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of homes. And that proportion is steadily rising.

To say that the introduction of the DVD has been a plus for the entertainment industry is a big understatement.

Today almost 60 per cent of Hollywood's revenue is generated by DVD sales and rentals.

According to GFK Market Data, the DVD market in Australia was valued at more than \$800 million at the end of May.

It's no coincidence that home theatre equipment has shown a marked increase in the same period, as the two markets are feeding each other.

Warner Bros Australia managing director Steve Nickerson says DVD can take the credit for more home theatre equipment being sold.

"Equipment has been designed in expectation of showcasing a high definition source with multi-channel sound," he says. "DVD sold all those products. It is the best source material on the market."

Developments in technology have made recreating cinema-like conditions in your own home easier and cheaper.

Now, with the DVD, you can have in your home the best possible version of a film that you can get outside of a cinema.

Picture and sound quality have left VHS for dead.

Marketing director for 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment Gail Grant says DVD has clearly changed the way we interact with entertainment in our homes.

"Only a few years ago a home cinema system was something for the well-heeled or hi-fi aficionado," Grant says. "Now most consumers have access to a sophisticated level of home cinema entertainment at affordable prices."

Consumer behaviour has also changed when it comes to buying and collecting the equipment.

"We know from research that early adopters of DVD collect 11 or more DVDs a year and that new consumers still buy six or more a year," Grant says.

Today, the movie studios have DVD in mind early in the creative process - even before the first frame of the film is shot.

Directors walk on the set knowing that what they are shooting isn't limited to theatrical release.

All the work that went on behind the scenes has been documented by crews whose sole purpose is to gather extra material for the DVD.

Special features are another factor that has catapulted DVD ahead of VHS tape.

They are another big selling point for consumers, apart from top-quality sound and vision.

"In purchase-intent research, 84 per cent of respondents indicated special features are worth spending extra money for," Fox's Grant says.

"When offered a single-disc feature-only option, 61 per cent indicated they were interested only in owning the film.

"There are reasons to buy both a good film at a good price as well as a fully loaded DVD with many special features, and at Fox we believe it's important to offer both options."

DVD has also breathed life into old films, with classics being remastered and released again on the



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format in all their glory.

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Business Investment Tipped To Rise

November 24

A small gain in business investment is likely in the third quarter, as a result of continued healthy domestic demand, steady interest rates and strong business confidence, economists said.

Private New Capital Expenditure and Expected Expenditure data (capex) for the September quarter will be published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on Thursday.

The market forecast is for real private capital expenditure to increase by three per cent, after a stronger than expected 5.8 per cent rise in the June quarter to \$14.023 billion in volume terms, seasonally adjusted.

Equipment, plant and machinery investment rose 6.5 per cent to \$10.188 billion in the June quarter, reversing the March quarter's 5.0 per cent decline, while buildings and structures investment increased by 4.1 per cent to \$3.835 billion.

Commonwealth Bank chief economist Michael Blythe said the capital expenditure survey will kick-start a number of quarterly economic indicators that culminate in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) data on December 1.

"The indications are that the ... readings will get that data deluge off to a good start," Mr Blythe said.

"We expect to see a three per cent rise in capital spending in the third quarter.

"The available indicators for the quarter show that business credit growth is running at a solid pace, business confidence and capacity utilisation are rising and capital good imports and commercial vehicle sales are holding at high levels."

ICAP head of economics and strategy Michael Thomas forecast a "modest" rise of 2.5 per cent for the quarter.

"What we have been seeing in the (recent) surveys ... is that business confidence is quite high and it looks like they are going to keep spending money on commercial building and also on infrastructure and construction generally.

"That is where we see the main increase - the building side of it (should) lead the way."

RBC Capital Markets senior economist Su-Lin Ong said the strong non-residential approvals in the third quarter suggest a small gain of about three per cent in business investment.

"We are mindful that obviously we got a pretty strong result in the previous quarter, so I don't think it will be quite that strong (again)," Ms Ong said.

"But you would have to argue that the business investment fundamentals are very positive ... interest rates are unchanged, (at a) relatively low cash rate.



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As you can see, a key factor with image is recognising that a brand or corporate image is a tactical tool. Reputation on the other hand is strategic – you decide what you want to be known for and constantly work towards building that reputation.

The significant aspect of reputations is that they develop from the actions of the company, how it relates to business and geographic communities, how it attains its successes, who it chooses to employ at the very top and who it chooses to form alliances with.

Young companies often have difficulties with coming to terms with reputation – and this is understandable. Their need is for instant awareness and sales, so they are very image focussed. And this is a very large danger for such companies.

As an example, it can be argued that OneTel was a company 100% focussed on image. Huge advertising and promotional campaigns were mounted to push an image-drive company. There appeared to be no thought of, or investment in, reputation. At the end of the day there was no substance behind the image – and it must be remembered that the company had around 4 years in which to define and start building a reputation.

Another telco, Telstra, is an example of a company that does understand reputation. While its products are out there often selling very much on image, the company itself places considerable importance on continually building and managing its reputation.

Look at how it has handled the issue of its performance in the 'bush'. 10 years ago you could imagine that the answer to poor services would have been addressed with a jingoistic television commercial linking to traditional country emotions through a jingle sung by a fair-dinkum aussie male and supported by a chorus of children. It would have been a 'paid for' image campaign.

Telstra is now more mature and aware than that. The company decided to set up a special division to proactively address its rural shortcomings and work with its customers. Traditional image communication to this audience continued, but it was supported in a more meaningful way. That was a clever, and meaningful, blend of image and reputation.

Obviously the tools employed to promote an image and build a reputation are quite different – but they are complementary and one goes with the other. Here are a few examples of the types of activities that are employed by both:

Typical Image Tools	Typical Reputation Tools
Advertising Promotions Direct mail Competitions	Corporate Social Responsibility programs Strategic sponsorships Media outreach Internal corporate counsel

So what can you do to make the most of the relationship between your image and reputations? Here's a short list of questions that should get you started:

Image.

Can we define the image we are projecting?

Who are we aiming it at?

Is the image still relevant or should it be skewed to reflect current trends and values?

Who is custodian of the image... is it marketing, product managers or the advertising department?

Is this the most appropriate custodian?



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What is our image currently costing is to project?
Do we know the return we are getting on this?

Reputation.

What is our current reputation?
Does it change with stakeholder audience?
Did we plan for this reputation or did it develop along with the business?
Do we wish to alter our reputation and, if so, to what?
How long will that take and what tools do we have to make it happen?
What will be the cost and the expected return of doing this?
Have we seen our reputation linked to any individual's profile such as the CEO or a high-profile board member?

Both.

Is our CEO aware of the relationship between image and reputation?
Are our image and reputation compatible?
Which one is stronger... and should it be?
Do the different image and reputation custodians work closely together or do they see themselves as competitors for the CEO's ear?

Conclusion.

In the corporate family, image and reputation are two very different siblings. And in today's more aware and questioning society, it's important that companies achieve not just a balance between the two, but are also more careful in how they manage the relationship between them. There is no doubt that PR, with its ability to think and plan strategically, must take a more active role in promoting the importance of reputation. But to do this, both those advising on PR and the corporate and marketing executives within companies need to be fully aware of how the two siblings – image and reputation – are linked and why they need to be managed in tandem.

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Quantum Leap for Computers

Leigh Dayton November 25

The amazing world of quantum computing has made a, well, quantum leap forwards, thanks to European scientists who have fashioned a practical "quantum memory" for the hypothetical devices.

Without a working memory no computer can process data, whether it's the binary bits of today's machines or the quantum bits, "qubits", of tomorrow's quantum computers.

But Danish, Dutch and Czech physicists report in the journal Nature that they successfully used a faint pulse of laser light to carry and trap "quantum information" into a gas of atoms - the quantum equivalent of an ordinary random-access memory.

The team, led by Eugene Polzik of the Niels Bohr Institute at Denmark's Copenhagen University,



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3. Show up prepared. The people you are competing with for your raise, for your promotion, typically grouse and complain about their job, the company, the people, etc., show up late some of the time, and show up unprepared. Start your day the night before by doing Daily Planning during which you make up a list of all the things you "have to" do but, more importantly, all the things you "want to" do.

Prioritise those items in order of their importance. (A simple numeric system will work; put a "1" next to the most important item, a "2" next to the second most important item, etc.). Do it the night before so that when you go to bed, you go with a sense of certainty and control you would not ordinarily experience and a sense of anticipation about your day coming up. Then, the next morning, while others around you are trying to figure out what they are going to do for the day, not you, you planned it out the night before so that you can hit the deck on both feet running and moving forward.

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Kazaa's Skype Offers Free Calls

Chris Jenkins November 23

The latest version of the controversial Kazaa peer-to-peer file swapping platform has appeared with an integrated Skype voice over IP internet phone application, promising free calls between its users.

Kazaa 3.0 will also offer improved search and a free weblog trial, owner Sharman Networks said.

Developers Niklas Zennstrom and Janus Friis created both the Skype and Kazaa applications, and had originally offered Skype as a paid call service.

Sharman claims over 300 million users have downloaded Kazaa.

"Despite narrow-minded attempts by others to stymie P2P technology through litigation, boycotts and legislation, Sharman Networks remains committed to delivering on the promise of peer to peer," Sharman Networks chief executive Niki Hemmings said.

Accused by record companies and others of being a key instrument of piracy, Sharman has been the subject of ongoing court actions in Australia and the US

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Spam 'Control' In Two Years: Gates

November 22

SPAM could become a thing of the past in around two years' time, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates said on a visit to Madrid.

"Spam is a major security problem," Mr Gates said, noting that progress had been made in the fight against unsolicited mail.

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more things would flourish. Such as the ability to mass-produce documents and graphics. So they developed the first word processor and the world's first graphics monitor. They knew that people would need a simpler way to use their computers, so they invented the first hand-held mouse to control the thing. And they weren't done. No, these two geniuses (and they were geniuses) realized that if the personal computers in an office could talk to each other, production would be even more efficient. So they developed the very first LAN - Local Area Network. Pretty impressive stuff if you ask me.

And personal computers in all of our hands, rather than just a few, have made Orwell's vision nothing more than fantasy. But we know that we have Steven Jobs to thank for all this. Or do we? Yes, he did make the personal computer available to all of us, but he's not the one we've been talking about. He's not the one who did it first.

No, It's a Little Known Fact that the first personal computer was invented by Butler Lampson and Chuck Tacker at the Palo Alto Research Center, 10 years before Mr. Jobs came up with the idea of Apple Computers. But the company they worked for, a giant named Xerox, decided that there just was no market for the personal computer, and tossed out the whole idea. Gee, I wonder if that Xerox executive who made that decision still has his job?

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Why Customers Quit! ...

Numerous surveys over the years have studied this question .. "Why do customers quit?" The following reflects the findings of such surveys.

1% die.. 3% move away.. 5% leave because friends have recommended that they change allegiance .. 15% leave because of better competition.. 18% leave due to product dissatisfaction. But by far the strongest component in the decision to quit from 58% of customers is the indifferent attitude of an employee.

Other surveys have quoted a figure as high as 67% of customers who leave for no other reason than a perceived lack of concern by the staff.

By contrast with the foregoing the companies who survive the Nervous 00's when customers are wary, weary, cynical and discriminating are those companies who major on building personal relationships of trust with their customers. They only make commitments which they can keep. Such commitments foster a true loyalty between the customer and the team.

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7 Ways to Help Your Representatives Be Better Listeners...

- 1) Effective Listening Requires Interpretation. This means understanding, evaluation and appropriate reaction.
- 2) Listening is our Primary Communication Activity. We spend 80% of our waking hours communicating. At least 40% of that time is spent listening. In school children spend 60-70% of classroom time listening. In business, listening is the most critical managerial skill.

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The Seafood Industry Council said in a statement Monday that exports to China could treble to about 300 million NZ dollars (about 210 million US dollars) if the New Zealand government successfully negotiates a free trade deal with China.

The high level of the NZ dollar is having a "major impact" on fishing firms, the council said.

The NZ dollar was cutting profit margins on overseas sales and forcing many companies to tie their boats up in port because they could not work profitably with high fuel costs, and lower quotas adding to the problems.

Seafood exports fell 2 percent in the past year to about 1.1 billion NZ dollars (about 770 million US dollars), according to Statistics New Zealand. The industry exports about 90 percent of its catch.

Forestry export profits are also thin or non-existent with the rising NZ dollar eroding returns, especially for log exporters already facing high shipping costs.

ASB Bank Chief Economist Anthony Byett said: "Forestry firms are really taking it on the chin and this (higher dollar) is only going to make it worse."

Forest Industries Council (FIC) Chief Executive Stephen Jacobi said the high dollar was a "hot topic" for the industry and the top of the list of issues with the government.

"It is an extremely difficult environment that we struggle to cope with," Jacobi said. Forestry exports were down 5 percent in the past year to 2.1 billion NZ dollars (about 1.47 billion US dollars).

The high NZ dollar showed just how important it was to get away from commodity products, into higher value products and to aim for trade deals, he said.

FIC Chairman Lees Seymour said the forest and wood processing sectors favored China for a free trade deal, as a priority market with enormous growth potential.

Farmers are enjoying high prices for beef and lamb so would be protected from the impact of the high NZ dollar, though it would take some of the gloss off.

Business New Zealand Chief Executive Phil O'Reilly believed that the high NZ dollar was bad for some exporters, but it would make new machines and other capital goods cheaper.

NZ Tourism on the Rise

Visitor numbers to New Zealand continue to grow. According to Statistics New Zealand's latest release of external migration figures, arrivals in October 2004 were up 9% from last year. Visitor numbers have rebounded significantly following the war in Iraq and the Sars outbreak in early 2003, aided by solid world economic growth and despite high oil prices and the continuing strength of the New Zealand dollar.

The number of visitors from China was up 25% from October 2003, with visitors from Japan up 7%. Australian tourist numbers, which comprise around a third of total visitor arrivals, rose 23%. This growth has resulted from lower-priced airfares and greater capacity on the transTasman route.

Visitor numbers in the year ended October 2004 totalled 2.32 million, up 13% over the previous year.

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Holidaymakers accounted for 51% of the visitors from overseas during the October 2004 year, 28% came to visit friends or relatives and the other 11% of travel was business-related.

Tourists staying longer

The underlying trend in total guest nights in short-term commercial accommodation has been rising since June 1998. The latest release of Statistics New Zealand's accommodation survey showed that in September 2004 total guest nights in short-term commercial accommodation rose 7% from September 2003.

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Small Households Next Big Thing

Kate Legge November 24

Declining fertility rates and an ageing population are behind a prediction that, by 2016, couples without children will become the most common family, transforming perceptions of what that word means.

David de Vaus, who put together the figures for the Institute of Family Studies, stressed that the nuclear model of "mum, dad and the kids" was likely to remain the family prototype, even as the typical household dwindled and couples with children became the minority.

In 1976, 48.4 per cent of families were couples with dependent children. By 2001 this figure had declined to 39.5 per cent.

The slump was largely due to growth in lone-parent families, careers and contraception, and couples without children. This last group includes empty-nesters as well as the Double Income No Kids stream of professional couples.

Federal Minister for Family and Community Services Kay Patterson said the report helped challenge the myth of rampant family breakdown, because 90per cent of couple families with dependent children were intact.

But she did not deny the steady growth in lone-parent families. Single parents - mostly mothers - have risen from 7.1 per cent of families in 1969 to 22.3 per cent in 2003.

The ranks of single parents have been increasing at more than twice the rate of divorce. But marriage breakdown has stabilised since the mid-80s, suggesting that patterns in cohabitation are partly to blame. More partners who do not marry are having children and then breaking up.

"It is likely that the increase in cohabiting relationships is masking the extent of increase in relationship breakdown," the report says.

The days of large families of five children is now a rarity. In 1911, the average Australian household size was just over 4.5 people per red-tiled roof. Now, it is down to 2.6 and falling, with projections for 2021 tipping just 2.2 people per household.

Australia's fertility rates, meanwhile, have been falling since 1961, with fewer women having three or



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more children.

Fertility is highest outside capital cities and in socially disadvantaged areas. According to the Institute of Family Studies, the shrinking of households will transform Australia's suburban sprawl.

One in four households consists of a person living on their own and almost one in every 10 people choose this lifestyle. Younger people who live alone are a bigger group numerically than older Australians.

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Vietnam's Retail Revolution

Retailing in Vietnam is starting to change, with malls emerging to meet the tastes of those with rising wealth and aspirations. Vietnamese developers are leading the charge, but international trade deals will open up the market to foreign retailers, possibly spurring the greatest interest from foreign developers.

Overwhelmingly, Vietnamese family businesses still dominate the retail sector, with few owning more than a few shops. But bigger players are starting to emerge, building chains such as Khai Silk, an upmarket silk weaving concern, and Citimart, a grocer whose branches are getting larger, becoming supermarkets. Others remain behind the scenes, winning concessions for foreign chains, especially in cosmetics, thus needing smaller units.

If clothing retailers like Benetton and Mango are en route, Hong Kong brands Esprit and Giordano cannot be far behind. There are a handful of department stores, though perhaps only one or two are well-managed. Generally, the layout and lighting are poor, the space plagued by columns and other signs of bad or unsuitable design.

In Hanoi, a few streets in the bustling old Vietnamese mercantile quarter bear comparison, though it seems something similar to Dong Khoi will emerge in the former French Indochina administrative quarter, whose streets, lined with elegant and handsome buildings, radiate out from the restored Opera House to recreate a slice of Paris on the Red River. Diamond Plaza, Saigon's first modern mall and office complex opened a few years ago, is just catching the economic boom. Now competition, of sorts, is emerging. An Dong Plaza in Cholon (District 5), a 60,000 square meter development with four floors of retail plus 18 five-star hotel floors above, soft-opened in November. Most tenants are locals. "Local retailers are predominantly distributors, they want to expand off Dong Khoi to reach a wider audience," says Ashton.

Though foreign retailers currently have to operate through distributors, they are looking for sites themselves in preparation for 2008, when trade deals with the United States, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group and the World Trade Organization kick in, opening up the market. "They will be able to get licenses to operate here. Then I think you will see a significant boom," says Ashton. "The fast-food companies are already looking."

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Malaysian Growth On Track

Jonathan Lemco

For the past six months, Malaysia has been an investor darling. The economy is growing at a nice clip, the state-owned petroleum company, Petronas, is profitable, and the political transition from former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad to Abdullah Badawi has been smooth. Inflation is low and the nation's external debt is capably managed. Malaysia also enjoys the advantage of high oil prices, yet even when they fall the nation is still poised to prosper as it has diversified its industrial base.

Malaysia has one of the most open economies in Southeast Asia, and as a consequence, it benefits from a greater boost from global growth than many of its neighbors (consensus estimates predict Malaysia will grow 7% in 2004). The country's current account has been in surplus since 1998. As of mid-October, exports had risen 24% year-on-year. The strong balance of payments has allowed the central bank to accumulate more than a quarter of its international reserves this year - US\$54.5 billion as of August - to the point that they now exceed the external debt.

Oil prices also are high, and this supports the Malaysian economy. Further, there has been some progress in passing structural reforms, and the Malaysian government also has taken steps to reduce its external debt. Credit-rating agencies have taken notice; Moodys is expected to upgrade Malaysia's "Baa1" rating by one notch to "A-". Standard & Poor's already rates the Malaysia credit at "A-".

A credit-rating upgrade would be an important boost for Malaysian credit quality and an affirmation of the government's fiscally prudent policies. The 2005 budget, which proposes a moderate pace of fiscal consolidation, is realistic. In fact, it might be considered investor friendly in that it eases foreign-investor rules in brokerage, fund management, futures brokerages and venture capital firms. It also removes the tax on interest income for non-resident investors, which should drive more investor interest into Malaysia's domestic bond markets.

In addition, private investment growth seems to be picking up. The government estimates that by year's end investment will have grown by 14.8%. In the meantime, the central bank - Bank Negara Malaysia - emphasizes caution in hiking interest rates so that no increase is expected for the next six months to a year. While the government plans for fiscal consolidation, balancing the budget is not sacrosanct. The government intends to narrow the fiscal deficit from 4.5% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2004, to 3.8% of GDP in 2005. The Malaysian central bank also has reinforced its commitment to a pegged exchange rate, which it regards as underpinned by low inflation and strong external accounts.

After years of a stable, if partly authoritarian and confrontational government, under Mahathir, Prime Minister Abdullah enjoys strong and unrivalled political support. Although some analysts suggest that the return of Mahathir's former deputy Anwar Ibrahim - who spent the last six years in jail on charges of corruption and sodomy - could pose a political threat, the mechanics of the Malaysian political system make this unlikely for the foreseeable future. Abdullah has made progress in improving the public delivery system to lower the cost of doing business and has helped increase transparency - especially in the public bidding of projects.

The Malaysian economy is not without risks. It must continue to attract foreign direct investment when oil prices decline, as they eventually will. The Malaysian corporate sector must also be made more competitive. Corruption remains a problem in both the private and public sectors. And a tax system overhaul is needed to attract more multinational companies. In fact, in 2007 the Malaysian government plans to introduce a goods-and-services tax so that it can cut taxes for individuals and corporations. In the meantime, Malaysia's corporate tax rate of 28%, is uncompetitive relative to

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expectations, you appear to be moving backward. Losing momentum is tantamount to decline even if you are making progress. Opening one new store this week is progress, but it is a failure if you are expected to open three stores each week.

2. The curse of amplification:

The greater your momentum, the more attention is focused on you and the 'louder' your brand becomes. Small victories become perceived as large (e.g., all of Howard Dean's endorsements), and small losses become perceived as large (e.g. Wal-Mart losing the referendum in Inglewood, CA). Positive events such as new store openings and revenue growth become big news reinforcing the positive momentum news for a company such as Wal-Mart. However, negative events also become big news, because they seem to contradict the perception of invincibility of brands on a great rise.

3. The curse of over-extension:

Brands are great because they skilfully fulfil the needs of their primary target customers. They are designed to appeal to these customers' needs, behaviours and sentiments. However, momentum eventually forces brands to extend beyond their core customer base. This situation sets the stage for their failure to meet expectations due to a misalignment of the brand promise with expectations of the expanded customer base. Failure to maintain momentum due to a misalignment with a new customer segment can kill a political candidacy or drain a company's quarterly profits.

Key Characteristics of Momentum

While the three curses define the potential risks, there are some characteristics that are equally crucial to understanding how momentum works. First, customers own your momentum. Just as you do not own your brand, you cannot own your brand momentum because it lives in the minds of your customers.

However, you can monitor what your customers perceive about your brand's momentum and use those insights to influence it. You do this by using internal momentum controls such as the intensity and placement of advertising, the sponsorship of events, the decision to leverage the reputation of specific endorsers, the selection of your channel partners, adding new features or benefits to your products and services, adjusting pricing, introducing loyalty programs, and improving your customer service.

Second, you should note that momentum occurs in bursts. It is not a steady, predictable force. It often erupts when internal momentum controls, such as those described above, and external forces converge. External forces include the evolving state of your competition and the quality of their offerings, word of mouth, switching costs, occasions for purchasing, customer satisfaction, trends, and the opportunities to purchase.

Finally, many forces that will determine your brand's momentum are simply beyond your control. Marketplace trends and fads, even new regulations, can serve to either amplify your brand's market potential or move the market decidedly away from your product positioning. The successful brand manager will monitor these external forces and attempt to use internal controls to maximize the benefit or limit the damage to the brand's momentum.

Momentum Management

Great brands are the beneficiaries of planned and managed momentum. Effectively managing your brand's momentum over the long term requires both stimulating and occasionally inhibiting its growth. It may be counter-intuitive, but there are even times when you might rein in the brand's momentum by leveraging internal momentum controls. Think about the negative impact on your brand if you

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underwrite the cost of training.

Perhaps the most serious management error is failure to appreciate the impact of many policy decisions they make on customer service and, ultimately, the company's profits.

It's not intended to use management as a whipping-boy for all problems that arise in the customer service department. It's an imperfect world, and managements have to deal with a wide variety of problems involving how best to invest the company's resources, how best to organise the company's activities ... and how best to satisfy the board of directors and the stockholders.

The goal is to make middle management-including customer service management-aware of its obligation to help top management make good decisions.

3. *Systems and procedures inadequacies.* While faulty systems and procedures can also be characterised as people problems, the responsibility is shared widely and here again the problem is to correct rather than assign blame.

The problem may be due to workers who use the system daily and are aware of its shortcomings but don't bother telling anybody. System problems don't come to light until a serious error occurs, often at considerable expense.

Many errors occur because procedures simply haven't been thought through in terms of the total system.

Most errors of the types mentioned here are the result of system fragmentation, i.e., split responsibilities with grey areas between those responsibilities.

4. *Errors by customers.* Mistakes by customers are the most sensitive of all mistakes, and, far from relaxing, managers should be making every effort to mitigate the damage and help the customer out of his or her predicament.

There are very practical reasons for helping customers extricate themselves from situations they have caused:

- Many errors apparently caused by customers are in fact the result of inadequate instructions, poor communications or similar circumstances where the seller is at least partially responsible.
- It may be difficult to actually determine who was in fact at fault when a mistake is made. The customer would not necessarily accept responsibility for an error even though there is nothing to suggest anybody else could have been responsible.
- The customer, in trouble in his or her firm for the mistake, may blame the seller anyway.
- If the individual who made the mistake in the customer company is disciplined or fired as a result, the seller loses an important contact who is a known quantity. The successor may not be nearly as easy to work with, and may in fact assume that the seller was ultimately responsible for the firing of his or her predecessor.
- The customer who does make a mistake and is helped out of it by the seller becomes a friend for life ... and an even better customer.

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- A customer mistake often presents an opportunity to correct an ongoing source of difficulty in an amicable fashion.

5. Errors by intermediaries: Here again, there can be a distinction between who *is* responsible for the problem and who takes responsibility for it.

Most third-party problems are not legitimately the concern of the customer. Whenever a seller uses a third party for whatever reasons the third party's performance reflects the good (or poor) judgment of the seller and therefore should be a matter of No. 1 concern, particularly in the matter of resolving errors and disputes. The customer who is asked to deal directly with a third party with whom he or she has had no prior contact is likely to resent having to do the follow-up, and in any event will certainly take a dim view of the seller in not avoiding such problems altogether or at least resolving them quickly when they occur.

6. Errors in application. This category of errors would usually include product liability cases arising out of misuse or abuse of the product by the customer. These often hinge on very subtle points having to do with how well the seller has instructed the customer in use or application of the product. The manufacturer of a product is presumed to be the ultimate expert on product applications and may be held liable for damages resulting from failure to properly inform the customer on correct usage and the possible consequences of incorrect applications.

Such instances, unfair though they may be, underline the wisdom of re-examining all communications with customers so as to avoid such situations completely whenever possible.

Additionally, when customer service representatives are trained in complaint handling, specific attention should be given to identifying complaints which suggest a product liability situation-and then taking the requisite action necessary to place them in the hands of the upper-echelon persons with specific responsibility for handling liability matters.

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Australia Information Sources Links

[Australian ABS Statistics](#) - Wide range of Australian statistics including: [Australia Now - A statistical profile of Australia](#) / [General census information](#) /selected [Main features](#) from some ABS publications, [Key National Statistical Indicators](#) and [Special articles](#) from their publications. Also links to ABS [Catalogue of Publications](#).

[CyberStats](#)- This site contains statistics on a vast group of subjects such as property, construction, economic, social, tax, tourism and financial statistics.

www.anz.com.au/business/info_centre/economic_commentary/economic_com.asp

http://www.national.com.au/Business_Solutions/0,,148,00.html

[ANZ Job Ads](#)- This site contains the regular ANZ bank job surveys.

Opinion Polls

[Roy Morgan](#)- This site holds various surveys on political parties, popular internet sites, TV



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programs etc.

[Newspoll](#)- A variety of surveys concerning popular issues

[ACNielsen](#) - ACNielsen has been collecting information on consumers in Australia for over 50 years, providing marketers and business professionals with invaluable information and insight into Australian consumers' attitudes and motivations, purchase habits, brand preferences and media consumption patterns. There are free reports available on this site.

Business

[Australian Workplace](#)- This Department of Employment and Workplace Relations site contains lists of shortages in skilled trade personnel and professional workers. There are also quarterly publications on the [labour market](#).

[Australian Food Statistics](#)- This site is designed to meet the information needs of the food industry, policy makers and researchers in analysing and capturing the many opportunities currently presented to the industry. It provides data on all levels of food processing from raw agricultural product to highly processed food. statistics.

[Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business](#)- The site contains reports and statistics on employment and trends in federal enterprise bargaining.

[Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources](#)- The site contains statistical publications on various industries such as tourism, business, R&D, petroleum, imports iron etc.

[Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry \(ACCI\)](#)- The ACCI site has surveys and statistics on business activity, business confidence and a general outlook for business.

[Australian Stock Exchange](#)- Statistics by the Australian Stock Exchange on trading volume, most traded stock etc on the ASX site.

[Business Entry Point - Statistics and market analysis](#)- This site contains statistical data and other market analysis information to assist businesses to start and expand.

[Exchange Rates and Statistics](#)- The Reserve Bank of Australia has daily exchange rates and other financial statistics available on this site

[HSBC Australia](#)- The Sydney-based research team produce a wide range of timely, in-depth economic and market reports which are available on their site.

[Reserve Bank of Australia](#)-: Produces a wide range of publications with some statistical component.

[Industry Sector Overview](#)- The industry sector site provides a snapshot of the 496 industries in the Australian Economy.

[Trade and Economic Statistics](#)- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has available a range of trade, economic and socio-economic statistics that can be accessed either in publications or as a special request using our Market Information Service, some overseas statistics are included.



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General

[Bureau of Tourism Research](#)- This site contains the latest tourism-related statistics.

[Australian Youth Facts](#) - This site provides facts and statistics about Australia's youth - how many there are, what they do and what they're like. The site is for anyone needing quick access to data about young people.

[Immigration Statistics](#):- The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Statistics on Immigration.

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New Zealand Statistics Links

New Zealand Bureau of Statistics

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/default>.

Reserve Bank of N.Z

<http://www.rbnz.govt.nz/statistics/> This website is the prime vehicle for the release of all new and revised data published by the Reserve Bank of New Zealand. The statistics tables are available in a short-run html format and the same data, in a long-run format, is also available for downloading using MS Excel.

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