

Is complacency crippling your valuable networks and client base?

BY ROBYN HENDERSON CSP

You thought you had a strong relationship with a client, one you had developed over a few years. Now you hear they have moved to a competitor, resulting in a significant drop in income for your business—what happened? You make several calls to a key contact in your network, and the calls go unanswered without explanation.

What are some of the signs of complacency?

Successful organisations are at far greater risk of becoming complacent than a new kid on the block who is hungry, scratching for business and grateful of any and all new clients—who they have had to take away from another supplier in the first place. Often gaining the new business before the current service provider knew it was ever at risk.

Might the reason for losing that client be based around conversations like:

“Don’t worry too much about that deadline, we have worked with John for years, he knows our work is always late!”

“Sorry Bill, we have had to put your job on hold for now, we’ve got another really important client that’s taking all our manpower at present!”

“You phoned three times with no replies, sorry—I’ve been busy.”

Assuming that your product or service meets the marketplace average standards, the main reason business is being lost in the market place today is COMPLACENCY.

Google lists over 1.3 million definitions for complacency including quiet satisfaction, contentment, and smugness, unconcerned or unaware of potential danger or risk.

The late Charlie Bell’s quote rings true for many businesses: “The biggest threat to McDonald’s lies within, and that is us as a company becoming complacent. There are a lot of companies that get fat, dumb and happy and take their eye off the ball and forget about serving customers”.

Networks or client base—is there a difference? Master networkers treat their networks as if they were filled with current clients—people they can do business with and people who can refer business to them. Your networks and your clients both need to be nurtured—never take them for granted. Why? Because networks are exactly that!

Five keys to avoid complacency with your networks and clients:

1. Stay connected. This doesn’t mean daily contact—but it does mean regular contact—in the format that

the client prefers—not your favourite format. Options may include phone call, text message, email, ezine, newsletter, tweet, and note in the mail with an interesting article. The message you are sending is: “I think of you regularly” not just when you are giving me business. Take the time to audit your networks and decide who, how often and what format you will stay connected. The larger your networks, the more systems you will need to manage this.



2. Share information generously. Develop regular sources of qualified information beyond traditional media and become really good at disseminating information to your relevant networks while it is still ‘news’, not old hat.

3. Offer to help others. Sometimes we take many of our natural skills for granted. Preparing a proposal document might be something you could do in your sleep (even though at one point in your life you were a novice at this) yet something that might take an unskilled person hours and hours. How will you know what people need help with? ASK! “What’s keeping you awake at night these days?” Or “Is there anything I might be able to help you with?” “What’s happening in your world—anything I can help you with?”

4. Develop your own skills and general knowledge by continually learning. iPods have revolutionised learning and listening and the listening doesn’t always have to be work related! The bonus is you will become a more interesting person.

5. Be open to change! Same old/same old won’t cut it today! Open your mind to innovative ways of doing business. Don’t be afraid to be different. Many business models are no longer working in today’s marketplace, but because “we’ve always done it this way” we resist change.

A final quote from Camille Paglia: “Will we end up like late Rome, infatuated with past glories, ruled by a complacent, greedy elite, and hopelessly powerless to respond to changing conditions?”

Being prepared to change, innovate, and continually improve your systems will save you, your business and your networks from complacency and guarantee continued growth and renewal—particularly in a tight marketplace.

Happy Networking.

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