The Edge: Become Unstoppable With a Competitive Edge

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(Photo: For FLORIDA TODAY)

In our fast-paced global economy, both companies and individuals have to stay current and savvy to be a competitive player in their market and their industry. Those who understand this concept remain open to change and plan for it by taking a proactive approach.

They build in succession plans, growth projections and support processes. Others who resist still go through change — but they are forced into a reactive mode that is usually far less effective or successful. These folks become stagnant and ineffective with companies or careers that end up obsolete and unable to successfully compete. Just consider the plight of engineers who never got trained in anything past cobalt or retailers who don’t have a website.

The good news is building your edge isn’t hard or expensive. This new “condition” of professional success can be accomplished through 10 basic steps. And, while the process is simplistic in nature, your results will be stunning.

• First, stay informed using accurate, timely research. Follow current market and industry dynamics and identify and study target companies and their toughest competition.

• Understand the needs of the people/markets your serve through competitive intelligence conducted online and in the field through networking and surveys.
• Become a creative solution provider. Understand concerns or potential obstacles and anticipate needs. Create contingency plans before you need them.

• Think in specifics to communicate with clarity. Write out your key messages and then edit the statements for brevity, focus and substance.

• Get connected. Build a strong, diverse network of top-notch professionals. Think six degrees of separation and create “buckets” or types of relationships that include but are not limited to marketing, technology, development, finance, alliances and or mentors.

• Build strategic partnerships and collaborate to expand potential business and learning opportunities.

• Make energy, enthusiasm and results the mainstay tools in your skill set.

• Continuously work to improve your oral and written communication skills.

• Take responsibility for positioning yourself for future opportunities within a three-to-five year window.

• Make evaluation and adjustment a consistent part of your professional and business development practices.

Here’s more good news — there are resources all over town that can help you learn to master these critical steps to success. I personally suggest contacting weVenture (formerly the Women’s Business Center), powered by Florida Institute of Technology. Consultations are free and referrals, resources and introductions are all part of the service. Think of it as your first step to unstoppable.

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