

## Imler Ponders the Secret of Any Successful Business

*Woodall's Campground Management – May 2000*

It was Saturday morning, and, as I backed my car from the garage, sunlight revealed that the old buggy needed a bath. Since it had been awhile since I had treated her to a real good cleaning. I debated about whether I should tackle the job myself or head for the car wash. The entire debate didn't take very long. You see, I like to wash cars about as much as I like to wash windows.

As I drove, I noticed something that prompted thoughts about one of my favorite subjects - our industry. Since I was already thinking about washing cars and the RV park business, making comparisons between the operation of a campground and a car wash was easy and logical.

Here is what I noticed along the three-mile drive. As I was waiting at the stoplight, I noticed the four filling stations, one on each corner of the intersection. Two of them had drive-through car washes available with the purchase of gas, so I could get the old buggy washed for very little or maybe even free. I also noticed a short way up the street I was traveling on. a do-it-yourself wand-type car wash. Both stalls also had special vacuums with which I could clean the inside of the car.

Neither the car washes at the gas stations nor the wand wash facility offered the type of car washing experience that I sought or that my old buggy deserved. So, I proceeded toward my original destination.

As I drove, it seemed that everywhere I looked there were other car washing opportunities begging for my business.

As I turned into my destination, the old buggy seemed to smile and breath a sigh of relief. I, too, smiled knowing that I had not been distracted by all the other opportunities that I had passed. I knew what type of experience both my old buggy and I were going to have.

But, I noticed something else. No one was out front waving signs and shouting for drivers' attention. In fact, cars were lined up four wide and several deep, waiting for a car wash. I compared this with the absence of waiting vehicles at the gas stations and the wand wash. "Why is this phenomenon taking place?" I asked myself.

Some of you are probably thinking: "Okay Imler, you got your car washed, now what is your point?" Well, it all came together when I sought an answer to my question. "Why are there all these cars here and none at the other places?" I asked the owner/manager for

an explanation.

Here's what he replied: "I never worry about those other facilities. They don't offer the same facilities and service that we do. None of them have a coffee or snack bar where customers can read or watch TV while they wait. Our customers do not have to do anything to their cars. We even move them through the lines for them. We have the door open for them when they are ready to leave, and we take credit cards. My people always smile and say 'thank you' when they close the door for the driver. Besides that, we guarantee their satisfaction. If they're not happy, we'll do it over or correct the problem. And, furthermore, we give rain checks if it rains within 24 hours of their visit to our facility."

I was amazed at his upbeat attitude about his business. Can you believe that he said: "We never worry about those other facilities?" He knew about them and what they offered, but wasn't concerning himself in the least. "Why?" I asked myself.

Could it be because he keeps his eye on his own business and the level of service he offers. Was it because, although he knew about all the others, his major concern and efforts were for his own facilities and service. Or was it because he actually enjoyed what he was doing?

"There ought to be principles here that can be used in the RV park business," I said to myself. Perhaps, we wouldn't worry so much about the other fellow:

- If we were more concerned about our guests' total experience and satisfaction.
- If we all had a more positive attitude about our guests and the businesses we are in.
- If we kept our eyes on our own business instead of worrying about what our competition (either private or public) offered.
- If we could be assured that we were the best we could be.
- If we could be assured that our facilities and service were the best we could make them.
- And, if we talked more about how wonderful it is to be in our line of business, rather than we do about the long hours, hard work and the very few, nasty guests who cross our paths.

I recently read an article in the Sacramento Bee that was advising people about starting a business. The author cited the number one key to success in any business as enjoying it, because the other demands will be taxing.

It is also an established training fact for runners that they never look over their shoulder to observe the competition. They must keep their eyes on their own goal line.

What do you think? Are there principles here for our industry - or for you?

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