

Are You A Champion Or A Challenger?

The attitude of a challenger is that today's success is essential, and they will give everything to achieve it. The attitude of a champion differs slightly—they know that yesterday's home run doesn't win today's game and feel secure in their success. But, to retain their crown they must also have a challenger's passion. Both these attitudes are must in today's highly competitive business environment. We cannot afford to have only one in the run up to progress.

Let's take a recent example of the battle for TV supremacy between Netflix and HBO. HBO was the champion before Netflix arrived at the scene. Netflix came as a challenger and in no time took the lead position as champion. In 2000, HBO declined to buy out Netflix for \$50 million. HBO neither thought Netflix was a challenger, nor did it have a champion challenger attitude to sustain it at the top. Even though it tried, HBO eventually lost out to Netflix.

Yahoo famously refused to pay \$1 billion for Google. The challenger attitude within Google rose until it became an indisputable champion. Yahoo, however, committed the same mistake again during acquisition negotiations with Microsoft, rejecting an offer of \$44.6 billion.

When eBay was a champion, Amazon wasn't even a close challenger. When Amazon started challenging, eBay was sitting safe on the top and ruling the charts. However, Amazon went on to become champion as the other slid down.

From just a few of popular examples, we can see how the champions were outsmarted because they lacked a champion challenger attitude, while the competitors went on to challenge by nurturing champion products and strategies.

A champion has more complex issues than that of a challenger who has less to lose. The challenger has the flexibility to fight for its positive, to come second, and even to lose. Being a champion comes with the weight of existing responsibility and commitments, which at times can crush the person or entity.

Champions too go through fear, apprehension, dreams and demons. If we look at great champions in different fields that have maintained their position, they have a couple of things in common, such as challenging their own strategies to put them ahead. They never behaved like they needed a break. They instead behaved like a new challenger.

We can take a modern tech giant example of Apple vs Samsung. Apple since its inception has created a champion status across the world and Samsung has been challenging Apple on both innovation and numbers. There have even been a couple of instances where Samsung have outsold Apple. Apple remains relevantly strong on its superior technology, security features and brand positioning, but it has the imminent threat of being outsmarted by Samsung, the challenger, anytime. Apple keeps its strategies ahead of the curve to sustain on top.

How do we manifest a challenger attitude in a champion? Be aware of what is happening around you. Be prepared for the unpredictable. Behave better in turbulence and make a choice to reduce the chance of failure. Such a mindset helps to keep the challenger attitude and to sustain the top position.

Every champion has a shelf life. The art of expanding your time on top depends on how best you can retain a challenger's attitude. It is important to behave with the wisdom of a champion, but with the approach of a challenger to keep you able to compete against newcomers. There's no champion without a challenger inside, and there's no challenger without the dream of being a champion.

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