



## ***Time to Slaughter Your Sacred Cows*** **Five Extinct Species in Your Business**

*“Sacred cows make the tastiest hamburgers.”*  
*-Abbie Hoffman*

### **Back in Time**

My father-in-law passed away several months ago. Among his possessions was an old Victrola. I was listing items to go to relatives and typed the word on my cell phone. It wouldn't accept the word and constantly corrected it to "Victoria."

Autocorrect had never heard of and couldn't identify the word "Victrola." This got me thinking about how outdated that antique device was. If you are reading this and have no idea what a Victrola is, I guess I'm as outdated, too. I never owned it, but my grandparents had one in their living room and I remember hearing an old vinyl record on it.

Speaking of vinyl records, do you remember those? They came before 8 Track tapes which came around (or before) cassette tapes, which came before Compact Discs which came before mp3s. Do you get the idea?

No, this isn't a walk down memory lane as much as it is a statement about what you are doing today that was outmoded years ago and is irrelevant in today's world. It is an anachronism, meaning it is back or against time (*ana-chronos*).

I asked a group in Canada what they are doing in their offices that are extinct in today's business world. It struck a nerve. Unanimously, the answer was: "FAX machines."

Fax machines that once were the only way to electronically send a document are now anachronistic. People now scan documents or use a PDF document in their place.

Scanning is safer now than your Fax machine in some ways. An internet security professional told the group that Fax machines tied to your computer are a gateway for a hacker to access all of your private files... including your client information.

*“I’ve always challenged myself and the people who work with me to take new approaches to traditional business challenges, to push the envelope and constantly ask whether our sacred cows are still producing great milk.” –Irene Rosenfeld*

My father had a phrase for starting an automobile. He called it “cranking the car.” When he was a boy, the way you started an auto was to get out of the car and turn a crank on the front under the radiator... much the way you pull-start a lawn mower or chain saw.

We have a modern anachronism in use today. Do you refer to lowering the window in your car as “rolling it down?” Even if you were born after almost all “crank levers” were replaced by switches on car doors to lower the window, you are familiar with rolling it down.” I guarantee that your grandchildren will stare at you in amazement in several years wondering what you are “rolling” when you press the window switch.

Can you think of a term or practice that is an anachronism in your daily business?

### **Will You Be “Ready?”**

In the movie, “Gypsy Rose Lee,” Rosalind Russell tried to resurrect an old Vaudeville routine when the family is out of new ideas for their stage act... the cow outfit two family members wore onstage! She wanted to bring it back into their act long after they had deserted the costume. Was the outfit their “sacred cow” from back in time that was irrelevant to their present-day success?

In one scene, as Gypsy’s mother says, “You need something to remind you that you are an actress, not a cheap stripper.” Gypsy responds that she isn’t a cheap stripper. She’s the best in the business. Her mother responds, “You won’t be ready for Vaudeville when it comes back.” Gypsy’s retort, “No, I’ll be dead.”

I wrote in my first bestseller about “Dinosaurs.” They are practices, policies or products that are extinct or not bringing you the returns they once did as effectively. Your dinosaur is costing you more to keep it alive than to let it go and bury it.

I encouraged people to have a funeral service and say “Farewell” to their dinosaur and walk away... before it costs them more in upkeep. Dinosaurs come in Five Species in your business – hoping they will show some life:

#### **Procedures**

Time wasting tasks – filling out forms, useless meetings, antiquated systems and methods. They are sales methods that worked for the manager years ago, but not for your lackluster staff. They are help desks that only forward the problems to someone else and don’t “help” by giving solutions. They are outdated methods for turning in course credits or credentials that don’t seem to have made it into the 21st Century.

### **People**

Staff who won't work or constantly complain to your customers. They are still there because they either know someone or know something *about* someone. When I ask a group to name their dinosaur, if they laugh, I know it is a person they are thinking about. A CEO told me after a meeting that HE was the dinosaur and needed to release some authority to people to prevent him from killing the company by micromanaging everyone to do the job HIS way.

### **Paranoia**

The practice of watching your competition instead of watching your customers. Your competition is waiting for you to copy them and destroy yourself. Their greatest fear is you building a strong base with your existing customers and taking their business away. It's okay to not be *everything* to *everyone* – specialize. Exclusivity has its merits to differentiating in your market.

**Practices** that once were effective and are now wasting time, money and customers. Your employees deserve to do more for what you are paying them to do and not jump through hoops just to maintain outdated methods. How can you update your practices to please customers? If you have to train your customers in how to do business with you, perhaps they aren't the ones who need an education.

**Policies** that punish customers. Let's face it, when was the last time you were a customer and the organization you were trying to do business with quoted their "policy?" Did it make you feel better... or worse for your poor treatment?

Henry Ford, the early automaker was faced with other car companies featuring different colored car options. He only sold black cars. Henry said, "You can have it in any color you want, as long as it is black." His sales continued to slump and eventually he had to "give in" and offer other color options.

Are you waiting for the customers to adjust to your policies?

*"There's something about dinosaurs that should be very humbling to human beings."  
-Colin Trevorrow*

I used an airport off-site parking service for a little over a year. They offered valet service and it was nice. Rather than have patrons park out in the lot and wait to be picked up in the heat, rain or cold, you could park your car at the entrance under cover and be picked up for the trip to the airport. Upon return they would call the office when you were picked up at baggage claim and order your car to be waiting for you at the drop off area.

But I found the settings on my radio at different stations on my radio (Remember radio buttons?). I found the seat settings changed often. They began to slow down the service and the car wouldn't be ready. Finally, they discontinued the valet service completely.

When I asked why, the representative answered, “We received so many complaints about the service, we just discontinued it. That cut down our complaints!”

It worked on me. I use a different service that serves me well. In fact, it is growing faster than the company has space to accommodate new customers. It is running the other parking company OUT of business.

*“Old habits die hard, I guess. If you don’t kick them, they kick you.” -Mel Gibson*

What is your take on poor service or old habits? Would it be better to just quit offering services that are poor? I disagree! Find the problems, the dinosaurs, the sacred cows, the anachronisms, etc. costing you customers and profits. FIX them! Fix them now, or you will continue to either receive complaints, or worse... lose business permanently.

***Permission is granted to reprint this article provided the following paragraph is included in full:***

**Jim Mathis, IPCS, CSP, MDiv. is *The Reinvention PRO*<sup>™</sup>, an International Platform Certified Speaker, Certified Speaking Professional and best-selling author of *Reinvention Made Easy: Change Your Strategy, Change Your Results*. To subscribe to his free professional development newsletter, please send an email to: [subscribe@jimmathis.com](mailto:subscribe@jimmathis.com) with the word SUBSCRIBE in the subject. An electronic copy will be sent out to you every month. For more information on how Jim and his programs can benefit your organization or group, please call 407-369-7842, or visit his web site: [www.jimmathis.com](http://www.jimmathis.com). © 2019 Reinvention Nation, LLC.**