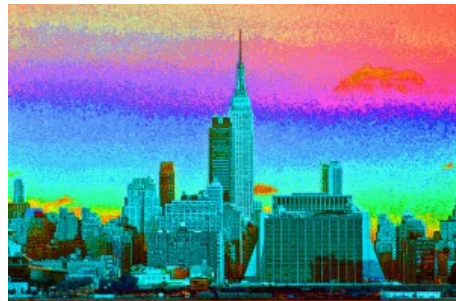




Ten Business Trends From The Trenches For 2013

By Andrea Simon, Ph.D.

I talk to CEOs weekly through my company, [Simon Associates Management Consultants](#), and at speeches and conferences.



As leaders of mid-market companies responding to changing times, these CEOs are touchpoints highlighting what's evolving in the business world. They might not answer a survey or even be aware of how their situations reflect a larger pattern, but their candor helps us see what's occurring now—and where we need to stimulate more change. Based on this, here are my Top Ten Trends From The Trenches:

1. The Power Of Women Is Growing.

The number of women-owned businesses is up by 54 percent in the past 15 years. During the 2008 recession, more men than women lost jobs, largely because women have more knowledge-based positions and have adapted themselves (with a higher percentage obtaining new degrees) to make the most of new industries. For the economy's sake, we must sustain this pace.

2. The Middleman Is Becoming Extinct.

Distributors and other “middlemen” are under siege. Their roles are changing quickly, regardless of industry, as the supply chain, and their companies' business models are evolving. Much of this can be attributed to the growth of e-commerce and how end-users are transforming the buying process in both B2C and B2B companies.

3. Entrepreneurs Are Everywhere.

The power of start-ups should not be underestimated, as they're more abundant than ever. Young people fresh out of MBA programs, and others no longer in large companies, are turning hobbies into businesses via economic opportunity and necessity.

4. Off-label Use Of Products And Technology Is Creating A New R&D Department—The User.

Anyone who discovers a new use for a technology or a product is changing its purpose. Showing the world is easy via YouTube. One of our clients received a YouTube video showing how someone repurposed his building product for a completely different use—which opened a previously unimaginable market for him.

5. Healthcare Is In Turmoil.

Everything is changing: reimbursements, billing, expectations of how and where to treat patients, major payer procedures, patient behaviors, the value of physicians entering the market and those maturing in it—you name it. New approaches are needed.

6. Family Firms Claim The Greatest Part Of America's Wealth.

So keeping them alive and thriving isn't just good for the families, it's important for our economy. Yet many now struggle to preserve what's best from the past, while infusing innovation. Family firms show resilience in tough times, but don't often take the risks others might to expand markets.

7. Culture Change Is A Big Area Of Concern

Hospitals need to change their cultures, whether engaging physicians or improving quality. Similar situations are found in K-12 schools and local communities are struggling to engage citizens in hard choices around budgets, given shrinking revenues and rising costs.

8. Made In The USA Is Catching On.

Our client realized that the time and cost of shipping from China was itself a commodity. By buying the manufacturing equipment from China and establishing a U.S. factory, he transformed his entire business model. Other companies are implementing similar strategies.

9. Blue Ocean Strategies Are Really Working

and more companies are using them to find growing, unmet needs in the new, ever-evolving global marketplace. I have seen this occur in industries as diverse as hydration system manufacturing, financial services and construction.

10. Sustainability Directors Are An Entirely New Market That Should Be Tapped.

Any company creating new, energy efficient ways of doing things will serve this group well. One client specializing in roofing saw the momentum shifting from replacing an old roof to adding roofs that reduce energy usage. Given the slow home-building market, this company found that Sustainability Directors at universities or other large institutions needed their services and products.

So what does this all add up to?

Companies flexible enough to adapt to changes quickly will thrive. Those clinging to the past unfortunately will continue to decline. Also, distinguishing a passing fad from a lasting trend will be vital, so that the right moves are made to sustain growth in 2013 and the next few decades.

Finally, the people who will really succeed are those willing to see, think, and feel differently about their businesses. This ability to be open to new perceptions and innovations is more important now than ever— not just for your company, but for your own professional growth.



Andrea Simon, Ph.D., principal and founder of Simon Associates Management Consultants (SAMC), has over 30 years' experience as a senior executive with financial services and healthcare institutions, and as an entrepreneur. Dr. Simon helps companies develop brand positioning, redesign their culture, and improve financial performance through innovative and effective product development and marketing.

She is particularly effective at understanding how customers really see, feel, and think about a company's products, services, and customer experience. Please go to www.simonassociates.net for more information.

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