

Business901 Podcast Transcription

Implementing Lean Marketing Systems



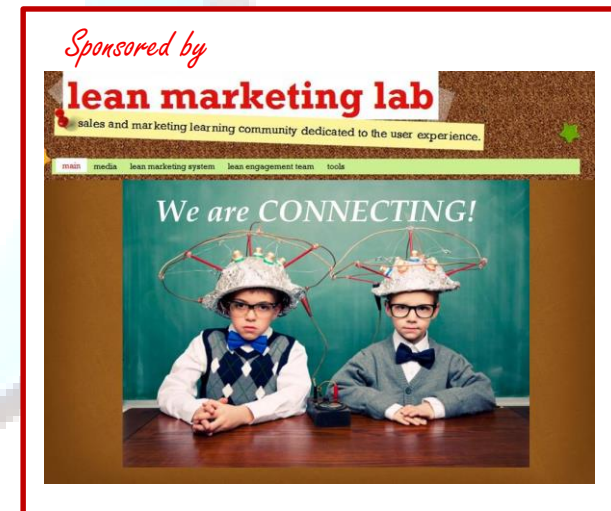
Maximizing Your Story Telling

Guest was Dr. Nick Morgan

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Transcription of the Podcast

Joe Dager: *Welcome, everyone. This is Joe Dager, the host of the Business901 podcast. With me, today is Dr. Nick Morgan who is one of America's top communication coaches. He helps people find clarity in their thinking and ideas and then deliver them with confidence and elegance. He has written multiple books including the one I'm most familiar with, "How to Tell Great Business Stories", and his latest book, "The Power of Cues". Nick, I would like to welcome you and truly amazed by your client list and your breadth of books!*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Thank you Joseph. It's a pleasure to be with you, on your show, and look forward to chatting about power cue storytelling; one of my big passions and anything else you like.

Joe Dager: *Well, you have your own podcast, don't you?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: I do, occasionally, just to mix up the blog that I do so that not every blog post is always written words. It's video. Sometimes, it's recorded podcasts. Just to mix it up. But I don't have a regular show like you do.

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Joe Dager: *One of the things that I got from your books and I look through the different eBooks, and written – how, I think, 2 or 3 – what I call full-fledged books maybe...*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Right.

Joe Dager: *A synopsis of all that is that you take business people and make them better performers. Would that be a fair way to say it?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Two things. Better storytellers and then better performers. You have to have good content and you have to have great delivery. I always say, that every face-to-face communication is two conversations. On the one hand, it's the content. On the other hand, it's the body language. When those two are aligned, you can be effective. I'm all about helping people get their body language (which is largely unconscious communication) and their content (which is the conscious part) aligned. Because when they're not aligned, then people believe the body language all the time. The body language always trumps the content. So that's why it's so important to get it right.

When I ask people, *"How much time do you spend when you're preparing a speech, when you're going to a meeting, any important session you're going to have, how much time do you spend preparing the content versus the body language?"* They always say, 100% on the content and 0% on the body language. I'll say, *"Hmm. That's interesting."* If those aren't aligned, the body language is always going to trump the content. Maybe we better put some time in on that as well. That's what I do.

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Joe Dager: *I will say I spend 95% of the time on content. You remind me so much, when you talk that way, I think of all the little moves that Steve Jobs did and that pause when he was looking at something when he was delivering a presentation.*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Yeah, exactly. He was a master, of course, and rehearsed endlessly in order to get those product announcements right and those speeches that he gave. He was very aware of the power of successful communication, when the body language and content are aligned. He strove very hard. He worked at it to have successful occasions like that. If you look at early Steve Jobs, he wasn't that good at first. He improved enormously over time.

Joe Dager: *Now, you spend a lot of time working with people, of course, who have delivered better speeches. Can anyone do it? Are there certain people you said who need to take up another profession or get someone else to do it?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Well, anybody could do it, who wants to just put the time in. Those are two important qualifications. You have to be willing to work at it (to change) and then you have to be willing to do the work itself. Of course, there are some executives who want to get better at it but they recognize it's one on the list of things they need to do and they're not just going to get to it. That happens sometimes, too.

It's not simple. It takes time to improve communications precisely because so much of it is unconscious. It's handled by your unconscious mind and we're not aware of it consciously. First, we have to become aware of what we're doing. How do we hold our bodies when we stand up and talk to people? What do we do with our hands? What do our faces look like?

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We think we're doing one thing but we're doing another. The video tape always shows that. People are shocked when they see themselves on videos as a result.

Joe Dager: *Well, we live in this digital world. Can you present yourself better being virtual? Are there any real tips in that area that helps you besides putting the mirror in front of you and those types of things? You have to elaborate more or it's all voice inflection, isn't it?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Yes. For instance, on this podcast now, your voice becomes very important. My voice becomes very important.

Here's the way I think about it. If you think about face-to-face communication, that's the richest form and the most natural form for humans of communicating. As soon as you get virtual, you go on the phone or you send e-mail, then what you're doing is you're sending less information back and forth. It's information poor. It's like the difference, in the old days, between dial-up and broadband. Face-to-face is broadband and talking on the phone or email is dial-up.

As a result, we get less information about things that matter to us like intent, emotion and attitude. Does the person mean what they're saying or not? If they say something mean to us, it's much harder to tell. Are they saying it with a smile on their face? Are they trying to soften the blow or do they mean it? Are they saying it with a scowl? Those kinds of things get lost. That makes information coming through much less and it makes it much less interesting for us.

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In the digital world, you have to do your best to replace those things that are lost. You need to replace the information. When I coach people, for example, when they're on a teleconference and they're talking to their team, they need to say things like *"I'm excited about this!"* or *"This is great news!"* or *"it's terrible that this happened."* You put the emotions in the words because they're not going to show up in the face or gestures as they normally would in a face-to-face conversation.

Joe Dager: *You're saying, you practically have to prepare more for virtual presentations?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: I think you do if you want to do a good job. I mean, we all know the jokes and the anecdotal evidence about people putting their teleconference on mute and then doing something else far more interesting while they're supposed to be listening to a teleconference. The hero of the hour says, *"Are there any questions?"* Then there's a long pause while everybody scrambles to take the phone off mute and to remember what was said. Yes, I think you do have to work harder.

Another thing you have to do is an audience in a room when we're talking to somebody, we can see them. We can tell when they start to get bored. Or when they don't make eye contact anymore, they start to fidget or something. Or when they disagree with us, they scowl or fold their arms. We can't tell that virtually so you need to stop. Give people a break. Ask for feedback and say, *"Let's go around all the teams here and find out what they're thinking in Dubai and what they're thinking in Detroit..."* and so on. Give people artificial chances to provide feedback because they don't get the natural ones.

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Joe Dager: *I'm always looking to how to improve business stories; how to write, how to deliver better business stories and that's where I ran across your work. Are all the fundamental concepts (I learned in school) about writing stories, do they still apply in business?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: I don't know where you went to school, Joseph. But I'm going to take a guess here and say most of them do. The problem is, most of the things you learned in school (let's say, people typically teach in school) are tactical. They assume you have a good story to tell and they tell you how to do it. They say, *"Provide concrete detail. Put a lot of action verbs in there."* They give you moment-to-moment advice. That's not very helpful if you don't know how to think about storytelling in general. Most people don't so what they do, in the business world, is they tell anecdotes instead of stories.

Like what happens when I call my mother on Sunday, I say, *"Hey Mom, how are you?"* She says, *"I'm fine. Do you remember Jim?"* I'll say, *"No."* She'll say, *"Well, I met Jim the other day. You knew him when you were in high school. It was Tuesday. I know it was a Tuesday because I was wearing my bowling shoes. No, in fact, I wasn't wearing my bowling shoes so it must have been Wednesday. No, you know what? I went bowling that week instead of Tuesday. So I was wearing my... and it Wednesday."*

Already, my mind is dying and I'm hammering nails in my forehead and I wonder when my mother's going to stop because she's telling a story in the wrong way. She's telling an anecdote that doesn't have a story and there isn't a clear structure. I have no idea where

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she's headed.

Good stories reveal their structure and they tell you where they're headed and yet, still provide surprises, so you're interested. When we go to a Hollywood movie, we have certain expectations. We know things are going to start with a bang. We know that the hero is going to off on a long journey and things are going to happen to him and it's going to be tough. We know that he's going to win in the end if it's a happy ending.

We have certain generic expectations. What surprises us then, is the detail along the way. We care about detail. We care about the story only when we know what the overall structure is and we sense that there's a good story going to happen. When somebody tells an anecdote, there's no story there and so, we don't know where it's headed and we don't care about it.

Joe Dager: *In a business story, should I be sitting there and making sure people understand how the story is going to unfold in the beginning?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Yes, but you have to do it in artful way. You can't say, "So now, I'm going to tell you a story and it's going to have a beginning, a middle and an end." You have to tie it into one of the great basic stories that I talk about in power cues, which is in an eBook that you referenced. There are five of them. There's the quest. That's the one that Hollywood tells most often, by far. There's a stranger in a strange land, there's revenge, there's a love story and there's rags to riches. If you tell one of those five basic stories, then people get it.

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If you say, to your business audience, *"We're about to head out on a journey and it's going to be a long journey. It's going to be tough and we're going to have to work late nights and we're going to have to eat a lot of junk food and drink a lot of Pepsi. We're going to have to work harder and pull together as a team better than we ever have before."*

If we do that, we're going to come out with this product, which is going to reinvent the paper clip industry in a way that's so astounding. We will be heroes. They'll stand up and cheer for this paper clip that's like no other paper clip. It's going to be incredible.

What I've done there is I've made the audience the hero. I told them that the journey is going to be long and hard. I've told them there's a cool goal that's worth striving for at the end: that amazing paper clip. That's the beginning. That's sketching out a quest story. If you do that, people know where you're going because they understand the demands, the aspects of the genre. Then, they'll want to hear the details of what the journey is going to be like.

Joe Dager: *I hear "stories, stories, stories" is a catch phrase. We need to describe everything in stories. Is it practical? People want information, not stories, don't they? We're in this Soundbite, Twitter world and we want to get in and out as quickly as we can. Do we want to sit back and hear a story?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Well, it's amazing. Even at the same time Twitter is succeeding beyond its founder's wildest dreams, yes, people do want it short and sweet, they don't want the detail and so on and so forth. At the same time, people are binge-watching *House of Cards*

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on Netflix and they're binge-watching *Game of Thrones*. They get into the detail of these kinds of things because those are well-crafted stories. I would say people still love stories. When it's told well, then they want to get involved. Most of the time, we just want the quick version because it's not interesting. That's the mistake that businesses make. If it keeps it at that uninteresting and superficial level, then, sure, give it to me short because it's not going to reward me for hanging in there for a long time. But when you tell a good story, a rich one, an interesting one, then we want to hear more. Some businesses are very good at this. Most of them are not. It's the few that do it well.

Joe Dager: *In your new book, "The Power of Cues", I found just in my quick research (I haven't read the book yet), just looking at it, it's on my list. I know it's on a lot of people's list because it made somebody's summer list. Tell me a little bit about it. What's "The Power of Cues" about?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: "The Power of Cues" is about the neuroscientific research. I tell seven stories. Trust me. This is not heavy duty research like you wouldn't want to read. There are seven stories about some researches and the amazing things they found out about how communication actually works. I have one in each chapter and I pair that with a cue. For example, the fourth chapter is about the voice. This one is surprising for people. This is not research that is widely understood or even widely known. I'll say, *"In order to be a leader in room (which is something that a lot people want to master), you have to do certain things with your voice. The research shows that people who master what I call "the leadership voice" are able to take control."*

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I tell the story of the researchers and how they found this out. It has to do with recording voices and looking at the patterns that they form. What's remarkable about the human voice when you think about it is that you and I (and everybody else) can tell an astonishing number of them apart instantly. You know your mother's voice from your family and your friends. Probably up to about a hundred and fifty, two hundred voices, you can instantly tell apart and identify them. Then, there are a lot more that you can tell that are different from that.

We have this extraordinary ability to do that. The question is "how"? We do it by identifying what's called the timbre of the voice, which is the tonal quality of the voice. Beyond just the basic pits that somebody is speaking at, there are undertones and overtones that give it this particular quality that enable listeners to tell my voice from your voice.

What's amazing is that we thought those undertones were just random and they add it up to the quality voice so we could tell them apart. But it turns out that they're not. What we do, when we get together in a room, we line up our undertones with the leader in the room. In effect, we elect a leader within about 5-10 minutes and then we match those undertones. This is a completely unconscious mental behavior on our part. We're not aware of it in the slightest. We don't hear it consciously. But unconsciously, we match our undertones with the leader in the room. We literally all get on the same wavelength. That's astonishing research. I talk about that in chapter 4 in the book and then how you can increase your leadership potential by creating a strong, powerful voice that people will want to align themselves with.

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Joe Dager: *The body actions have to accompany that? Was that in the research, too?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Yes. For example, you could have a strong voice but if you did bizarre things with your body (your body showed up as unconfident or strange), then that would undercut the voice. That's right. That person will only be good on radio. As they used to say, "He has a great face for radio."

Joe Dager: *When I reviewed it, one of the things that I took away from it, is that you have to understand your own cues before you try to understand others. Would that be fair in saying that?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Absolutely. That's the first power cue: becoming self-aware. Knowing how you show up. I demonstrate this. It's easy to demonstrate in person when I talk about "The Power of Cues". A little harder to describe but I'll try.

What I do is, I introduce myself to somebody in the audience three times and I'll ask the audience to tell me what I'm thinking. The first time, I'll stand there with rounded shoulders and my head down. I'll arrange my body so that I look like I've just been defeated. I'll look like one of those tennis players when they just lost the big match. I'll be downcast. My body posture will suggest that. I ask the audience, "What am I thinking?" They'll say, "You look unhappy to be there. You look this. You look that." The second time, I'll stand in a different way and I'll ask them what I'm thinking. The third time, I'll stand up in a very confident way and I'll ask them what I'm thinking. They always tell me the same

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thing. *"You look confident. You look secure. You look like you're happy to be there."* All I'm doing is varying my posture slightly.

Here's the point. If you're not aware of your posture then you're going to give your game away. You're going to show up to an important meeting or to a session with your boss or to a job interview or to a speech and your posture will say, *"I'm unhappy to be here,"* or *"I lack confidence,"* or *"I don't know what I'm doing."* Even before you open your mouth, you've screwed yourself. That's the first step. That's why it's so important to become self-aware; to start to realize how you look when you show up in a room. That's the first power cue. Taking inventory of yourself (I described how to do it in the chapter) and beginning to learn what it is you look like to other people. Not how you feel, necessarily, but how you're coming across. Those are two different things.

Joe Dager: *Should you record yourself, before you put on a presentation, and watch it? Would that be something you would highly recommend?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: I would highly recommend it, yes. It's something I often do when I'm working with clients. Video tape them and then show them what they're doing. We never mentally record our own body language, honestly. We think we're much better than we are. I've been as guilty of that as anybody else. Early on, when I first started speaking, I had a proverbial problem that we call "happy feet" in the business because I had a lot of nervous energy. You get the fight or flight syndrome. When you get ready to speak, you get nervous. Your nerves start to fire and you get adrenaline through your system. You have to get rid of it somehow.

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One way, that inexperienced speakers, do (and as I did) was you walk around too much. You just wander because you have all that extra energy. You're on this side of the stage and that side of the stage and you're all over the place. That's very irritating for audiences after a while because we assume motion is purposeful. Then, if after a while, we notice that it isn't, then we feel like we've wasted a lot of extra brain activity watching somebody move in random ways and that annoys us.

That's just a very simple example of what you need to do to take charge of the process.

Joe Dager: *What type of presentations do you put on? Could you name a couple of your presentations for the audience?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: I'd love to. I talk about storytelling. That's one. How to tell better stories for the reasons we've been talking about. Another one is, obviously, body language. I talk about this idea that every communication is two conversations: content and body language. So, I'll say, *"You need to get the content right but you worry about that all the time. Now let's spend a little time. Let's spend one hour worrying about body language. Talking about it. Getting conscious about our unconscious behavior and then realizing how that can help us or hurt us."*

Joe Dager: *Your specific practice, is it working with individuals or more so with organizations?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: We work with three kinds of people. We work with professionals,

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speakers, people who want to establish a brand and go out there and make a living at speaking. So that's one area. I love those folks because I do the same but, also, because they're so passionate about what they do in putting on a good speech. It's a very lucrative world. You can make a lot of money as a speaker but it's also incredibly competitive so you have to be good at your game. It's a fun area and I work with a lot of professional speakers.

The second area is business executives who want to show up with more executive presence, more charisma, or they've been told in their 360 evaluation that they need to get better at communications for one reason or another. I work with them.

The third area is companies that either want to tell better stories or want to do some training of, typically, their executive team to be better communicators, better storytellers.

Joe Dager: *Who is "The Power of Cues" written for? Is it written just for speakers and executive business storytellers, let's say?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: It's for anybody who wants to wield more influence in an organization. It's helping you learn how to take charge of a meeting, conversation or speech. But the focus isn't on speaking so much on giving speeches or presentations so much as it is about everyday communications; the kind that you have when you pop into a meeting with your team or you're talking to your boss in the hallway (that kind of thing). It's how to show up in those situations powerfully. How to show up and wield influence. How not to get taken for granted. How not to get put down. How to get your story heard.

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Joe Dager: *Let me just play devil's advocate for a minute because I hear these things and I want to improve on them and I want to grab them. But then, how would I lose in a conversation when I'm trying to do these other things?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Well, it's not easy. It does take practice. What I coach people to do is to take their unconscious behavior, make it conscious for a while and then determine whether it's what you want or whether you want to change it. Then, the idea is to get comfortable enough to practice that enough so that you can leave it to your unconscious mind again. Once you work through that process, then it's not so difficult. But you're absolutely right. If you're going into a meeting and you're having a high stakes conversation with your colleagues and your arguments are flowing freely back and forth, it's very hard to remember body language at that point unless you had a lot of practice with it. It does take some effort. It does take some attention. Like anything else, you get better at it when you work on it like your golf swing or your tennis or whatever it is.

Joe Dager: *So, it would be important to, maybe, take it just one cue and practice on that for a week, a month, and two months until I feel like I've mastered it. Then, move into the next cue.*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Yeah, I would say take them one at a time. Absolutely. That's what I always coach my coaches to do. Work one thing at a time. When we work together, we try to come up with a half a dozen things that are good and half a dozen things that are not so good. I'll say, take the not so good ones one at a time and work on them because if you try to do more than one at a time, you just get overloaded.

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Joe Dager: *Do you ever work strictly from the positive and not so much from the things that I have to improve on to excel at the things that I do well?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: We do both. Both are very important. You have to come from a positive place to work on this stuff. It isn't about feeling like, "Gee, I'm terrible," and you've got to improve everything. It's about saying, "What's my unique voice?" It's about learning, "What is it that I've got that's a strength?" Often, that's what other people have told me. It's a weakness. It might be "my nervous energy," or it might be "my big booming voice (people have told me to pipe down all my life)". That might turn out to be a good thing when connecting with an audience. It's about finding what makes you uniquely you and then working on those, magnifying those strengths. Then, if there are things that you're doing that you don't like, then you can pay attention to those, too. Absolutely, it's about focusing on the positive. Figuring out what you do great. Even more importantly, what you do that's unique to you because what gets people's attention these days are unique and authentic stories. Not the same old, same old. Not something that they can hear anywhere. But what makes you uniquely you.

Joe Dager: *The biggest thing is the fear that people have of getting up in front of an audience and some people are ready to have an anxiety attack before they get up there. What do I do beforehand to help overcome that?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: I talk about a number of techniques that you can use to overcome it. The one I focus on particularly in *Power Cues* is about re-training your brain in the same

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way that Olympic athletes do when they're getting ready to ski down a hill 75 miles an hour or whatever they're doing. At the level they're competing or if they're running a race, or they're doing a ski jump, or whatever they're doing, I guess the Winter Olympics example is coming to mind because that was the most recent one.

Whatever they're doing there to beat the competition, we're talking hundredths of a second or the finest points of technique to separate you from somebody else according to the judge, is estimation. You can't let anything in your mind get in the way of that. What they do, and they've been doing this for years (but we've only recently begun to talk about it in the general population), is they create scenarios in their heads. They create little movies about how the run is going to go, how the fight is going to go, or about how the gymnastics routine is going to take place. They run that over and over again in their heads because at the moment when doubt comes in, that's the point when your hand slips off the bar. Or, you put too much weight on one ski and you go flying into the guardrails or what have you. They can't afford mistakes. More than that, they need a positive vision to work on.

That's a key one that I talk about. If you put enough energy into imagining what success is going to look like, then that crowds out the nerves, the fear and the anxiety. Generally, the anxiety is your mind racing and having nothing else to think about. You start to think about, "*Oh my God. I have to give a speech. I'm terrified. It's going to go badly. People are going to laugh at me. I'm going to lose my job. It's going to be terrible.*" As you start thinking those thoughts, then your physical symptoms get worse. Your heart starts to beat faster. Your palms get clammy. Your face starts to flush. Then what you do is, you notice

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your physical symptoms. You say, "Oh my God. My face is flushed. That's going to embarrass myself in front of an audience." That makes the mental symptoms worse. What you have to do is give your mind something else to think about and that's the positive scenario you construct. That's what I talk about in the book.

Joe Dager: *Where do I find out more about the book and, where do I find out more about you, too?*

Dr. Nick Morgan: Both questions can be answered in the same place. Thanks for asking. It's publicwords.com. P-U-B-L-I-C-W-O-R-D-S dot com. On that, there are links to the book. You can buy in a variety of places: Barnes & Noble, Amazon, the Harvard book site. There's also my blog which has tons of free information on it about body language, neuroscience, public speaking, performance anxiety, the works. That's the place to go. It also talks about our company and what we do.

Joe Dager: *You're also on Twitter, right?*

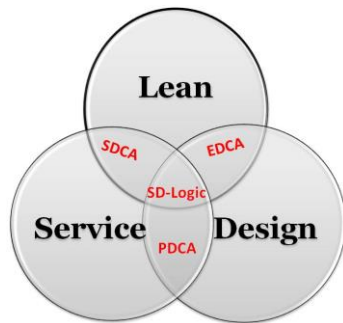
Dr. Nick Morgan: Yes, it is @DrNickMorgan. They call me Dr. Nick now as a way to distinguish me from everybody else. I'm on Twitter. You can like Public Words on Facebook as well. We're on all the social media.

Joe Dager: *Well, great! I very much appreciate your time, Nick. This podcast will be available on the Business901 iTunes store and the Business901 blog site. Thanks everyone.*

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Joseph T. Dager

Business901

Phone: 260-918-0438

Skype: Biz901

Fax: 260-818-2022

Email: jtdager@business901.com

Website: <http://www.business901.com>

Twitter: [@business901](https://twitter.com/business901)

Joe Dager is president of Business901, a firm specializing in bringing the continuous improvement process to the sales and marketing arena. He takes his process thinking of over thirty years in marketing within a wide variety of industries and applies it through Lean Marketing and Lean Service Design.

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