

What Business Can Learn From Avatar And James Cameron

by Patricia DiVecchio

I recently read an article in the Feb. 1-8 edition of *Business Week* titled, "King of the World: The Inside Story of How *Avatar's* James Cameron Became the Most Powerful Commercial Force in the Movie Business - Twice." I was intrigued. It talked about how Cameron is the most important commercial force in modern film. His vision for the future of the movie business is demolishing anything that gets in its way. *Avatar*, the current 3D rave, is the highest grossing film in history next to *Titanic*, also a Cameron film. Pretty amazing. So what does this have to do with you, your business, or the Washington, DC economy anyway? Lots!

I was curious about *Avatar* because of all the Press but the muscles and guns part of the story is an old one that needs to be rewritten. On the other hand, the beauty of the scenery on the moon Pandora and the sensitivity of the Na'vi, the indigenous people, left me very touched.

In order to draw large numbers, Cameron appealed to a broad audience of those attracted to the advanced technology and those interested in a love story. He initially used his own funds, developed his own technology for the script, and struggled to get a studio to back it. (He originally wrote the script in the mid-90's but held off on production because he knew the existing technology couldn't do justice to his ambitions.) Talk about someone who believed in his product, was willing to take extreme risk, and not kowtow to others. As the

article mentioned, "Cameron had to turn himself into an inventor-entrepreneur."

As business people in today's economy, don't we have to do the same? We are literally and figuratively being forced to be inventors and entrepreneurs - reinventing at every corner. Our customers and the economy are demanding greater value - they only buy when they perceive a substantial benefit. Time and money are being gingerly allotted.

Isn't it time to step up to the plate?

Business Week went on to reference another article written about Cameron in the *New Yorker*. It was better yet. It spoke of his self-determination and gift of being a very emotional storyteller. It goes on to quote him as saying, "As a society, we're just fat and happy and comfortable and we've lost the edge" and "If you set your goals ridiculously high and it's a failure, you will fail above everyone else's success."

Rupert Murdoch, who owns Fox, said of *Avatar*, "If you create a film of this quality and make it an event, it shows that people will pay to come see it." Murdoch knows what he says. Translating this to business means our business model must be of the highest quality and a unique attraction in order to gain customer's trust and then dollars.

How can you broaden and deepen the level of your quality? What will it take to expand your business so it

excites and enlivens your customers? If you whole-heartedly believe in your service or product, then show it! I personally think we are often lacking the confidence needed.

If you find yourself saying you've done everything you can, then run for the hills because you won't be around for much longer. Your business will be beaten out by the young at heart risk-taker who doesn't doubt his/her value and confidently shows it. All ages are welcome to this party. In fact, wisdom and experience are highly valued. Let's see, Cameron is how old? 67!

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