

"If you don't go after what you want, you'll never have it. If you don't ask, the answer is always no. If you don't step forward, you are always in the same place."

»Nora Roberts

The Better Mousetrap Myth



A recent headline on a banking website included a quote from a CEO of a fintech that caught my eye... and made me cringe just a little.

The story wasn't as cringe-inducing as the headline, but it still had me shaking my head.

The headline quote was, "If the product is good, it should sell itself." Upon reading the article, I learned that the quote originated with a former marketing director and not that CEO.

That may be why he is the former marketing director.

I thought of Beatrice from the old Esurance commercial: "That's not how any of this works!"

When discussing how critical marketing and sales functions are to individual branches, I have often used small business statistics to make a point.

Step Inside, Walk This Way...



I am a big fan of "behind the story" stories. I stumbled upon a video clip this week of a Howard Stern interview with the members of Def Leppard that fit the bill.

Def Leppard is one of my favorite bands of all time. Hit songs and musicianship aside, I respect bands with members older than I who are still able to draw crowds.

(That's a shrinking number.)

In this interview, they shared how demanding recording albums was with their longtime producer, Mutt Lange.

They put in longer hours recording and rerecording songs than any band around. Heck, the 4-minute song, "Animal", was a multi-year project.

Their masterpiece album, "Hysteria", was a grueling three-year experience both in and out of the studio.

Thirty percent of small businesses fail within their first 2 years and 50 percent fail within 5 years.

I suggest that most do not fail because they are incompetent at what they do. They do not fail because they are uncompetitive with pricing, either.

Many small businesses fail because they are unable to ever connect and earn the consideration of the customers they need to survive.

They may have great products at competitive prices.

Yet, they fail to show up on potential customers' radars.

I further venture a guess as to one reason some companies that succeed for a few years eventually fail a little down the road.

Companies (people) begin to succeed and grow just a bit and then take their eyes off new business development.

Their existing business is good enough...until it isn't. Without a proactive growth (sales) focus, their business slows, struggles, and fails.

Growth cultures are not turned on and off like a switch.

The idea that our products are superior enough to "sell themselves" is alluring.

However, the landscape is littered with failed businesses (and careers) that operated with that mindset.

Believing you are the best at what you do or offer is a good thing. Selling great products and services is a lot more fun than the alternative.

At the end of three years, their label had lost patience and wanted whatever they had... now.

The band was tired. The album was done.

Just before getting ready to turn over the finished product, Lange heard Joe Elliot strumming and singing something in the corridor.

He stopped and asked "What's that?" Elliot said, "It's nothing."

Lange insisted he play it again. He then fought the record label to give them two more weeks.

Ten days later, that throw away strumming session was the last song put on the album.

That song was "Pour Some Sugar on Me", and it became one of the most iconic songs in rock music history.

Members of the band smiled while recalling that it was the quickest they'd ever written and produced a song.

Guitarist Phil Collen chuckled and made a comment that resonated with me. He said, "We'd actually gotten the hang of it by then."

While that was a tongue-in-cheek comment about the lightning-in-a-bottle phenomenon of some hit songs, I believe his statement had truth to it.

Creative bursts and "strokes of genius" are often only possible after long hours and grueling work.

Overnight successes are often years in the making.

However, the competition is good, getting better, and talking to your customers.

That's the nature of any business worth being in.

Sales is the oxygen of business. Marketing and selling efforts are akin to breathing.

Don't hold your breath, expecting customers to find you.

Good products don't sell themselves.

Good people do.

"Natural talent" is usually the result of effort and practice most folks are not willing to put in.

Also (and not to be overlooked) they were now operating with a firm deadline. They produced their biggest hit in record time...because they had to.

A deadline isn't always the enemy. Often, it provides the motivation and focus we need to create – and complete - our best work.

What goals are you focused on now? Give yourself a deadline.

Then...rock on.

"There is no greater disability in society than the inability to see a person as more."

»Robert M. Hensel



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