

# THE STERLING INSIDER

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THE STERLING LIGHTING, LLC NEWSLETTER



## SCALING YOUR BUSINESS: PART 2

In our last newsletter, I discussed eight weaknesses I found in my business. Big or small, they all contributed to years of stagnation in my company.

However, the hardest part was yet to come. Before I could grow the company, I had to face a number of obstacles and difficulties that, at the time, seemed insurmountable.

In the end, it was all worth it.

These are the eight things I did to overcome my company's weaknesses and take my company to \$1 million (and beyond).

### 1. I STEPPED BACK

I knew I needed to give up some control so I could focus on growing my business. But I loved installations and felt guilty if I was not involved all the time. Eventually, I was forced to give up some

control when I bought an old farmhouse that needed a lot more work than I originally expected.

Thankfully, I have been blessed to have a production manager that has now been with me for 17 years. He knows more about lighting installations than practically anyone else in the country. I entrusted him with running field operations, which freed me up to focus on other projects.

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## 2. I LEFT THE FRANCHISE BEHIND

Now, this may not apply to you, but this was a difficult decision for me to make. Even so, I knew it had to be done. The franchise and I saw a much different direction for the future of the industry. I fulfilled every obligation I made with them and gave up the customer base I had spent ten years developing and nurturing. Like I said, it was a difficult decision.

The next two years, the franchise spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to shut me out of the industry. I was swept up in a David vs. Goliath case. But I believed then, and now, that when great growth is about to happen, don't be surprised if seemingly insurmountable obstacles suddenly appear... In the end, we won every single case and were free to pursue our business untethered. It truly felt like Cortez burning the ships. There was no turning back now. I was committed.

## 3. WE BECAME DESIGNERS

We moved away from doing nighttime demos and focused on just doing design consultations. It's working so well that last year I decided that I needed a full-time salesperson/designer. I promoted from within the company, and now we're working on feeding him five consults a day.

## 4. I HIRED THE RIGHT OFFICE PERSONNEL

I knew I needed to have someone with spectacular drive in the office: answering phones, scheduling appointments, and making sure our customers were well taken care of. However, I went through office personnel like tissues.

I was frustrated with having to hire and train a new person every one to two years, so I looked for someone who had several years of experience in the green industry. That's when I found Karen. She is organized, great with customers, and loves to close sales and collect money. Find the right person to answer your phones. It's invaluable.

## 5. I MADE A MARKETING PLAN AND STUCK WITH IT

After years of rollercoaster sales, I finally came up with a marketing plan and began to

implement it. I used direct mail to send out catalogs, newsletters, trifolds, and postcards on a consistent schedule. I began running AdWords and Facebook marketing online. I also hired a professional photographer and videographer, Bryan, to showcase our work. Our customers are always wowed by the photos and videos we use in our marketing, and it's been an enormous asset.

## 6. I INVESTED IN MY EMPLOYEES

I wanted my company to be filled with people who were excited about growing the business and growing in their own careers. That not only meant promoting some employees and giving them more responsibilities, but also firing employees who didn't have that drive. When you're trying to scale your business, it's important to have a strong team surrounding you that believes in your vision.

## 7. I ARTICULATED WHAT MADE MY COMPANY UNIQUE

With so much competition out there, you need to know how your company is uniquely better than every other business. After you have that figured out, it's just a matter of getting your message across to potential customers. There were a couple things I knew we did really well. While our competitors were selling packages and good/better/best products, we were selling our design abilities and amazing products at fair prices.

## 8. I STARTED DREAMING BIGGER

A few years ago, one of my customers told me I should be doing \$10 million a year in sales. I laughed at him and said I didn't know anyone doing over \$1.4 million in outdoor lighting. He responded, "Then you should know better people." I chuckled at that, but something began to gnaw at me. I realized my limited thinking was killing my business. I needed to dream bigger.

So Damien and I went to a business management meeting. That is where I came up with Enlightened's BHAG ("Big, Hairy Audacious Goal"). After the meeting, I came back to my team and presented the idea of increasing our sales tenfold in the next six years. I have to admit, my team gave me a look of disbelief. At the time, it did seem far fetched. Now, however, it seems like it's within reach.

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## SCALING YOUR BUSINESS: PART 2

Those were the eight changes I implemented in my company. In doing so, I've been able to take my business to the next level—and even far beyond that.

If you feel like you haven't been growing and you're ready to take your business to the next level, I encourage you to sit down and review your company as if you just purchased it. Once you find the places you need to improve, make a plan of action and start addressing them, one by one. It's not easy and it may take months, or even years, but trust me.

In the end, it will all be worth it.



Patrick Harders - Co-Owner

## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT BOLLARD LIGHT

This sleek fixture is perfect for illuminating large, open areas in style! With an open light source and a beautifully frosted lens, this path light adds safety to walkways, driveways, commercial properties, and more!

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Wattage:** 4W

**Wire Lead:** 10' 18AWG

**Color Temperature:** 3000K

**Operating Voltage:** 9-15 volts

**Lumen Output:** 450 lm



## CHEF'S CORNER: THAI-CURRY GAME HENS

*This spicy dish will warm you up during these last couple weeks of winter. Recipe from epicurious.com*

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons grapeseed oil or olive oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons Thai red curry paste (adjust to taste)
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 cup canned unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 cup low-salt chicken broth
- 2 5.95-ounce cans straw mushrooms, drained
- 3 kaffir lime leaves or 2 teaspoons grated lime peel
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon (packed) light brown sugar
- 6 cherry tomatoes
- 2 1.25-pound Cornish game hens, thawed if frozen, halved lengthwise, backbones removed
- \*Fresh basil leaves (optional garnish)
- \*Small fresh or dried red chiles (optional garnish)

### DIRECTIONS

1. Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add curry paste and tomato paste and stir until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Add coconut milk, broth, mushrooms, kaffir lime leaves, fish sauce, and brown sugar. Bring to simmer, then remove from heat. Add cherry tomatoes. Season sauce to taste with salt and pepper.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in large nonstick skillet over high heat. Sprinkle hens with salt and pepper. Add hens to skillet and cook until browned, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer hens to 13x9x2-inch glass or ceramic baking dish. Pour sauce over. Bake uncovered until hens are cooked through, about 35 minutes. Transfer hens to shallow serving bowl; tent with foil. Skim fat from sauce. Pour sauce into large skillet; boil 5 minutes. Pour sauce over hens. Garnish with basil and chiles, if desired. Enjoy!

CALL US AT

**703-997-5514**

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## CUSTOMER SERVICE HOURS

Open M-F 8:00am to 5:00pm

[info@slights.com](mailto:info@slights.com)

Email us 24/7, we are always eager to hear from our customers!

## Now's the Time to Start Marketing!

Springtime is just around the corner, and NOW is the perfect time to start planning out your marketing for the year. To help you get started, here are our top three marketing tips:

### 1. Set a Budget

This is the first place to start. Before you start thinking about marketing campaigns, think about your budget and how you want to allocate your money. Generally, you'll want to spend at least 10% of your annual sales on marketing.

### 2. Track Your Marketing Efforts

We recommend using CallRail, which allows you to create a unique phone number for each of your different marketing pieces. With CallRail, you can track how many calls you get from each piece. This will help you determine which of your campaigns are working and which are not.



### 3. Check Out Sterling Storefront

We created Storefront to help make marketing easier for you. Our General Manager, **Jim Heim**, has years of experience in the direct marketing industry and would love to help you get started! To learn more, give him a call at **703-997-5514** or email him at [jim@slights.com](mailto:jim@slights.com)