



Opportunity Has Many Meanings

Create an equal focus on opportunities, not just the alarm bells of problems!

July 15 2009 Thought Leadership from Ed Bernacki, Innovationalist!

Greetings!

We use this word "opportunity" in so many ways. We have golden opportunities and windows of opportunities. We know that opportunity only knocks once! (continued below)

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I would bet that for many businesses, a golden opportunity not only knocked once, it knocked a dozen times and opened the window to climb in. Yet, no one noticed. Worse still, management closed the window not feeling the winds of change blowing through their business and the industry. With that, the opportunity waved good bye and flew away. To start, consider these definitions:

Opportun-ity n good chance, favourable occurrence.

Opportune a. well selected and timed, occurring by design

Consider an opportunity to be a favourable occurrence that is well selected, well timed and designed to happen. But businesses are often better at solving problems than creating opportunities for two key reasons:

1. **There is a sense of urgency to solve problems.** A client complains and you react; the immediate problem takes over from long term planning.
2. **To create something new takes initiative, energy and time;** all things which most organisations perceive they have little to spare.

The irony is obvious - had these businesses developed their opportunities, the "fire fighting" may have been avoided by "fire prevention". Secondly, highly innovative companies would not only prevent fires, they would create an opportunity to sell this "fire prevention" to lesser companies.

To have a problem, something must be in place and have gone wrong. To create an opportunity you need to put something in place and make something happen. That's why is it much harder! Unfortunately, too many organisations spend too much energy cleaning up messes rather than adding value with good long term ideas. Remember, focus on solutions for problems but always invest time in developing the opportunities.

The lesson is clear - we must create a sense of urgency for creating opportunities which must at least equal that for finding solutions to our problems.

Let's remember what we are here to achieve. This definition is a great incentive for any one trying to capture the true benefit of innovation and working for a creative, fun and profitable organisation:

Succes fou (sookas foo') n. success marked by wild enthusiasm.

That's a result that we all want in business.

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