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On Differences and New Beginnings

It has been said that if you believe you can't do something, you're right. Such a statement is indicative of how often we place self-imposed limitations on our visions. We tend to forget how we can achieve our goals, instead remaining focused on the obstacles that prevent us from such accomplishment.

When we are assisting a client company—a real-estate developer, oil marketer, retailer, foodservice provider, hotelier, etc.—in the analysis of the potential viability and feasibility of new facility creation, the blank land must be viewed the same way an artist sees a blank canvas. A chunk of granite is first touched by a sculptor, the original notes of a new musical score are written by a composer, or an opening pitch is thrown in the first game of a new baseball season: These events are unspoiled, with no limitations from preconceived thoughts, intentions or visions. Creativity begins with the first brush stroke, be it broad or minute, being applied to the canvas.

Development of successful retail entities requires the courage to be bold. Being the first to imagine and create provides the vision to succeed with a firm commitment to establish. Having the first opinion and initiating the first positive action within a newly identified marketplace, trade area or sector requires the ability to visualize and react. The ensuing players are merely responding and/or reacting and cannot achieve the extended success reflected in being the first to begin creation.

Each of us must resist doing what we and others have done in the past, instead

replacing it with innovation that moves us into the future. Wildfires are nature's way of beginning the renewal process. Old growth, deep vegetation (and flora) saturation and residue are replaced with the new kindred opportunity to create stronger species that can adapt to and enhance an environment in which daily life occurs. Seasonal cycles bring closure, combined



with the emergence of new possibilities and new beginnings.

Through proper and insightful trade area identification and analysis, each company's properly aligned and positioned individual locations create a mosaic that reflects each individual piece while presenting an artistic image that reflects a whole consisting of the many. Greatness of one is created by the efforts of all. It is the greatness of the total that produces success and prosperity.

Individuals and Groups

As companies consider new markets to enter or new products to offer, they must precisely and accurately determine how the opportunities that might exist align

with the offered concept. It does not mean that what has been successful in one geographic region or individual marketplace will transfer into success in a diverse region or marketplace. An example of this involves the many different tastes and styles of barbecue. Individual distinctions and flavors define differences in barbecue in Texas, Kansas City, Memphis, the Carolinas and other regional favorites. Whereas Kansas City barbecue is well loved and preferred in that portion of the Midwest, it will not succeed in Austin.

It remains a mystery why global companies sense they know what must be offered when they expand the company beyond the shores of the United States and venture into Europe. However, at the very same time, they feel secure in operating from the perspective of: If a facility (and product offering) has success in Southern California, the company can duplicate it in Indianapolis and meet with the same level of acceptance.

We each take pride in our own self-individualization. And we find our own degree of personal success when we properly align that individualization with the rest of our family, friends, company, church, neighbors, etc., while maintaining our network and group sense of self. The very same sense must be applied to our retail network; all of our selves must be properly integrated into the combined many to achieve proper customer service and experience.

Once again, this is reflective of the principle I am fond of quoting: The concept never changes, but the marketplace always does. ■