

## Winning Market Share

We're in business and we want to grow. The question is how can we create demand for our products and services?

It's a simple enough question but the answer is reasonably surprising. Our ability to actually create "new" demand is reasonably limited. "New" demand, in the main, is only generated from "new products," either by the emergence of new technologies or from the advent of new inventions. What this means of course is that a vast number of businesses don't actually create new demand; they simply share the existing demand between themselves. There is surprisingly little unmet demand out there. Existing demand is being pretty well catered for in one form or another, with or without us.



This introduces a new dynamic to the equation; if we want to increase our share of the market we have to steal some of somebody else's share; the other side of the coin of course is that there are a whole lot of people out there trying to do the same thing by attempting to steal some of our share.

How then do we go about protecting and increasing our share?

Achieving this requires a thorough understanding of both our customer base and that of rival businesses.

Having the answers to the following simple questions will help us build a comprehensive picture of our market and our competitors and put us in a stronger position to win a bigger market share.

- Who are our existing customers and what segments within these markets can we identify? Are there any other groups that may require our product or service that we haven't targeted before? Can our product or service be used for other purposes that we had not previously thought of that could make it appealing to a wider market?
- What are our competitors' strengths? Do we have these too? If not, why not - and should we have them?
- Why do customers buy from our competitors? What advantages do we have over our rivals that may attract their customers? How can we communicate with our competitors' customers to get them to switch and buy from us instead?
- Why pick us? What are our unique selling points? How do we distinguish ourselves and our product and service from that of our competitors? Is it price, quality, reliability, accessibility, reputation, or other matters?
- Apart from obvious rivals, are there any other businesses with customers we may appeal to?

- Are there customers who have stopped buying from us? Do we know why? If not, we may want to ask them.
- Will we need to change pricing, marketing, distribution, service levels? Could those changes upset current customers? Will our employees remain motivated?
- What else can we do to better meet our customer needs?

Protecting and Increasing market share is about always staying ahead of the pace. It is about constantly setting ourselves apart from our competition.

Measuring and monitoring market share is an extremely useful barometer for business. It enables us to assess what strategies are working and what ones aren't. It also allows us to assess our performance against our competitors, and to look for reasons for differences.

Cheers

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