

TAIL WAGS DOG

By Dan Kennedy

Read my Report on Amazon in the June Issue of the GKIC No B.S. Newsletter (details on how to get this for free below), and you might naturally imagine its CEO high above the clouds, dealing with visionary thinking, moving money around, making acquisitions, ensconced in high-level meetings. Oblivious to piddling details. But, in the 2013 annual report, Bezos wrote:

“Our battle against annoying wire and plastic clamshell packaging rages on. An initiative that began five years ago with a simple idea that you shouldn’t have to risk bodily injury opening your new electronics or toys has now grown to (our specs imposed on) over 200,000 products – all available in easy to open, recyclable packaging designed to alleviate ‘wrap rage’. We have over 2,000 manufacturers using our Frustration-Free Packaging Program. Through hard work and perseverance, an idea that started with only 19 products is now available on hundreds of thousands.”

Yes, Jeff feels our pain and made sure something is being done about it. **There are two lessons.** First, this is typical of Bezos’ (and, by the way, Steve Jobs’, Walt Disney’s, Donald Trump’s) direct, personal **attention to *micro aspects of the customer’s experience***. Most CEO’s are far distanced from their customers, and wouldn’t have it any other way. Most never read ‘white mail’, take inbound calls, get out on the store floor and work as a real “undercover boss”, or even get the products they sell delivered as customers get them, and use them as customers do. When I consulted with Weight Watchers, their skinny as a rail without effort CEO had never even been to a local Weight Watchers meeting, let alone been weighed in. The President of every airline should fly in coach as a nobody, on an empty stomach, eating from his pockets, in a middle seat, at least once a month. Every state’s Governor should be put, anonymously, inside his state prison for a week. Elected officials should live by *all* the same laws they enact. Congress, President and IRS executives made to do their own income taxes, televised live on C-SPAN. Oops, off on a rant. Anyway, distance from the details of the customers’ experiences, his irritations and disappointments, and his life is a corporate norm and king’s privilege. Most would think Bezos foolish for involving himself with product packaging and for making it a featured item in his giant corporation’s annual report to shareholders.

I was recently out to dinner with friends at an upscale restaurant, where we had excellent food and service, but I witnessed two in our group wrestling, breaking a nail, jabbing with a knife, fighting to get the protective seal off a miniature bottle of mustard provided with the \$20 burgers. They gave up and ate without it. I’m betting they won’t be eager to return. And I’m betting when the owner is served his burger, his mustard and ketchup bottles are opened for him or, better, he gets nice little crystal mini-bowls of condiments.

Avoid this mistake of executive privilege. Get down in the dirt. It’s a path to David v. Goliath competitive advantage, because They won’t do it, and the lowly folks they delegate it to are there

for the paycheck, hate being bearers of bad news, are just as likely to sweep dirt under a rug as to holler that something must be done about it.

Second lesson –the tail can wag the dog. Wal-Mart, Amazon, others of their size are still tails. The manufacturers are the dogs. But Amazon has “pushed” 2,000 (!) manufacturers into using packaging I’ll wager none wanted to bother with.

It’s a mistake to think you need Goliath size to stomp your foot and get your way. If you stand between a vendor, supplier, manufacturer, anyone and something they want, like access to your customers or simply your money, ***you own power, and you should wield it***, as forcefully and dictatorially as needed, to get things your way. In the entire time I ran the business that became GKIC, I never once permitted anyone to sell to my members through me without offering an unconditional money-back guarantee. Many who did not offer such guarantees elsewhere, even to their own customers, did so in my venues or were locked out. I could give you other examples demonstrating the same point. It is dumb to accept slow production schedules, reoccurring mistakes, or anything that is grievance to you or your customers. Manage *everybody*, so that they perform to meet your specifications, and replace those who won’t.

NOTE: To receive access to the June Newsletter as well as \$633.91 of free money-making marketing and sales information from Dan Kennedy and GKIC simply click the link here. <https://gkic.isrefer.com/go/CCLOS/milteer>

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