The Edge: Niche excellence better than one-stop service

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When I started my business after serving 18 years in corporate PR and management positions, I did it with the intention of offering a slew of services under one roof: public relations, marketing, advertising, video production, photography, social media consulting and graphic design.

Essentially, I thought “being all things to all customers” would prove to be a solid business model. Others were claiming to do it, and I wanted to make sure that my brand could compete in the marketplace.

What I’ve discovered over time is that if we — in our personal or professional lives — take on too much, we wind up being mediocre at many things versus excellent at a few.

Most of us have unique talents – things that we are inherently good at and that are further honed through formal education and years of work experience. If you are fortunate enough to make a career out of these talents, it pays to stay true to them once you start your own business.

I have to be honest, I had real fear of limiting my company’s offerings — thinking I would lose significant business opportunities as a result. After going through the IGNITE 360 second-stage business mentoring program at Florida Tech’s Women’s Business Center last year, I realized that growing my business meant not only diversifying my client base and revenue streams, but also
focusing on and promoting what my company was really good at — public relations and social media strategy for businesses.

I even changed the name of my company from TNT Creative Group to TNT Communications Group to reflect that newfound laser focus.

If you look around, there are literally hundreds of businesses within our county alone that claim to be “one-stop shops” for whatever service they offer. Yet, when you are looking for an expert, do you go to a “one-stop shop” or to someone who specializes in what it is that you need? It’s the difference between getting something done and getting it done right. Eventually, it’s likely that you’ll wind up with the specialist.

When I coach clients about how to stand out in their industry through PR and social media, we first talk about their “differentiators” — the things that make them unique and different from their competition. These things — their niche areas — are what we use to position them as authorities in their fields. In turn, we utilize those niche areas as the foundation for social media fodder in industry discussion groups, in story pitches to target media outlets, etc. And I can tell you that message is never “we do all things for all people.”

As a small business owner, I understand the desire to make everyone happy — to create a product or service offering that allows customers to get everything they could ever want under one roof or brand so they don’t leave yours. But, there is something to be said for being good — really good — at something and staying true to that gift. Word will spread about your company’s unique competencies in that niche and your business will grow.

Stay true to your niche and watch your bottom line grow. It will happen. Trust me.

Tina Lange is the owner of TNT Communications Group, a public relations and social media agency located in Melbourne, serving clients such as Space Florida, Brevard Cultural Alliance and Hart Clinical Consultants. Tina is also a graduate and mentor for the Women’s Business Center IGNITE 360 business mentoring program.