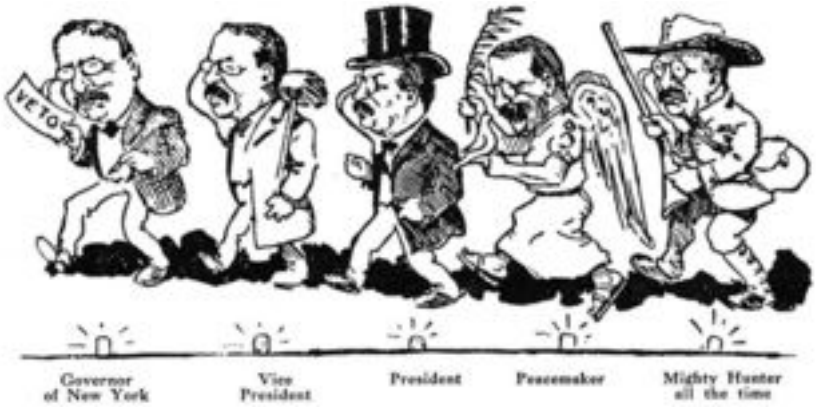
Ode to Competition

Screaming Circuits

Thanks to Theodore Roosevelt, we almost all have competition of some sort or another. I'm not a big fan of the statement made so often: "We welcome the competition, It validates the market." or similar such sentiments. You usually hear that from a spokesperson when a new competitor enters the market. My guess is that most people who say that are probably thinking to themselves: "Yeah. In a pig's eye" while stating it.



[1]I'm also not a big fan of the phrase so often heard in start-up companies: "We don't have any competition." To me, that's a warning sign. You might not have much competition, but you always have some. At minimum, other companies (maybe even with non-competing products) are competing for the same dollars. If someone thinks they don't have competition, I would suggest they look a little closer at what their customers need and are doing.

The number three statement that I'm not a big fan of: "Imitation is the fondest form of flattery." I do understand it. If someone is copying you, that must mean that you're doing something right (the possibility of the blind leading the blind not withstanding). In a business context I do believe that all three of those statements are a form of saving face. You can't stop competition from showing up, but you can pretend to be noble and welcome it. It's not always possible to stop people from copying you, but you can pretend it's a complement.

Here's what I think about competition: It's my job to give you better value than our competition. Plain and simple. If you come to me for business and I give you better value: What you want, when you want it at a fair price, then I have earned your business. If a competitor gives you better value, it means that I'm not doing my job right. We are all in this to make money, but we're in this to make money in such a way that we are the best value for you. Not the lowest price, but when you add up our reliability, quality and technical capabilities, doing business with us should save you time, aggravation and money.

So why the maefesto? It annoys me when competitors place comments on our blog linking to their website. Especially when they don't identify themselves. Yes, it means that they believe that we are doing things right. Yes, it means they think we have enough customers that it's worth trying to lure some away from us. So, in a sense, it is validation that they think we're doing a good job. I don't really see that form of "validation" as being worth much though. What I really care about is that the people who give us money think we're doing a good job.

Duane Benson
We are with you, sire! For Sparta, for freedom, to the... to the... Um...
to the sucess of your project!

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