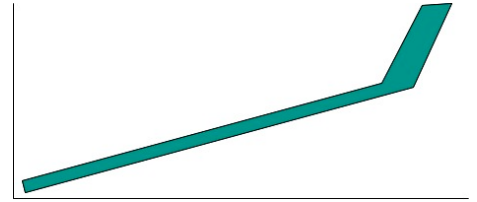




Getting Back to Hockey Sticks



The Issue

We're all now painfully aware of the credit freeze and resulting worldwide economic meltdown. Financial services are in a shambles, real estate values are plummeting, and the S&P 500 index has lost over 40% in the last year. Consumer confidence is at its lowest level ever. Are you cutting back at home? If so, you're in the majority. And the resulting reduction in consumer spending has caused many companies to simply throw up their arms and decide they have no idea where revenue is headed. They're tightening their belts, spending only where they can produce rapid economic results.

Clarity Perspective

How has your company's behavior changed? How have your objectives and budgets changed? Your customers are likely having similar experiences, although the effects vary, depending on their industry's exposure to a downturn, their need for cash, management courage and wisdom, plus a myriad of other issues.

It was all a lot easier when we were managing plans that looked like hockey sticks. Growth covered many ills.

It's time to get back to the basics of good business. This crisis, like all, brings with it tremendous opportunities. Market growth will indeed slow. As a result, your growth will primarily rely on market share growth – taking it out of the pockets of your competition. Customers will scrutinize more carefully than ever the business value of everything they purchase, based on their belief in your ability to help them achieve their objectives and overcome their challenges. And their current perceptions of your capabilities are likely not what you'd like – if our 15 years of asking them is any indicator.

Do you know your customers' most recent objectives in detail? Do you know the challenges they face? How well do you understand their unmet needs, both those they tell you about and those they don't. What are their current perceptions of your company and its offerings? Your competitors and their offerings?

Recommendations

All is not lost. You have an opportunity to win – big – and, as you might expect from us, it's all about the value proposition.

1. Understanding your customers' current objectives, challenges, needs and perceptions allows you to build a clear value proposition that can drive your business top to bottom, in every functional discipline, and for each customer segment you address:
 - What you want your customers to do in order to get a set of experiences you offer
 - The experiences that you offer them, including those that are superior and inferior to competitors
 - The price they will pay to get these experiences
 - All of the above as they perceive them
 - All of the above relative to your customers' perceived alternatives to doing business with you. In this environment, that alternative may well be "do nothing"
2. Once you have a clear, market-aware value proposition for your internal consumption, you can develop communications that will help customers appreciate the experiences you offer, value those experiences appropriately and believe that you can in fact deliver the experiences.
3. Finally, every phase of your execution must be aligned in complete support of the value proposition.

Firms who rapidly realign to choose and deliver compelling value propositions in a time of economic distress will enjoy a distinct competitive advantage versus the majority who turn inward. Market share and profits will both regain their upward momentum while you and your shareholders can breathe a collective sigh of relief.

Although your budgets are undoubtedly strained, this is exactly the time when our time-tested methodology can be most effective in rapidly moving the needle for your business.