

Your Competitive Advantage is You



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In 2016, I decided to launch a full-service agency. Many of my business colleagues and friends in the marketing communications industry warned of too much competition, the need to focus on a niche because they said, you can't help everyone.

But competition was and is not my concern because I compete with myself.

I'm lucky to have had my dad as a mentor. I adopted this mindset of competing with myself when I was young. Some 20-years ago, when my father had stage 4 melanoma (and has since passed), he suggested my three young sons question him about life while I created a video of him.

What's always stuck in my mind was one of my son's questions,

“How do you know when you’ve done your best?” My father said, “At the end of the day, only you know if you’ve given 100 percent. No one else can decide for you.”

You may be reading this thinking; I know who I am but how does that change my situation?

People Hire for You, Not What You Do

In this environment people are fearful, afraid to speak up, feel their voices don’t matter, are afraid of taking risks, and are worried about all the negative impacts of the pandemic.

Since we can only control our emotions and reactions, rediscover yourself. Previously, I’ve shared the importance of looking back throughout your background, experiences, interests, hobbies, strengths and relationships to identify common patterns and transferable skills.

After reflecting on my 30-year career, I realized I had written all my life and had always worked on technology accounts. When I combined the two, I became a technology columnist.

Beyond my career, I thought about all the things I used to love to do, travel and live in France, ski, swim, bike, play the piano, dance, sing, read and spend time with my three boys. Since a piano is too large, I just ordered a keyboard, so we can enjoy our love of music and play again.

Research suggests that our current perceptions are shaped by what’s happened to us in the past. If you draw on your life experiences, you’ll have more to share with others, connect in a more personal way and open yourself up to new opportunities.

I’ve always loved Carla Harris, Vice Chairman and Managing Director at Morgan Stanley presentation in 2014, called, “How To Own Your Power Presentation: Take the Lead.”

In it, Carla shares that she graduated from Harvard undergrad and Harvard Business School and thought that “*success was based on how smart you are and how hard you work.*” Instead, she discovered that success is not a meritocracy. Instead, it’s based on how you’re perceived.

Do You Know How You’re Perceived?

Most of us know what our friends, family and colleagues think of us. But, do you know how you’re viewed online, during Zoom calls with new acquaintances, on social and digital media, and with business prospects and clients?

To a large degree, if you trust your confidantes, you have some idea. But, if you’re unwilling to listen to constructive advice, you’re missing out. For years, my now ex-husband told me I talk too much. Since he’s a linear thinker, I ignored it. But, after hearing this from other people, I’ve modified my behavior and am a better listener.

Instead of trying to promote your product or service, tell people the story of you and why you do what you do. For example, I often work with young tech founders who are passionate about their new ideas. However, people buy from people. If you’re not bringing your whole selves into the work you do or your business, you’re less likely to succeed.

For example, I met one young woman at a blockchain pitch fest in late 2019. Since she was born in China, she had an accent, and was shy too. As an outsider, I said, the fact that you grew up in a different country is an advantage because she had a global perspective. She never thought about herself in this way. After she practiced her pitch with me, she felt more confident and was accepted into Columbia’s Accelerator program.

Another 25+ year old founder with whom I worked, launched a business at eight years old, is fluent in six languages, has

several postgraduate degrees and is a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, among other significant accomplishments. Instead of promoting his startup and product, we discussed injecting his personal accomplishments into his brand story. After doing so, he impressed VC's and his age was no longer a factor.

Do You Take Your Accomplishments for Granted?

Many high achievers are perfectionists, workaholics, don't want to ask for help because they want to do it themselves and don't own their value. But, you're more than your title, your position, your role and the work you do.

Often, it takes an outsider like a business coach, a mentor, a therapist, a professor or others to help you uncover all that you are. After launching my agency in August of 2016, I was in a taxi that crashed with a Mack truck. Prior to the accident, I had two knee replacements but tore my MCL. I wore a full right-leg brace for several months and was bedridden.

Since I was used to attending in-person events to meet people, I didn't know how I could work. I reached out to several industry leaders for help. Deirdre Breakenridge came to the rescue with a lot of ideas about what I could do. Since that time, she's been my mentor, advisor and now, a dear friend.

Looking back, had I not reached out for help, I would have gotten depressed. With weekly "homework" assignments, I always had a lot to do while trying to heal. Unfortunately, in 2018, I had an MCL replacement on my knee replacement and was laid-up again. Deirdre, among others, helped me to keep moving forward while being bedridden.

Daily, I discover new things about myself by accepting constructive feedback, ensuring that my communications are two-way and accepting compliments instead of brushing them off.

Decode Your Value is a process of looking inward and being open to other's impressions of us. When my boys were young, I was their mirror, reflecting back on their achievements and frustrations.

We can only know how we're perceived by allowing others to feel comfortable giving honest feedback. Whether negative or positive, you'll learn more about yourself.

If you want to learn more about a process to discover your value, I'd love to hear from you.



About the Author: Wendy Glavin is Founder and CEO of Wendy Glavin, a NYC full-service agency. Wendy is a 30-year veteran of corporate, agency, consulting and small business ownership. She specializes in B2B2C marketing communications, executive writing, PR and social media advisory. Her website is: <https://wendyglavin.com/>. Contact her at: wendy@wendyglavin.com.