



VIEWS&VISIONS

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Expanding Your Global Footprint Locally

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He received his undergraduate degree in finance, insurance and business law from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Champion Industries Inc., headquartered in Huntington, West Virginia, is a business solutions provider specializing in commercial printing, business forms manufacturing, office products and office furniture in regional markets east of the Mississippi River.

Competition is all around us like never before. Purchasing decisions can be made from different suppliers all across the globe quickly and efficiently. Often I hear the question, or even worse, the already defeated statement, "How am I supposed to compete?" As next generation local business leaders, we are all asking ourselves that same question.

Although hard to imagine, but extremely important to remember, almost every national corporation started as a local business in a local economy. How did they grow their footprint? At Champion, our leadership built this company on a very unique platform. We have grown regionally to be one of the top commercial printing and office supply companies in the nation by becoming a conglomerate of local businesses servicing local markets. This has afforded us the opportunity to provide business solutions



C H A P M A N P R I N T I N G C O M P A N Y

to many national and regional organizations headquartered in diverse markets and economies.

At Champion, we are constantly focusing on striving to innovate and strengthening our human capital. This can be very difficult to continuously achieve because it is a circle that must not be broken and needs the support of a strong local economy. A critical aspect of fixing and enhancing local economies is to keep the same dollar turning over and over again in that same footprint. That dollar breeds the ability for reinvestment in new technologies, efficiencies and the training and attracting of human capital. Thus, there is great importance to utilize local suppliers, but local businesses have to deserve the opportunity to keep those revenues in their market. This leads us to the importance of



strengthening local brand identity and premium service levels.

Moving forward, we are striving to avoid two obstacles: under-appreciation of our brands and devaluing service and relationship. National companies bypass these hurdles because it is impossible for them to enter into a deeper service level and relationship with local customers. This presents a clear opportunity for local businesses.

In today's fast-paced buying world, it is imperative that your company is the first one that comes to mind – that is brand identity. Brand identity is essentially relationship. Many of us share a high-level relationship with a brand, such as a manufacturer whose trucks we trust are "built tough," or the food chain we frequent because we know we are "eating fresh."

As local businesses, the first obstacle is that often our entire brand identity platform becomes "we are local." What does that mean? Are your products of better quality than your competitor? If an issue arises, can you handle it immediately and face to face? Or does it simply mean you are saying that we should place our faith in your organization because your address is down the street? It is not enough just to tell someone they should "buy local." In any business relationship, you have to give someone a reason to place value on your products and services.

As local businesses, we have the competitive advantage to access a valuable, deepened service level. This changes us from a vendor to a partner. However, this can lead to the second hurdle: We often underappreciate our own service and value of our relationship. Whenever we undervalue something, we stop paying it as much attention, often taking advantage of it, perhaps without even realizing. For example, we've shared a great personal relationship with a particular customer and have done business together for a long time. Over time, though, when this



customer has a problem, we do not resolve it for multiple days, assuming they will understand due to our relationship. We are then surprised when they eventually make a change, because no matter how deep the relationship, our customers have personal goals and objectives they want to achieve. We undervalued our service, underperformed and convinced ourselves that we had an advantage because we are friends and colleagues in a local context. Sustaining and growing our presence requires much more investment of ourselves in the relationship.

As local businesses, we have the niche opportunity to be a true solutions partner rather than just a supplier. We all must continuously strive for this. If we do, we will be able to achieve the absolute most important aspect of successful business – hope. Hope breeds confidence, and confidence pushes us all to continue to be determined in pursuing our vision and passions. Hope erases questions like, "How am I supposed to compete?"

I am so fortunate to come to work and collaborate daily with talented individuals

and highly skilled craftspeople who take a raw material and turn it into an opportunity for local, regional and national organizations. As we look toward the future at Champion, our focus will continue to be a total brand management solution for local businesses and creating a win/win relationship. We believe when we help our customers achieve, we all expand our footprints not just locally, but regionally and globally together. ▼