FEATURE | COMMITMENT | PERSONAL GROWTH

Build to Last

Create a Culture of Commitment

What are the most important factors in determining whether or not a particular marketing situation will last for the long haul?

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1439 words | 6 pages

What are the most important factors in determining whether or not a particular marketing situation will last for the long haul? What factors determine whether or not this is the right opportunity for you, one where you can safely invest your hopes and dreams along with your time and effort?

There are of course two major factors to look at: 1) product and 2) company, which includes founders, management, history and compensation plan. Making this choice carefully is crucial, because once made, it is essentially fixed in stone: you can't do anything to change product or company. (As with marriage, there's no point saying, "I'll join them because I'm sure that with my help, they can change!")

But there is a third factor, and it is one you can do a great deal to change. In fact, you can *determine* it—and it has everything to do with the health and longevity of your business.

> ***That factor is your own organization's* culture.**

The truth is, while the first two factors, product and company, are more visible, and they're what we tend to promote, it's really the third factor that is often the push-comes-to-shove glue that binds an organization together, keeps people going and coheres them to your business when times are tough, either professionally or personally.

When your people run into problems, they MAY be kept in the game by loyalty to the product line or to the company, but it's most often loyalty to their RELATIONSHIPS, to the connections with the people with whom they actually interact, that keeps them committed.

In fact, while a positive personal experience with the products and a firm belief in the company are both powerful ingredients of coherence, neither of these alone will really create a strong culture of commitment, nor will both of them together—because the day-in/day-out process of building and maintaining a network marketing business does not occur in a human vacuum, but in the context of the organization's culture.

The company and product provide only a foundation. Choosing a strong foundation is essential—but only the beginning. No matter how good the products and how artful the company's support, building upon that foundation a business culture that will stand the test of time is a responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the distributors themselves.

In other words, it's your job to create it.

What sorts of traits define an organizational culture that will go the distance? Ask any leader in this business and you'll get all sorts of answers: trust, integrity, personal ability, dedication to training and education, fun, excitement, frequent acknowledgment, support, teamwork… While the strongest traits are fairly universal, every culture is unique in its emphasis.

But if it's a long-lasting, durable community of cooperative commerce that you want to build, I think there is one characteristic that stands head and shoulders above the others:

Commitment

By this I mean specifically *your* commitment. And I'm not speaking of anything especially high-falutin or esoteric. I mean simply that rock-solid, unshakable clarity that *you are not going anywhere*: that whatever else happens, you'll still be here.

Of course, you'd love it if everyone else duplicated your level of commitment, too, and you want to seek to have that happen. But it won't. It's one of those ideals that one strives for but never fully attains. Some will match your commitment with their own; many will not, and that's all right.

For the culture to hold, you don't need EVERYONE to evince this level of unswerving resilience. You just need to reveal it in YOURSELF.

There will always be times when your downline falters, when the course feels rocky, and people look to you to hold up a level of unflappable commitment that provides a power source upon which they can draw.

There's a biblical scenario that beautifully illustrates this.

Shortly after leading the Israelites across the Red Sea, Moses leads his people into a battle where their side is badly outnumbered and the odds are not looking so hot. Joshua leads the ground troops, but it is Moses who provides critical aerial support. Standing atop a nearby mountain, he simply holds his hands in the air. The sight of him up there, hands outstretched, keep the people going. In fact, Moses finds that every time he lowers his hands, the tide of battle starts turning back the other way—so he *has* to keep them airborne.

Eventually his arms grow simply too tired to stay up. (After all, Moses is only human. Hey, sometimes the same thing happens to us, too.) He has to lower them—yet this is precisely what he *cannot* do.

What to do?

Finally he finds the solution: he has two aides stand at his sides and literally prop his arms up in the air. The arms never go down, and that unvarying show of support wins the battle.[15]

Oftentimes, that's exactly what you need to do. And I'm not speaking about those rare times of true crisis that can crop up occasionally, like when *20/20* runs a piece of horrible press that claims your company is a fraud, or your competitors send a mailing to everyone in your company claiming their product is ten times more powerful at half the price. Those times require leadership, too—but those epic PR calamities are rare. I'm talking here about the everyday crises of confidence that occur all the time. Joe's best prospect decided that "this is just not a good time to start something new," or Joyce ran her first major home meeting, with fifteen guests confirmed, and nobody showed up.

In those moments, for Joe and Joyce, the odds don't look good. They are outnumbered. They need to look up and see your arms outstretched. (Even if you need two aides, like your upline, to help you hold them up.)

> ***Commitment simply means staying power. Staying stubbornly on course and not letting CIRCUMSTANCE dictate or sway your STANCE.***

In the long run, your particular gifts or skills as a teacher, speaker, recruiter, enroller, trainer or manager don't matter. What does is your staying power: your ability to hold onto people's dreams, to be unwilling to be affected by problems. Your people will feel kicked in the teeth. Their best people will quit, their new prospects will fail to keep appointments, the company will suddenly not deliver on a promise or unexpectedly

change a policy. *Your* response to those mini-crises will be the *number one factor* that determines your people's ability to ride them out and hang onto their own vision.

My friend Gilles Arbour defines a sponsor this way:

> ***"A sponsor's job is to be the steward of other people's dreams."***

You need to believe in your people—often more than they do themselves.

When people are starting out, no matter how confident or skilled they may be on the surface, the bald fact is that they have *no evidence whatsoever* that this thing is going to work for them. They look to you for that evidence.

You need to be the still point of their bewilderingly turning world. You are the keeper of the flame, the bearer of the torch, the holder of the vision.

Want to know what it takes to be a successful leader in this business? Hold out your arms—and keep them there.

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John David Mann is one of the most recognizable and well-respected names in network marketing. As co-founder (with John Fogg) and senior editor of *Upline®,* Editor in Chief of *Network Marketing Lifestyles* and the current Editor in Chief of *Networking Times,* he has been keenly observing and insightfully commenting on the Network Marketing world for more than 15 years. And... John has been one of the top-earning distributors with the same networking company for nearly 20 years.

The Last Word is an i-book in process, an ongoing collection of short essays on the experience of network marketing. Each article is linked to an interactive forum for "reader comments" so now, you can have the last word. John says he may eventually *... finish...* and publish this book (on, you know, paper). For now (and maybe forever), it exists as a living, growing conversation on the Internet. Just click the link to visit John's website: **JohnDavidMann.com**