



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE COMPETITIVE

Senior managers will claim that their company, brand or new marketplace entry is “competitive.” Yet so very often their products are “me-too,” further contributing to the “age of sameness” in an era characterized by a proliferation of products (i.e., an “age of abundance”) in virtually every market. Additionally, they’re under-funded and/or their organization is not sufficiently focused, lacking the critical mass it takes to win with target-customers - all other things being about equal. So, what’s up? What does it mean to be competitive?

It appears being “competitive” in these instances means participating (more like joining-in to conduct business) in an emerging or existing category, segment, therapeutic area, etc. Truth be told being competitive to them is probably about getting a *“nice slice of the pie and/or growth,”* whatever that means. They’re merely picking at some low hanging fruit or hoping for scraps that they can take to their bottom-line. There’s no appetite for, or hope of, achieving the number one or two position in the category. It is not a horse that former GE Chairman Jack Welch would run on a track, no less house in his stable. He’d sell it to a glue factory.

So, what does it mean to be competitive? In sports we hear that someone is a “competitive athlete.” Essentially this means that the individual is capable of winning (assuming s/he is having a good day, and everything works out in her/his favor). The ingredients (or requisites) are in place such that on this given day this athlete may just prove triumphant, even against the phenom, or clear favorite, of the times. That s/he has a chance and might just upset the champion.

Being competitive should mean far more than entering or participating in a market. It should mean putting oneself in a position to best the competition to win target-customer preference. It means upping one’s game to beat competition as evidenced by achieving a prominent market position, rapid market share growth and even growing the category. It means being talked about, with grudging or envious respect, by your competitors. It’s being Amazon, Keytruda and Apple, playing the game to win and striving to get better at it. If your brand isn’t capable of winning on a good day, even your best day, then it’s really not competitive.

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