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From the Publisher

Well, it just happened again. One of our oldest and most loyal print advertisers is not buying print ads from us anymore. And even though print advertising has been on the decline throughout the publishing industry, this situation is different. This advertiser was acquired by a company which doesn't do print advertising, or at least it isn't doing it with us. So after more than eight years of providing great service to this customer, and building a wonderful working relationship, this business is *GONE*. We've lost dozens of devoted advertising, exhibit, and sponsorship customers over the past five years because they were acquired. And it wasn't that they didn't like working with us, or they didn't think we were providing valuable services. They simply quit supporting our work because they were no longer making their marketing decisions, or they had been completely shut down.

So thank goodness for the new, smaller companies. They're hungry for marketing opportunities and they are filling the void left by the "acquired companies." Now the vast majority of our support comes from these smaller firms which have a short and simple decision-making process, and they buy our services because they see the value and enjoy doing business with us. *What a concept!*

By comparison, most of the larger companies have very long and arduous processes they must go through to purchase anything, and many have already spent their "soft money" on acquisitions, management bonuses, lawyers, and new logos. So they don't do any marketing. They've bought so many companies and acquired so many products that they don't know who should manage them, how they should be marketed, or why they bought them in the first place. Plus so many seem to think that one brand name fits all, so no matter how much equity had been built by the former brand names, they are allowed to fade into obscurity.

At meetings, or in phone conversations, I encounter experienced sales and marketing people almost on

the verge of tears because they no longer control the product lines they spent so much of their careers developing. In addition, they have no idea if their jobs will be retained, or if they'll be forced to move. Everyone knows that you are going to take a beating if you sell your house in this economy, and if you do move, you may not have a job long after you get to the new location. These aren't the folks with "Golden Parachutes" who are paid big bucks no matter what happens. These are the standard working professionals who have far too little financial security to take on more risk, and especially with a new parent company that really doesn't know what to do with its new acquisition.



In addition, so many marketing, technical service, and customer service positions are being sent overseas, or are simply being eliminated. And what could be worse, many key marketing decisions are being farmed out to third parties who hire kids to make them. I've never seen so many people with so little experience making key marketing decisions. In graduate school and through other corporate experiences, I've learned that the finance people know they can do a much better job of sales and marketing than the people who are in these positions, *so why not farm these responsibilities out to people who are cheap.*

Whatever happened to building a company and providing both products and services that offer value to a customer base? *I'm afraid that this is quickly becoming a lost art.*



Keith L. Carson, Publisher

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