

There are only so many ways to stand out and become a leader in any market.

You can be focused on providing excellent customer service, top-quality products and/or lowest price driven, but there are **five specific** reasons your competitors may be doing better than you. Many companies excel at two or three but it is nearly impossible to excel at all of them.

THE FIVE REASONS

1.) They have great operations; operations that let them be more efficient than you at getting orders picked, packed and delivered so that customers' expectations are exceeded.

These efficiencies in operations also allow them to keep their costs down. At the same time those interested in capturing additional market share invest those efficiencies back into improving the customers' experience. Walmart.com online exemplifies this quality.

2.) They do a better job at generating word of mouth

Everything they do is focused in on delighting customers. They are driven by service. They understand that success is a long term strategy and can afford to do what they need to in order to please their customers.

They go to every extreme to delight their customers and offer [lagniappe](#) in many ways.

They live on "life-time value" metrics. They are driven by a passion to serve and a philosophy that **it is easier to keep a customer for life than to try and keep acquiring new ones.**

These sometimes over the top efforts lead to so many of their customers sharing the amazing experiences they have had with the brand. Zappos.com exemplifies this quality.

3.) They deliver as good of a product/service in a more customer friendly way

I've seen this one happen so many times. One day you, the market leader, the first person to market with the product, with significant marketing budgets, and with the hugest market share become aware of some smallish competitor and ignore them because their product isn't up to snuff.

They slowly start winning customers, that just need the basic features they offer. All the while they keep building up their product/service. However, from the get go they eliminated many of the hassles of getting started with their business. Instead of a complicated sale processes, or in-the-way sales people they made their pricing transparent and made it easy to sign up online to get started right away. GotoMeeting employed this strategy when competing with Webex.

4.) They do a better job at being found when people need them

Location, location. Budweiser is not the world's finest beer. However, they sell a lot of beer. Bud dominates so many channels that they are always available. We know Bud and so we order it because often good enough is good enough. Amazon applies this principle online.

Wherever or whatever you search for comes up on their site or on Google as being sold by them. I am not just talking about having a first place ranking for the most competitive single word key phrase, but they have invested in having content (a large portion customer generated) that spans the long tail, from early in the buying process to later in the buying process. Their pages tend to keep showing up time and time again. They thrive on generating content that is relevant and are thrilled to live off the 3 or 4 searches a month for a particular piece of content or obscure product as long as they have thousands of them that people are finding. Amazon has utilized this to keep adding product categories to their vast catalog.

5.) They developed a culture that continuously optimizes the customer experience

This is different than being customer intimate, it is more incremental, it is about being metrics driven. The key is to focus on key performance indicators that drive success for your business and being relentless and innovative in way to drive up those numbers. They may not often start off as the category leader but through relentless testing and optimizing they gain market share. These companies tend to be less risk averse preferring gradual and continuous change.

This is a very powerful strategy for companies to leverage in a down economy, because while your competitors are trying to maintain status quo you focus on constantly improving. Many of Intuit's brands exemplify this strategy.

How can WE leverage these strategies to drive OUR own growth & success?