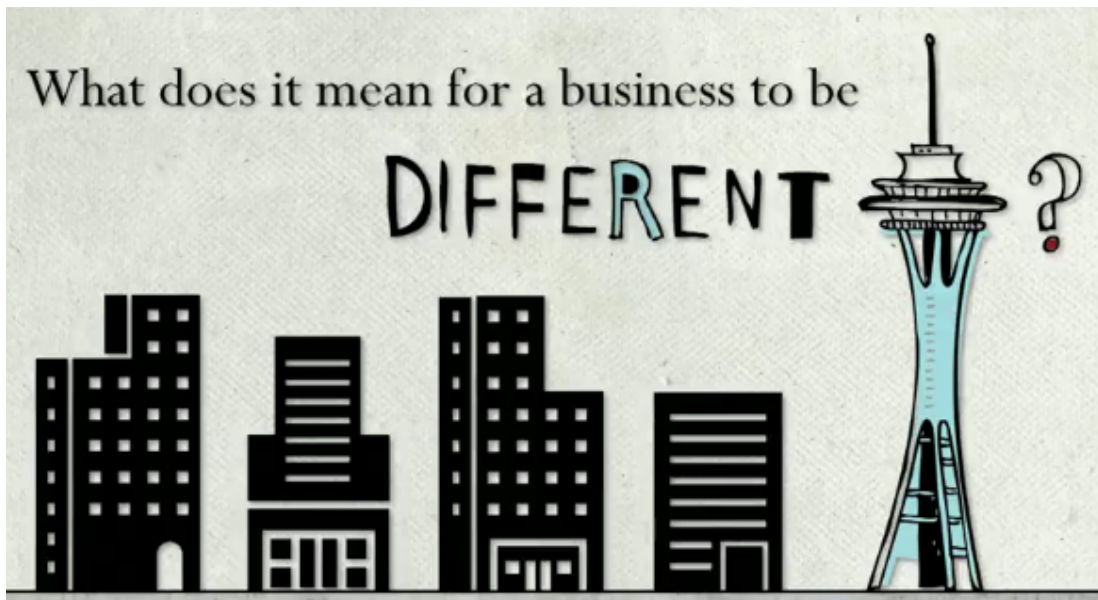


Subtract to Get More

Business is a constant battle against competitors, trying to keep customers happy and on your side...or so it seems. For most of us, in whatever space we're trying to fill, we continuously add to our offer, making the deal sweeter and sweeter. We do this in an effort to stay ahead of the competition so the customers don't run off to the next guy. BUT...should that always be the case? What if we were to take something away that they expect? Would they still come running, or possibly even more than they did before?



You've seen this happen, but probably didn't notice it or recognize it as a business/marketing strategy. One of the speakers at [Verne Harnish's Fortune Growth Summit](#) coming up in October is going to be [Youngme Moon](#). I decided to read her book [Different](#) after Verne gave her such high praise at the last summit. The book really puts this marketing strategy in perspective.

To set the stage, think about the early days of the internet when search engines like [Yahoo!](#), [AltaVista](#) and [AOL](#) came about. The search pages were covered with more options, more content...just busy all around. Then a new search engine came

along, and all you saw when you went to the homepage was their name and a search bar. I remember my old investment firm business partner Robert yelling down the hall “Hey everyone! Check out this really cool Google page!” My response...“What the heck is a google?!?” These days, who doesn’t know what [Google](#) is?

Moon’s book also talks about [IKEA](#), which was one of her most popular case studies on how companies normally wrap things in a positive. [IKEA](#), on the other hand, uses a set of negatives such as having to drive to the warehouse, having to walk around and locate what you want, which are limited in choice, long checkout lines, and then assembling it yourself. How could they possibly be so successful?

Moon calls them a reverse brand, and say that “This is what reverse brands do: they eliminate, but they also elevate. They strip things down even as they sweeten things up. The result is a fusion of the basic with the sublime, a fusion that may seem strange, unfamiliar or even disconcerting at first encounter – but is nothing if not distinctive.”

When she brought up the topic of our country going through a period when big “phat” buffet’s were popping up one after another, each restaurant trying to outdo the next with their massive offering of tasty food, it gave me an idea. What if someone opened a restaurant around the concept of not overeating?! Don’t you hate the overstuffed feeling when you leave the restaurant that resulted from your eyes being bigger than your stomach? The brand promise could be something like “Guaranteed to walk away without that overstuffed feeling!” Talk about a reverse brand! If you like the idea, please feel free to use it. I would certainly eat there!

Is there anything that you could eliminate or strip down that would brighten up your offering?

Check out [this video](#) on Moon’s book [*Different:*](#)