

# Start With What Works



A faster way  
to grow your  
business

**Andy Bass**

Foreword by Rory Sutherland, Vice-Chairman of Ogilvy

## **Praise for *Start With What Works***

*‘Rather than waiting for a magic bullet, make your organisation better, starting today. Andy helps you see the resources and talents you have already, but just haven’t got around to using properly or fully enough. Even better, the process creates engagement and excitement among employees, because the process honours their expertise and abilities.’*

**Rooney Anand, former CEO of Greene King Plc;  
Senior Independent Director, Morrisons plc**

*‘Leaders don’t always realise how much untapped potential, strength and opportunity their organisation has. We’ve had great results from starting with what was already working. Andy’s book will get you to see your business in a new light so that you can do that too.’*

**Matthew Crummack, Group CEO,  
GoCo Group plc (GoCompare)**

*‘The world needs inspired leaders who excel at finding and releasing potential. Andy’s book *Start With What Works* is a gamechanger for those who want to accelerate their business growth with greater inspiration and less risk and frustration.’*

**Nancy MacKay, CEO and Founder,  
MacKay CEO Forums**

*‘Clear, actionable advice for any organisation seeking to grow or innovate. Before you start throwing money at the problem, unlock your hidden potential.’*

**Michael Smets, Professor of Management,  
Saïd Business School, University of Oxford**

## **Data and information resources**

- **Market Window.** ENSEK, fast-growing software provider to the UK energy sector, has a window onto the market which it can use to shape new products to meet emerging needs of its customers.

*Question to consider:* What insights do we gain in the course of business that could have value if packaged for others?

- **By-product information.** The classic examples here are Facebook and Google, who, by gathering data as a side effect of facilitating social networking and search, completely upended the world of advertising. But these are just two of the most visible examples. Many companies collect huge amounts of data in the course of their day-to-day business – a trend that will only increase with the rollout of 5G networks. The information that is latent in that data represents a resource of rich potential for those who can organise and extract it.

*Question to consider:* What do we learn by analysing data from our interactions with customers that could add value to them?

## **Reusable resources**

- **Remanufacture.** The casings of gearboxes last longer than the cogs. In a classic example of ‘circular economy’ thinking, Renault adds new cogs to reconditioned old casings and sell the resulting product – highly profitably – at a discount.

*Question to consider:* Is there exploitable value in our products after our customers have finished with them?

## The ROI from hidden resources

Starting with existing hidden resources – instead of growing by enlarging a plant, buying more machinery, hiring additional staff and so on – can lead to:

- reduced development costs;
- accelerated time to market and ramp up of business;
- lower cost of customer acquisition.

So

- increased ROI on original investment in assets;
- better, faster returns from new business.

It also strengthens your unique resource base for the future. Finding and building on the hidden resources you've developed in the course of business is a great defence against reverse engineering, because it creates the causal ambiguity we discussed earlier. They can't copy you if they can't figure out how it's done.

## Hidden resources inventory

Consider each of the categories, and ask yourself the prompting questions. Although some of the categories and examples will seem very different from the way you habitually think about your business, looking at your resources in new ways is the point. Therefore, it's a good idea to keep this question in mind: 'Am I absolutely certain this does not apply to me?'

Resource category	Resource type	Exemplar	Questions to consider	Example in your business
Relationship	Customer interaction	International Automotive Component Group	Do we make the most of the opportunities to learn from and educate our customers during our interactions?	
	Reach	Tesco	Does our reach to our customers and other contacts represent a unique asset we can capitalise on?	
	Alumni networks	McKinsey	Can we do more to leverage the value of our relationships with our former employees?	
	Insights into customer issues	GE	What insights about our customers' businesses can we see that they may not?	
Strategic position	Market position	Big Four Accountancy practices	What needs arise for our customers before, during or after they interact with us? Can we advantageously meet those needs?	
	Access point	GoCompare	Do we give advice to our customers about needs that we don't meet ourselves? Can we help directly, or as paid intermediaries?	

Resource category	Resource type	Exemplar	Questions to consider	Example in your business
Network resources	Installed base	HP Instant Ink	Do we have a customer base that requires ongoing help and supplies from us? Can we create car-wash style ongoing packages of support?	
	Third-party relationships	Music tour management companies	Do we know sufficient members of an industry ecosystem that we could act as integrators for our customers?	
	User community	LEGO	Do our customers know each other? Could we advantageously facilitate a community?	
	Ability to attract the right talent	Google, Gymshark	Are we particularly attractive to the type of candidates we need? Are we a club that they want to get into?	
Know How resources	Systems and software	Basecamp project management	Have we developed any particularly good in-house solutions (core or non-core) that could be repackaged and sold?	
	Tech know-how	Lotus Cars	Where have we developed expertise that could serve other applications and new customers?	

Resource category	Resource type	Exemplar	Questions to consider	Example in your business
Data and information	Market window	ENSEK	What insights do we gain in the course of business that could have value if packaged for others?	
	By-product of interaction	Apple iPhone sleep app	What do we learn by analysing data from our interactions with customers that could add value to them?	
Circular economy	Remanufacture	Renault	Is there exploitable value in our products after our customers have finished with them?	

# Exercise

## Key hidden resources

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Look at the resources you have identified above. What new applications do they suggest?

	Resource	VRIO score*	Possible new application(s)	Value to customer
1				
2				
3				

\*(V = 1, VR = 2, VRI = 3, VRIO = 4)

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## Where Next? Implied Resources: A Preview

As you work to more deeply appreciate the resources you have already, you are searching for elements to recombine in new ways to create greater value. While generic resources can be found on the balance sheet, and hidden resources are often hiding in plain sight, there’s a third level: what I call ‘implied resources.’ In the hunt for implied resources we look at what is already working and ask, ‘What must be there in order for this to work, and what else can we do with it?’ This is where your truly unique assets might be lurking, and it’s the subject of the next chapter. Read on to find out more.