

## WHAT IS THE CURE FOR COMPLACENCY?

By Ross Shafer

I wrote a book titled, *Behave Like A Startup* because so many of my clients were frustrated that young startup companies were nibbling at their legacy market share. These Fortune 1000 clients found themselves puzzled because they remain convinced they were doing everything right. It's very hard to argue against long track records. They worked hard to develop award winning sales and marketing teams. They seemed to be hiring the right people for their respective cultures. They had tons of cash in reserve for R & D and expansion. They offer stock options, company gyms, and maternity leave programs. Still, they find themselves losing high dollar bids to relatively unknown companies. It doesn't make sense to lose market share to companies that don't have long-term relationships or even (what they would consider) credible past performances.

Brace yourselves. This pattern will only continue to haunt famous companies. Most highly successful companies battle complacency because they deny it is even happening. Instead they blame a volatile economy, off shore competition, or the choking of government regulations. Yet, from what I witness, complacency is a slow growing disease. Do not take it lightly. Let's take a little quiz to see if you are vulnerable.

Do you sense your company isn't as reactive as it once was?

Are your team leaders starting to take shortcuts instead of performing at their thorough world-class standards?

Are leaders complaining about burnout?

Do teams get distracted (and get cautious) every time they get wind of another company scouting you as a takeover target?

Are teams breaking off in to factions in defiance of your core goals, or worse, some of your key people are quietly sabotaging workflows to slow things down to what they consider a more manageable pace?

If you sense any of this is happening to you, what can you do about it? The solution can start today. Throw your culture in reverse and behave like a young Startup company again.

Startups do business in very different ways than a legacy company. Startups have an extreme sense of urgency and they don't wait for perfection. They need to grab business now or they won't exist tomorrow.

Since Startups typically have a much more lean management team (translation: not enough money) They can't let inane distractions take away from their immediate project goals or client deadlines.

Startups have a dynamic energy. They are hungry. They adapt and evolve quickly.

Startups encourage idea harvesting. If you walk into a startup office there are white boards full of unconventional thoughts. Some smack of fantasy. Post it notes cover walls and lunchrooms. People talk louder. They laugh more. There is an obvious camaraderie.

And, this next element you might find shocking. Team members get together outside of work because they are usually college buddies or “friend of friends.” There is no question the vibe of a Startup is exciting. It’s enthusiastic because there is a true sense of mission and ownership. They win together. They ring bells or foghorns with every sale.

If you want to inject that kind of feeling back into your organization, here are four cultural shifts you can make.

**ONE:** Restore your corporate sense of urgency by reacting to market conditions before you have to. Startups launch ideas and products in beta mode because speed-to-market is so critical. The end users will fill in the details for you. I mean look at the apps on your smart device. You heard about a cool app and you downloaded it. You didn’t perform your due diligence to make sure every single bug had been perfected. No worries. If the app isn’t flawless you knew you will get updates from the cloud within the week. These days, perfection is fluid; a work-in-progress.

**TWO:** Re-examine all of your customer & client complaints because complaints are the first alert to how any organization leaks money. Complaints are especially dangerous in a recommendation economy because complaints can go quickly go viral. If a Startup gets a complaint they respond immediately because they care about every single customer flub via social media accounts – because that’s the fastest route to multiple end users. A complainer who gets a response from a company is likely to post it to thousands of other social friends.

**THREE:** Look for sluggish processes. Whether you are a B2C or a B2B company, what steps within the sale, order, and delivery processes are causing customers to leave you?

**FOUR:** Take a different approach to risk. Many legacy companies overthink risk to the point that good ideas often come to market too late. Look, I’m not suggesting you should be reckless. But I am saying that Startups make bold decisions because they want your market share. And, they are willing to be very hyper-innovative to get it.

All of the above rests upon how well you can get buy-in from your teams to be more enthusiastic and nimble. You’ve got to bring back the fun – bring back the excitement of being with a fresh-thinking company. If you can pull that off, the energy in your organization will be palpable again. You’ll see new ideas being born before your eyes. You might even find yourself having a drink after work with someone on your team for fun...not as a lubricant to slog through another unnecessary meeting.

#### **ABOUT ROSS SHAFER:**

ROSS SHAFER is the preeminent keynote speaker on CHANGE & RELEVANCE. He has authored (9) business books, won (2) International stand-up comedy competitions, and earned (6) TV Emmys as a network talk and game show. He has also bought and sold (23) different companies. As a veteran of more than 2,600 keynote speeches, you might want to have Ross speak at your next conference <https://RossShafer.com>

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