



Identity Insights

*Information and ideas about what's going on
beneath the surface of our lives*

The Identity Circle Newsletter

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Don't F'oogle Your Company!

Facebook would like to offer you a lesson in dubious competitive behavior. But, first a peek at relevant history ...

In the 1980s, Donald Burr and a few other disenchanted Texas International executives started People Express Airlines. Influenced by British airline entrepreneur, Freddie Laker, People Express was the no-frills, no-reservations, low-fare, game-changing upstart that altered the rules of air travel when no one was looking.

Soon after it launched, the major airlines began to mimic People Express tactics, eroding its advantage. And soon after that, People Express started mimicking the big guys' conventional methods, further undermining its unique position and upsetting customers who really liked what the feisty, new carrier offered. And so it went until **People Express disappeared, having mimicked its way into oblivion.**

By now, you're wondering, *what does this have to do with Facebook?*

Seems that war has broken out between Facebook and Google. As stated in a recent, lead article in *USA Today*, "Facebook is turning up the volume - in a big way - in its high pitched battle with Google+." [Facebook Plans Huge Makeover](#)

At every turn, Facebook is now challenging Google's growing success in social media -- especially in relation to music, video and mobile services - - aiming to maintain its innovator's edge. In its massive makeover, however, it is also succeeding in offending Facebook loyalists who are less than thrilled with many of the changes. Worse, in some peoples' eyes, **Facebook is allowing itself to look more and more like you-know-who.**



Larry Ackerman
Founder and President
The Identity Circle LLC

"Will Facebook 'People Express' itself out of business?"

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Are we seeing the same zero-sum game, only with different players? Will Facebook 'People Express' itself out of business? Not likely. Might the concern stir up confusion in the social media marketplace that hurts its image and softens customer loyalty? Not out of the question.

So, assuming yours is not a social media, Internet juggernaut, what does this have to do with your company? Pretty much everything.

Don't be F'oogled!

You don't have to be an airline or Internet company to copy the actions of major competitors. It happens in all industries, all the time: auto, health care, industrials, financial services, telecom, and on and on. With the best of intentions, you study your competition's best practices to see how they 'got there.' You track new product launches. Then, you emulate some or all of these success markers, hoping to improve your lot.

Along the way, you forget that **your company's greatest strategic advantage lies in investing in the unique capacities that set it apart from others.**

In short, you've allowed yourself to be F'oogled (Foo-gal *verb*; to Foogle: "to be seduced into adopting strategies and tactics that blur the lines between you and your competitors.")

Who wins in Foogling? Ultimately, no one. Not your customers, for whom you've made choices harder. Not your employees, who may no longer be sure why they signed up and who they're working for. Not your investors, who will anticipate a price war, which may erode profit margins and confidence.

The fate of the Facebook-Google battle is unknown. But it is safe to say that this online fracas will eat away at differentiation and the benefits healthy differentiation brings.

Want your company to stay healthy? Here are four actions savvy companies take:

- Know what your **innate capacities** are and how they drive value creation
- Figure out how to **'sell' them to your customers**

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- Make them a **framework** for shaping strategy
- **Link your capacities to your people**; use them in recruiting, training and leadership development

Above all...Don't be Foogled!

Care to share your views? Here's a link to [The Identity Circle blog](#). Let me (and everyone else) know what you think.

Sincerely,



Making organizations and individuals more productive

A **Read More** feature of Identity Insights

Discover How To ...

... Turn your corporate brand into your corporate compass

As long as branding is regarded mostly as a positioning, naming and design exercise, it won't deliver the value most executives are looking for - the kind that influences behavior as much as perception. Indeed, there is so much more a "brand" can contribute to the growth and performance of an enterprise.

To make the most of this hidden opportunity, you first need to know [the secrets of the corporate brand](#). Here's the article that will reveal those "secrets" and how to capitalize on them.