

Competition - Friend or Foe

By Beverley O'Neil, Ktunaxa Nation

We often think of competitors as just that, competitors. In business, competitors are both friends and foes... especially in the tourism industry.

The value of competitors is they can help strengthen your business or industry. Very few businesses compete directly - that is, very few businesses offer the exact products or services, from the same location, with the same quality of customer service, at the same price. Many businesses often evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in the industry and compare their products and services with those of their competitors. From here a business can determine where they can or are positioned within the marketplace, what target markets are not being served, and where a niche can be established.

In the tourism industry, you want competition. You want competition to attract the tourists to your area. One tourist attraction is not enough. In this case, your competition is your friend. Developing a tourist attraction requires infrastructures. This is the how your clients (the tourists) will get to your community, what they will do when they get there, who they will meet and see, what they will gain from the adventure (relaxation, knowledge, etc.), what they eat, where they will sleep... to name a few considerations.

Let's assume you own a golf course trying to establish yourself as a golf destination resort. Your target market is the golfing maniac who eats, drinks, and sleeps golf. At Christmas this person has visions of golf balls dancing through their head and asks Santa for new golf clubs. This person's business meetings are scheduled for the golf course. When this golfer is

evaluating options for a golf vacation, the golfer is looking for a variety of courses en route or at their final destination, availability of accommodations, lead time required to book, other activities in the area (i.e. entertainment for when they can't golf such as at night and during electrical storms), time it takes to get to the destination, customer service, product quality, and price. You as the growing golf resort relies heavily on other golf courses in the area to provide the variety to attract the golfer to the area, and of course, your facility. And when this golfer decides to bring the family, the availability of other attractions in the area grows in importance.

You may determine that in order for you to bring people into the area (i.e. attract your target market) direct economical flights from Vancouver are needed. However, you know that your business alone cannot attract enough people to encourage the airline to change it's pricing structure. You need to build an alliance with other businesses, attractions and groups in your area to convince the airline to change the price. Competition can be your friend.

Some businesses feel it necessary to eliminate their competition. Evaluate whether this will really be of benefit. Is the competition of significance to maintaining the market you rely on? Does the competition fill a niche that you can or will not? Are your suppliers also reliant on your competitors to maintain their service and pricing to you? Because of the competition, is your product better? You be the judge.

Competition. Friend or Foe. Don't be so quick to judge or eliminate them.

Beverley O'Neil is a citizen of the Ktunaxa Nation, President of O'Neil Marketing & Consulting and Numma Communications Ltd., as well as a freelance writer. Please contact her for permission to reprint or use the article for publication. Also, feel free to send her your comments and suggestions.

Email: info@designingnations.com Tel. (604) 913.1905.