



BUSINESS Rules!

52 ways to achieve business success

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illustrated by **STEVE HICKNER**

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52 ways you can achieve business success

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BRIGANTINE MEDIA

The Rules

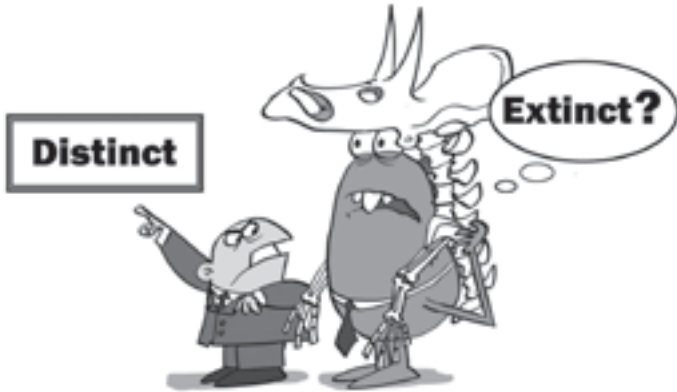
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The Rules

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RULE
1

Be distinct.



IT'S EASY TO be different, but it's not always a wise course of action. Driving on the wrong side of the street would be different, but it wouldn't achieve any goal aside from creating havoc.

It's far better to be *distinct*.

So many aspects of business are essentially the same. Airlines fly planes, retailers sell products, manufacturers build widgets. But in every field, there are companies that stand out by being distinct.

Southwest Airlines, for example, markets its distinctions, from the lack of baggage fees to the simple price structure to the offbeat nature of its staff. Progressive Insurance focuses on flexible pricing, Jimmy Johns sandwich shops on speed, and Hyundai on its extra-long warranties.

A company can be distinct in many ways: through service, products, prices, promotions, or even location. The best companies make their points of distinction so clear that even the most distracted consumer can name what makes them different. And those companies make sure every associate understands and serves that point of distinction.

That's what makes a winner.

Nothing beats a great attitude.

IN THE FIELD of thousands who competed in the 2014 Boston Marathon, Larry Chloupek stood alone.

It wasn't because Larry won; in fact, he didn't come close. Through each of the twenty-six miles of the course, Larry was greeted with thunderous applause for doing something most people could never imagine. He completed the Boston Marathon as the only entrant on crutches.



Larry lost his left leg to childhood cancer, but he has hardly lost anything since. Now in his fifties, Larry runs, golfs, bikes, and coaches countless teams, all on one strong leg and a pair of crutches.

Larry entered the Boston race to make a point to those injured in the bombing the previous year. He wanted to show that life goes on, races are entered, and the spirit endures.

Larry's effort reminds us that actions and deeds determine who you are, not the cards life has dealt you. Think about his lesson as you approach your job and your team. If you believe you can succeed, you will find a way. There are countless stories of famous people, from FDR to Stephen Hawking, who overcame physical and emotional handicaps to achieve great success.

In that way, Larry Chloupek—a friend of mine for the past decade—remains one of the most capable people I know. His attitude makes him able to do almost anything.

RULE 3



Support the whole team.

WHEN A CAPACITY crowd of 71,008 fills M&T Bank Stadium to root for their beloved Baltimore Ravens, they cheer for quarterback Joe Flacco or for the stout defense. No one thinks about Don Follett.

Don Follett is the director of fields for the Ravens. It's his job to make sure the team is always on sound footing. His goal is a field that lets the players do their best. Follett's handiwork goes unnoticed, and that's okay by him. Follett is invisible even though the game depends on him.

But someone in Baltimore understands the importance of Follett's role and all the other non-football-playing roles that have made the Ravens one of the most successful NFL teams for more than a decade. That person is the Ravens' owner, Steve Bisciotti.

Bisciotti's leadership style hasn't gone unnoticed.

Sportswriters frequently praise the entire Ravens' organization as one of the calmest and most professional in sports. Bisciotti lets the professionals in the organization do their jobs.

Follett says there's more. Bisciotti has built a spirit of oneness into the organization, making sure every employee is valued and connected. When the Ravens win big, the benefits find their way to everyone. That spirit ties everyone in the organization—in all those invisible jobs we never see, but could never watch a game without—to the success of the franchise.

It makes no difference to Follett that he will never see thousands of fans wearing his name on a jersey. He knows he's part of a winning team.

RULE
4

Focus on your best customers.

THERE IS A new force speaking to the power of customer loyalty, and her name is Lady Gaga.

Lady Gaga, known for her singing, dancing, and stunning wardrobe choices, is also a paragon of marketing for the electronic age. Jackie Huba, who co-authored the *Church of the Customer* blog, has studied and written extensively about Lady Gaga as a marketing genius.

Huba says the core of Gaga's strategy is to focus on her best customers—her one percent most engaged followers. By talking and listening to them largely through social media, Gaga makes them advocates of her brand. Their enthusiasm spreads to the rest of her followers, affectionately called her “Little Monsters.”



This strategy has garnered her millions of fans worldwide.

By focusing on her most loyal followers, Gaga builds her strength. They share their passion to others, expanding her overall fan base and, in the process, expanding the numbers of her one percenters.

More businesses should go Gaga about their best customers.

Don't get too full of yourself.

WE ALL LIKE praise. We like to hear that we are smart or funny, that our haircut looks good or our clothing looks fashionable.

But businesses have to be careful not to get too carried away with praise. As many business leaders have cautioned me through the years, “Never breathe your own exhaust.”

If you only breathe your own exhaust, you die, because your body can't use the carbon dioxide you exhale. If a company only listens to its own opinions and feedback, it can die, too. Companies that ignore outside voices struggle to see their own weaknesses and miss opportunities for improvement.

