

Competitors - Friend or Foe?

David Begin

When you think of the competition in your marketplace, do you think of fellow business owners and brethren, teaching the world about professional car washing and keeping the environment safe and clean, or do you think of them as "mud sucking dogs," taking away your customers and deserving of destruction and total annihilation? My guess is at any given time, you think of your competitors in both ways.



I find myself stepping back and in the dark recesses of my mind, actually appreciating my local car wash competition. If it wasn't for my competition, my operation would probably be a lot less efficient than it is today. My local competition keeps me on my toes by forcing me to analyze every aspect of my business to see what can be improved. It forces me to keep my equipment maintained and to upgrade to the latest equipment. Competition forces me to keep my operation running efficiently and smoothly. It forces me to find way to offer the most value to my customer to keep them coming back. It makes me treat my customer with respect so they don't take their business down the street. It's my competition that makes me a better operator and for that, I am secretly grateful.

Some of these competitors have become my friends. It is nice to able to share issues and insights with someone who is going through the same things I am. I like to think that my tunnel has some "classified secret" that gives me the edge and makes my car wash the best there is, but I know it doesn't take a rocket scientist to drive through my car wash to see what and how I am doing.

Competition also validates a market segment. Seth Godin, the author of the marketing book, "Purple Cow" states that competitors give validation to a market. If we were the only one out there doing it, we would either not be alone very long or we would quickly find out why nobody else is doing it.

The International Carwash Association (ICA) consumer habits studies indicate that the majority of car owners still wash their vehicles in their driveways. With these potential customers, we all have a common goal to communicate the benefits of professional car washing to the consumer.



So thank you, my fellow car wash competitors. I still want to beat the socks off of you, but you have made me and, hopefully, our industry better and ultimately, our customers will be better for it.

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