

May 6, 2019

By Rick Boxx

The Pitfall Of Having Too Much Good In One Place

Have you heard about the warning against “putting all your eggs in one basket”? This applies for much of life, especially the business world. Whether it means one large customer at a for-profit company, or a single major donor for supporting a not-for-profit entity, when your revenue comes significantly from one source, your organization flirts with danger. Real trouble can arise if anything goes wrong with that relationship.

Sometimes small businesses open with one primary account. Things go well – sales are high and cash is flowing steadily – until one day, for whatever reason, that single account is lost. Suddenly the stream of revenue that had seemed so dependable is lost and everyone is scrambling to survive.

Another pitfall of having too much dependence upon one customer is the influence they might have. Whenever your revenue becomes overly reliant upon a single customer or donor, you can find yourself feeling pressured to make unhealthy business concessions. It can be flattering to have one source that invests so heavily into the work you are doing. However, that can present the temptation to make decisions focused on accommodating that source, rather than remaining faithful to your mission – especially if it could jeopardize that key relationship.

What is the solution? The answer is fairly simple: Diversification. My experience, and experts would confirm this, is that it is best to seek to limit any one customer at 15 percent or less of your total revenue. It may be hard to say “no,” especially when the potential for a very significant revenue

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stream is presented. But making a determination to “spread the wealth” by cultivating a wider variety of resources may be better than adverse consequences that could result from losing a single customer that comprises a majority of your business.

This is another example of the great, timeless wisdom we can find in the Bible. King Solomon addressed this particular issue when he advised, *“Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth” (Ecclesiastes 11:2)*. Another translation states it this way: *“But divide your investments among many places, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead.”*

There are other reasons for diversifying our work – as well as our finances. One is the desire, as God’s ambassadors, to have a broader impact in our communities, our cities, and even around the world. The psalmist writes about *“the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands.... His heart is secure, he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes. He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever...” (Psalm 112:1,8-9)*.

This passage talks specifically about seeking to meet the needs of people who are disadvantaged, but the principle holds true. We can serve more effectively – and be used by God in more fruitful ways – when we diversify the use of our time, energy and resources.

Which brings to mind Jesus’ parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. It speaks of three individuals entrusted with their master’s resources while he was gone. Two of the servants wisely invested the money and gave their master a substantial return. The third simply hid what had been entrusted to him, and when the master returned home, he had no increase to offer. If we are to grow – as businesses, as well as in service to God – we need to diversify, and grow stronger in the process.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Does your company or organization has one customer or donor that dwarfs all others? If so, what would happen if that source of revenue were suddenly lost and could not be restored? What impact would that have on the work and services you provide?
2. If, on the other hand, your company is not reliant on one single source of revenue, is that because of a deliberate decision to diversify business? Is it difficult to maintain such a commitment? Explain your answer.
3. What about financial investments – have you developed a practice of seeking to diversify where you invest, rather than putting all of your resources in one place that seems to be most productive? Why or why not?
4. Shifting to apply this principle to spiritual pursuits, what would you see as the benefits – and potential shortcomings – of diversifying our efforts to serve God and those who sends our way?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Psalm 37:25-26; Proverbs 10:4,12:24, 15:22; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

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