

friend or foe?

The plan was to send out my August article after the election so that I could do a postmortem and analysis on the results. Well, if I wait for the result, chances are readers won't receive anything until Christmas.

So, were the campaigns by the two main parties effective? Most would agree that the campaigns are a marketing driven, communication overload period of our lives. As for their effectiveness, well I think it's pretty obvious that one party lost votes, another gained votes, while another two parties increased their popularity, either out of frustration from the other two or for what they stand for.

Over the past 6 weeks or so (which felt like an eternity), it didn't take a genius to recognise that 90% of election messages were focused on slamming and damning the competition. Sometimes competition is good, however in elections, they're only good if the opponent makes a meal of their campaign.

Like in small business, whenever you mention the competition, in good or bad nature, it's a reminder to everyone that they're still around and you keep them in the race. The cliché line of "any publicity is good publicity" rings true right here.

I wonder what the outcome would have been in the election if both main parties had stayed away from their foe and purely focused on their own policy spin? Would the outcome have been different? If anyone have had bothered to ask for my advice, it would have been quite simple. I would have focused completely on the leader of our party, our party itself, our team and the great things about us. Every party can spin their numbers or policies to look great, so stay true to what these are, stay true to what you stand for. The team that did

this would have been perceived to be more focused, not vying into debate, flirtations and childlike banter. A touch of arrogance perhaps, but we have come to expect that from any great leader (even the mediocre ones show it).

Further to the leadership factor, it would have made the other bunch seem like they stood for nothing and all they could do was throw insults at their opponent. Perhaps this is why the 'other two parties' gained popularity.

In small business, competition can be good in many ways. If I started a new business and I had no competition, I would certainly encourage it as it would promote and market my 'category'. New entrants to a category always create talk in an industry. In an environment where you're a 'local' business such as a café, you would want the 'area' to be marketed. So if your 'street' was well known as a shopping precinct, then it's a perfect spot to be. You then have to differ slightly to your local area competition. Why should people stop in your café or shoe shop instead of next door? Why on a shopping strip are one or two coffee shops so much busier than the rest? Chances are they were there first or offer something different in terms of environment, product or price.

The question then is, when don't you want competition? Well it's when there's plenty of it. You don't want to get lost, and it's hard to get on top of the competition when they're in the 'category' first. It makes your life a little harder if you're the last one in.... no credibility at all.

If you're second in a category, don't pretend to be number one. A famous Avis ad always proclaims 'We try harder'. They're admitting

to be number two in the category. It creates light of their plight. In order to build a category, small business should welcome other brands... choice incites demand.

Look at your competition, promote the category and let it flourish whatever category you're in. If you're a business coach, an online mail order bride service or own a frog shop, promote the category, create demand, don't demand it!!

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a quick one on... **competition & category**

- If you're second in a category, act like it, don't try to act like you're number one when people know you're not.
- Be true to what you do and what you stand for.
- Always, that's always, promote the category of what you do.
- We love a captured market, so amongst competition, think about why people can choose you over your neighbour. Staff, offering, environment, price.
- Promoting the category is often better than just promoting your brand.
- Don't ever burn bridges, a category and the world is too small. People remember if they've been burnt.

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