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How to Thrive in a Recession - It's All About the Customer

This is a series of articles on thriving in these tough economic times. While they can be scary we need to keep in mind that it is the entrepreneur that will be our salvation. We can't look for the government to bail us out. It is up to us to lead the way and create opportunity out of crisis. Why?

It's what entrepreneurs do!

Folks I'm going to sound like a broken record. I've written about this several times. My friends are getting tired of hearing about this. One of the most basic business facts is...

Business starts and ends with your customer

This isn't new. It isn't fancy or complicated. It isn't rocket science.

- Find a niche you can dominate. Are you just another player? Then you need to further differentiate yourself. This is where the small entrepreneur thrives. You don't need a large market to be profitable. The giants in your industry do and can't compete in your niche.
- Listen to your customer. The amazing this is that they will tell you about their needs. Look for gaps between their needs and what is being supplied.
- Create products and services that close that gap. Most people do this backwards. They try to find a market for their product. This is the hard way to do things. Start with the market and then move on to product creation. It is much easier to create products to fill an existing need than to convince the customer that your product will do the job.
- Sell solutions and problem solving. Ignore features and focus on how you will make the customer's life better. This is a step beyond selling benefits instead of features.
- Listen to your customer and adapt. They will let you know what (if anything) needs changing. They will also point you to other gaps that you can help fill.

How else does this apply? It applies to every aspect of your business. If it doesn't add to your customer's experience eliminate it. For example:

- Complicated and/or difficult order processing.
- Fancy offices filled with exotic furniture.
- Large organizations that exist to create processes to make their own jobs easier.
- Corporate jets and other executive amenities.
- Voice mail systems that allow the customer to never touch a living human.
- Websites that talk about you and how great you are.
- The list goes on and on...

If it doesn't help the customer (quicker, easier, cheaper, better) then it adds no value to your business. In fact it often annoys your customer and makes them want to work with another company. Think you are the only game in town? Guess what, you've just created a gap for an entrepreneur to fill.

You can also find this article published on [How to Thrive in a Recession - It's All About the Customer](#), and on the tag pages [Entrepreneurship](#).