



BY Cheryl Cran



## CAN SPEAK PRESENTS

***“There’s no such thing as competition”***

Got your attention? In the meeting and event planning industry there have been many world events that have posed major threats and challenges. With terrorism, war, SARS, flu pandemic warnings and a myriad of other threats the ability to adapt and thrive has been duly compromised. Many would argue that competition is greater than it has ever been and that everyone is fighting for the same business.

That’s true if you are looking at the business from a limited perspective. Why is it that in these highly competitive times there are companies that are thriving and growing despite all of the world challenges? The answer is simple, so simple in fact that many overlook it.

The meeting and event planners that are flourishing in these uncertain times are practising the basics. The basics of good business, which are:

1. The successful and busy meeting and event planners are not selling themselves as a

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experts who partner with their clients. They position themselves as an integral part of the companies they are working with and differentiate their services through providing a “consultative” service.

2. Innovation, creativity and a willingness to risk are what successful meeting planners need in order to stand alone as unique and fresh and highly attractive to potential clients. Brilliance is not built on duplication. Customers today are savvy and have been exposed to the same ideas over and over again. They are looking for “wow” and along with that the implementation ability for smooth follow through and back up when things don’t go according to plan.

3. Building the business through referrals rather than going out and finding the next client. In many industries the emphasis has been on going out and conquering the market, finding the next client and in some cases taking clients away from the competitors. This model for business is no longer working as industries continue to recycle clients. The emphasis needs to be on looking at the bigger picture with each client, building relationships with all departments of a large corporation, asking for referrals within specific industries where there has already been established success. Becoming an expert within a market segment versus trying to target all markets with a hit and miss approach.

4. Partnering with suppliers to build your own “team” of experts that can be relied upon to consistently deliver quality, service and customer care. The meeting and event planners that are thriving have built solid relationships with their suppliers and value them as highly as their clients. Taking the time to communicate clearly their expectations to suppliers and understanding the needs of the suppliers allows the meeting planner to be able to provide with extreme confidence the service promises to their clients.

5. Adaptability and attitude to do what it takes. The meeting and event planners that are busy are not rigid in their processes. They are willing to make changes that may mean moving away from normal procedure for the benefit of the client. Rather than be fixed on issues having an attitude of flexibility and willingness to work towards complete customer satisfaction is what sets them apart.

So if we position ourselves in the meeting industry as an expert, provide consistent and reliable service and continually work to stay cutting edge there really is no such thing as competition.



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