

Questing



A Feather in the Cap

The best businesses are those who are ranked ahead of the rest. If ever there was a call to action, targeted squarely at those with a competitive streak, this statement could be it. The opportunity to be recognized for your achievements can be very alluring. Landing a coveted spot on the list of choice can be as much a reward for years of effort, as it is incentive to do more in the future. Whether the aim is to be recognized for social activism, eco-friendly focus, dollars & cents know how, or 360' of humanistic tendencies... there's a *list* for everyone and every company. Best 100. Top 50. Oprah's Favorite Things. Letterman's Top 10. Heck, even Santa had a Naughty/Nice list that many children worked feverishly to stay on the right side of.

After Edmund Hillary ascended to the summit of Everest, the list of 'can-doers' attempting the same, grew and grew. To be among 'the best', is to incite others to want to be there too. This may be why the variety of quests/programs has grown over time - allowing more the opportunity to enjoy the view from the top. Yet, with so many options to choose from, the first challenge comes in determining which list/competition/survey is truly best for you and your company. Think of it like choosing which of the World's biggest mountains you want to climb; or for those a little more ambitious - the plan to climb them all.

Getting Your Bearings

Before you begin to plan your quest for the summit, ask yourself "why?" Why is having your name on the list, so important? Be honest with your intentions - are we doing this for the company/brand/competitive advantage/employees or are we doing this for more personal reasons? Either answer is fine, really. The *Top 40 under 40* and *The Fortune 500* are examples of well-known published lists; the result of programs designed for very different, yet specific target markets.

This is where doing your homework and researching the benefits and values of a particular quest/program can be critical. Factors that may affect your decision include:

- the cost to participate,
- regulatory/legislative/financial minimum entrance requirements
- internal administrative/coordinating capacity

In the case of some of the more humanistic programs the application process (data collection/response) is a major differentiator. Some look to the Leadership to provide their feedback, while others go deeper, taking the survey directly to the employees for their input. How important is it to you to have your people involved in the process?

The reality is, once you understand the rationale for wanting to be recognized, you will be better prepared to target the ideal measurement tool/competition for your organization. Ultimately, you should be able to speak not only to how participation and recognition links into your current business planning, but also how it fits in the years to come. The decision to pursue a quest is married to the decision to take a long term view of planning and people management. These kinds of decisions involve setting your sights on the future.

The Altitude Affect

To be formally recognized on your list of choice is a cyclical process that can demand a lot from you and your resources - over and over. Anyone who has climbed the Grouse Grind can tell you - *the higher you go, the harder it gets*. Improvements and efficiencies become more difficult to achieve, or take longer to fully appreciate. You learn to do more with less (oxygen for example) and you get used to others nipping at your heels to pass you to the top. After all, the goal is to reach the summit - to be the best of the best.

As a company, the better you are the harder you have to work to maintain your position and to stay ahead of the competition. On your climb up the mountain, you will benefit from assistance, guide/Sherpa, equipment (compass, O₂), and training, included repeated trips to ever increasing levels of altitude to allow for acclimatizing. Whether it's route mapping, environmental risk assessments, or simply some companionship along the way from someone who has "been there, done that", you will find that a good partner can be worth their weight in gold.

The Top End

The same can be said for having the proper team of support around you when traversing unfamiliar territory on your quest to be the best. By establishing a solid rapport with a trusted advisor and electing an internal champion, you position yourself for a more comfortable and controlled ascent. This can also include forming a small committee of representatives from within your organization to help you, not only in the planning and roll out, but with the after effects (results) and the potential changes required.

Ultimately, any quest for greatness will be filled with unequal parts: challenge & reward. If it is your first time entering into the foray set realistic expectations - do your homework and understand what you are up against. In the months and years...yes years, leading up to participating in your first quest application, you may be surprised at the volume of insights, learning, and foundational changes. And yes, by changes I mean actual changes that have an obvious effect on your business, to your environment, and even to your business plan.



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To have a deeper conversation about how this subject will affect your business, please contact:

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