paced work environment is for them may want to consider a career as an emergency room nurse. ER nurses treat patients of all ages from all walks of life. No two emergency room patients are the same, so ER nurses will rarely, if ever, have the same day on the job more than once. Accurate assessment skills are vital for ER nurses, who also must be skilled communicators, as emergency room patients are often in distress.

Nursing is an expansive profession with a host of opportunities for aspiring professionals who want to work in the medical community.

Women In Business



Emily Kofoid -Director and Carolynn Ohlendorf
Youth Services Manager

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~ Serena Williams



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Illinois celebrates National Women's Business Month

CHICAGO—The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is celebrating National Women's Business Month throughout October by recognizing the significant contributions of women-owned businesses across the state. Throughout this monthlong celebration, DCEO is elevating resources and opportunities to help bolster Illinois' women-owned businesses.

"For far too long, wom-

en in business have faced significant gaps in access to capital and resources – but here in Illinois, we are actively bridging those gaps and prioritizing equity," said Governor JB Pritzker. "This National Women's Business Month, I am proud to join the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity in uplifting and empowering the incredible women-owned businesses and entrepreneurs that drive innovation and growth

throughout our state."

Although Illinois has over 457,000 women-owned businesses, women business owners and entrepreneurs, especially women of color, have historically experienced barriers in accessing financial and social capital and other key business resources. DCEO prioritizes creating an equitable business environment through targeted initiatives and resources designed for women-owned businesses.

"Women-owned businesses are vital to Illinois' economy, yet many still face challenges in accessing the resources they need," said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. "This Women's Business Month, we celebrate their contributions and remain committed to breaking down barriers so that all women entrepreneurs can thrive."

DCEO's Office of Economic Equity and Empowerment (OE3) works to

create an inclusive business environment for communities that have faced systemic challenges to growth, including women business owners and entrepreneurs, as well as businesses owned by people of color. OE3 hosts dozens of events and provides year-round support to women-owned businesses, including connection with grants, technical assistance, and incentives to bolster women entrepreneurs and women-owned enterprises.

"DCEO is committed to eliminating barriers and creating a more equitable economic ecosystem for women-owned businesses across the state," said DCEO Director Kristin Richards. "During Women's Business Month, DCEO is elevating the resources our office has available, ensuring these businesses have greater understanding and access to the information, funding and tools they need to succeed in October and beyond."

Saluting Women in Business



*Back row, left to right: Eve McDowell, Bradyn Chandler and Angie Collins
Front row, sitting - Branch Manager Betsy Westrick and Gayle Peasley*

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National Business Women's Week launched in 1928

The third full week in October (Oct. 20-26, 2024) ushers in National Business Women's Week each year. The observance focuses on the accomplishments of women in business. It also takes a look at the past and how far women in business have come and how far they have yet to go.

Every year, women in the workforce take on stronger, more empowering roles. They run their own businesses, take charge of the boardroom, and build upon last year's successes. At one time, very few women even had a voice.

Today, women-owned businesses generate nearly \$1.8 trillion in sales. Of privately-owned companies, women own 40 percent of them and employ almost 9 million people. Their contributions to the economy cannot go unnoticed.

What's important to note are their roles continue to change. When once their place in the boardroom would have been considered questionable, today, it's now becoming commonplace. They're also successful at what they do.

Recognize the women in business who you ad-

mire. Give them a shout out on social media. Are they entrepreneurs, innovators, creators? How have they impacted your career? Learn more about women in business by visiting thebalancecareers.com. For women who have chosen a business career path, share your experiences with others. While today is much different from 1938, women must continue to inspire young women by attending job fairs and speaking at high schools. Demonstrate your successes to them and show them the way.

Share your experiences

as a businesswoman using #BusinessWomensWeek or #NBWW on social media.

Lena Madasin Phillips, president of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (NFBPWC), launched the first National Business Women's Week in 1928. It wasn't until 1938 that the week was officially recognized and celebrated every year since.

Facts About Women in Business

To illustrate the importance of businesswomen, we've decided to list some facts about women in busi-

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ness that anyone observing this week is going to want to read.

- Women own over a third of small businesses in the world.
- In California alone, there are 1.3 million women-owned firms.
- Women-owned businesses are growing at a rate

of 5% per year.

- In the U.S., women own over 12 million businesses.
- Women-owned U.S. businesses employ more than 9 million people.
- Hispanic women-owned businesses have grown almost 200% over the last decade.

Financial Plus honors its working women



Front row, left to right:

Jamie Denault, Rose Bonnell and Celina Garza

Back row, left to right:

Ashley Hermosillo, Aubrey Stienner, Audrey Holocker.

Not pictured:

Jennifer Truckenbrod

Financial Plus would like to thank all the hardworking women that have become indispensable to our business & our members.

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Lena Madasin Phillips, president of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (NFBPWC), launched the first National Business Women's Week in 1928.

The many qualities women bring to business

Women continue to thrive in the workforce. Wells Fargo reports that, from 2019 to 2023, the growth rate of women-owned businesses outpaced the rate of men-owned businesses in relation to number of firms, rate of employment and revenue earned. LinkedIn also indicates there are 114 percent more women entrepreneurs now than there were 20 years ago.

Every business owner or employee brings something unique to the employment landscape and certain characteristics are universal, regardless of gender. Still, there are certain qualities that women bring to the workforce that can help businesses excel. Forbes indicates women employees offer traits that can help drive engagement, productivity, satisfaction, and various other attributes. The following are some of the

traits women may bring to business.

Emotional intelligence

Women First Jobs says that women often bring high emotional intelligence to the table. Emotional intelligence involves understanding and managing emotions and the emotions of others. Women may be more inclined to understand different perspectives and to help resolve conflicts and build relationships.

Collaboration

Women employees often have traits that can foster collaboration in the workplace, such as reading non-verbal cues and willingness to take turns in conversations, indicates Forbes. This can help everyone collaborate more effectively.

Room for improvement

Women in the workplace continually seek

opportunities for improvement, advises Sparklight Business. This can involve taking advice from other workers and peers. Women leaders embrace opportunities to do things better and work to improve their skills for the greater good.

Communication

The IWEC Foundation, which empowers women entrepreneurs, says women tend to be effective communicators and often make great leaders because of this trait and their ability to inspire others. Communication often is key to any relationship, whether personal or in a business setting.

Organization and planning

Women may excel at

organizing and planning. Women can look at things with a detail-oriented eye and recognize flaws in plans even before getting started. This means women can be in charge of distributing workloads or organizing the schedules of others.

Adaptability

Even though it is a cliché, women tend to be natural multi-taskers. Handling multiple jobs at the same time means women can adapt to changing situations.

Generally speaking, there are some inherent characteristics women may possess that can make them viable assets as business owners or leaders in their fields.



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Building an App can help you grow your business. Here's how to do it

(StatePoint) In today's world, apps are crucial for business growth and customer experience. They enable shopping, appointment setting and customer service interactions. In fact, around three-quarters of U.S. adults say they buy things online using a smartphone, according to Pew Research, which means if you don't have an app for your business, you're leaving money on the table. However, if building one sounds daunting, experts say there is good news--artificial intelligence can help.

"AI enhances app development through code generation, chatbots, process optimization, content creation, user stories and prototype generation. Anyone, even with little to no experience, can quickly and cost-effectively develop an app using AI," says Sachin Dev Duggal, founder and chief wizard of an AI-powered composable software platform that allows every business and entrepreneur to become digitally powered.

Despite the relative ease of developing an app harnessing today's AI tech, it's nevertheless important to get your app right. With over 77% of users uninstalling an app within the first three days after download, according to WifiTalents, you'll want

to ensure your app provides your users with real value.

So, before building your app, first consider how it will help customers, and how it will help you solve your short- and long-term business objectives. Asking yourself these questions can give you clarity on the type of app you need, how you will fund and maintain your app, and how it will function.

When you are ready to begin development, here are the benefits you can anticipate by using AI to meet your objectives:

- **Rapid development:** AI-driven platforms significantly reduce development time.

- **Unlimited customizations:** AI app development platforms offer pre-built, customizable modules.

- **High performance:** AI creates high-performance apps with fast load times and smooth user experiences.

- **Cost efficiency:** AI reduces the need for extensive developer hiring, lowering costs.

- **Error reduction:** Around 66% of software projects fail. The primary cause? Human error.

- **Seamless articulation:** New AI technology allows you to speak directly with the development platform, enabling you to convey your ideas and instructions

effortlessly, making app development more intuitive and efficient.

So, how do you actually use AI to build your app? In the case of Builder.ai, it's as simple as following these simple steps:

1. Choose and customize a base template.

2. Review and finalize features.

3. Identify the app's platform (Android, iOS, desktop) and build a timeline.

4. Establish a payment plan.

5. Match with a product expert for guidance.

6. Review and monitor

the app's progress.

7. Launch your app.

8. Leverage data from your app to optimize business.

"AI automates repetitive tasks, code generation, bug detection and testing, resulting in shorter development cycles and reduced

costs while maintaining high quality. By giving everyone, regardless of their tech knowledge the power to build applications, we're removing the barriers that have traditionally stopped individuals and business owners from unlocking their potential," says Duggal.

Celebrating Women in Business



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