

Make Success Inevitable!

The Anthill Theory of Business Success

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The ants have got it right! Over millions of years they've developed a structure and a system that enables them to grow and prosper - even in the face of relentless adversity. Without carrying an analogy too far, I'd like to point out why they are successful as a species, and how we could learn a few lessons that can be applied to success in business.

- **Question.** Does your business anthill have a structure and systems that enables it to grow and prosper even in the face of such adversity as the current economic crisis? *Be aware that, if you are still operating with yesterday's structure and systems in this fast-changing business environment, the odds are against your success.*

Every ant adds something

Every ant contributes to the bottom line: the welfare and survival of the anthill. *In business, everyone should contribute to the bottom line.* It's "One for all and all for one" - or else there won't be enough to go around - and that's all there is.

- **Question.** Do you have a performance measurement system that allows you to determine who is contributing and who is not? Do you take action based on its results? *Remember, what you don't measure – you don't get!* You may have a lot of information and statistics, but that is not the same as knowledge. Quantitative information requires qualitative analysis to provide strategic guidance.

Don't leave your business to the ants; let me help you with both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the performance your business as a whole, and that of your people. Contact me at (630) 420 2605 or mykwyn@aol.com

Every ant carries more than its weight

Ants can carry up to 40 times their own weight. Leaf cutter ants carry pieces of leaves that are many times their own size. *In organizations, whether large or small, every person should contribute more than he or she costs.* If, like ants, every employee in a business carried more than his or her weight, the company couldn't help but be a success.

- **Question.** Do you help your people improve their capacities with frequent training, career guidance, skill development, and motivation? *Do you measure profit per employee?* Anyone who doesn't carry his or her own weight and more does not belong in any organization. For an example, just look at what providing tenure to incompetent teachers has done to our education system.

Ants think big

Ants take on large projects. Recently in Europe, an ant colony was discovered that spread all

the way from northern Italy to northwestern Spain! The original ants, the founders of the colony, are believed to have arrived in a ship's cargo from Argentina about 40 years ago. When you consider the tiny size of the ants and the huge expanse of their colony, you can't help but be awed by their incredible expansion effort. The lesson for business is: ***No matter how small you are - there is no limit to how large you can grow!***

- **Question.** Is your business anthill growing consistently and constantly? Smallness is not an excuse for lack of growth. It's amazing what adding a little bit every day will do in the long run. (You didn't know that ants discovered Kaizen before the Japanese, did you?)

Want some help with innovation and thinking big? Contact me at (630) 420 2605 or mykwyn@aol.com

Every ant is a trailblazer

Ants are constantly exploring for new sources of food, just as people in companies are always (or should be) looking for new opportunities to grow the business profitably. But, every ant that leaves the colony on its own and goes off into unexplored territory leaves a trail of pheromones for other ants to follow. In business, in addition to the fact that very few people blaze new trails, much information and knowledge is lost because people don't leave trails for others to follow.

- **Question.** Ants are daring enough to go where no ant has gone before (Ant Star Trek). *What have you dared lately?* Exploration and innovation got us to the moon; they can take you and your business as far as you dare. The biggest mistake is not making one.

Ants are self-directed

Each ant knows what it is supposed to do - and does it. There are no slackers and goof-offs. No supervision is required. Wouldn't it be wonderful if businesses could operate the same way? You might say that it is easier for ants to be self-directed because they are programmed from birth to do a specific job. To an extent, so are humans; like the ants, we're programmed to survive: we have to work to make a living. In business, training makes up for what nature didn't program in us. The lesson is that training can help make people more self-directed.

- **Question.** Are you working too hard? *As the boss, your job is not to work, but to help others make your business be more successful.* Smart leaders develop self-directed employees.

Ants form alliances

Certain kinds of ants known as Dairy Ants actually raise aphids to milk them. They collect the aphid larvae and feed them; when they reach maturity, the ants collect their milk. What's the lesson for business? You can work with businesses that are not in the same business as yours for mutual benefit.

- **Question.** Have you ever considered teaming up with suppliers, your clients, and even your competitors to provide new and better things your customers? *Learn to look at everyone as potential resources for your business.* Ask yourself how might person or company help my business if we were to work together?

Ants build and re-build constantly

The universe tends toward entropy; that is, it is constantly disassembling and reassembling just about everything. Anthills, like businesses, grow old, parts deteriorate, and constantly need to be maintained and rebuilt. In addition, as the ant colony expands, new facilities are

needed.

Businesses tend to deteriorate with time unless there is a constant effort to rebuild and update. Unfortunately, there is a mindset in business of "If it ain't broke - don't fix it." As a result, by the time a business gets around to finally doing something about a part of its operations or an obsolescent product, it is often "broke" beyond repair. Sharp business leaders constantly challenge their operations and products before the market does it for them.

- **Question.** Nothing stays organized forever. No solution works forever. No employee stays forever. No business model works forever. Renewal is the key to sustainable business growth and profit. Peter Drucker said that before you start to build something new, check to see what you should be getting rid of. What and how much have you eliminated in the last year? As the title of the book by Robert Kriegel and Louis Patler says, "*If it aint broke ... Break It!*"

Ants protect their future

In the anthill, the queen lays the eggs and the workers take care of them. The eggs are the future of the anthill. Everybody is involved in guarding and nurturing them. The future of a business is its people, and their knowledge and skills. It should be everybody's job to ensure that every employee is nurtured into productive maturity, and that knowledge growth be stimulated and preserved.

- **Question.** It is easy to make decisions that might benefit the present, but will almost certainly sacrifice the future. The ant workers take care of the eggs, and the eggs ensure the future; even insects know this. Have you been so busy that you haven't given consideration to the future of your business anthill? *One thing you can be sure of: tomorrow will always come – except if you are no longer there because you didn't prepare for it.*

Queens, Drones, Soldiers, and Workers are a fact of life

There is usually only one queen in the anthill. One egg among thousands is selected to be the queen. Others are selected to be Males or Drones. While the queen's job is to lay eggs (ensure the future), the Drones are charged with fertilizing the queen. When they have fulfilled that role, they die off. Soldiers are worker ants chosen to defend the anthill. Workers are destined to do just that - work. Those are the facts of life in an anthill.

In business, we can't say that we have same division of labor as the anthill, but there is selection and hierarchy and different people are charged with performing different tasks. Just as not every ant can become a queen, not every employee can be the CEO. That's a fact of life in business. There is one significant difference though: *in business, everyone can aspire to become the CEO.*

- **Question.** Are your people aware of how their responsibilities fit within the overall scope of the company? Have you discussed succession planning with them, and explained the logic behind it? Have you made it clear to them what their role is in fulfilling the company's mission?

(By the way, thanks to today's growing recognition of the value of women in the workplace, anthills may not be the only organizations with queens at the top.)

Ants succeed through teamwork

In the Amazon jungle, when army ants reach a stream, the lead ants link arms and legs together forming a living bridge across the water so that the rest of the colony can cross over. When other ants threaten the anthill, soldier ants attack the intruders with great fury. If the intruder is a larger insect, the ants attack en masse overwhelming the enemy by their

numbers.

A business can only survive if there is effective teamwork. The better the teamwork, the greater the success of the business. If the team wins, everyone wins.

- **Question.** Do you know the difference between a committee and a team? On a committee, each person represents a different interest. On a team, all members represent the same interest, respect one another, support one another, act in the common interest, and can be the leader when the situation requires their specific expertise. That's why in sports we have teams rather than committees; *it takes a team to win!*

Make Success Inevitable!

A business is not an anthill. Roles are not predetermined. Employees are not selected from birth. People are not programmed by nature to be alike. Nevertheless, we can learn much from the ants, especially that - ***if there is a common goal, and all commit equally to it, success is inevitable.***

Make Success Inevitable in your business by applying all of these lessons. Sometimes, it is hard to look objectively at your own business. So, why not bring in someone with experience and fresh eyes that can help you find many ways to apply these lessons and more to your business? Contact me at (630) 420 2605 or mykwyn@aol.com . If you have doubts, you might want to check some of the testimonials on my website www.FreeProfitTips.com