

Monthly Musings



courtesy of Fletcher Consulting

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SMART STRATEGY:

Reinventing yourself

Did you ever imagine the **U.S. Postal Service** would be making same day deliveries? Well, it does now... even on Christmas Day.

The gauntlet was thrown down when **Amazon** raised our expectations and now same-day delivery is **Amazon's** new standard in certain areas.

San Francisco has been a battlefield for same-day delivery as a company called **Postmates** has been delivering pretty much everything: lunch, office supplies, toys, donuts, groceries, and purchases from over 250 national retailers including **Macy's** and **Foot Locker**.

... imagine the U.S. Postal service would be making same-day deliveries?

In that same city, **Sidecar Deliveries** picks up and transports people as well as purchased items, combining the services offered by **Uber** with product delivery companies. Their thought: We will always have more drivers in the area if we are delivering both people and purchases.

... Sidecar Deliveries picks up and transports people as well as purchased items...

OK, for you smart guys and gals out there, I have also discovered a California (where else?) company called **Trees**, which will literally deliver premium marijuana to your doorstep (in California only) the same day you place the order.

What new trend have you identified that will allow you to accelerate...

It's like having your own drug dealer on speed dial – or call him your *cannabis concierge*. To no surprise, customers may also request some munchies to accompany their smokes.

Same-day delivery has been a staple in some industries, with Houston's **Gallery Furniture** promising immediate delivery for more than ten years. Today, we now see even **FedEx Same-Day Courier** service available in the Fort Worth-Dallas area. Of course, **Uber** delivers... YOU!

Companies are constantly reinventing themselves to offset

lost potential sales and to recognize and capitalize upon lucrative new niches.

What new trend have you identified that will allow you to accelerate your growth trajectory?

The visionaries are innovating while slow-to-move companies from the old-school world are watching from the sidelines.

Companies can change their product or service or their approach to interacting with customers and prospects.



SMART CUSTOMER SERVICE: Acme does it right

You may have noticed that **Fort Worth Business** named its **Top 100 Companies** earlier this month. Recipient of the Public CEO of the Year Award was my college fraternity brother **Dennis Knautz**, CEO of **Acme Brick** – a fellow Horned Frog.

I always called Dennis "the smartest guy in the room" and his success validates my description.

Dennis has proven his value to the company as he transitioned **Acme** from record-setting growth in 2005 through the steep decline in the economy and home-building industry, and led their strong business recovery in recent years.

His relentless drive to do the right thing, even in the face of challenging times, impresses me. Dennis recently told me about his policy on those rare occasions when a bad production load of bricks is delivered to a home construction site. If those bricks eventually cause structural flaws in the home, **Acme** replaces all the bricks and pays for the installation labor, as well.

Acme is the only brick manufacturer to stand behind its bricks for 100 years.

"We have a limited 100-year warranty on our bricks and we're serious about it," he told me. "When customers have notified us of bricks that failed



to live up to our promise, we replace them. There is no insurance coverage. We just do what's right at our own expense because that is who Acme Brick is."

I experienced my own "Acme Moment" when resolving a client situation 20 years ago. We had ordered \$16,000 worth of coffee mugs with the client's name glazed onto the mugs. The client approved the design, as did my own production and account leaders.

Upon delivery, the client noticed that we had left out the period after their final initial (We had four letters and only three periods). It did not matter that the client had approved the design. As the agency, we were "the eyes and ears of the client." The ultimate responsibility was ours.

When I asked the client what would make her happy, she said she wanted a new shipment of mugs with the proper logo. Without protest, I ordered the new mugs and paid for them completely – certainly a painful moment for a small company.

Interestingly enough, that \$16,000 mistake earned my company the respect of many prospects and led new clients to respect and trust us with their business.

Delivering on your quality promise, particularly when it is painful and in challenging times, separates the trustworthy companies from the rest.

What are your policies for resolving an issue in your client's favor when such a situation arises? If you have not thought through your process, now would be an excellent time to do so – BEFORE the heat of the moment, not after.

Just as Acme Brick has done.

CONGRATULATIONS

- To my client and friends at **Renfro Foods** for being named **Family Business of the Year** by *Fort Worth Business*.
- To my friend **Dennis Knautz, CEO of Acme Brick** (story above), for being named **Public Company CEO of the Year** by *Fort Worth Business*.

SMART LESSON:

Subway learns painfully

Jared Fogle surprised most of us by admitting he is a pedophile and has been active in this regard for years.

Subway immediately distanced itself from its former spokesman, releasing him from any relationship with the company. Even worse was the charge that at least three Subway executives had known since 2008 about his questionable lifestyle and had not taken any action due to the success of his role as spokesman.

Fogle's situation represented the second embarrassment regarding a Subway spokesperson in the past nine months, following endorser and Olympic champion swimmer Michael Phelps' plea of guilty for his second DUI charge.

The company is experiencing challenges that sometimes occur when selecting a spokesperson. And while Subway's endorsement contracts certainly include a "moral turpitude" clause that allows Subway to terminate the arrangement in the event the person's

actions would bring shame or disgrace to the company, the pain and damages are real.

Having worked with numerous celebrities and athletes representing my clients over the years, my best perspective comes from **Hall of Fame Rodeo Announcer Bob Tallman**, who currently endorses my client AgTexas Farm Credit Services.

According to Bob, "I realize that everything I say and everything I am seen doing reflects not only upon myself, but also upon AgTexas, Wrangler Jeans, Resistol Hats, my other sponsors, and my own philanthropies such as M.D. Anderson and Cook Children's Hospitals. Plus, of course, I am the face of each rodeo that hires me."

He adds, "I pay attention to what I do and say when I am off-duty as much as I do when I am on-duty."

Colossians 4:5-6 in the New Testament shares excellent instruction to spokespeople: "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."

How much do you "pay attention" when considering someone to represent your brand? You are joined at the hip through his or her private life away from the spotlight as much as you are when the camera is rolling.

The most effective endorsers can raise the profile of your brand beyond your wildest expectations. However, their potential fall from grace can be damaging, embarrassing and cause irreparable harm to your reputation.

Just ask Subway.



THE Tiebreaker
Playing with your customers

How well do your employees "play" with your customers in a good-natured sense?

En route to a morning meeting this past Thursday, I took the time to enjoy breakfast at the counter of Fort Worth's Paris Coffee Shop.

When I had devoured the meal, a young man named Cleveland asked if he could remove my plate. I replied, "The food was so good I was going to lick it clean, but go on ahead."

He surprised me by saying, "Hey, I can go back and have the lady put more on the plate if you'd like."

While we were both just playing, I could tell that he would have done so if I had asked him.

Sharing pleasant fun with your customers and making them smile turns customers into fans and then advocates.

What little things are you doing to play with your customers and break the tie in your favor?



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