

SuccessExpress

Press

FOR ACTION-TAKING, FORWARD-THINKING BUSINESS OWNERS

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We invite you to contact us with any questions, comments or requests for specific information to help solve your business challenges. Send to:

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How To Exploit Diversity to Gain a Competitive Edge

Susan Carter

I can already hear some of you moaning after reading the above headline ... "you've always given us practical, how-to, business-building advice and now you want to lecture us about diversity ...?"

Relax! This article is NOT going to be a lecture, and the "exploiting" part has nothing to do with taking advantage of other people; it has everything to do with taking advantage of opportunities by incorporating the value of other people.

This article IS about a specific and significant business-building tactic – diversity awareness. But if the word diversity makes you think of a touchy-feely, let's-all-sing-Kumbya-and-do-a-group-hug kind of thing, then you're living in the past!

Twenty-first century diversity awareness is NOT about group hugs

and mushy, emotional, "executive retreats" that force attendees to form a circle, hold hands and sway back and forth in unison while listening to sitar music. It's not about filling workforce quotas, or learning to accept or "tolerate" each other despite an undercurrent of learned resentment. And it certainly is not about compromising your beliefs and values to become one, big, mosh pit of sameness that is destined for rebellious – and certain – destruction.

"Twenty-first century diversity awareness is NOT about group hugs and mushy, emotional, "executive retreats" that force attendees to form a circle, hold hands and sway back and forth in unison while listening to sitar music."

Diversity awareness is the new, strategic, gold rush for business development. It's a treasure-hunting expedition that promises opportunities to uncover and dump huge, doubloon-laden chests of gold (a.k.a. bigger profits, heightened communication, and a competitive advantage) at your feet!

Okay, so I've gone a bit over the top using descriptive phrases, but you get the idea. "Thar's gold in them thar hills!" And that "gold" is yours for the taking!

So how does diversity awareness give you a competitive edge? Here are just three ways:

1. *It puts a big, red bull's eye on each of your target markets.*

When you increase your knowledge about the people who buy your products and use

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your services – and ACT on that knowledge by seeking to understand their motivations (and adapt it to your own thought process) – you will also increase your ability to attract new customers. This is nothing new!

Researching your target markets is at the foundation of building a strong business. Yet, if you broaden your thinking about how to serve those markets, you'll rise to the top of the competitive heap.

2. *You experience head-spinning, brain-expanding, "aha" moments that open up new, creative marketing ideas.*

If you're happy with your marketing efforts and really don't need any new customers, then read no further. You're set for life. But if you do business in an ever-changing industry that shifts with the proverbial tide of customer whims, then "doing what you've always done to get what

you've always gotten" isn't enough.

Begin with number 1 above, and then ACT by taking the knowledge you've gleaned about your target markets and develop specific, attention grabbing, marketing campaigns that let them know you know them.

3. *It ignites the fire of employee intelligence that fuels fierce loyalty to you – and to building your business.*

Fire up your employees! If all you're doing is expecting them to perform routine tasks and duties that fall within the parameters of a job description, you're not getting your money's worth – and you're not giving them a

reason to WANT to work for you.

Each individual employee (including vendors and contractors) brings a personal and unique perspective to everything that takes place in your business.

For every business practice you use, each person observes it, processes the information and comes to a conclusion about its effectiveness from a very unique perspective. Scoop up all that unmined perspective and use it as a competitive weapon to strengthen the abilities of the whole group – and each individual.

You'll develop loyal employees who care about your business success.

Employees who care about the business are solid, bottom-line assets.

Your attitudes about diversity issues can work for or against you. If you seek ways to make them work for you, it could catapult your profits to heights you never anticipated. In fact, I dare say that the more diverse-hugging your business is (figuratively speaking, of course!), the greater potential of capturing a local, national and global edge, even against your biggest competitors.

There's a great side benefit to re-examining the world around you, too. It just might make you a better person to work for, partner with, and simply be around. Who wouldn't want a little more of that kind of charisma?

Susan Carter is an operations consultant, author, and owner of Nasus Publishing. The publishing company's latest release is entitled

Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand – a humorous approach to diversity learning tied to bottom-line benefits.

Visit www.successideas.com/ostrich.htm to read the first chapter FREE!

