

Are You a Fighter or Heading Home?

Now is the time to kick it up a few notches

By Jim Walton

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Brand Acceleration is a full-service advertising, brand management and public relations firm operating from Indianapolis, Indiana and Charlotte, North Carolina. The agency's focus is on economic development, architecture/engineering/construction, real estate and motorsports.

You know, I typically don't care much for those *competition* programs that are so prevalent on television these days, but one has gotten my attention. *So, You Think You Can Dance* features passionate dancers with varying degrees of talent, all vying for the top spot as the best dancer in the country. Now, late in the season, the field has been narrowed to only twenty young and very talented dancers.



As I watch these individuals struggle to survive the wrath of the judges, I am especially inspired by their dedication and hard work. The agony of being cut and the tearful joy of survival can be a lesson for each of us. One such lesson is that some competitors pull all-nighters, practice until they are bruised and in pain and survive to compete another week. Others give up, whine, go to bed early and end up going home.

Business, like this program, is a competition. In order to survive in today's economy, you need to practice, learn, grow and work harder than ever. So, what can you do to survive? Here are a few ideas:

Be involved – Be visible – Be aware

As important as anything you do, you need to be involved in your target industries. If your goal is to attract more business from the life sciences, for example, you need to be involved in the life sciences organizations. Join the trade associations, attend their meetings and participate in their conventions and trade shows. This involvement also serves to grow your knowledge and awareness of industry trends and activities, and it is the best way to discover opportunities for your community or organization.

Fight harder – Work harder

Recently, a business owner was telling me that some of his staff were disheartened and had emotionally given up. They were showing signs of surrender and were beginning to pollute the workplace with their whining and negativity.

Folks, if you know someone like this, run away. They are emotional poison. You have

absolutely nothing to gain and everything to lose by giving them an audience. If you can't inspire them into positive action, then you need to avoid them as if they were carriers of the swine flu. You don't want to catch it!

If you are one of these people, it's time to make a decision. Are you going to be a fighter or a quitter? The best way to pull yourself out of your funk is to associate with positive people and to work harder than ever. If you're still employed, celebrate that you are still among the 92%. Be thankful and do everything you can to stay in that group. Come in early, work late and make every minute as productive as possible. If you are one of the unfortunate few who are without a job, the same rules apply. Hang out with positive people and make finding a job your full-time job. It will happen.

If you're in the business development or marketing department, you may need to step things up a few notches. Put designated times on your calendar for cold calling. Despite reports by some that cold calling doesn't work, they are wrong. It does work! Set a goal to get on the phone and make a specific number of calls each day or week. If you're already doing this, maybe it's time to increase your numbers. How about an additional 10%, 20% or more? Note: If the person on the other end of the phone begins to whine, thank them for their time and move on. Emotional pollution carries over the phone line, too.

Stay close to your clients!

Now, more than ever, it's important to keep your finger on the pulse of existing business. Know what they are doing, what they're thinking and what their home office is up to. Become a partner, a resource and an extension of their team.

Market harder!

I'm stunned by the number of people who tell me that they've reduced their marketing communications efforts. "We're just holding on" is the mantra. Do these people honestly believe that becoming *less visible* is the best way to grow their business? *Wow, times are tough; fewer people are buying our products or services. Maybe we should become invisible.* Come on!

If the pipeline is less full or empty, you need to *increase* your visibility. Even if the opportunities are for bid work, your challenge is to increase awareness in order to assure your organization is considered. It's more important than ever to increase your promotional effort. Traditional advertising, direct marketing, e-mail marketing and public relations are just a few tactics that should be in your current arsenal.

Sure, times are tough, but if you want to survive to compete another week, you'd better get moving. Like the dancers mentioned above, right now is the time to discover how badly you want to win. I'm convinced that we are at or near the bottom of this thing and that times are beginning to improve. But, now is not the time to become complacent. The optimists who give each day everything they have are the ones who will be on the forefront of the recovery. They will be the winners.

At Brand Acceleration, we're looking for clients with fervor to win. We're not dancers, but we are passionate about architecture, engineering, construction, real estate, economic development and motorsports. Give me a call and let's discuss your winning strategy.

Jim Walton

A promotional graphic for Brand Acceleration. It features a blue header with the text 'Be Relevant!' in white. Below this, there are three paragraphs of text in a dark blue font. The first paragraph asks 'How relevant is your promotional effort? Sure, you know what your prospects want but do you know how to communicate with them in a way that will move them to action?'. The second paragraph says 'When you find yourself looking for stronger connections, that's when we should talk.'. The third paragraph states 'With a focus on Economic Development, Architecture / Engineering / Construction, and Motorsports, we're passionate about helping our clients reach their goals.'. At the bottom, there is a red and white logo for Brand Acceleration, followed by the text 'BrandAcceleration' and 'HIGH PERFORMANCE MARKETING'. Below that, it lists 'advertising // public relations // design' and provides the phone number '317.536.6255' and the email address 'jim@brandaccel.com'.

Be Relevant!

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but do you know how to communicate with
them in a way that will move them to action?**

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