

If you know a company — customer, supplier, friend, or your own — that could benefit from improved operations, let us know. Your best interest is our best interest.

The Finish Strong® monthly e-newsletter is for business leaders who recognize Operations as a strategic function that creates competitive advantage, profitability and brand loyalty in the marketplace.

BECOMING LESS UGLY

The 1958 book, *The Ugly American*, spoke specifically to the arrogance of US policy in SE Asia, but the phrase so resonated with the world that it lives on today. For entirely too many of us, that is with good reason. The current global economic crisis presents Americans, and any “ugly non-Americans,” with an unfortunate but outstanding opportunity to leverage the silver linings it contains.

1. The integrated world-wide economy encourages us to learn how to identify countries on a globe, and to learn the names of political leaders and currencies.
2. A growing appreciation for the history, socioeconomics and politics of other countries can strengthen our ability to understand and serve markets.
3. The globe does not merely show potential markets; it also shows countries hosting companies that can compete effectively in our markets, and help us do so as well.
4. There are many ways to “do business,” not just the one we grew up with. With interest and effort, any of them can be executed to mutual benefit. Understanding the business traditions of other cultures matters.
5. No one country has cornered the supply of bright energetic people. The US barely makes the top 50 in infant mortality rate, and is only in the top 20 for adult literacy. Don’t make the mistake of dismissing other countries as only capable of low quality and second-rate technology.

Collaboration can make a business stronger. International collaboration has great potential for many of us.

We can take this opportunity to educate employees about international markets, supply chain sources, and competitors.

Whether we use a fun technique, like a Jeopardy-style game, or some other approach doesn’t matter; what does is that we respect the opportunity and the challenge that the rest of the world offers our businesses.

THE BIG 3, 2, 1.....

General Motors, Ford and Chrysler were all near the top of the Fortune 50 in 1979, 1989, and both GM and Ford were still there just 10 years ago in 1999. And both companies are still near the top in 2009. Sounds successful. Ah, but we know just how deceiving that is.

Big isn’t necessarily better, but even Toyota found “largest in the world” an alluring pursuit the past few years. That company’s first-ever loss served as a wake-up call; new (old) leadership has since stepped in to reaffirm commitment to what made the company successful -- the customers -- and to climb out of the vortex that “race to biggest” created.

Focus on the right things should never waver, whether times seem great or abominable. If they truly are “the right things” they will not let you down. Customer service, cash flow, delivering value, continuous improvement, people -- those are priorities that stand the test of time. And of economic cycles. Let the other guy be biggest. Focus on being the best.

FINISH STRONG®

The Starting Pistol

Rose F Kennedy:

“More business is lost every year through neglect than through any other cause.”

The Tape

Rebecca Morgan:

“...and that applies whether the object of neglect is customers, employees, or the daily commitment to improving processes (which is neglect of both customers and employees).”

continued

REACH FULCRUM VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

About 18 years ago a client voiced concern that I hadn't received his voicemail for almost eight hours. I got a pager to address that problem. My, how times change!

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