



You Should Know...

Yes, We're Living Longer

In 1950 there were 2,300 people in the US older than 100. In 2010 there were 70,430.

The Point: A good thing, but maybe the explanation for dramatically higher healthcare and pension/entitlement costs.

Vigilantes Are Back?

Unfortunately, budget woes have caused the city of Detroit to reduce its police force by 40% delaying police response times. The result? In 2011 34 citizens killed attackers in what the police call "justifiable use of force," reports *The Daily*.

The Point: Disturbing and hopefully not a trend.

Very Strange

Mr. Hughes of Butte, MT, led police on a 100 mph chase that ended when he blew out his tires. When asked why (he was sober and had committed no crime), he said he'd "just always wanted to do that."

The Point: He must have been bored.

Free Speech

A football fan in San Diego has sued the city for his right to yell profanities at sporting events. The NFL has a prohibition on fan cursing; however, his attorney has charged that it's unconstitutional.

The Point: Sometimes rights and manners become confused.

February's Quote

"Horse sense is a good judgment which keeps horses from betting on people."

W.C. Fields

Marketing Strategy vs. Tactics

Most executives understand the importance of having a clearly defined and well communicated marketing strategy. Unfortunately, gathering consensus, crafting, and executing one is time consuming. Putting out "day-to-day fires," managing cash flow, retaining key accounts, etc. often leaves too little time for long-term strategic thinking.

First, why have a strategy at all? A good strategy is more than the first slide in a PowerPoint presentation. It is a flag providing clear direction around which manufacturing, R&D, engineering, sales, marketing, operations, and the rest of the company can coordinate their efforts.

Additionally, a well communicated strategy ensures that the resources of all departments are focused on the same goal, promoting internal harmony. When sales/marketing and R&D/engineering have differences regarding new product features or selling prices, the reason is often the lack of a clearly articulated, mutually understood, and agreed upon strategy.

Where to start? Well, a manufacturer of B2B products has three general strategic options. It can:

1. *Manufacture and sell the lowest cost products and services.* This usually means competing on price which can be effective, but difficult in the long-term. Low cost business models are quickly copied by one's competitors.
2. *Be the developer and provider of differentiated products and services.* These products can be physically or functionally differentiated (think IP). Also the "service" portion of the product offering can provide differentiation (think warrantee, delivery, breadth of product line, convenience,

pre/post sale technical assistance, etc.).

3. *Be the provider of a complete basket of products and services/info to a vertical market.* This means providing every tool or chemical that a specific class of tradesmen or medical researcher needs and uses on a regular basis as well as "how to" guidance.

The first and second options are mutually exclusive, but either can be combined with the third.

Conduct an audit: Do you have a clear, concise strategy? Has it been communicated to and agreed upon by at least the first two or three levels of management? Does it provide guidance, not just for your sales and marketing efforts, but for operational, administrative, and product development activities as well?

When crafting your strategy it's important to avoid pursuing the same one as your competitors. This is called strategic convergence and invariably leads to a price war with all the nasty consequences that implies.

The Point: Without a carefully crafted, consensus, and well communicated strategy, it's impossible to focus the human and financial resources of a company on the real goal, beating the competition.

The Fastest Animals

Animal	Speed
Cheetah	70
Pronghorn Antelope	61
Wildebeest	50
Lion	50
Thomson's Gazelle	50
Quarterhorse	47.5
Elk	45
Cape Hunting Dog	45
Coyote	43
Gray Fox	42

Source: *The World Almanac*