

Is Business War?

By Terry L. Brock

You've probably heard it before that "business is war." There are those who think that to succeed in business you have to beat the opposition to a pulp. They see the process as a win-lose.

I remember a while back I was asked to speak for a large, well-known manufacturer's annual meeting. Before I spoke one of the Sales Vice Presidents got up to give a speech to "inspire the troops" (notice the subtle military reference). He looked out at the crowd and said, "Men," (the audience was mostly men in the audience but I wonder how the few women felt about that reference) "it is literal war out there." That got me thinking. Did he really mean what he said? Literal war means killing people and destroying things. Even if you win, you lose a lot in terms of money, time and effort expended, not to mention your own people are killed and your own possessions are destroyed. Somehow I think that this gentleman had a wrong view of what business is all about.

Some will say it is just an expression but the words we use shape our thoughts. How we frame a situation determines ultimately our actions.

I think business is more like farming. Farming means that you sow seeds and after lots of time, money and effort, when harvest time comes, you yield a crop of life-sustaining, essential goods.

Business is not about the E-Commerce (the Electronics); it is about R-Commerce (the Relationships). Like farming, you have to carefully select the soil (choose the customer base to serve), till the soil (do your preparation to provide solid value), plant the seeds (show opportunities where customers can get involved with you) and nurture the crops as they grow (build relationships over time).

It is not easy. Farming is not an easy profession. You have to face the elements of wind, excessive rain, drought, pestilence, and then when you finally get a crop at harvest, you are subject to the market price for that particular crop!

In business, you and I are faced with similar challenges. However, if you employ the right technologies and the right attitudes you'll increase your odds of success. Here are some steps and some tools that can help you in your pursuit of R-Commerce as it relates to farming:

1. **Carefully study the market for what is needed and what you can provide.** You have to study (read, work!) to find out what the market wants. This is not just what you think is nifty and groovy. Sorry. You

- have to provide what the market is specifically asking for and is ready, willing and able to pay.
2. **Match market needs with your expertise and advantages.** If you can provide a need the marketplace has because of a strong background in a given area, that's good.
 3. **Till the soil.** Getting business cards and contact information is critical. I use CardScan to capture names and pertinent information quickly. Frankly I'm amazed at the speed and accuracy of the most recent versions.. Treat your database of contacts like your most valuable asset--because, in business, it is.
 4. **Nurture the Soil.** Gentle rain. The right amount of sunshine. A little bit of fertilizer. Some necessary pesticides. These are all part of a farmer's set of tools. Stay in touch with people. Send valuable information related to what they want to know. Send video, audio, text, etc. And no, you can't just have a text-only e-mail to stay in touch with people. How 20th Century! Cultivate relationships by being there for people in a real way and in a personal way. In an age of too much e-mail, too many YouTube videos, too much information we long for solid, real relationships with people that genuinely care about us and our needs.
 5. **Employ Technology To Serve People.** One of your most valuable tools will be the database of names. Segment these by needs and previously expressed interest. In other words, don't send everybody the same thing. Send special people special messages. Take the time and think through the logical segments that make sense for your business and develop systems (key term) to address those needs.

R-Commerce means that you take time to find out what people want and then find ways to provide that. It is never-ending. The successful farmer today is a successful business person. It requires the right principles, the right tools and the right amount of dogged, never-say-die determination.

No, business is not "literally" war. Business is about building, nurturing, creating and helping others. War means there is a winner and a loser. Business means that even if you miss a deal this week, you can learn from it and be better next time or get into the right field for the future.

It is on-going and never-ending. Sure, it requires work---but that's a lot better than "literal war."

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