

# Growing a Company in Today's Chaotic Times!

By Lee Traupel

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I think we've all heard enough bad news to last us few months to last us several lifetimes! Our mantra for clients is "get over it" - cut your losses when where you can and focus on the basic building blocks to grow your business. Here are some fundamentals we recommend to any company that wants to survive and grow in this chaotic market:

1) Practice maniacal focus! Who is your customer, how do you reach them with your advertising, partners, channels and/or OEMs? If you can't readily identify these benchmarks, then you may need to take a hard look at look at your business structure, personnel, costs of good/services, etc. and rework your model.

2) Outsource and build virtuosity into your company. We tell clients to minimize fixed costs like the feudal barons of old – they kept a core group of fighters to man the garrison walls and hired (outsourced!) conscripts when the baron from the next door came calling at the castle gates with a legion of longbows behind him to exact tribute. Marketing, finance, HR, IT infrastructure, even product development or manufacturing can be easily outsourced to specialists who have levels of proficiency that you might not be able to afford if you tried to hire them full time.

3) Flex and tier your pricing creatively to minimize barriers to entry. If chaos is the order of the day (and we think it is) then make sure your pricing is tiered or structured so your clients can afford to try out your products and services – and be flexible in your negotiations and look for creative ways to bring new customers aboard.

4) Make your suppliers real business partners! Fed Ex and UPS are setting up shop in their customer's shipping docks to save valuable time and money and become active business partners. You may not have the clout of a Fortune 1K company/behemoth to leverage Fed Ex but you can ask your suppliers to extend terms, work with you on just in time delivery schedules or get creative with pricing, joint promotions, etc.

5) Ensure your marketing fundamentals are up to snuff! We see so many sloppy web sites that do not address the basic fundamentals of good site design, menus, UI, etc., brochures that are out of date, power point presentations that are barely legible, etc. – basic marketing principals should be addressed; i.e. integrate your color scheme and logo across all marcom materials (digital and traditional), reinforce your branding and positioning with clearly worded value propositions ("we save you X by doing Y") and ensure your logo and tagline look professional and are used properly.

6) Create and deploy credible PR that isn't full of fluff; i.e. "market or cost leadership, best of breed

technology, leading provider of ..., high-performance, etc.; don't use terms any editor sees hundreds of times a day! Create PR that is original and truthful - you will stand out from the crowd much better.

7) It's truly a Global Market! Position your company so you can work with customers all over the world - if you don't have the resources or personnel (see two above) then partner with a local reseller, dealer or distributor who has an established presence in a country or market which you can't serve via your corp/home office.

8) Don't waste time chasing venture capital – fund your company creatively! Venture capitalists are busy today trying to save their existing portfolio of “.bombs” so don't waste a lot of your time contacting them! Be creative, talk to friends and family about investing or look to your suppliers to give you extended terms in exchange for a long-term contract, discounted parts, etc.

9) Leverage technology to help you grow your business. A good web site should answer questions for your customers, not leave them frustrated and confused – make sure you address fundamentals with an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), or even setup instant messaging via any number of chat technology providers so people can anonymously ask your sales or c/support personnel questions while they are on your web site.

10) Ignore marketing hype and concentrate on technology that really works. Tried surfing the web via your cell phone and finding a hot bistro in a new neighborhood recently? I hate to pick on this technology du jour, but it rates high on my “hypeometer” at this moment in time. There is a reason why opt-in e-mail advertising is the one of the best ways to reach a target market – its virtually instantaneous, is 24/7 in most cases, very targeted, provides global reach, and drum roll.....it really works!

Lee Traupel has 20 plus years of marketing experience He is the co-founder of a Northern California and Brussels Belgium based, privately held, Marketing Services and Software Company, Intellective Communications, Inc. <http://www.intelective.com> Intellective focuses exclusively on providing services to small to medium sized companies that need strategic and tactical marketing services. He can be reached at Lee@intelective.com

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