

Is That a Dinosaur in Your Room? Let It Die

Jim Mathis, The Reinvention Strategist

Climate Change

Have you ever heard the expression: “the elephant in the room”? It can refer to an obvious **truth** that is being ignored or goes unaddressed. It also applies to an obvious **problem** no one wants to discuss. Because an elephant in the room with us would be impossible to overlook, those in the room who pretend the elephant is not there are more likely to be focused on small and irrelevant matters, never coming to terms with the looming big one. Just think what’s going to happen when that elephant moves!

Archaeologists tell us that the dinosaurs probably died out and became extinct because they weren’t equipped to adapt to a changed environment and climate. As the climate became different, they couldn’t (or wouldn’t) become different. But other species on this planet survived because they were able to adapt and they thrived with the different climate. It is called survival of the fittest. The fittest species can survive, regardless of its size.

Your business climate has definitely changed. But there are obvious habits, policies, attitudes, people and inventory that are holding you back. These aren’t making you “fiscally fit.” They cost you more than they deliver in profits. They don’t allow you to become what you could be without them. When you resist changing them by refusing to adapt to a changed business climate, global marketplace or economy they hold you back from making the decision required to move forward. Whatever excuse you choose for avoiding change, it will lead to your own extinction.

Sadly, everyone can see it but you. It might be a fashion style you think makes you stand out, but instead is being ridiculed by onlookers. It might be your stubborn belief in a product or item in your inventory that you just know someone will want to buy if you push it hard and long enough. It might be meetings with your employees that are useless, time-wasting, or simply self-aggrandizing. Whatever name it goes by, it is costing you more money (or time) to hold on to it than to just get over it and move on.

Rest In Peace

The late Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple said, “Get rid of all the crappy stuff, and focus on the good stuff.” At the time he was advising Nike president and CEO Mark Parker, but it spoke to items unwanted by the marketplace that Apple tried unsuccessfully to sell. Remember the Apple Newton? (A product that Apple failed at miserably) Like Steve Jobs and Apple, you have “crappy stuff” too. That stuff has dwindled in importance or function and is no longer profitable for you. Instead of being the elephant in your room, it has really become the “dinosaur” in your room. You need to purge it, free it, lose it, let it die and get over it. Hold a funeral service and put it to rest.

Your **people** are in the room. Most of them contribute to your profit line. Some make more than others. Some cost you more to retain than if you released them (including the lawsuit when you do). Those few are draining your organization of money, time and energy. They have no intention of making a profit for you. Your ability to work them into your “team concept” hasn’t gone as well as you planned. Your concept and the useless people on your staff are the

dinosaur(s) in your room. They have become extinct. You need to get over them, the outdated concept and move on.

Your **inventory** is in the room. Some products take up space that could be more useful for you. It costs you in storage and wasted advertising. No one is buying it or ever will. It says that if you wait long enough, the style, the fashion, the trend will come around and someone will pay for it... at least enough to pay you back for what it cost you to purchase, produce and store it. It never will, though. You need to donate it to someone more worthy and get over storing it in a valuable place. Let it die (and hold a cheap funeral for it).

Your **policies** are in the room. They protect you and your structure, but punish your customers. They make you look good and treat the public with contempt. They keep you from lawsuits, and business. They are punitive and restrictive. They are quoted to your customers beginning with the phrase, "Unfortunately..." You wouldn't want them quoted to you if you were them because you know the outcome wouldn't favor you on the receiving end. You need to erase, relax or just abandon many of them. They are killing your image. Ask Bank of America and Verizon customers who rebelled against poor policies that cost them more than the perks the companies offered. Let these punitive policies die before they kill your business and image with the public.

Your **ego** is in the room. You are convinced that your methods are tried and true in business, but your bottom line indicates otherwise. You insist that everyone follow your leadership regardless of your wisdom. You feel your eccentricities are unique and that everyone appreciates your uniqueness, even while your employees think otherwise. Your attitude is not very approachable. Your ego is in the room. It has become extinct. You need to get over it, hold a service and bury it.

Your Real Job

I realized the same thing this year and it became the impetus to reinvent my business again. The old way of doing "business-as-usual" wasn't working for me. At that time, no one was buying what I was selling. I couldn't figure out why. Although I marketed more, it didn't make a difference. Although I talked more about what I did that I thought everyone would benefit from, no one was calling for it. Although I tried to work harder and push what I sold harder, it made no difference and didn't fulfill me at the end of the day. Then one day I realized the truth. I was the "dinosaur" in my room. I was becoming extinct. I allowed the recession to get me "down." I wasn't being different!

So I did some soul-searching and asked a lot of questions. I asked my most loyal customers what *they* wanted. I asked people *why* they bought from me. I asked customers what they heard me *say* that affected them the most. I asked what they *weren't* getting from me that they wanted. I asked *myself* what I needed to release that was costing me more in money, time and energy than what it was bringing in.

It made me reinvent my business, my image, my marketing, my brand, my culture, my customer base, my selling/buying plan and even my personal life. I needed to get "business as usual" out of the room, let it become extinct and die.

Your **business-is-usual** is in the room. It says that if you feed it by doing the same things you used to, it will reward you with success like you used to have. It promises that the old ways are tried and true. It says that if you push a product or service hard enough, no matter what it is, you will sell it to almost anyone. It affirms that you need to keep the customer at bay, your employees in the dark and everyone else guessing about your next move. It ignores the internet as a geeky phenomenon where no real business takes place. It charms you with leftover inventory, then woos you with the temptation "One day, someone will buy all of this and you will recuperate the loss to make a fortune." It says that although Fred doesn't do much work, getting rid of him would cost more in expense and trouble.

Business-as-usual is a dying beast. In the most successful and competitive businesses it has already died, been buried and the funeral held. In your business, you need to do more than let it die of natural causes. You need to proactively exorcize it from your inventory, staff, schedule, to-do list, practices, attitudes, beliefs and expectations. Business-as-usual is the dinosaur in your room. Banish it to extinction.

OK, so you get this. You're saying, "Great points, Jim. You made me think about some things in my organization and structure." You're still headed for extinction. You read this and say, "Okay, I get it. But my boss and customers don't. So what can I do?" You too are still headed for extinction. If you say, "I get it, but I don't have the authority to do anything about all of this," you are headed for extinction.

Reinvention begins with your attitude. It isn't *part* of your job; it *IS* your job. Your only job!

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