

The Strategy of Preeminence

When I asked myself the question, “What is the single most powerful, most comprehensive results producing system/strategy I have learned over the last twenty years?” The answer is the Strategy of Preeminence.

The one single concept that captures whether or not we succeeded year in and year out in the IT industry was our ability to execute consistently the Strategy of Preeminence. From 1983-1993, I was Vice President of Sales at the Amdahl Corporation; responsible for AT&T worldwide. In addition I developed the corporate strategies to position Amdahl in the Telecommunications marketplace. In 1994, I had worldwide responsibility for Amdahl’s Enterprise Accounts (the TOP 20% of accounts that produced over \$1.2 Billion of annual revenue). Every one of these positions required the formation and execution of high level strategies. It was expected that we deliver over \$15,000,000 per strategic account per year. You can’t sustain performance in high profile accounts without effective strategies.

I didn’t invent this strategy. In fact I spent more than twenty years discovering some of the pieces and sharing them with business clients like The Creative Financial Group an insurance agency that has grown from \$1M in annual sales commissions to over \$40M in GDC/annual commissions. It makes them the most productive sales agency in the financial services industry.

In 1988, I became part of a mastermind network and it was through this network that I learned this comprehensive approach to positioning yourself in the marketplace. I saw that companies that had formalized the implementation and made it a part of their day in and day out practices were outperforming their closest competitors by 300% to 400%. I realized that it embodied the majority of the things I had discovered in my sales and marketing career.

I began to teach this information to Senior Account Managers, which were responsible for handling Fortune 200 accounts, at Amdahl. Most felt that this was powerful, new information that would have value. However, the only managers that benefited significantly were those that adopted a formal process of implementation. When we analyzed why some managers were succeeding massively and produced sustained growth- year in and year out, they had embraced this basic strategy.

Background/Disclaimer

Jay Abraham, marketing guru, documented the Strategy of Preeminence. He has helped his clients to add over \$7Billion in new revenues. Jay will tell you that every marketing strategy that he has developed is based on the ideas that are included in the Strategy of Preeminence.

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To gain access to this information cost him more than \$400,000. There are more than 500 pages of written notes taken from interviews with managers who use this strategy. This is the Cliff notes version of the information with specific examples on how to apply it to the Financial Services industry. As part of Jay's mastermind network I have paid for the right to share this information with you, my clients. You may in turn use it within your agency/team. However, this document may not be duplicated and used outside your team. Also the companies that were studied will not be identified which is part of the agreement that Jay put in place. These companies felt that this information has given them a considerable advantage over their competitors. The examples provided under each section are my specific interpretation for the financial services industry. Since most people are concerned with their personal finances you should be able to see the connection for your industry.

After you have read this document if you would like to see Jay Abraham in action discussing the Strategy of Preeminence go to the last page of this document where I have provided a link to the web that will give you free access to his presentation.

What Exactly Is The Strategy of Preeminence?

- Preeminence extols, advocates, champions the role of the team member, partner, prospects or customer.
 - Its focus is on the receiver and their best interest. It boils down to; “I’m not trying to sell you-I want to serve you.”
- ⇒ Example: This is the essence of customer advocacy selling- take the I and we out of your vocabulary and focus on the “you-the client”.

How Do You Gain Preeminence In A Market?

- Preeminence is a multifaceted approach like an integrated fabric: it’s a strategic mindset.
 - You get preeminence by subordinating your needs and totally focusing on the “other side”- the side of the client or customer. There are four groups of people you have to sell:
 1. Your fellow team members
 2. Your suppliers
 3. Your family
 4. Your clients
 - Only the fourth group pays you but all the groups are important to your success.
- ⇒ Example: Focus on the needs of the people the client must serve – his/her employees’ and/ or family members. You represent their (the people your client serves) needs to your client.

The Primary Basis for The Strategy of Preeminence Is A Keen Commitment To Empathy

- **Empathy** is understanding in a very compassionate and respectful way how the “other side” in the transaction is feeling; how they see the situation (what their hopes, dreams and needs are.)
 - Truly preeminent companies and individuals, in every communication, **always sell leadership**: a definitive belief system, authoritative positioning and a conviction of their point of view. They communicate in everything they do and say, that they want to lead you to a greater yield, a greater result, a greater happiness or greater profit.
 - Preeminent firms make sure when they communicate with a client or prospect that the client senses that their feelings are understood.
 - The firm is saying, “I want to give you what you need, want and deserve.”
- ⇒ Example: Clients want to leave their twenty to thirty years of accumulated wealth to their spouse or heirs rather than Uncle Sam. However most people procrastinate and may

even wait until it's too late. They always believe they have plenty of time. The leader won't permit his or her clients to fall into this trap because they have the knowledge and conviction it takes to get people to take action.

There Is A World Of Difference Between Giving Information and Giving Helpful Advice

- Information is inconclusive. Giving helpful advice is definitive; good advice is converted into action.
 - That's why those who practice the strategy of preeminence tell people, "Here's what you should do, here's how you should do it and here's why you should do it." **Being specific is incredibly powerful.**
 - We have become a society filled with people who are afraid to take a stand. But the people you trust are the people that help you to come to a conclusion. People want you to be the expert!
 - When you truly care about your clients' well-being, **you cannot allow that person to make a mistake, because your success depends on their success.**
- ⇒ Example: You realize that your client has several key employees that are critical to the success of the business. Failure to recommend and persist until the client follows through on your Key Employee benefits program is a disservice to your client. Don't allow your client to have a Key Employee walk out before acting on your recommendations.

It's Your Job to Provide Focus!

- Focus provides clarity
1. Most people don't know what is out of focus until someone shows them. **When they discover they're "out of focus" then they'll want to make a decision to change.** They don't know they are out of focus until they get focus after you refocus it for them.
 2. Connect all the dots for them. If you connect the dots, it helps them to see the next step. That's what "leading" is all about.
- ⇒ Example: Your client's financial lives have become significantly more complex over the last several years. Do they have a clear picture of the three most important things they must focus on over the next six months? If not, why not?
- Clarity gives power.
1. It's important for your customers to define for themselves their biggest frustrations, challenges and opportunities. In most cases, they are paralyzed because they cannot put their dreams into words. They just have a vague idea of what they really want... so they can't take action.

2. You want to give them clarity by asking them, “**What would the picture look like if your business were operating the way you really want it to?**” (Just asking this makes a change, in and of itself.)
3. Most people in business are strikingly like people on a cross-country trip. They are in one of two places. They either know where they are but have no idea of where they are going. Or they know where they are going but have no idea of where they are!
4. The end is when you have achieved your goal. But you have to know what your goal is and where you are now, in relation to your goal.

⇒ Example: Client reviews are an appropriate time for your clients to step back and restate what their objectives are. Showing them how they have progressed and getting a commitment for the next set of actions is what will keep them moving positively. Focus on the process and the sales will follow forever.

- Power gives understanding.

1. The strategy of preeminence also depends on your ability and willingness to educate your customers and prospects as to **what their real options are**.
2. Just telling them what to do and not telling them why they should do it doesn't give them the confidence that going through the process will produce.
3. Cultivate your ability to put into words what people want and build on that.
4. **The first thing to do is to articulate the biggest, clearest and desired result people abstractly felt but never had clarified for them.** Then build a strategy of action they can take—new concepts they had never recognized they wanted before.

⇒ Example: This will test your questioning and listening skills. The best people can take the rambling long answer and turn it into a clearly defined statement of what the person was trying to articulate. Replay the precise statement for your client and seek agreement.

- Understanding gives certainty.

1. Companies that practice the strategy of preeminence always come from a position of “hopefulness”. **They genuinely have a better and higher wish or hope for their clients or prospects than they even have for themselves.** They have the best wishes for every single prospect they come in contact with in their life.
2. It is this **hopefulness that gives their customers the courage, the belief, the strength and the desire to establish a long – term, loyal, lifelong relationship with them and their company.**

⇒ Example: Always look for situations where the client has more to gain from the transaction than you do in the short term. This guarantees your success. In the long term the client will reciprocate and get you to others like them so that they can avail themselves of your service.

- Certainty gives trust.

1. Always provide customers and prospects with the views and viewpoints those customers can absolutely trust. Never put your interest ahead of your customer's.

2. **Refuse to sell more or less of what they need. Always provide what is in your customer's best interest.**

⇒ Example: How can a client buy life insurance and not disability coverage? Isn't their income critical to building their long-term prosperity? Maybe you are being too easy on your clients.

- **Without trust, people won't take action.**

1. Leadership: Most buyers base everything they do on absolute authoritative leadership. Not condescension, but leadership. **They want someone who they believe can lead them to great results, outcomes, joy, less pain, more profitability, and more productivity.** In fact a true leader knows what's possible and often times the customer doesn't.
 2. People silently think: "I don't know what to do." And **they are searching for someone they trust, someone who understands their point of view, to point them in the right direction.**
 3. The fact is **people don't trust "the system"**. So leaders provide their customers with a viable alternative and a perspective that gives the customer control and power.
 4. People are really mad- **they don't feel anyone is listening** to what they want, and they don't know how to make anyone listen. This comes through in shoddy service, shoddy workmanship, shoddy products and shoddy business practices.
 5. If you can approach someone like that and say, "I understand your frustration and I think I can help. **Here's what I perceive you really want, and I'd like you to tell me first, if that's right or wrong. And once you and I agree on your ultimate goals and dreams and wishes, and then we can move forward with a plan to make them come true.** And I think I can do that for you. (But you see it all starts with taking the customer's point of view).
 6. **Put yourself in their role-** understand where they are, what they'd probably do if left alone and recognize that they'd do it because they'd be emotionally frustrated and impetuous.
- ⇒ Example: Once the client and you have determined what is really wanted. Have them put a value on what it means to them to get what they want. **This creates a powerful emotional bond with your solution and builds lasting relationships.** Without the emotional bond to your solution clients will change their minds on a whim. This little exercise will improve your close ratio. Let me be specific. Let's assume you just showed your client how to save \$150,000 in estate taxes. Mr. Client, "you can see that by implementing an irrevocable trust you will save over \$150,000- **tell me what that will do for you.**" You will see a dramatic change in physiology like the weight of the world has been lifted off the clients' shoulders. Observe the change. Listen carefully to your clients' answer. Compare the client's answer with how you thought the client would answer. I'll bet you guessed wrong. At this moment you have forced an emotional tie between your client and your solution. That tie is so strong it almost guarantees that you will close the transaction.

- **The Strategy Of Preeminence Relies On Authentic Communication**

1. Always ask: whom are we communicating with? What problems are we going to help them resolve? How can we have the most positive impact on this person?
 2. Remember: Your message doesn't have any value unless it makes an impact. Information alone is not motivating. **Unless it makes a positive and profound impact it doesn't have any value.**
- ⇒ Example: Always remember your clients all love the same radio station **WIIFM- What's In It For Me**. If you can't put it in their terms you don't have anything to offer. If your client doesn't need the benefit of your solution he sure doesn't need the feature of your product.

- **People Buy For Emotional Benefits**

1. Most people focus on tangible results, but most of the great rewards are intangible- like the birth of your first child, your college degree, winning the championship, or getting married. **Typically great rewards are emotional not tangible.** But most people sell on a tangible basis and ignore or forget about the emotional.
 2. **People have to recognize your advice as a solution to a problem that they feel emotionally as well as rationally.** Logic doesn't make a sale. You have to compel people on an emotional level.
 3. **People will avoid making decisions because they don't want to feel foolish.** That's another very powerful emotion. You don't want them to feel foolish for what they are currently doing. But you want them to know there is a better way. Or maybe you can provide a better feeling or a better result from what they are already doing.
 4. You want to **show how** your product, your service, your friendship, your partnership, **doing business with you will make people feel good about them.**
- ⇒ Example: Saving someone \$100,000 is not as important as this means they will have funded their grandchild's college education and their grandchild will have the opportunity to develop into a professional. Picture the client that made it without a strong educational background. How do you think they feel about being able to give a grandchild something they always wanted but couldn't afford?

- **Five Questions To Ask If You Were in the Clients place**

1. If I were on the receiving end would I want this?
 2. Why would I want to take advantage of this offer at this particular time?
 3. What's in it for me?
 4. How will this product or service make me feel better about my family, my business my future, my life, and myself?
 5. Why is this better than doing what I'm doing now- or doing nothing at all?
- ⇒ Example: **So what- Your promotion, your selling posture, your proposition has to answer a question that is already on a customer's mind.** It has to provide a solution or a result that is big enough, tangible enough and desirable enough that it will compel them to want to take action now.

- **10 Words That Will Change Your Life Forever: "Most people fall in love with their product instead of their prospect".**

1. This is the exact opposite of what needs to happen to achieve the strategy of preeminence.
 2. Most people think, “What do I have to say to get people to buy?”
 3. Instead they should say, **“What do I have to give? What benefit do I have to render?”**
 4. The message is: You matter. Your well-being is important to me.
- ⇒ Example: To accomplish this **you have to believe your purpose is to contribute great value**, not to take their money, but to give them a great outcome or result for what they are doing. You have to subordinate yourself and your interests and focus on them.

- **Sell The End Result Not Steps To Get There**

1. Typically people say, “We’ve been very successful and we’d like to work with you.”
2. Instead say, **“Let me show you what we do and how our system works so you can determine if it will work for you- then you can sign on.”**
3. People are searching for ways to make decisions better- they want ways to solve their problems today.
4. Most people don’t want to see things as a process. They’d rather see things as a project with a beginning and an end.
5. **People don’t want to be average or have an average result or yield. People will relate to you when you respect them, empathize with them and genuinely tell them they don’t have to be average.**
6. People need solutions not strategy. They need someone to advocate and address their well-being.
7. Never be afraid to ask your customers: Is there a better way?
8. Don’t bedazzle your clients with rhetoric. **A master of preeminence always wants to have ideas to leave their customers better off than when they started.**

- **“Show Me” Is More Powerful Than “Tell Me”**

1. Instead of making a conclusive statement, **give ammunition that allows a person to come to their own conclusion. You never want to draw the conclusion for them- you want them to draw the conclusion that then leads them to take action and make a commitment.**
2. By allowing people to come to their own conclusions not only will they “buy into” your product or service but **they will “buy into” the end result they believe they will achieve.** When they draw the conclusion that, “Yes, this really will make my life easier, or make me richer, or I’ll be more respected or more powerful in my business- then they have begun to embrace the end result. At this point the likelihood of achieving it goes up considerably.

- **Ways To Make It Easier For Them**

1. Reduce the height of the hurdle.
2. Talk about frustrations or desires they really feel.
3. People worry about whether they stand out, whether they are unique, whether people will really care- **let them know you think they are really special, let them know you care.**

4. Genuinely help them out- give your customers a chance to buy more often (don't make them buy less than they want.)
 5. Most concepts are too difficult to buy into the whole cloth on first blush- instead, give them an example of how things work.
- ⇒ Example: **Solve the most pressing problem the client perceives they have first.** Then show them the other areas they should focus on and the reasons why. This will produce an ongoing series of transactions for you.

- **Always Make The Customer The Center Of Attention**

1. Instead of making your business subject focused – make it individual focused.
2. Write, think and talk with a “them” focus rather than a “me” focus.
3. **Start each sentence with the word you rather than the word “I” or “me”.**
4. Talk about the end result, in feelings, in emotional terms, what your product will bring, not how it will work.
5. **Ask customers what they want.**
6. **Listen to them!**

- **Suggestions on Using The Strategy Of Preeminence**

1. Don't attempt to massively implement these ideas in total. This is an enormous amount of information that needs to be **digested one bite at a time.**
2. Begin with your management team and your most successful senior people only. Usually these people are the most receptive to new ideas. Or if you are a sales team follow the next steps provided.
3. Identify what you are already doing. When I went through this exercise with my sales teams we discovered that when we had been most successful we had practiced many of the approaches at the unconscious competency level.
4. The simple practice of **taking the ideas that are working to a conscious competency level gives immediate leverage to what you know.**
5. Now **identify one or two new ideas that can be applied to your business today.** I would recommend that as you survey your clients for your first target market that you use these ideas. Since these are clients that you have already had a successful relationship, you can “test” the idea with minimal risk.
6. Next go back and analyze two or three situations where you lost the business. Pick the really big situations where if you had won it would have made a significant difference to your business. Based on these new ideas would you have approached the situation differently?
7. Consider using the strategy of preeminence as a fundamental development tool for new employees. **Imagine what it would be like if two years from now everyone in your business had this fundamental mindset.** Would you be better? Would you be significantly better? Remember the new people haven't decided on what the right course of action they will follow. Put them on this path early and watch the results over time.
8. Last, **this strategy won't become part of your inner fiber unless it is reviewed continuously.** I would have my sales teams review it whenever we were attempting to implement a major change. It became a checklist to see if we had covered all the bases.

You will know you are succeeding when your team/teammates begin reminding you of the things that should be done to implement the strategy of preeminence.

PS. Always remember that this strategy should only be used by people who want to succeed massively.

PPS. Everyone has a need to position themselves and their businesses uniquely in the “targeted markets” they serve. The Strategy of Preeminence once fully comprehended and implemented is your passport to eventually “owning” your markets.



In summary we began everything with your Strategic Business Plan. The Strategy of Preeminence is the foundation upon which to build your Strategic Execution phase. Savor the ideas presented here. Don't try to do this massively as it would be like trying to eat a seven course meal in 15 minutes. Take it a step at a time as you are moving from knowing about this strategy to knowing how to apply it to separate your business from your competitors and to succeed massively in the long run.

BONUS

Hear the Strategy of Preeminence plus much more.

Since you have completed the reading of the SOP you may want to hear more from the master Jay Abraham. Just paste this link into your browser and it will take you to a webpage where you can gain access to about one hour of video with Jay in action.

I think you will find that it will greatly increase your knowledge and help you to implement this cornerstone strategy.

http://businesscoaching.typepad.com/the_business_coaching_blo/2008/02/jay-abraham-vid.html

Over the years I have been inspired by Jay Abraham. I have attended many of his live workshops and have actively participated in a mastermind organization of 280 business owners that he mentored. This participation enabled me to better understand the ideas that

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he expounds and to apply them at Amdahl. Later on I have taken the tried and proven success strategies and applied them to the Insurance, Pharmaceutical and Medical industries as well as many small business owners. I believe I hold the distinction of being Jay's "First Corporate Client". All of Jay's early clients were small business owners. Jay would corner me at his workshops and ask does this work at the Corporate level? I would then share with him what strategies I had selected and how I was implementing them. Having the opportunity to meet one on one to discuss ideas with him is truly a mind stretching experience.

The last time I saw Jay face to face was at a conference in Orlando sponsored by Strategic Profits. Jay was a keynote speaker for the 500 attendees. I decided that since I had a plane to catch immediately after his presentation that I would try to thank him for all of his wisdom and guidance that he had given me over the years. As I approached him he quickly addressed me by name (I had a name tag on) and before I said anything he said, "Bob are you still working with the people in the North East on Financial Services"? During Jay's presentation he was taking questions from the audience and my table elected me to pose our question. Before Jay answered he commented, "Bob and I have known each other for at least 16 years and he has been an active member of our mastermind business owners." I am very honored to be remembered by such a business leader and I have always felt an obligation to share as many of his ideas with my clients in order that they may benefit from his expertise.

During the summer I was contacted by Jay. He asked me to work with him to develop a "Kick Ass Workshop" for The Financial Services Industry. Please say a little prayer for me that someday I will have the opportunity to share the stage with Jay. He is one of the most forward thinking and generous people I have ever met.

