

Why I Served Road Kill to My Investors.

It was my lucky day when Emile told me that he had some road kill in his freezer that he would give me in trade for a couple cases of beer. Not so lucky for the cow who had been hit by the semi truck on the highway I guess. Emile told me that there were lots of steaks in the boxes he was clearing out of his freezer and if I was to marinate those steaks for several days that they would be fine to serve at my company barbecue. Well serve them I did, grilled over a cut-up shopping cart, in the back yard of my family home, to my investors in my fledgling start-up. You see, the company was running short on money, and for two years I had held our required annual general meeting for the company, with a barbecue. The only thing different this year, was that the meat had been tenderized by a truck!

As business owners, sometimes we need to think out of the box to make things happen. When we are running short on cash, we need to resort to untraditional means that result in success. Jay Conrad Levingson in his classic business book Guerrilla Marketing recommends that small businesses do that all the time. Whether we are trying to reach prospective customers, doing research for our companies, or just serving meals to our unsuspecting investors, being creative can not only save us lots of money but it can get people talking. When we get people talking about our business, we are often on the road to success. When we run lean companies with few extraordinary expense, we reduce waste and put money away for times when we really need it.

Running a lean company doesn't mean being cheap with the important things that count – our employees, and our customers. Running lean means that we think of ways that help us get the end result without spending cash that we often don't have. This means that before investing huge amounts of money in big changes, ~~that~~ we try small changes first. Then, we get feedback, and tweak our plan and try again.

In our retail stores, we would make changes while the store was still open, in some cases completely changing the layout over the period of a couple weeks with customers milling around. Not only did this get our customers interacting, but it allowed us to use our existing staff to help out and get involved. We would have a pretty good idea of what the end result was suppose to be, however because we were trying things out as we went along, the result was often better than intended. If we saw that something wasn't going to work or needed tweaking based on our customers comments, we would make those changes. Many times, staff that hadn't been involved in the planning stage would come up with ideas that were fundamentally superior to ones that I had thought of.

Many times as business owners, we think that there is only one way to do things. Sometimes the fastest way to the end result is often the most expensive, however when we slow things down, ~~and~~ look for other options, and are creative in our thinking, we can save money, time and energy.

I served road kill to my investors because I didn't have any other option. My start-up was low on cash, and this option was going to save me hundreds of dollars. Not only did my investors enjoy the steaks, which were nice and tender after marinating for 2 days, but many even asked for my recipe. The meeting was a success, and I was able to move forward and find a buyer for the business that ensured that my investors would get most of their money back. I never did tell my investors that the meat at that shareholders meeting was road kill, but then again, they never asked.

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