



TWEETING BLACKBEARD

10 SWASHBUCKLING BUSINESS TIPS FROM THE WORLD'S GREATEST PIRATE



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Yes.

These times are tough. Work is difficult to find. Robots, bar code readers and automated telephonic devices have invaded—and are now occupying every, single moment of our lives.

Creativity and innovation indexes appear to be dipping to all-time lows. I guess that could say that we are all stumbling around without that old 'skip in our step'—as if we had a wooden leg.

Ahoy!

In times like these, it is time to put down your mild-mannered business ways. It is time to embrace your inner-pirate. You are Blackbeard, a swashbuckling entrepreneur of epic proportions! Break through the beige cubicle of contemporary thought. Make your own rules and succeed!

It worked for Blackbeard. Now make it work for you!

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Nearly everyone has heard the tales of the merciless and bloodthirsty pirate **BLACKBEARD**. However, few know that this man, known for seemingly mindless attacks and killings, was actually a marketing genius who employed consistent brand strategy, persistent social networking and relentless word-of-mouth advertising, in his reign of terror over the 18th century Caribbean.



1. EXPERTISE. EXPERTISE. EXPERTISE. STICK TO WHAT YOU KNOW.



Teach, made it his mission to live the life of a pirate, no matter what the cost.

Blackbeard was born in the year 1680, in either Bristol, England or on the British controlled Caribbean island of Jamaica.¹ He was born to a rather wealthy upper-middle class family and was given the birth name Edward Teach.² Although it is not known for sure where he was born, but either way, it is known that Blackbeard grew up in Jamaica. At the time, Jamaica was a British controlled colony, and a hub for the privateering business. So, it is believed that Blackbeard's parents desired for him to take up that career.

The definition of a privateer is, "A private person or ship authorized by a government by letters of marque to attack foreign shipping during wartime."¹ During Blackbeard's childhood, England was entwined in the Wars of Spanish Succession and Queen Anne's War. (The Wars of Spanish Succession concerned who was the rightful heir to the throne of Spain. Queen Anne's War was fought in North America and it concerned the ownership of colonies among European nations.)² In order to keep a handle on the exports and imports of foreign goods Queen Anne established privateers and gave them the mission of intercepting enemy supply ships. Blackbeard is believed to have served on one of these ships as a deckhand when he was a young boy. Therefore, from an early age he became accustomed to the pirate life in an environment above the law and free from punishment.²



After several years of privateering, England was at peace and the occupation's demand had diminished. Yet, Blackbeard was far from retired. He had made it his mission to live the life of a pirate, no matter what the cost. In the year 1716 he officially joined the crew of infamous pirate Benjamin Hornigold. With his experience and know how, he quickly rose through the ranks and soon was in command of his own ship in Hornigold's fleet. While serving with this fleet, Blackbeard got his first taste of piracy. Learning the trade under Hornigold's wing as first mate, Blackbeard seized numerous cargoes, including one containing over 120 barrels of flour. The two remained together until Hornigold's death in 1719, leaving Blackbeard on his own.³

When things are not going as well as you might have expected, your initial response might be to try something completely different. In nautical terms, jump ship. Patience is the key. Rather than making drastic changes, tweak your approach and carefully monitor the results. Equity gained through education and hard work, is extremely valuable cargo. Starting over completely is always an option—but only after everything else has failed.

2. SEIZE THE BEST EQUIPMENT. HIRE AN EXCEPTIONAL CREW.

Blackbeard wasted no time in establishing himself as an independent pirate. He quickly seized the French merchant ship “Le Concorde” which was headed for Virginia in 1716. The boat became his pride and joy. He named it “Queen Anne’s Revenge”⁵ and equipped her with 40 cannons and recruited a crew of 200 men.⁵ With a cutting edge ship and highly experienced crew, Blackbeard was ready for action. It is not known for sure why Blackbeard named his ship “Queen Anne’s Revenge” but it would make sense to say that it had something to do with his past allegiance to the Queen during his privateering career.



Having the right crew is invaluable. We see it all the time with professional sports teams. Talent means nothing—without superb team chemistry. Acquiring the best quality tools possible, will only strengthen the results.

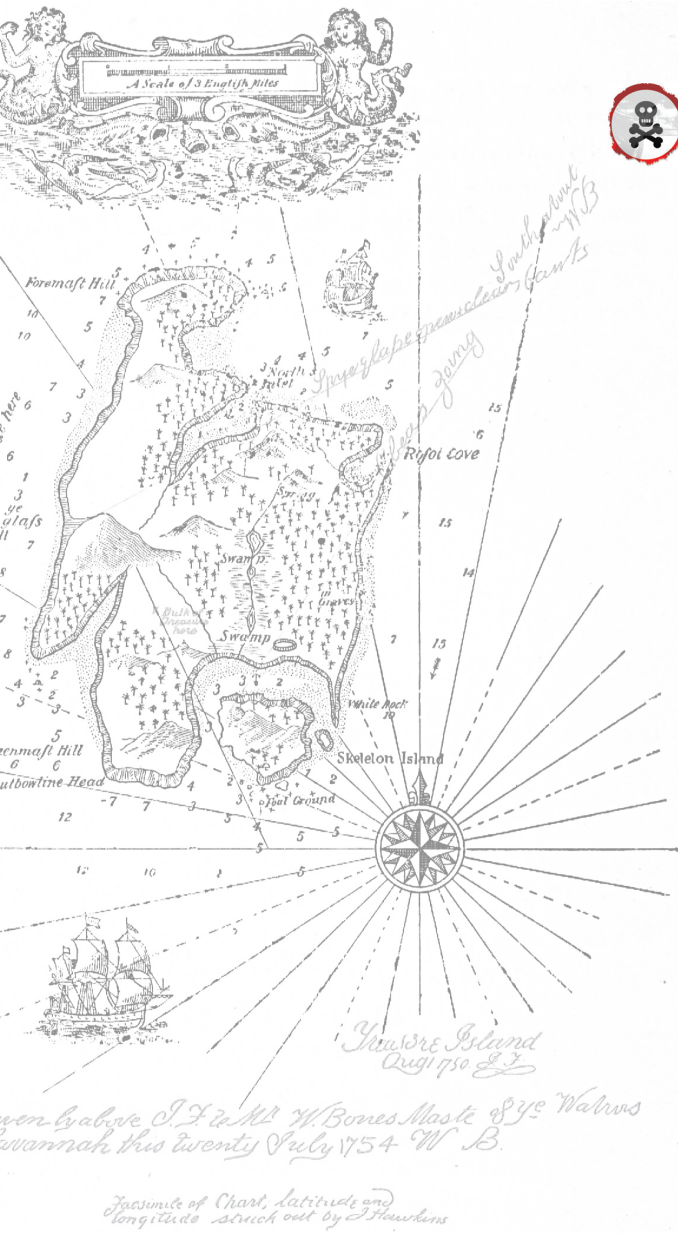
3. GOLD AND JEWELRY ARE ROMANTIC TREASURES, BUT EVERYDAY OBJECTS REACH A LARGER AUDIENCE, ARE EASIER TO MARKET, AND HARDER TO TRACE.



The supplies he stole were mainly grain, rum, molasses, ammunition, rope and tools. This contrary to the common belief that he was after riches such as gold and silver.

Blackbeard began his raiding and, started plundering numerous ships all along the Eastern coast of America. The supplies he stole were mainly grain, rum, molasses, ammunition, rope and tools. This contrary to the common belief that he was after riches such as gold and silver. When he had such supplies in his possession he would bring them to local markets including one in Bath, NC. Here Blackbeard would sell the items well below market price in order to make quick money. Not only did it pay off for himself, but the residents of the market loved the cheap prices. Choosing to ignore the possible deadly means by which they were acquired though.⁴

From a swashbuckler’s point of view, ‘making the big move’ is brimming with romance. However, piecing together a series of small moves, can lead to more rewarding and longer term results—from both financial and strategic perspectives. Don’t be afraid to think small first, and then go BIG!



4. AGGRESSIVELY SEEK OUT NEW BUSINESS THROUGH A CLEAR AND CONCISE NAVIGATION.

Blackbeard, did not just attack ships at will. He had developed a precise set of maneuvers that produced guaranteed results while using as little deadly force as possible. The first step in his attack was determining the nationality of the target ship. Once it was discovered, Blackbeard's crew would raise an identical flag on their ship and approach the ship on their weak side, posing as a fellow countrymen making a friendly sail bye. *(Something familiar ships would do in order to pass along news and supplies to other ships.)*

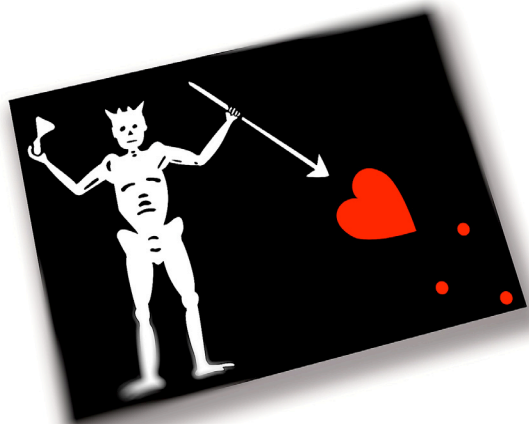
“When you’re up to your neck in alligators, it’s hard to think about draining the swamp.” When we are extremely busy, it is often difficult to think about finding more business. Although it may be uncomfortable, this is the time that you need to be cranking in the sales front.

Stressful is the day when you wake up and realize that there is no new business on the horizon.



5. DISTINGUISH YOUR SHIP WITH A DISTINCTIVE CORPORATE IDENTITY

Once the other ship was within range of the cannons, Blackbeard would haul down the mock flag and hoist the “Jolly Roger”.⁵ The “Jolly Roger” is the name for a pirate flag. It was commonly composed of a white skull and cross bones on a black flag, and was used by the majority of pirates. However, Blackbeard used a different form of the “Jolly Roger” known as the Edward Teach flag, in his honor. The flag depicted a skeleton with horns piercing hearts while toasting to the Devil.⁶ After raising the pirate flag Blackbeard would then demand a surrender. If the ship surrendered they would grapple the side of it with ropes and hooks, and then board it and loot it.



Blackbeard used a different form of the “Jolly Roger” known as the Edward Teach flag, in his honor.

Today’s business world is starving for innovation and creativity.

If businesses spent more time being unique, instead of just trying to fit in, think how much more attention they would receive!

This is not the time to be timid.

Stand up! Be noticed!



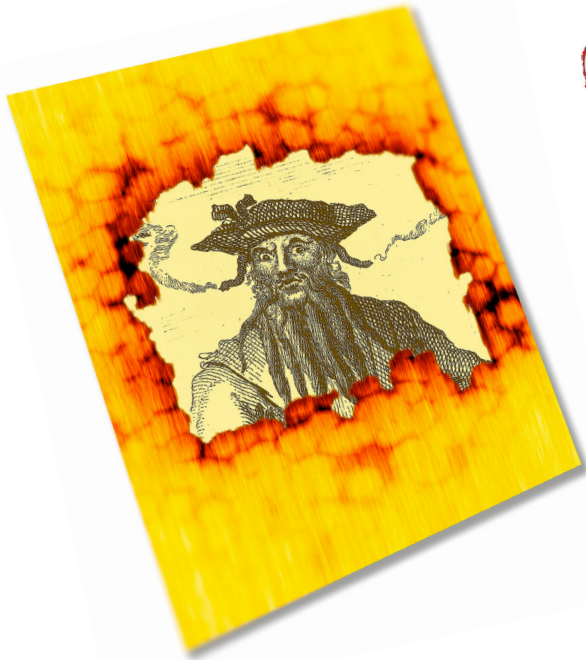
6. DEAD MEETINGS TELL NO TALES



Blackbeard would leave the victim crew unharmed assuming they remained cooperative. If the target ship refused to comply with the surrender, it would be bombarded by cannonballs to its hull; strategically placed only to immobilize the ship, and allow it to be seized through hostile boarding. If this happened, Blackbeard's crew would slaughter without mercy. However, they would also intentionally leave a few survivors, so that the story would spread through social networking and word-of-mouth advertising.⁴

This method of attack proved effective, never once failing Blackbeard. Stories of his hostile boarding also grew like a wildfire to a point where no one dare not to surrender.

There are plenty of ways to “get the word out.” With the rapidly changing social media culture and the new tools emerging almost daily, word spreads quickly. Carefully craft your story and pass it along. There are multitudes of people listening!



When other ships approached he would light these long strings, so that from far away it seemed as though his whole face was a ball of fire.



7. THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKING AND WORD-OF-MOUTH ADVERTISING, CREATE A LEGENDARY BRAND IDENTITY THAT SPREADS LIKE A BEARD FIRE

As word spread about Blackbeard and his crew, Blackbeard's own reputation became surreal. Blackbeard realized that if he could create an image for himself that defied that of everyday life, he could scare some of his victims into compliance and establish an even more powerful reputation. He let his beard grow out to his chest, braiding the ends with red and black ribbons that would flutter in the wind. He also began to wear a blood red jacket that stretched from his knees to his neck. Over the jacket he wore a leather sash that held 8 loaded pistols. In his belt he stowed a long sword sheathed in a silver casing. For a hat he wore a black 360 degree rimmed hat with long strings braided into it.³ When other ships approached he would light these long strings, so that from far away it seemed as though his whole face was a ball of fire.⁵

With news of his devilish persona came stories of cruelty and horror. One lady claimed that when she refused to give Blackbeard her golden ring, he responded by slicing her finger clean off, to obtain the ring.² Another story claims that Blackbeard told hostages that if their ransom was not met, he would personally hang each and every one of them, luckily they complied and he did not hang anyone.² Newspaper reports spread from England to Boston listing Blackbeard's numerous crimes and adding details to his unique character.



Blackbeard's strategies worked and soon news of him had spread from Jamaica to England to Boston. He was regularly featured in papers and was wanted around the world for piracy.⁷ From 1716 to 1718 he routinely stopped ships all over the Atlantic. Although his actual plundering's and whereabouts are not known for sure, he is said to have attacked at least 700 ships. What is known for sure is that he did have homes in both Bath, North Carolina and Ocracoke Island.⁵ Here he had safe refuge from the law and a retreat from sea life. He had safe refuge because the locals liked him because of the cheap goods he sold them. This earned him a "get out of jail free card" and he could move about freely.¹

Be yourself. Be creative. Have fun.

Repeat.



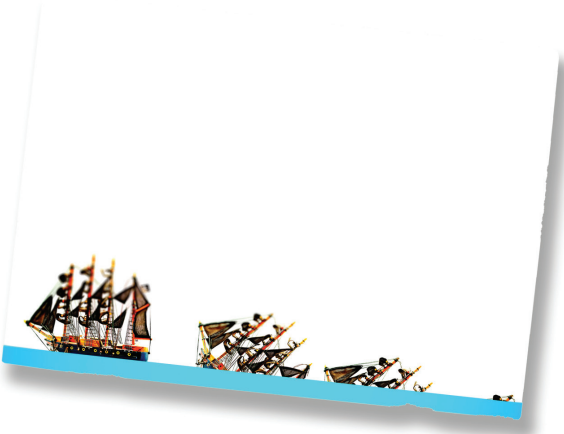
8. AS THE BUSINESS CLIMATE CHANGES, DON'T BE AFRAID TO SWITCH SHIPS.

Blackbeard was wanted from England to North America on the following accounts: piracy, theft, murder, blackmail and extortion. Rewards for his head were posted everywhere and complaints of his crimes rained in from all over North America.⁸ Again and again bounty hunters and military ships were sent after him, yet he was uncatchable. He could outsmart the best of the best. One escape actually involved intentionally beaching “Queen Anne’s Revenge” in order to create a distraction while Blackbeard and his crew slipped away in a smaller sloop. Word had it that “Queen Anne’s” revenge was becoming a burden for Blackbeard because it became too much of a household name to the point where it left he and his crew overly susceptible to being spotted and caught by a government ship. So during the last of his pirating years he sailed a variety of sloops and ships unnamed in order to dodge the law.⁹

Nothing lasts forever. Business runs in cycles.

There are good time, bad times and the times in between.

Embrace change and always be prepared for it.



9. HEADS UP!

Blackbeard was killed November 22, 1718, at the hands of Robert Maynard, “An experienced officer and a gentleman of great bravery and resolution, first lieutenant of HMS Pearl.” Robert Maynard was ordered to hunt down Blackbeard and kill him, by the governor of Virginia, Alexander Spotswood, a man with a strong hate for pirates. Robert had a crew of 35 men and they were armed only with small hand guns and swords, but they attacked Blackbeard and his crew while they were drinking with friends, catching them off guard and heavily intoxicated.² After killing Blackbeard, Maynard severed his head and tied it to the bowsprit of his ship. Thus ending Blackbeard’s reign of terror.⁴

It is often easy to get caught up in the moment. You may have your nose to the grindstone or—become too comfortable and forget to keep your eyes off the compass. A successful business requires constant monitoring and adjustment. Too much comfort quickly initiates chaos.

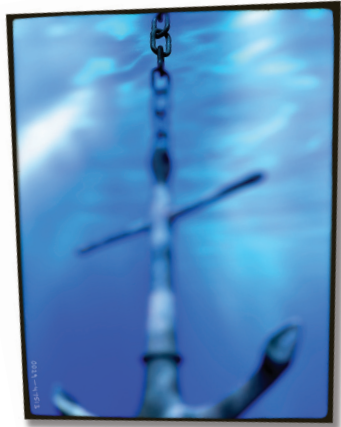


With Blackbeard's death came the end to a period of complete control and dominance over the Caribbean. Blackbeard had mastered the art of being a pirate through three major steps:

- **HE EQUIPPED HIMSELF WITH A WORLD-CLASS CREW**
- **HE CREATED A FOOLPROOF ATTACK METHOD**
- **HE MASTERED THE ART OF PROPAGANDA THROUGH WORD-OF-MOUTH ADVERTISING & SOCIAL NETWORKING**

Not only did he do these three things, but he was cunning, clever and had the advantage of having been around boats and the ocean his entire life. He knew how to cleverly navigate his way out of jams and escape even against the most unfavorable odds. By combining all of these characteristics and tactics, not only did Blackbeard become extremely successful, but he was one of the first people to master the power of reputation and instill fear into all.⁷





10. “YOU ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS YOUR WEAKEST LINK.”

This common phrase links directly to Blackbeard and his crew. By hiring pirates with experience and true loyalty to him, Blackbeard ensured that there would be no “weak spots” to his fleet. Blackbeard’s crew was highly trained and operated in an organized fashion. Each person held a position ranging from first mate to officer to deckhand. Much like today’s corporate environment, crew members would be promoted based on their actions, and higher positions in the crew received higher payments. This not only gave his crew ability to excel, but motive to move up in order to profit more. Blackbeard’s crew also held a supreme allegiance to Blackbeard. Not once did any member of Blackbeard’s crew commit the act of mutiny or even question his rule. In fact, even after Blackbeard’s death one of his pirates, a black man named Caesar; attempted to carry out one of Blackbeard’s final wishes. This was to blow up Lieutenant Maynard’s ship, “Adventure.” Unfortunately for him, he was caught and hung, as were all of Blackbeard’s crew in the year 1719.¹⁰

It is often easy to get caught up in the moment. You may have your nose to the grindstone or—become too comfortable and forget to keep your eyes off the compass. A successful business requires constant monitoring and adjustment. Too much comfort quickly initiates chaos.

Without strategy, Blackbeard would have been far less successful and would most likely have been killed long before 1718.

This is demonstrated when you analyze the success of other pirates of the time who simply attacked. Most pirates of the time lasted only a few months or retired quickly. This is because they lacked a well thought, strategic brand positioning plan. The majority of pirates, would simply approach ships and try and take them over via firepower and force. This gives the victim ship more time to prepare for the fight and gives them a higher chance to either defeat the attacking pirate vessel, or escape.

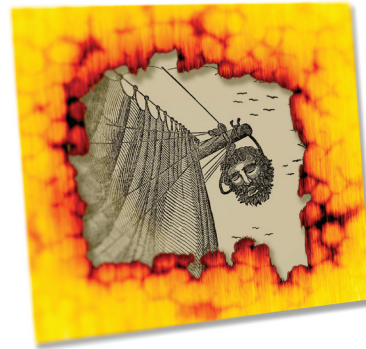
So, in mastering the art of trickery and deception, Blackbeard struck through wit and not brute force. He was able to attack when least expected and preserve ammunition as well as manpower.

He kept his victims vulnerable and oblivious so that when Blackbeard raised the pirate flag and demanded surrender. They had no choice but to comply, or to be attacked. Ironically, Maynard used Blackbeard's own method of surprise attack to kill him. By striking while Blackbeard was partying, drunk with friends, Maynard caught him off guard and was able to win with ease rather than risk defeat.⁹



**When harnessed, reputation can be used to passively conquer all.
Also, when reputation is spread, stories and legends spread with it.**

This creates indirect propaganda and a general feeling of terror that leaves victims with no choice but to comply. Blackbeard embraced the evil stories and devilish persona affiliated with himself. In fact he used it as his weapon of choice. By dressing the part, and doing uncanny things such as lighting his hat and beard on fire; he created a superhuman appearance. This not only terrified people, but led them to do whatever he asked. He was treated like the god of the underworld because all feared that defying his requests and orders would lead to an ever certain death. He was feared to a point where government officials refused to hunt him down in fear of their lives. He held a spot above the law because of the fact that people dared not to question his power. This was all because he had created a consistent brand message, and mastered the art of creating a reputation of horror, scaring all into compliance.





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THANKS FOR DOWNLOADING.

My son Foster, a high school junior at Thayer Academy, originally wrote a large portion of this ebook as a term paper, on the life of Edward Teach, commonly known as Blackbeard.

In reading about the life of Blackbeard, I was impressed with some of the techniques that this crafty pirate used in obtaining business, promoting business and maintaining his unique way of conducting business. Within a fairly short time, Teach, became a legendary icon—within a very unconnected world.

This started me thinking, what would happen if we took some of Blackbeard's principles and applied them to the mundane business world of today. Instead of trying to nest within a crowd, what if we stood up, waved our sword and lit our beard on fire!

IT'S TIME TO MAKE SOME WAVES! EMBRACE YOUR INNER-BLACKBEARD!

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