

Lesson 9: Covering Your Posterior

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By now, you doubtless have a much better picture of your competitors, including their strengths what you can learn from them. While not all competing companies will be as diligent as you in researching the opposition, your safest bet is to assume that they are and be prepared for it.

In other words, chances are good that the competition is eyeballing you even as we speak, looking for weaknesses that they can exploit. Want to know what areas they're going to target when they attack you? There's no need to wait around and find out the hard way. All you need to do is a little role reversal and you can find out for yourself.

Explore Your Weaknesses

You've already gone through the exercise of outlining what you do better than the competition and where their weaknesses are. Hopefully you've created a very thorough and detailed list that gives you lots of critical information which you can use to outmaneuver them in your marketing campaign. This means that you already have the exploratory tools that you require. You need only turn them on yourself.

Do your best to step away from your personal involvement in your company and see things from an objective point of view. It doesn't matter if you don't believe that a vulnerability is important. If the enemy sees it, they're going to go after it just the same. Therefore, err on the side of listing too many weaknesses rather than assuming everything's fine and you have no cracks in your walls.

Creating An Opening

If you can successfully see yourself through the eyes of the other guy, you're going to gain more than you think. For example, everyone assumes that professional boxers train all day learning how to throw a punch. While this is true, they also work on intentionally creating openings, or exposing a weakness that their opponents will want to attack. Why would anyone intentionally put themselves at risk? Simple. It's a lot easier to defend when you know exactly where the attack is going to come.

When you know your vulnerabilities in great detail, you not only give yourself the ability to shore up your defenses where they're weak, you also have the option of leaving some of them intentionally exposed so you'll know where your opponent will attack. You can couple this strategy with the knowledge you've gained about your competitors to create some very effective tactics.

A Working Example

By now, you know where your competitors are strong. If you have a counter to that strength, you might be tempted to lead with it. What if, instead, you created a weakness in that same area for all to see?

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Naturally, your opponent may well pounce on that and make a big deal out of why this is an important consideration in making a purchasing choice.

Instead of immediately responding, why not let them do your work for you? Let them spend their marketing budget spreading the word on why this is an important issue when choosing a company to do business with. You'll even lose a few initial sales in the process. However, once they've built up a full head of steam and everyone's talking about it, you're read to launch your own campaign.

You've had a superior solution all along. To be sure, had you led with it, it would have had an effect. However, imagine how much more devastating it is to your competition when they've expended time and money publicizing the issue. What looked like an attack turned out to be them making your point for you. You can imagine the market shift in your direction that this can create.

Conclusion

By taking the time to look at your own weaknesses in a brutally honest fashion, you'll gain critical insights that you can use to keep others from stealing your business away. At the same time, by seeing yourself through the eyes of the enemy, you're in a much better position to control the battlefield, being a step ahead of their moves and even controlling where they'll next strike.

If all this talk of enemies, attacks and vulnerabilities makes you uncomfortable, it's understandable. Conflict is an unpleasant part of life on our little blue planet. Even so, that's not nearly as terrible as going out of business. Know your enemy. You can bet that they know you.