

THE IPO FACTOR: *The Reality of Going Public*
Community at a Time

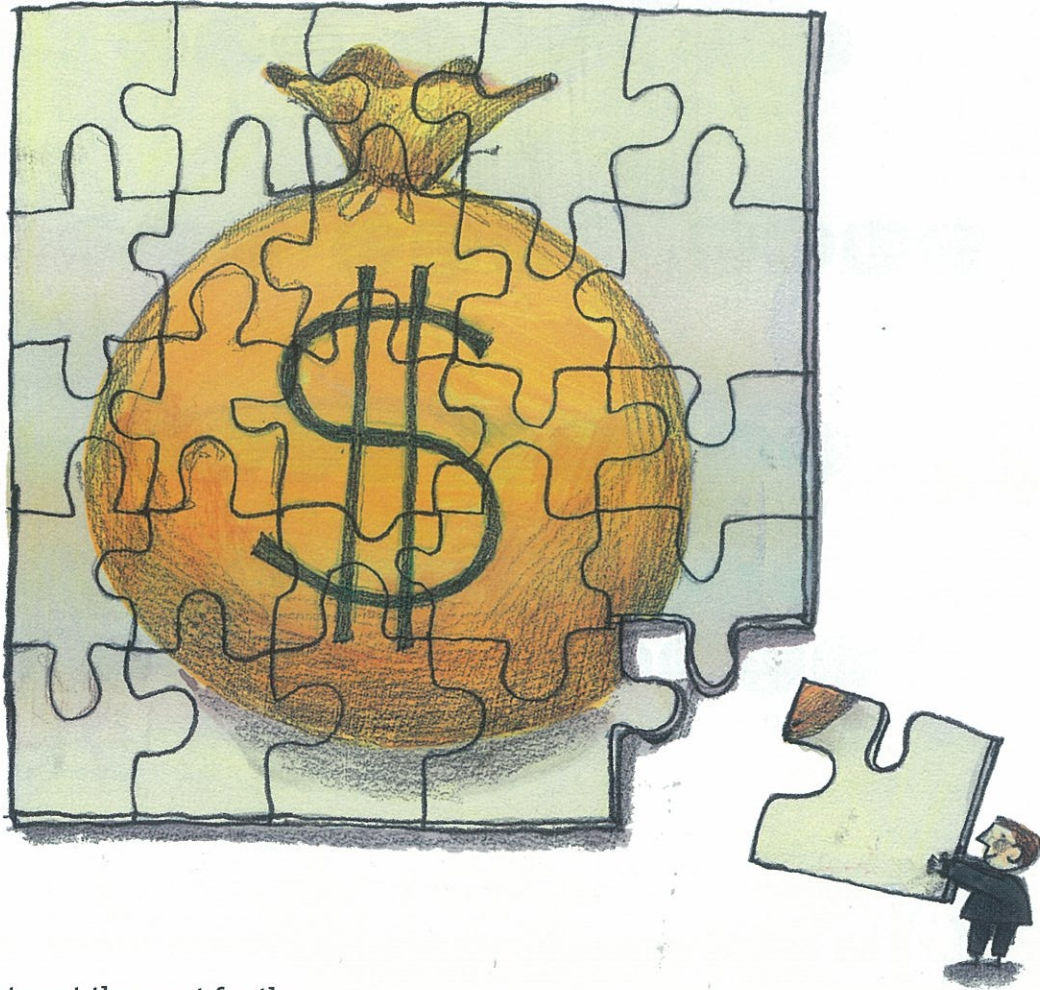
MAKING A DIFFERENCE *One*
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THE CHANGING FACE

SOLUTIONS FOR GROWING BUSINESSES

Entrepreneur®

THE SMART WAY TO SELL YOUR BUSINESS



Puzzling over how to get the most for the business you've worked so hard to build? Find out how to ensure all the pieces fall into place—and how to prepare for life after the sale.

BUZZ

GOT GAME?

Most entrepreneurs have a business plan. But what about a game plan?

While a business plan is a document aimed at impressing investors, a game plan is a document implemented inside a company to sell managers and employees on a realistic look at the business and the goals to reach. Game plans "look at what's working and what's not," says Jan B. King, an El Segundo, California, media consultant and author of *Business Plans to Game Plans*.

Entrepreneurial introspection appears to be a growing trend: Sixty-four percent of fast-growing companies now have strategic plans in place that they reassess annually or more frequently, according to a study last summer by accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Make sure your business plan is in place before thinking about a game plan. If sales need to increase 50 percent over the next 12 months, for example, the game plan will lay out what everyone in the company needs to do on the job to make it happen.

To get started, outline a few companywide goals, and discuss how the team can get there. Involve employees and advisors in the process, then update the game plan annually to reflect new goals and strategies. This is one case where gaming the system just might work.

—Chris Penttila



Working IT

SMART MOVES: HAVE YOU BEEN PUTTING OFF TECH SPENDING? NOW'S THE TIME TO GET HIGH-TECH EQUIPMENT AT LOW PRICES.

BUSINESS SPENDING ON NEW TECHNOLOGY is rebounding, which is good news for vendors—and entrepreneurs who move quickly to take advantage of prices for PCs and other goods. A recent study of IT purchasing by New York City consulting firm McKinsey & Co. says timely purchases, clever negotiation and internal controls can help businesses save megabucks. The catch: You have to do it soon, and you have to do it right.

By Mark Henricks

There's no doubt that vendors have slashed prices for computers and other technology. "What you used to spend \$2,000 for, you can get for \$950 to \$1,200," says Alan Pearlman, a Northbrook, Illinois, attorney and computer consultant.

"I don't think there's a better time to buy than right now."

Prices are probably going up. After PC sales to U.S. businesses were down in 2002, and up just 9.1 percent last year, shipments to businesses are growing 14.8 percent in 2004, according to market research firm IDC. Worldwide, the value of PCs shipped this year to businesses will grow 6.5 percent, IDC says—money that will come from buyers' pockets.

Or not. The McKinsey team estimated that savings of 10 to 20 percent on IT outlays were possible using its recipe. That means you could be paying less while everybody else pays more. Here's how: **1. RENEGOTIATE EXISTING CONTRACTS** for services such as network support and