

You, too, can be success

99% OF THE POPULATION KNOW DAVE THOMAS AS THE FOUNDER OF WENDY'S, ACCORDING TO A COMPANY SURVEY. I HAVE SEEN THOMAS PERSONALLY HYPING HIS BUSINESS ON TV AND HAVE EATEN A HAMBURGER OF TWO AT A FEW OF HIS MANY VENUES. THOMAS OPENED HIS FIRST RESTAURANT IN 1969 IN COLUMBUS, OHIO. TODAY THERE ARE MORE THAN 6,000. THOMAS DIED ON JANUARY 8, 2002 AT AGE 69 OF LIVER CANCER, A REMARKABLE HORATIO ALGER -TYPE SUCCESS.

HIS DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT WAS DRIVEN BY THREE PERSONAL CONVICTIONS:

HARD WORK
QUALITY CONTROL
SHREWD MARKETING

These three convictions also drive lay and clergy leaders of successful lay pastoral care "business." Likewise, individual lay pastors become success when driven by these same convictions. Considering that Wendy's ongoing business is selling great hamburgers to the public, and that the Lay Pastors Ministry's business is "selling" great love and care to God's people, let's look closely at Thomas' three-point success formula.

HARD WORK

A successful ministry doesn't just happen. Think how hard Jesus worked at His ministry: walking myriads of miles; teaching and healing by day, praying by night; dealing with hostile officials on one hand and squabbling, slow-learning disciples on the other; weary and hungry; betrayal, denial and desertion. He not only made the take-up-your-cross for being a disciple, he took up His cross – literally. He worked hard physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally, and spirituality.

Think how hard Paul worked at his ministry. Listen to him: "I have worked much harder [than other Israelites] ...have been in prison...been flogged...exposed to death again and again.. shipwrecked...I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep...I have known hunger and thirst ...I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." (II Cor. 11:23-28)

Someone said, "Having a dream takes imagination; making a dream come true takes work." Every successful business person, every successful lay pastoral care ministry

leader, and every successful lay pastor, testify to the HARD WORK conviction.

QUALITY CONTROL

"Excellence in all things and all things to God's glory," so reads the plaque on a church wall. Excellence in people's spirits control the quality in their life and ministry. God gave Moses requirements for constructing a world class tabernacle (curtains of finely twisted linen, gold hooks, acacia wood frames..."by a skilled craftsman"), better-than-Armani "suits" for the priests (finely twisted linen, braided chains of gold, engraved onyx stones, "the work of a skilled craftsman." (Exodus 26 and beyond) You can be sure Moses assumed the **QUALITY CONTROL** task because he was accountable to God for "excellence in all things and all things to God's glory."

A successful pastoral care ministry will be led by and carried on by people of quality: inner quality of spirit (love for God and love for neighbor), and outer quality of body, "words and actions" (I John 3:18). The Apostle Peter wrote, "Your beauty should be...that of our inner self." (I Peter 3:3-4) The "nots and buts" of the Lay Pastors Ministry Magna Charta (I Peter 5:1-4) control the quality of shepherding God's flock:

Not because you must, but because you are **WILLING;**

Not greedy for money, but **EAGER** to serve;

Not lording it over others, but being **EXAMPLES.**

Willingness is one's spirit surfaces as authenticity, and is perceived as "for real" by the receivers of lay pastoral care. *Eagerness* in one's spirit as passionate commitment, and is perceived as such by the receivers of lay pastoral care. Accepting the role of *example* in one's spirit surfaces as godly living, and is perceived to be standards for Christian conduct by the receivers of lay pastoral care.

Both ministry leaders and individual lay pastors need to be committed to quality. And by setting standards, politics, procedures, and biting-the-bullet evaluation, quality can be controlled. Successful ministry leaders and ministry doers testify to the **QUALITY CONTROL** conviction.

SHREWD MARKETING

In one of His parable, Jesus legitimizes (even encourages) shrewd ministry methods

by commending the dishonest manager for his shrewd business methods – "For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than the people of light." (Luke 16:8)

Shrewd means foxy, artful in wielding practical skills, cautious, sagacious, perceptive, sharp in the ways of the world, and "cool." Jesus meant all of the above when he sent out the Twelve with these instructions: "Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." (Matt. 10:16)

How do you combine these two opposites – snakes and doves? The one is sneaky, subtle, deceptive, frightening and deadly (a symbol of Satan); the other is pleasant, graceful, attractive, out in the open (a symbol of peace, love and Holy Spirit). Here's how:

Be realistic – see things as they are, use the eyes of secularists.

Be expedient – be pragmatic...do what works; fight fire with fire.

Be aware – be wary, alert to the character and motives of people.

Be aggressive – get "in their face;" go after them; get the jump on them.

Realism, expedience, awareness and aggressiveness....*all in a spirit of respect, humility, love, without violating our Christian principles.* Jesus was being all of the above as He drove the animal peddlers out of the temple, labeled the Pharisees "hypocrites," and stood before Pilate in non-defensive silence.

The following story about a shrewd duck helps me understand *shrewd*. A duck waddled into the country store and asked the attendant, "Do you have any corn?" "No, we don't have any corn." The duck returned the next day. "Do you have any corn?" "No, we don't have any corn." The duck returned the third day. "Do you have any corn today?" "No! we didn't have any corn yesterday! We didn't have any corn the day before! We won't have corn tomorrow! If you ever ask for corn again, I'll waddle your feet to this counter!" The duck returned the next day. "Do you have any nails?" "No." "Do you have any corn?"

Dave Thomas, famous among "the people of this world," is a prime source of shrewd marketing ideas for "the people of light," even though the product – love and care – is different.

The first usable **SHREWD MARKETING** idea from Thomas is promotion. The lay pastors ministry has to be publicized. It's just this simple: People have to *hear* about it!

The first two convictions, **HARD WORK** and **QUALITY CONTROL**, by themselves, did

not make the founder of Wendy's restaurants a success. He had to *publicize* his quality product. Dave Thomas knew that the American people had to *hear* about his delicious hamburgers, just having them available was not enough. He blanketed the county with information about his products by effectively using television, billboards, newspaper ads, and mailings of money saving coupons. (I have used my share of them.) He, himself, made over 800 television commercials.

One of the hospitality industry companies, Baymont Hotels, as I write, is upgrading its rooms. Just to get the word out to potential "guests" about the additional comfort and convenience, Baymont plans to spend between \$400,000 and \$700,000 just in advertising. Publicizing business is an absolute essential, whether it's fast food, hotel rooms, or lay pastoral care.

Jesus publicized His "business." His plan was to cover the world with the Gospel by people who would travel, teach, preach and live it. He told them, "You will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) He has been telling his people the same thing for 2,000 years, through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit and church pronouncements. The first usable idea is publicity.

The second usable is one of the most important missiles in our **SHREWD-MARKETING** arsenal: the personal appearance and testimony by ministry leaders and those doing ministry. Seeing the people doing the ministry and hearing from them, themselves, is most convincing. This can be done in worship services by interview or personal testimony, at other church gatherings, through newsletters and other printed pieces, and by scheduling special Lay Pastors Ministry information meetings.

The third usable idea is an absolute: "Don't cut corners." Thomas heard These words over and over from his grandmother during his childhood summers with her. (He was adopted as a baby and lost his adoptive mother at age of 5 and two stepmothers before he was 10.) This oft-repeated admonition morphed into a quintessential for success. If you promise quality; deliver quality. If your attractive brochures, church bulletins, and pulpitering create expectations of love and care, to be a success, you have to deliver. The energies of love and care, of course, are **Prayer, Availability, Contact and Example (P.A.C.E.)**. Quality is marketing strategy. "Don't cut corners."

Whereas Thomas depended on thousands of managers, chefs and servers to make a good on his promise of quality, clergy and ministry leaders depend on their lay pastors to make good *their* promises of quality love and care. Thomas' employees held the key to his success; lay pastors hold the key to their own success and to the success of their leaders. Again: **Quality is SHREWD MARKETING**. Without quality, no amount of hard work, colorful brochures and pulpit hawking will make a ministry

successful.

If, when you go to Wendy's you are served a tasteless or bad-tasting hamburger and limp French fries, you'll probably not go back. Likewise, if a church member has the tasteless or bad experience of a half-hearted, conversation dominating, self-interest contact, that member will likely resist subsequent contacts. If this happens often, "business" will fall off. No amount of hyping the ministry will offset the affects of poor quality.

"Fool me once, shame on you;
Fool me twice, shame on me."

Don't cut corners on anything: publicity, lay pastor selection, equipping, accountability, prayer, commitment, passion, relationships, perseverance, servant hood, ministry and spiritual growth.

I'll list four more usable ideas from the Dave Thomas' success story and leave them for creative and enthusiastic readers like you to flesh out:

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE STATUS QUO Wendy's restaurants started with Thomas' frustration at not being able to find a good hamburger in downtown Columbus, Ohio. The Lay Pastors Ministry started with a pastor's frustration at not being able to personally care for all his people, or to hire a staff large enough to do it.

SUCCESS IN AN ALREADY CROWNED BUSINESS Thomas demonstrated that success could be achieved in a highly competitive segment of the restaurant business. Church leaders, lay and clergy, who see the possibility of lay people doing pastoral care, compete with an already crowded church program, overextended personal schedules, and the already overlapping commitments of prospective lay pastors. Tight church budgets are also a challenge.

GENUINENESS AND INTEGRITY ARE ESSENTIAL Thomas was not only a success in business; he was a success in life. In addition to managing a rapidly expanding international business, he became a leading champion for the adoption of foster children, arguing that they needed to love in their lives. The former president George Bush named Thomas national spokesman on adoption issues. President Bill Clinton thanked him personally for his leadership. Thomas' valuable involvement in this great need is undoubtedly attributed to his childhood experiences. Lay pastors can likewise draw on their life experiences of sickness, troubles, loved-one's death, need for God, spiritual journey, and the like, to be genuinely emphatic and helpful to their

people.

Dave Thomas died a success. When Jesus approached the end of His life on earth, He prayed, "Father...I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." (John 17:4) I want to be able to tell God the same at the end of my life on earth. That's what being a success means. Applying this meaning of *success*, I want to be a success and I want *you* to be success. With the prodding and power of the Holy Spirit, we shall make it.