

5 Things I Hate About Lists.



Well, not all lists. I do see merit in shopping lists, to-do lists and action plans, to name a few. It's just the ones you see in business magazines and seminar promotional material that I take issue with.

“...we’ve interviewed 50 successful business leaders and here are their 10 tips that will make you super effective...”
Or
“...8 actions that will make your whatever (supply chain, sales force etc.) best practice...”

If only business excellence was as simple as following a cake-making recipe or an IKEA assembly instruction sheet. OK, maybe that last example is not the best one I could have included.

Throughout my career, I’ve observed that running a successful business or being a quality business leader is not achieved by simply following a generic instruction manual, no matter how appealing that idea might be. Each business, at any one point of time is in its own exclusive environment. Each business leader brings their own set of characteristics and qualities. Yes, it is true. We are all, both individually and as businesses, different. Hence how value can best be created and retained needs to recognise and exploit that combination of unique characteristics.

I’m sure your experience is the same as mine. When I think about some great businesses that I know have passed the test of time, they didn’t follow “8 actions to best practice”. No, they followed just one or two of them, then maybe a few years later, one or two others. Same with great leaders. Fundamentally they were the same people no matter what the environment, but their behaviours did change over time and not follow all 10 tips simultaneously. Just a couple at a time.

So, read the lists in those business magazines if you must. But don't follow them blindly. Spend much more of your time understanding what is relatively exceptional about your business, gaining insight about the market and deciding how you need to behave in order to create value in your unique situation.

Oh yes, there never really was 5 things, just one ramble. And maybe hate is too strong a word.

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