

The Leader: A Fresh Look At Competition

by **Frederick E Roach**

We live in a competitive environment. It is a part of our historic free enterprise system. In fact, the law protects many forms of competition. We fear the effect of monopolies on prices, services and society's well-being.

While we think of competition primarily from a business perspective, it's really just part of life. Competition is corporate, but also personal. We compete at home and school, and in sports and politics -- in virtually every aspect of life.

We desire to be the best, the biggest, or the greatest or some more descriptive superlative. Most individuals or companies work to find some area where they are No. 1. Sometimes, they develop their own benchmarks to outdo the competition.

In health care, we glimpse both the positives and the negatives of competition. We can look at competition through history, and now with an enlightened view.

Competitive forces obviously are at work in the dynamic health care arena. The critical question is: "How are we going to succeed in the changing environment?" Forces are at work "within" and "between" health care institutions. The list of stakeholders, when considering this issue, is long. Included would be the trustees, the administration, all employees, physicians, suppliers, donors, volunteers, the extended family members who relate to us, the community and most important, the patient. It takes unusual diligence to balance the interests of these and other stakeholders.

Ultimately, our goal involves accomplishing the most for the community we serve. In our fast-changing world, we must accomplish our goals by seeing competitive forces through a new set of lenses. We have to "buy off" on new paradigms. We must put into place new methodologies. We must seek areas where we can effectively work together. Isolation is a damaging strategy for the future.

It's great to be able to acknowledge that our Baylor leaders have moved aggressively in recognizing this trend. They gained the best possible results from working to build trust through working with our internal and external constituents. Let's review some of the alternatives to out-dated competitive forces.

Alternatives To Historic Competition

1. Cooperation

This indicates a spirit and willingness to work with all appropriate parties to gain the best results. There is less isolation and a more fraternal atmosphere.

2. Consideration

We need to be sensitive to our colleagues, thoughtful of their goals. When we "seek first to understand," then there's the possibility we will be understood. A worthy goal!

3. Consultation

We need to draw on the expertise of others. It speeds up the process when you can call on someone who can add a new dimension to your thinking. Meaningful consultation assumes a good relationship, and this rapport takes time to build.

4. Coordination

When people or organizations are open and talking together, that opens the way for coordinated initiatives. Lack of coordination can be an expensive lesson.



5. **Commonality**

We hold "in common" specific values as a faith-based organization. We can build on "like" views to establish relationships that benefit all parties.

6. **Complementary Attitude**

Complementary services, versus competitive services, can be better for everyone. Internally, we need to complement each other, not view our associates as competitors. The same holds true when you look at the total marketplace.

7. **Collaboration**

This involves working together to gain a common goal. Collaboration is more intensive in nature, with each party strengthened in the process. There's an openness, trust and mutual respect for the organizational mission.

8. **Coalition**

Alliances with other health care providers can gain efficiency and reduce costs. This is a very effective method to achieve a significant gain within a limited portion of your operation.

9. **Consolidation**

There are times when consolidation is the answer. This is not automatically the goal in working with others to eliminate fierce competition. But we've seen the gain that can occur when consolidating the right entities.

10. **Community**

The creation of a "community of interest" is the ultimate answer to aggressive competitiveness. Participants gain a relationship that clearly benefits those whom we serve