

How to Get Your Kite Rising Against the Wind?

A Different Way of Looking at Marketing

© Ray Brun, MBA, CPA, SPHR, (Sr. Prof. HR Mgr.). Facilitator and Owner of The Alternative Board- East Bay North
Author of *How Small Businesses Capture Talent*, 164 Strategies for Recruiting and Hiring Winners

With Starbucks closing stores, civilization as we know it is going into a tailspin! What are you seeing today? Getting bank loans to buy gas and food? Nose-diving home equity values? Your 401K is becoming a 201K? Feeling depressed? Peter Sinclair says, "Depression loses its power when fresh vision pierces the darkness." Where are you going for new perspectives?

Today, I was annoyed by Fairfield's 40 MPH winds as I had to re-light my blown-out water tank pilot light for the third time this week. However, another perspective would be that it was these same *winds of adversity* that gave us Travis Air Base- the economic fuel for our city's survival! In business, do you see today as the worst of times or the best of times?

Business owners flew with the wind at their back for a long time. Customers were easy to find, profits were fat, and many CEOs relaxed. Many took their customers, profits, and futures for granted. They acted as though the good times would never end. Hopefully TAB Board Members are better prepared. TAB continuously discusses planning for contingencies, and because of the continuous overlapping of fluctuating industry cycles, members gain ongoing experience in dealing with downturns. Nevertheless, it is clear that *all of us* are feeling this wakeup call today.

Now is not the time to sit back. Napoleon Hill says "*Every adversity carries with it the seed of equal or greater benefit.*" My thriving members are benefiting from adverse times by rethinking marketing approaches. Changing to a customer focus rather than prospect focus is resulting in new businesses as well as happier *existing clients*. During good times many of us neglected existing clients as a marketing resource so we could pursue the "thrill of the chase." Why? Because, rockets go off and bells sound as we bring in new clients. Developing the power of current clients and asking for referrals is not as much fun. It is human nature "to give more love and attention to those we are trying to seduce than those we are married to." However, how many untapped opportunities have been right there within your clients' firms and especially within their deep reservoirs for referrals? It is time to ask an important question:

1. Who are the best customers and what makes them better?

Once you have listed your best customers and defined exactly why they are keepers, make the time to visit them, and get answers to the following questions:

2. How can we better serve your current needs?

3. What other problems might we help you with?

4. How can we make *your* work easier?

5. Who else do you know that we might be able to help?

Try this process and uncover new business while strengthening loyalty of your clients. Businesses that get going when the going gets tough do so by digging in their heels, looking in the mirror, and finding ways to better serve their best customers and other people like them. You already have everything you need. You just need to add determination, patience and courage. Do not fear of the winds of adversity. Make that wind work for you and fly you over your obstacles. These are the best of times for the people and businesses that are looking to improve.