

"A secret to happiness is letting every situation be what it is instead of what you think it should be, and then making the best out of it." »David Roads

Adapt or Get Benched Chicken and Checking



I often joke with my sons about their generation thinking that athletes today are so much better than those from my generation.

They point to stats, and I point to something I like to call "reality."

I'm fond of pointing out to them that the games have the same names, but they aren't the same games.

Terry Bradshaw won four Super Bowls while calling his own plays, having wide-receivers being mugged all over the field, and defensive players hitting him after he threw the ball.

Pete Maravich averaged 44 points a game over his college career at LSU, without a 3-point line.

Magic Johnson, Isaiah Thomas, and Larry Bird played in a time when you could clothesline a player and not be thrown out of a game.



Truth be told, I've always preferred Popeyes Fried Chicken to Chick-fil-A.

That's no knock on Chick-fil-A, just acknowledgement of the singular awesomeness that Popeyes puts in a paper box.

When in New Orleans and eating at nice restaurants with "foodie" friends, I often ask, "That dish was great... but was it as good as a Popeyes' 3-piece and a biscuit?" (If you get that...you get that.)

That said, Chick-fil-A tends to be, hands-down, my family's favorite fast food restaurant.

Okay, I do have an actual point to make by referencing the purveyors of poultry-based cuisine in a banking column.

That point is that the product any type of service company provides entails far more than a basic widget...or meal...or checking account.

Today's golf and tennis equipment have totally altered the games Jack Nicklaus and John McEnroe played.

One of the guys I have thrown out to them to "Google" before is Herschel Walker. He is a few years older than I, and I remember watching his games and thinking that dude should wear a cape.

I leaned forward last week when I saw an interview with Herschel Walker leading up to the Georgia/Alabama championship game.

I looked forward to hearing his thoughts about today's college and professional game, but I wasn't expecting his comments to be applicable to business as well.

When he was asked about the advice he gives to today's running backs, he said, "I tell them the position will mostly become extinct if they don't adapt."

He explained that it's a different game than when he played. The changes in the rules that make passing the ball the focus of the game today forces guys who want to succeed to develop different skills.

Walker said, "You have to be able to catch a ball as well as stay back and protect the quarterback, or you don't get to stay on the field."

He also advises running backs to learn their linemen's jobs and know which of them you can trust to make their blocks, which ones you can't trust, and to be prepared to adjust accordingly when they are handed the ball.

A recent article in Business Insider entitled, "Chick-fil-A is beating every competitor by training workers to say 'please' and 'thank you'" grabbed my attention.

In it, Kate Taylor points out that Chick-fil-A generates more revenue per restaurant than any fast-food chain in the US.

That is impressive. That they do it while also being closed on Sundays is amazing.

The food is good, but usually priced on the high-end for a fast-food establishment.

They do not win on having plainly better food or on better pricing.

What regular customers would attest to (and backed up by research in the column) is that Chick-fil-A employees just seem to be more engaged and happy to help you.

A restaurant research group found that Chick-fil-A was statistically the politest fast-food restaurant in their markets.

Their employees were the most likely to say, "Thank you," and "please", and to smile at you... and the second most likely to have a "pleasant demeanor".

PDQ was most likely. I guess chicken places tend to be nicer?

Well, it's a theory, anyway.

My point is that in highly competitive, price sensitive, and largely homogenous industries, people matter more, not less.

His message was that you must adjust to the game to remain relevant in the game.

I smiled and thought that was another version of my mantra: Evolution does not mean elimination, but failing to evolve guarantees elimination.

Our game (banking) continues to evolve as well.

Be prepared to adapt to it to stay on the field.

As long as customers are humans, no other element of a business matters as much as how its humans (employees) make the other humans (customers) feel in their presence.

Technology alters some of the ways customers use branches.

It does not alter the importance of engaged employees and friendly interactions within them.

Those matter more now than ever. How will yours impact customers today?

"At one point in life you either have the thing you want or the reasons why you don't." »Andy Roddick



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