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Business Development Ideas to Help You:

- ◀ **Make \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000 Every Year**
- ◀ **Dominate a Market/Eliminate Competition**
- ◀ **Triple the Value of Your Business**



It's Better to Be First Than Fast – Martial Arts and Marketing: Part One

You may be wondering what martial arts have to do with marketing and the design of competitive business practices. There is actually tremendous relevance, particularly with Aikido, which is the form I study. I've heard many explanations of the objectives and philosophies of Aikido, and one an interesting description I heard recently is that the objective of Aikido is the resolution of *violence* without *conflict*, and it's also the resolution of *conflict* without *violence*. Now there's a concept to ponder awhile.

Anyway, the following is an excellent illustration of how you can apply the advanced strategies of an Aikido master to your strategic marketing.

I've been watching one of my senior instructors. He's barely 5'2" tall and 120 pounds. He's 65 years old and has been studying martial arts most of his life. He consistently neutralizes the attacks of aggressive, younger, stronger, larger, and more agile opponents, with what appears to be great speed and with little effort. And he does so without injury to himself or his opponents.

The other day he revealed his secret. He said he was not "fast" and that as he aged, his speed actually was diminishing, as you might expect. But then he said, "It's not about being faster than my opponent, it's about anticipating and being where he is going first, so I can short circuit and redirect the attack to create a positive outcome." **It's better to be first than fast.**

Reflect on this, as there is much wisdom for marketers in this concept, and there are at least three specific aspects you can adapt to make your marketing more effective:

- **Anticipating Instead of Reacting**
- **Getting There First**
- **Creating Instead of Competing**

In this article, let's examine the first aspect and in subsequent articles we'll look at the other two.

Anticipating Instead of Reacting

Our martial arts metaphor incorporates the concept of an "attack." You may or may not think this is .

an appropriate term for the marketplace, as people often think the word attack implies something direct and malicious, but don't get hung up on this. I'm sure you'd agree that whether you call it an attack, there is much direct and indirect competition for the time, energy and money of the people you want to do business with. This competition, while it may not be coming directly from someone "out to get you," may very well have the same effect.

For example, you could get run over by a train (even one trying to stop for you) and you'd still be smashed, even though the train was not specifically attacking you with evil intent. The same thing happens in the marketplace, because in addition to direct competitive attacks, there are big forces at work that can smash your company. Even though these general market forces are not attacks directed at you, if you happen to be in the way, you will get smashed and the absence of malice will be of little consolation.

Most businesses we see are in a reactive mode. Things happen and they try to respond. In this mode they are always "back on their heels" and off balance. Although people talk about "responding to the market" as if that is a positive thing, at the point they are actually responding, they are actually late, and they lose the capacity to act with the most effectiveness. It reminds me of the old saying, "There are three kinds of people: those that make things happen, those that things happen to, and those that just wonder what happened."

Anticipation is a more accelerated form of response. It's about being in position to make things happen and to cause others to respond to you (or perhaps just wonder what happened).

Therefore, a major job of marketing is anticipating what the market is likely to do, so you can first of all survive, and then so you can thrive. In martial arts and in marketing, anticipation is what makes it possible for you to get out ahead of the attack (get there first) and it involves three key elements:

- Being present and paying attention - looking around
- Studying your indirect and direct competitors to gauge their:
 - Intent
 - Position
 - Balance
 - Direction of movement
 - Force of movement
 - Speed of movement
- Thinking about the implications of what you see

In marketing terms, this means being a student of your market and the marketplace in general. It means surveying your customers, your competitors, your vendors, your ex-customers and your prospects. It means paying attention to the trends and the way others are doing business, since innovations in one industry can rapidly be adapted in another to the detriment of those who were not paying attention.

Market research and surveys are the keys to understanding the central concept in marketing, which is: *"If you want to know why John Smith buys what John Smith buys, you have to see the world through John Smith's eyes."*

As you continually collect this market data, it needs to be interpreted. What does it mean and what should you do about it? Answers to these questions are at the core of an effective marketing strategy.

This leads to the next two concepts: **Getting There First** and **Creating Instead of Competing**, which will come in parts 2 and 3 of this series.

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