

2. Best!

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TBD

(2004-2005) Part A. Best

{2005/07/03, DLH in Cancun: This part should be most appealing to those who want to own the system}

« Equivalent to Emery and Trist Type 2, Placid-Clustered »

<< **Examples to be incorporated** >>

1. The homesteading world (of local development)
2. (Mostly) predictable cycles, e.g. in farming, spring follows winter

<< **Concepts to be incorporated** >>

Emery & Trist, Placid Clustered

A.1 A "best" orientation centers on a unified direction, and clear means

« Need to cite an example, first »

« Describe unifying ideal »

Possibly the greatest challenge in business is to keep everyone focused on a coherent direction. A sea vessel with a well-defined destination is more likely to successfully arrive, than one where the crew bickers about the course to be set each day.

The direction that a business takes – the why – may be expressed as purposes with varying horizons. A goal or a mission is a purpose that can be described on a finite horizon. A goal can be a target set for a month. A mission can be fulfillment of some outcome on a horizon of a year or two. If the business is a going concern, with a horizon of a decade or more, individuals may look beyond their individuals interests to some ultimate purpose that binds them together.

An ideal can be defined as purpose that can not be achieved within a fiscal period, but towards which progress is possible. Businesses are often bound together by people who share a unifying ideal. In the 1980s, the ideal of a computer in every home, not just in large corporate businesses, motivated Silicon Valley engineers towards personal computers. Life sciences businesses are often focused on cures, such as a cure for cancer, a cure for multiple sclerosis, or a cure for a birth defect.

« I might have written about the primary constituent for an enterprise being the customer or the shareholder here, but it may be better in the “both” section »

« Describe one best way »

Frederick Taylor is generally credited with the idea of “one best way”. In a scientific approach to business, he represents the ultimate industrial engineer, in seeking the most efficient way to product a well-defined product or service. Followers of Taylor may also be supporters of the idea of “core competence”, where a business focuses on that which it can do best, particularly in comparison to competitors.

This is not to say that the “one best way” can only result in mass produced, cookie-cutter products or services. When a customer wants “the best”, a business can build on its prior experiences. It draws on the “best way” in which it has satisfied that want or need in the past, and builds on that. This is typically the approach behind a “continuous improvement” philosophy. Whether we believe that most workers take pride in their work, or are looking for the way with least effort, work practices eventually converge on “normal” ways of doing things. In a “best” orientation, the “normal” way should be the “one best way”.

« Describe why “best” works well in a simple system conception, but not necessarily others »

Startup and small business typically take a “best” orientation. In order to be noticed in a crowded marketplace, they must stake some distinctive competence that puts the business head and shoulders above others, in some aspect. Capitalizing on the dimension that make up the “best”, the business can effectively invest lavishly in areas that make a difference, while economizing on those that don't. By rigorously maintaining a focus on the way that it defines the “best”, a business is able sustain market dominance with high productivity.

The enemies of “best” are competitors and growth. In a dynamic marketplace, it's obvious that a successful business producing a profit will find competitors who covet their position. The less obvious enemy of “best” is growth. For any product or service, a business will find the greatest profitability in the customer set that is willing to pay the highest price for the defined “best”. Pure metals (e.g. 24K gold), limited availability (e.g. first class seats on an airline) or priority access (e.g. customized alerts from a financial newswire) have a small number of customer for whom price is no object. Beyond those premium customers, however, is a larger market of potential customers, for whom preferred treatment – 18K gold, business class seats, privileged Internet news – is very profitable. The margin on these preferred customers is not as great as the premium customers, but the total revenue can be orders of magnitude larger. Finally, there's the attraction of the mass market – 14K gold, tourist class, mass media – where the “best” orientation is lost.

Super-luxury products – beluga caviar, designer fashion apparel, gold watches – may be able to maintain the simplicity in their businesses by ignoring that which others might define as great business opportunities. They may spin off peripheral business, and even create their own competitors to maintain their “best” orientation. For those with more than single-minded ideals, however, the orientations of “both” and “more” may be attractive.

A.2 A “best” orientation works everywhere, all the time

« Need to cite an example, first »

« Describe “everywhere” »

“Best” means the same offer everywhere. It may be related to uniformity and/or convenience.

Particularly on highway routes, fast food chains such as McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's have the same basic menu. People don't like surprises.

« Describe “all the time” »

“Best” means the same offer all of the time. In today's society, people don't want to negotiate the price of a cup of coffee, and are willing to travel only short distances to obtain one. This has resulted not only in convenience shopping, such as the corner coffee shop, but also automated vending machines, where the quality is predictable, if not adequate. Many supermarkets have taken to being open 24 hours per day, because in the middle of the night, there are still employees in the store stocking shelves.

« Describe why “best” works well in a simple system conception, but not necessarily others »

“Best” works best everywhere and all of the time for ubiquitous products or services, that are low cost, and considered the staples of life.

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