

Fat, Dumb & Happy is a Choice!

By David Nour, Founder – Relationship Economics

I recently had lunch with a colleague – let's call him Bob, and couldn't help but to make some general observations – not being judgmental, simply the blatant obvious: Bob has become fat, dumb & happy – and I'd submit by choice! You see, Bob came up with an interesting idea in the mid 80s and became very engaged in consulting with global companies of varying sizes and industries. For the past two decades Bob has milked every possible angle you can imagine on this simple (and at its height, unique and powerful) idea.

You can't argue with success and by all measures, he was quite successful. A fundamental problem with success is the danger of becoming complacent – exactly what happened to Bob. He no longer felt that he needed to innovate and as such, his ideas are no longer relevant. During our lunch visit when I inquired about how his business was doing, with a rejected look on his face, he simply replied "it has flat-lined." Of course, he offered a cadre of excuses related to the economy and comparatives to others he knew, none of whom I recognized as leaders in their respective fields.

I couldn't help but notice that Bob's jacket was too tight and that he was wearing his belt under rather than around his waist. My impression is that Bob is probably 50 pounds over weight and badly out of shape; he began to breathe heavily as we were walking just a couple of blocks to our restaurant. It's evident that he has clearly lost his edge.

Not just in his physical appearance (compared to the pictures I had seen of him at the height of his success), but also in his content – vs. the audio sessions or video clips I had seen of him – energetic, vibrant, poignant, practical. Watching those VHS tapes (don't get me started on Bob and 21st century technology), you can't help but to think, "boy, Bob was IT!" Unfortunately, 20 years ago!

More importantly, over lunch I gathered that Bob had also lost a great deal of his self-esteem / confidence as evident by the work that he is doing now – imagine someone who is used to working with senior executives at global companies (mahogany row), now working with completely obscure and miniscule / irrelevant organizations (the mail room) at a fraction of his fee or perceived value back then.

When I offered some suggestions, he was polite enough to jot them down, but you could clearly see his newly developed (and rather refined) low tolerance for risk.

In all fairness, I only spent a couple of hours with Bob and certainly am not privy to the bigger picture of what's going on in his life. And this article really isn't about Bob – it's about doing three things to stay relevant, sharp, and on the edge of business success – to not only survive in this or any other economy, but to thrive!

It's been said that adversity reveals genius; prosperity conceals it. This economy, this market, this difficult time that many of us going through is actually the perfect time to reinvent your business model, revenue model, or portfolio of most strategic and valuable relationships.

Nour Call to Action

Aim to implement the following three best practices:

1. **Get and stay in shape! Physically and mentally.** There are far more credible sources that can validate the benefits of consistent physical exercise such as increased oxygen flow to your heart and brain. When you get adequate sleep and are well rested, you function more effectively. When you eat healthier, you feel better. When you exercise your brain, you reestablish synapses which help you think more clearly and remember information more readily. By the way – when I hear someone say they're "too busy," it simply means that whatever they're making an excuse for is not a priority! Because we will make time for things that are important to us.

2. **Constantly innovate.** Some of my colleagues in the professional speaking or consulting world are deadly afraid of sharing their content / intellectual property (IP) online. I have several of my presentations on slideshare.net – go ahead, view them, copy them, download them, and send them to everyone you know. On RENetworks, our private enterprise social networking site, I'm constantly adding new and compelling content that you can download and implement in your relationship development or social networking efforts.

Unlike some of my colleagues, I'm not afraid of putting my content out there for others to use, because the next time you see me present, it'll be very different content. We're also fairly aggressive in trade marking or copywriting our IP. When I began speaking professionally, I promised myself that I wouldn't be a "pull-string" speaker. What better way to research, re-build, and innovate your ideas than to share them with as many people as you can. If you've heard my Adaptive Innovation™ keynote, I illustrate the "S" curve of innovation which simply shows that before the height of your current idea, you're ideally working on the next evolution (if not revolution) of what's next. That's why I love to read, write, and present to very diverse groups – as I research each one, as I go wider and deeper on key areas of Relationship Economics® or Social Networking Best Practices, I'm humbled by what I can learn and share with others. In the process, you find ways to do things differently (true innovation) vs. simply just better (incrementalism).

3. **Become a life-long learner!** How do you grow personally and professionally? What do you read consistently to push you to think differently about topics you find of interest or value? How do you try out new ideas? One of my mentors reiterates that "if you're not failing, you're not trying!" Because every failure brings (hopefully) valuable lessons learned – in how we evaluate a situation, how we react to it, and whether or not we are able to achieve the results we desire. I value humor that bombs in my presentations, because I'll go back and tweak them. I put on workshops I've never conducted before, present webinars on new and exciting topics, collaborate with incredibly insightful thinkers whom I respect immensely, research a book that's near & dear to my heart about those who escape the current dictatorship in Iran – all of which push me to raise the bar on my personal and professional growth

Questions Toward Getting Lean, Smart and Energized

So I have 3 simple questions of you:

1. What has to happen for you to commit to staying in physical and mental shape? No one can light a fire under you; you have to find a way to light a fire within you!
2. What are three areas of your thinking or living you can do differently and innovate in the process? Not just band-aids, but a real commitment to create (as Seth Godin calls) a movement of ideas, actions, or a purpose?
3. How can you raise the bar on your personal and professional growth? In 20 years, will you still be relevant if you continue to ignore social networking trends that are reshaping basic tenets of business relationships?

Combine a dose of passion with a well-developed competence and the ability to excite or disturb others – get them to think differently about their current conditions, and your business will do far better than "flat line!"

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David Nour is a social networking strategist and one of the foremost thought leaders on the quantifiable value of business relationships.

A native of Iran, David came to the U.S. with a suitcase, \$100 cash, limited family ties and no fluency in English! Fast forward 25 years and he has built an impressive career of entrepreneurial success, both within large corporations and early stage ventures. David is the author of *Relationship Economics*, *The Entrepreneur's Guide to Raising Capital*, and *The Social Networking Best Practices* series.

He is a senior management advisor, and a featured speaker for corporate, association and academic forums, where he shares his knowledge and experience as a leading change agent and visionary for Relationship Economics® - the art and science of relationships. To learn more, please visit: www.relationshipeconomics.NET or call 1-888-339-1333.

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