

FOCUS: BUSINESS/STRATEGY

Ask the Questions, Act to Advance



Context
Partner,
Mike Borel

There is more good marketing in agribusiness today than ten years ago, but it is still suboptimum in most companies. You cannot manage well without good marketing – but equally, you cannot market well without good management. Assure quality: take special care to position right the first time. Differentiate your offering, segment to enhance your differentiation. “Me too” is a sure way of turning products into commodities. “Me different” offers the best hope of substantial victories.

Market Research and Information – in addition to the annual detailed market share/spend summaries that are widely subscribed to (including some from Context), there is regular need for deep “qualitative” research to understand and predict attitudes and behavior. If you are making assumptions about customer attitudes, preferences, plans, etc. – consider contracting a study to have solid, unbiased data upon which to make decisions. Faster moving markets demand swifter reactions and more deliberate research. Getting “out of touch with the market” is unforgivable.

Identifying what to do, and doing it, is certainly key to success; but take care to periodically consider what to stop doing and what not to do. It saves considerable time, energy and money that can be directed more profitably. Context has extensive experience in raising profitability through identifying the activities and products that detract, or distract.

I see more “Playing not to Lose” among companies, and business leaders, than I see “Playing to Win”. There is a big difference and it is worth thinking about your strategies/priorities for change. Perhaps another variation on this theme is what is often called the Lemming Effect – everyone doing the same things, using the same strategies. Who will change the rules?

Inventory Management – we continue to believe, and prove, that this is a goldmine of opportunity in crop protection, animal health and seed. Our work has helped our clients better understand their strengths and to identify areas where small changes in inventory management yielded significant improvement to the bottom line.

Is your business consistently outperforming the competition in profitability? Is your business achieving extraordinary results? Context can bring you high talent and external objectivity on a short term basis with assured confidentiality and your full ownership of the work result. Contact mike.borel@contextnet.com.

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The Context Network provides business management and strategy consulting services to the world’s leading agriculture, biotechnology and food companies and government agencies and institutions. Major areas of expertise include strategy, merger and acquisition support, valuation of new technologies, formation of alliances, and market research. The West Des Moines-based firm is composed of a core of professional consultants that is complemented by a network of hundreds of industry and subject-area experts.