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Playing With the Big Boys -- How to compete with chain stores

By Alvin Apple

Playing With the Big Boys -- How to compete with chain stores by Alvin Apple

Ashley opened a posh, little gift shop and decided that the best way to advertise was a 15 second spot on one of the local television stations. Her commercial emphasized that people should stop by for the grand opening. When her shop first opened, it was visited by a steady stream of customers, many who came by because they had seen the commercial.

After her shop had been open for several weeks, business began to taper off. Ashley visited several of the larger, chain gift shops in town and found that business was booming.

Ashley couldn't figure out what the problem was. She felt that her products were unique and stylish. She thought customers would be intrigued by a shopping experience that was more personal than that in stores like Pier 1 Imports and Pottery Barn.

In her advertising, Ashley emphasized that people should come by for the grand opening, but she figured the shop would sell itself. She didn't understand that people might fail to see the benefits of shopping in her store if those benefits weren't pointed out to them.

Here are some advertising techniques small businesses can utilize to compete with chains:

* Emphasize the uniqueness of the product. People are often attracted to the idea of getting something unique from a smaller, independently owned business, but are used to the larger selection a chain store can offer. Ashley could have featured the originality of her stock as compared to the universal stock a chain store offers.

* Shoppers often create a comfort zone of buying from stores that have everything. They know what they are going to find there, and that means they don't have to take the time to search. However, many people shop because they enjoy it. Always knowing what you are going to find can be boring. Ashley's store offers mystery. People won't receive a catalogue that shows everything they would see if they went to the store.

* Although Ashley's store is not at the same economic level as the larger chain stores, she should make her business as recognizable as possible.

One way to do that is hire a designer to create a logo that represents your business. Many companies spend millions of dollars making their logo familiar to the public. One could also include a jingle or an original piece of music in commercial spots; something a viewer can become familiar with.

Alvin Apple helps everyday people start businesses they will enjoy. Then he teaches them how to succeed. Read all his helpful strategies, including his latest article, "How to write the perfect classified ad" at <http://AlvinApple.com>. Reach Alvin at 801-328-9006 or alvin@drnunley.com.

Marketing Is A Game

By Dave Cole

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Marketing is a game, very similar to the game of baseball.

As most of our readers know, I manage the local Pony baseball team. This past weekend we played in an 8 team tournament, and managed to get to the final game, only to settle for a second place trophy.

The first game we played in the tournament, we lost. It was early Saturday morning when my boys took the field. We were the first place team in our league, but that day we would be facing teams from various leagues around the area.

When the other team started arriving and as each of their players walked onto the field, it seemed like each boy got bigger and bigger. Soon I started to hear my kids saying things

like, "Boy, look at those guys....look how big they are!"

As my team was sitting there watching the other team warm up they were all saying, "We can't beat these guys, they're too big and they hit the ball too good."

Well guess what happened?

Yep, first game we lost. We had 11 of our batters strike out, many of them missing the ball by 2 feet or more! And my team came into this game averaging 10 runs a game! We only got 3 hits and 1 run in the game.

We lost that game before the first pitch was even thrown!

Now, here we have my team, in first place in our league, we've beat almost everyone by 10 runs or more this season, we're playing great ball and we fall flat on our face.

Reason why ==> My boys "knew" they couldn't win that game because the opposition "looked" bigger and stronger and better than they did. They talked themselves right into being losers.....they looked at the adversity and saw a giant.....instead of looking at who they were and what they had already accomplished....and what they could accomplish.

Well we came back from that loss and fortunately played a team of "small" kids the next game. That got the boys heads back on track. And we went on to have a really big win on Sunday against a team of boys that were even bigger than the first team!

Sunday I managed to get the boys to look at who "they were...instead of who they were playing" and they came through with a very big upset victory over the team that everyone thought was going to win the entire tournament.

The only difference between the first game and the game on Sunday was the boys mental attitude. On Sunday they were somebody. They were the ones who were in control of themselves and the game. They were in charge of their thoughts.

When they walked out on that field Sunday they went there with a purpose to be the best they could be. And they knew

they could play a good game against anybody.

They didn't look at the adversity, they didn't look at the opposition, they didn't see the giants in the other dugout..... they saw the giant within themselves instead.

And so I'm asking you today, when you go to do your daily tasks with your marketing business, what are you looking at?

Are you looking at all the past failures you've had, or at all the adversity out there, or thinking about all the reasons why you "can't make money" or "can't seem to get sales" or "can't seem to get your ads clicked on".....and all the hundred and one other reasons why it's not happening for you.

Or are you looking at the "giant" within you and who you really are, and what past victories you've already accomplished, and what future victories you will accomplish.

The game of baseball is 90% mental.

The game of marketing is 90% mental.

As Napoleon Hill said, "You can if you think you can..... if you think you can't, you won't."



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