Want to be great? Ask someone else.

Ask customers, that is. Over and over and over. What happens when you combine *Fortune* and *Business Week?* Well, I'm not sure you'll make a fortune in a week, but you *do* get a key insight to make your company more successful.

"Research shows that lack of natural talent is irrelevant to great success. The secret? Painful and demanding practice and hard work." So says the October 30th issue of *Fortune.* Now consider this: Yahoo, which is the home page for a whopping 20% of web surfers redesigned its home page "based on users' clicks, not its hunches" according to the October 9th *Business Week*.

Our Take

The path to business greatness is the demanding practice and hard work of understanding your customers better than your competition does. Way better. Companies which gobble up market share constantly challenge their assumptions about the marketplace, learn first hand what customers want, pursue fresh knowledge, and transcend the conventional wisdom of the employees "closest to the customer."

In contrast, many of the companies I encounter still make key decisions based on guesses and assumptions about the customer, last year's data, or information gathered exclusively from the Sales team.

Look at these greats: Tiger Woods, Vladimir Horowitz, Bobby Fisher. All reached the top of their field because they practiced relentlessly. Now look at these companies: Costco, IKEA, P&G. All achieved phenomenal results through their relentless practice of understanding customers.

Imagine your company is in a sailing regatta. You don't take a new tack every time the wind shifts; however, the boat which constantly trims its sails and makes slight course adjustments wins the race. It's harder to read subtle shifts in market needs than changes in the wind; however, practicing customer understanding through frequent, non-selling conversations with customers *and* non-customers is the hallmark of a winning company.

For more advice on increasing your sales (or filling your sails), contact:

David A. Fields
Managing Director
Ascendant Consulting, LLC
128 Haviland Rd.
Ridgefield, CT 06877-2822
1-203-493-0166
1-88-88-2 Ascend
(1-888-822-7236)

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Insight: The Best Thinking In Today's Business Press®

A free newsletter highlighting an intriguing article from current business press, and offering commentary which is thought provoking, actionable and valuable to businesses.

Past copies are archived on our website: www.ascendantconsulting.com
Copyright 2006 David A. Fields. All rights reserved
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx