



May 2009 - Leadership Letter (38)

“How to Absolutely Destroy the Competition”

Dear clients, colleagues and friends:

Some of you will recall my rants about knowing and using your competitive edge or strategic advantages.

Consultant/researcher Michael Porter is also very supportive of that aspect of **successful** strategic planning for your future.

Porter defines "competitive edge" as doing different things **or** doing things differently, in ways your clients/customers/users appreciate (for a strategic differentiator).

Well, I've found another strong advocate: **Larry Winget** is an author, speaker and consultant ... who is worth listening to. In fact, he calls himself an "Irritational" Speaker (in contrast to a motivational speaker).

Chapter 11 of his book is one of several favorites and one I want to highlight here, and hopefully without losing his pithy prose and powerful points.

I hope you enjoy my review of Winget's views on this topic (following) ... and I'm pretty sure you'd also enjoy other chapters in his book: ***It's Called Work for a Reason!***

Wishing you all the best!

Mel

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“How to Absolutely Destroy the Competition” ... Chapter 11

from ... IT'S CALLED WORK FOR A REASON!

by Larry Winget

Gotham Books 2007

Author, speaker and consultant, Larry Winget says he has only one big secret. He believes ...

“You destroy the competition when you stop believing in it.”

If you believe in it, you give it power. He says to forget the competition and instead focus on yourself, your strengths and **your uniqueness**. (I would add, it's important to **learn** from your competition. For example, I'd like Delta to learn from Southwest Airlines, how to run a cost-effective operation.)

The smartest thing he's ever said (says he) is:

“Discover your uniqueness and learn to exploit it in the service of others, and you are guaranteed success, happiness and prosperity.”

He believes few individuals or companies know what their uniqueness is or are currently following their unique path. We can only agree!

We often ask client executives to identify their firm's **unique strengths, competitive edges and/or strategic advantages**. They always exist and are incredibly important, yet few executives realize **what** they are or **how** important they are.

Winget gives some excellent examples of firms that **do** know and do exploit their uniqueness ...

- FedEx (speed)
- Mercedes-Benz (quality)
- Nordstrom (customer service)
- Apple (cool products)
- Southwest Air (fast, fun, cheap)
- Geico (cute lizard, save \$)

Other examples I'd add to Larry's good list include these well known names ...

- Whole Foods (healthy, tasty food)
- McKinsey Consultants (honest objectivity)
- Procter & Gamble (innovative products)
- Johnson & Johnson (health solutions)

How To Absolutely Destroy the Competition ... continued ...

Since most of us are smaller in scale, it's probably much tougher to be as well known. However, it is probably even easier to identify our uniquenesses and focus on those with our (1) employees, (2) clients, (3) prospects, (4) suppliers and consultants, (5) network and family, and (6) marketing/sales/business development message.

Speaking for myself, I didn't really **know** my uniqueness until comments from our clients really caught our attention. That uniqueness was different than we thought it was. (Just what Larry Winget said ... we didn't **know**.)

At least one firm, Littlejohn Engineers in Nashville, does seek and get very specific feedback from their clients that they find to be of great value. It enables them to **know** what they are worth, and **why**, and then to **price** their services appropriately.

If you're part of a public utility or service group, or a church or civic organization, you may feel you don't really "compete." Actually, in the long run, you do; just remember the US Postal Service. So ... it's very useful, maybe even essential, for a college, church, or service group to know, sharpen and pursue their strategic advantages (or competitive edge) for the sake of their members, clients, and other stakeholders.

For example, the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department of the University of Cincinnati honors and sharpens its competitive edge ... which includes:

- Founder and leader in Cooperative Education
- Many employers seek only co-op graduates
- Integration of Research and Education
- Strong funding for graduate education
- Internationally renowned Environmental Program
- 97% of graduates pass the FE (first professional) exam
- Graduates are practical problem solvers with real world experience

... and more.



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