

"The PIER"

The Monthly Newsletter for Business Leaders and Executives



Helping Business Leaders and Executives Create Profitable and Innovative Organizations.

Tim Donovan, MBA
The Competitive Advantage Architect™

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The PIER is a free monthly newsletter to help busy business leaders and executives get information about how to compete in the global marketplace by exploiting their competitive advantage. This newsletter is based on the writings and talks given by Tim Donovan, "The Competitive Advantage Architect™". Businesses can grow and prosper regardless of competition and economic pressures if they build sustainable profitable and innovative organizations. Past copies are available on our Website: <http://www.aim4best.com>.

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Leadership

Four Lessons I learned In NCO Academy

(Part 2)

In the last issue I started this series on the four lessons that I had learned in the 7th Army Non-Commissioned Officer's Academy. These lessons were:

1. **Know Your People**
2. **Make Timely Decisions**
3. **Mission First**
4. **Communicate the Strategic Intent**

In this issue, I will talk about the Second lesson: **Make Timely Decisions**. I will cover the following lessons over the next two newsletters, so keep reading to get all of the information from these lessons.

Make Timely Decisions

I know this seems like a pretty obvious statement, after all why would you not want to make timely decisions? Many business leaders/managers will not make decisions until they have all the facts available to them, or they may decide to not make a decision hoping the issue will disappear. Neither of these course of actions is ever successful. We can not always wait for all the information to be available before we make a decision. We must learn to recognize when we have enough information to make an informed decision, and make the decision. Your team members may be waiting for you as the leader to make the call. To be successful in making timely decisions you must:

First, determine if it is your responsibility to make the decision, or is it one of your team member trying to eliminate their accountability and/or responsibility for making a decision. In this case, you need to coach them on their responsibilities to make them aware of the issues that may occur if they abdicate themselves from making their decision.

Second, when it is your responsibility, you must understand the timeframe in which the decision must be made. You must prioritize the decision to ensure it is made within the necessary timeframe. What is the urgency of the decision? Is there an immediate need that must be met right now, which is usually the case in combat, where lives hang on decisions that are made or not made, or is it one that has a deadline that if it is missed may hold a competitive or financial implications to the organization? You must collect as much information as your time frame allows. When you believe you have enough information, you may want to check with some trusted sources, then make your decision and communicate it to all the people that need know what the result will be.

If at a later time more information is made available, that would change the course of action that you have taken, you must take responsibility and make the necessary change without placing blame or cause. There is not really a wrong decision, as we make decisions based on the information that is known at the time it is made. If additional information is revealed after the fact, which would have led us to make a different decision then accept it. Realize that you can not always wait until everything is known to act, as it may be too late to accomplish the mission.

(to be continued next month)

Technology

Steve Jobs

1955 to 2011

Steve Jobs passed away on October 6, 2011. He will be missed. Steve was one of the original founders of Apple, he managed to develop Pixar into a major motion picture animation company and he led Apple out of the doldrums and revolutionized personal electronics with iPod, iPad, iPhone, etc. His passing has created a great void within the industry.

Here is a quote from Steve about innovation and people:

"Innovation has nothing to do with how many R&D dollars you have. When Apple came up with the Mac, IBM was spending at least 100 times more on R&D. It's not about money. It's about the people you have, how you're led, and how much you get it."
[Fortune, Nov. 9, 1998]

Steve was a very insightful man, and this is the attitude, we carry here at Advanced Innovation Managers. You need to surround yourself with good motivated people, they will allow your organization to have PROFITS. This is my short tribute to Steve Jobs, who was a young man, who fought a valiant fight. He always said he was not in it for the money, he wanted to make a difference in everyone's lives. He had his failures, but he never gave up or gave in. Steve you made a big difference in all our lives.

Thank-You Steve "Rest In Peace"

My Thoughts

People Are Our Most Important Assets

In the tribute that I wrote to Steve Jobs in the Technology Section, his quote on innovation reminded me that "People are our most important asset." The quote mentioned that Apple was able to out innovate IBM, who for the longest time was the leader in Mainframe and Server Computers where they were spending at least 100x more on R&D than what Apple could afford to spend. Yet Apple was able to revolutionize so many consumer electronic products, faster and cheaper than IBM. What does your company do for R&D?

Today, many companies first reaction to loses in the marketplace is to lay off employees, outsource all functions that they feel are not profitable, in an attempt to reduce their overall costs. What has happened to "True Leaders" who manage by determining the root cause of the issue and then solving it. I always told my graduate computer science students if you cannot define the problem in a short paragraph, stop and go back to look at the problem again. You do not understand it, so how can you determine a solution to a problem that you do not understand.

Earlier I read a book called "No More Consultants" by Geoff Parcell & Chris Collison. The title caught my eye, as I was starting a consulting company. It stated (to paraphrase) You should not bring in consultants and turn them loose within your company. Always ensure that you have a clearly defined project that you want them to work on, ensure that knowledge transfer between them and your company takes place so that you will not need them to keep coming back to do the same things over and over again. It made a lot of sense to me, so I have carried some of these philosophies forward into my own company.

This approach of "right sizing" and outsourcing to gain profitability, obviously has not worked. What ever happened to the days of working towards productivity increases and innovation to make you profitable? I remember when I started at HP, where people took pay cuts, stayed at cheap hotels and watched the money like it was their own. Why not go back to that type of trust in your employees. If you select them correctly why not trust and see what happens? After all, they also have an interest in making the company profitable. So your challenge is to be a Leader and get your employees involved.

"The PIER" is a monthly electronic newsletter that discusses current topics that impact business organizations in their ability to compete within the global marketplace. This is based on the writings and observations of Tim Donovan, MBA "The Competitive Advantage Architect™" who believes that all organizations can compete, no matter what the economic or competitive conditions, if they have developed their competitive advantage.

Contact us for further information at: tpdonovan@aim4best.com

To Subscribe send an email to: join-thepier@aim4best.com

Web link: <http://www.aim4best.com>

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Tim Donovan
"The Competitive Advantage Architect(TM)"

Phone: (813) 991-5656
Email: tim.donovan@aim4best.com
Mail: PO Box 46695
Tampa, FL 33646