

Your Competitive Edge – Is It Time For A Revamp?



Your Competitive Edge – Is It Time For A Revamp?

The Japanese call it *kaizen*. Western management gurus call it *continuous improvement*. Most business people would best recognise it as 'not sitting on your laurels'.

The big question is; "*How am I going to do this in an effective way?*" And, just as important, "*How do I make this renewal and improvement process part of business routine rather than one off events?*"

There are several ways to institutionalise competitive improvement in your business. First, there is customer feedback. Many successful business leaders say publicly that the best ideas for product and service improvement came from customers. So it's up to you to ensure that your customers have some readily available way to contribute their views on your business, and that when they do submit ideas and suggestions, you personally thank them for their contribution. This way, customers will know that you take their suggestions seriously.

If you decide to act on a customer's suggestion, you should make sure the loop is closed; that is, you should write to the customer who made the suggestion and explain that it was such a good idea that it has been implemented. No doubt this customer will tell others about their experience, and, as a consequence, the business is likely to receive even more new ideas and suggestions.

Second, you can introduce a system for finding out what the competitors are up to. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How much detailed information do I have on my competitors?
- How recent is it? What business initiatives have *they* taken in the last quarter?
- How will this effect *my* market position?

You can make it a point to update this information every quarter so you know what is going on. Your team may be able to make valuable contributions here by tapping in to what customers are being told by your competitors.

Third, and this is something few companies do, you can use the concept of 'organised rebellion'. Organised rebellion works like this: take your best people and put them in a room for two hours. Give them a sensible amount of pretend seed capital and tell them that they have just left the company. Armed with their capital, their task is to plan a launch against your business and beat it in 18 months.

If you have enough team members, set several teams the same task at once and make a competition out of it. At the end of the two hours, ask each team to share their competitive business plan - perhaps through a fifteen minute presentation. This way you will get a good idea of your company's strengths and weaknesses; its vulnerabilities in particular. The next stage is to sit down and plan how you would beat such an attack by a new rival. In thinking how to beat this theoretical rival, you'll probably come up with some quite innovative ideas that will raise the barrier of entry to new competitors.

This sort of exercise is best managed by an external facilitator who knows your business. The role of the facilitator is to ensure that all ideas are heard, to advise the groups when they need financial and other advice, and to make sure that management stay out of the process and don't kill ideas.



Want to find out more? Need some assistance developing and implementing profit improvement strategies?

Call today on 01743 249992, or

Email: outsourcing@cb-solutions.co.uk

Visit: www.cb-solutions.co.uk for more free resources!

An Important Message

While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.

Terms Of Use

All rights to the content in this publication are reserved by RAN ONE Inc. Any use of the content outside of this format must acknowledge RAN ONE Inc. as the original source.