



My Six Year Old Is Right: Always Be Competitive

By Bryan Rader ■ *Media Works*

This “competitive spirit” has been missing from the private cable industry for a long time. We used to complain that we couldn’t raise money, or that we couldn’t get financing, or obtain good right of entry terms from property owners.

But guess what? Investors are back. Financing is available. And owners of all types and sizes are willing to do deals. No more pity for the PCO who can’t kick it out of first gear and grow his business...because in today’s environment you can.

And now that we can, we need to regain our “competitiveness.” We need to maintain that desire to win. The

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desire to bury our competition. The desire to never lose another property to a franchise cable operator, or an occupied apartment or condo unit to a satellite provider.

This spirit, or mindset, was lost for so long. But all of those old reasons for feeling uncompetitive, or inferior, or technology-challenged, no longer apply. So we have no more excuses. This is our chance to be on the “offensive” rather than the “defensive” in building our business.

The good news is there are already signs that this is happening, as IMCC, our trade association, has seen recently.

In the past couple of weeks, the IMCC fielded phone calls from two independent property owners who had properties coming up for renewal

in Kansas City and Nashville. They were each properties with a franchise provider currently in control, but the property owner wanted to consider a change to a private operator.

So IMCC sent an all-points bulletin to its membership soliciting potential interest in servicing these two markets. And collectively over twenty companies responded with strong interest. There was a strong desire to pull another property away from the franchise providers, to not let another renewal go to the enemy. That’s exactly the “competitiveness” attitude I am talking about.

And we need to harness this spirit even more. We need to take the position that we will not lose another property to the “Axis of Evil” – ComCast, Cox and Time-Warner. We need to have an intensity about our ability to compete against the franchise players.

In my company’s annual seminar this past Spring, we worked on developing this “competitiveness” in every one of our associates. We called our employee conference “Preparing The Team for Battle” and used a military theme to talk about how we would win on the battlefield. We focused on our strengths, our battle plans against the enemy (franchise operators), and how to beat illegal subs or non-subs. It was our position that MediaWorks needed to instill even more a feeling among its associates that we could win, and be competitive every day.

And I think the entire industry needs to feel the same way.

It’s nice that there has been a lot of consolidation lately, as one private cable operator has purchased assets of another PCO. And these transactions will continue for awhile. But at the same time, we need to use our “competitiveness” to grow our overall share of the multi-channel multi-dwelling pie.

Nobody is more competitive than my six year old Austin. He wants to win at everything. He makes everything a race and he wants to finish first – whether it is a race to the car, a race to brush his teeth, or a race to be first in the shower. He is always challenging me and desperately wants to win. (And he always does).

He is very competitive, and I think it is very healthy. For him, and for our industry. I believe my six year old has it right. The best way to win is to have the right attitude, the right mind-set.

He doesn’t mind the challenge of seeing who can swim to the other side of the pool the fastest. In fact, he relishes these types of challenges.

And I think all of us should relish the challenge in private cable today too. It’s time for us to regain our competitiveness, and think more like six year olds. ■

About the Author

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