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In PR, You Must Choose Your 'Enemy' Wisely

By Rusty Cawley

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When the great Carthaginian general Hannibal was just a boy, his father forced him to declare his undying hatred for Rome. After his father's death, Hannibal used that rage to propel him in a lifelong battle with the emerging Roman Empire.

Hannibal crossed the Alps with his army and its elephants. He defeated the Romans in battle after battle. Unfortunately for Carthage, Hannibal was wonderful at winning battles, but incompetent at winning wars.

After Hannibal's death, Rome took its wrath upon Carthage. The Romans destroyed the city, sold the inhabitants into slavery and sowed the land with salt so that no city could ever rise on that spot again.

The story of Hannibal points out two truths about developing a singular identity. First, it helps to choose a well-known enemy. Two thousand years after his death, Hannibal still ranks with Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon as one of the most famous generals of all time. (Just as Hannibal had Rome as his enemy, Alexander had Persia, Caesar had Pompey and Napoleon had Wellington.)

Second, it is important to choose the right enemy. By choosing Rome, Hannibal selected an enemy he could not defeat, an enemy he was forced to fight on its home turf, and an enemy that was so ruthless that it wiped Carthage from the earth.

So what is the right enemy?

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To begin, it's important to realize there are two kinds of useful enemies.

The first is competition.

If you are anything less than the No.1 brand in your category, then your competitive enemy is whoever is on top. For Pepsi, the enemy is Coke. For Oracle, the enemy is Microsoft. For Reebok, the enemy is Nike.

If you are clearly the No. 1 brand, then your enemy is the No. 2 brand. You can't declare war on everyone. You must define your enemy to get any use out of your enemy.

Always try to define the battle as No. 1 versus No. 2., and forget everyone else.

The second kind of useful enemy is a public problem. This type of enemy gives you the opportunity to define your identity by seizing an issue.

Declare war on illiteracy, or on disease, or on famine. Take on any significant public problem that appeals to you.

But make sure of three things:

1. Your company has a logical, apparent connection to the cause. Exxon Mobil is contributing funds to help save endangered tigers. This is logical, given the long history of Exxon's mascot, the Exxon tiger. Yes, it's tenuous. But it's logical, and that's what counts.

2. Your company has the resources to make a significant impact on the problem. Don't take on hunger in Africa if you lack the time, money and resources to actually help alleviate hunger in Africa. You want a cause that is large enough to register with the public, but one that isn't so large that it straps your company or makes it look foolish.

3. Your company can remain committed to the cause for the long haul. How long? For all practical purposes, forever. The last thing you want is to become known as the company that used to do that very important thing that really helped the community, but quit.

Now you may ask why it's so important to have an enemy. Because we are defined by our rivals.

In the world of boxing, Joe Frazier was defined by his rivalry with Muhammad Ali. Among airlines, Pan Am was defined by its battle with TWA. Among department stores, Macy's was defined by its war with Gimbel's.

David was defined by Goliath.

Churchill was defined by Hitler.

The Hatfields were defined by the McCoys.

If you want to create a singular identity, you must contrast your position with a rival. You need an

enemy.

Don't wait for an enemy to appear through happenstance. Find the right enemy and declare war now.

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The Politics of Freedom

By Kathy Simcox

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The war on terror should not be a political war. It should not be a war pitting Republican against Democrat or Christian against Muslim. The war on terror is a war on evil. There have been countless wars in our world that to some extent have protected against some level of evil. But this evil we fight today is an evil more bitter, more deadly, than anything you or I have ever lived to see. It is an evil so deeply rooted in hatred that it will take a very long time, if ever, to defeat. I am against war not because I am a Democrat or a peace-loving hippie, but because my Christian values tell me killing is wrong; because my Christian values tell me to love my Muslim brothers and sisters even though they worship God differently than I do; and because my Christian values tell me that its wrong to kill millions of innocent people, on both sides, because of those differences. I support the war on terror not because I am a Republican or a conservative bigot, but because I am an American who holds the value of freedom very near my heart; because I am an American who wants to live within the protective walls of that freedom for as long as I can, the very same protective walls so many young people have sacrificed their lives to keep standing; and because I want so very much for the rest of the world to know how wonderful that freedom feels and the peace that freedom brings.

I support our President not because of any hidden agenda or foolish conspiracy, but because he is an American like me who despises the enemy of freedom and the enemy of his faith; because he despises the enemy of ALL faiths, including that of true Islam; and because he despises the enemy of humanity. I am a free American, and I believe in all who fight for that freedom.

About the Author Kathy Simcox, Columbus, Ohio, United States hrdude28@hotmail.com Kathy works as an Administrative Assistant in the College of the Arts at The Ohio State University. She holds a BA in Psychology and is currently working on a second BA in Religious Studies. In addition to writing, her passions include hiking, biking, kayaking, photography, and singing in her church choir. She is also known to read an occasional book.

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