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You Can't Read the Label From Inside the Jam Jar

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By [Deborah Daily](#), Co-founder & President, Buckaroo Marketing | New Media



I'm always fascinated by company leaders who cannot grasp the value someone with a different perspective can bring to them. It reminds me of that homespun wisdom that it's impossible to read the label from inside a jam jar.

Put another way, unless a CEO or other company leader has managed to become 100 percent objective, they're probably not able to see their organization as their marketplace does. The decisions they make and the actions they take are then limited by the boundaries of their own perspectives. You may fervently believe in the superiority of your product and the genuine concern of your customer service team, but if the outside world thinks what you sell is second-rate and your CSRs are even worse, you're not going to get much traction.

That's one of many reasons it pays to develop relationships with strategic partners that go beyond what most companies consider as vendor relationships. Strategic partners look at your organization from outside the proverbial jam jar — in fact, the best strategic partners look at it from any number of angles, giving you insight as to how your many stakeholders see you. They can also bring you ideas you may not have considered that can keep you a step ahead of the competition.

Two keys in finding the right strategic partner are identifying a partner that spends more time listening than talking, and choosing an organization capable of growing as your needs change and expand. Often, companies assume that outside help is beyond the reach of their resources. It's true that some potential partners arrive with grand schemes and price tags to match. They may offer great work and brainpower for larger or different organizations, but for your company, it's like using an M-16 to swat mosquitoes.

Our company is proud of the work we've done for our clients and even prouder of the number of years we've helped several of those organizations. Typically, we began to work with them when their needs were modest and their budgets were too small to interest some of the bigger players. We helped them make the most of those limited budgets in the early days, and as they've achieved better returns, they've been able to commit more dollars to explore new channels or opportunities.

Long-term relationships like that are based upon trust and mutual respect. As organizations grow and their needs change, we've been able to grow alongside them. We've begun those relationships working with department heads, and as they've moved into C-level roles, the partnership has deepened. We've become sounding boards for new ideas and ambassadors for the companies as they move into new business sectors.

I mentioned the importance of finding a strategic partner that does more listening, and I can't overstate the importance of that trait. Over the years, I've learned that company leaders and key staff members often come up with germs of ideas without realizing it. They'll mention something in passing or recount a conversation they've had at a trade show, but they're so focused on day-to-day operations that the potential opportunity doesn't occur to them. A trusted strategic partner can transform that germ of an idea into a plan of action to achieve the desired end goal.

A great example of that scenario was a longtime client that remarked about a couple successful installations in cold storage applications. The client wondered what it would take to target that market, so we went to work researching the decision-makers, the trade associations, and the shows that appeared to be the most promising. Next, we developed a plan to have an inexpensive presence at a key show and tightly target the right attendees. Not only was the effort ultimately successful, but it allowed the client to dip their toes into the market segment in a cost-effective way.

How can you find the strategic partners who fit your needs and your budget? The best way is to talk to your peers in companies with which you don't compete. Learn who they work with and pay attention to their level of enthusiasm. If they give a halfhearted recommendation, it probably isn't worth your time, but if they get excited about what they've been able to accomplish, it's time to ask them to make the connection for you.

The view from inside your jam jar may be comfortable and familiar, but it can be awfully limiting and inflexible. You may be content to remain there, but I suspect you're ready to discover what awaits you outside — and the right strategic partner can get you there more quickly and effectively.

Deborah Daily is the co-founder and president of Buckaroo Marketing | New Media, a Fishers-based strategic Multi-media, Marketing, and Advertising Agency established in 1999. She can be reached at DLDaily@gobuckaroo.com or called direct at 317.694.4160.



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