

Power in the Unseen Elements

On those hot, muggy, sticky days, have you ever wondered just how much moisture actually is in the air? Someone at the USGS decide to look at how much moisture was being carried from the warm ocean up to the coast of California. He figured that each day, that “river in the air” was transporting more than the volume of water put in the ocean by the Amazon river in a year. There can be a lot of power in the stuff that we don’t see but is all around us.

This is also true in business. There are a number of things that are not easily measured that have a significant impact on our business. Things like strategy, creativity, design work, and shared purpose are all unmeasurable, but have large impacts.

Similarly, cyber security and malware infections are all invisible to us until a trigger happens to make the problem visible.

In recent years, digital marketing has changed from being a new concept to being a central part of any sales channel. In digital marketing, we are finding that design is a critical component. Yet, for many businesses, being told that they need good design in their digital marketing is like being told that they need to speak Mongolian. It is a totally different language than what they are used to.

Strategy is a totally unseen thing. We hold it in our heads and often, never even write it down. Yet, strategy can be the deciding factor in a campaign. Repeatedly in combat, attacking forces that use unexpected strategies are

successful. Over time, defensive forces learn a number of strategies and how to counter them. But, when an unexpected strategy is used, the defenses crumble. To be successful, that strategy has to be communicated and shared among the attacking forces.

Currently, cybercrime is booming all around us. We can have our systems invaded and all our confidential information stolen without us even

knowing that it happened.

We may not see the wreckage until either a competitor has that information and uses it against us or we get notified that our customer information is being spread around and used for fraud.

We all have heard stories about how a group of

regular people gained a shared purpose and thus, were able to win championships, produce incredible results, or get to a summit that only top producers had been able to do prior. Such shared purpose is very rare. We would like to think that we could generate it in business, but that is nearly an impossible task for any large corporation. Some very small companies are able to achieve a common purpose.

When we work on building a shared purpose, we build far more effective teams.

Notice that a shared purpose is about a team. It is about enabling the workers to work together to achieve a goal.

Likewise, when put into a corporate purpose, it is not about having a good marketing message; it is about enabling our customers to use our products or services to reach a goal.

The Unseen Has A Large Impact

It was Too Fragile

Scientists were wondering why Bird Flu spread so quickly through chicken farms when only a few people caught it. By digging into the DNA of that flu virus, they were able to identify that the virus is too fragile to be able to spread between people. We see the same thing with a lot of new products and services: they are just too fragile to spread rapidly through the general public. Only a few people will be able to use those products or services.

Back when the first personal computers came out, the user interface was what was called a “command line”. People typed in commands and the computer did them. When the Macintosh first appeared, it was absolutely mind blowing. Microsoft worked hard to find a similar system for PC’s. But the first few versions of Windows were both difficult to use and full of bugs. It was too fragile to be used effectively. It wasn’t until version 3.1 that it was stable enough to be used extensively.

Likewise, the first versions of the popular game platform, League of Legends, were pretty bad. However, as the makers kept working on it, they made it better and far more stable. Now, it is a hugely popular game.

For many a startup company, they hope to hit gold right away. The reality is that they won’t. Their products or services won’t be stable enough to really spread. It takes time and a lot of effort after the product is first working to make it into a stable product usable by a wide population.

Even within companies, there are things that are not stable yet. There is a story of a junior programmer wiping out a company’s production database on his first day on the job. Netflix is reported to have the slogan “if an intern can break production on their first day, you, as a company, have failed.”

A View from the Prairie is published by
Prairie Trail Software, Inc.,

**Making Information
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Risky World

For those of you who worry about the stability of self-driving cars from Tesla, there are kits out there to allow you to write your own version of self-driving software and modify your own car. In other words, the driver of the car next to you might be the software that a teenager built himself.

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