



ON COMPETITION

By Wayne Visser

Competition is a wave upon the ocean of cooperation.

The short-sighted investor stands upon the sandy shore and sees nothing but crashing breakers;

The child manger plays in the frothy surf and feels only the threatening tug of the tide;
And the paranoid trader swims in the murky shallows and fears sharks lurk all around.

Not so for students of the ecology of economic waters:

The surfer learns to ride on the shining back of galloping waves;

The sailor practices dancing hand-in-hand with the twirling wind;

And the diver discovers the true bounty of life beneath the surface.

Could it be that those who sing the songs of competition most heartily are in fact the pirates of the commercial seas?

That those who shout most loudly for unrestricted market access are driven by their lust to capture the loot of others?

And that those who lobby most vigorously against laws for protection of the vulnerable are themselves dangerous outlaws?

Those who swear by the supreme law of red tooth and claw are victims of melodrama;

And those who chant the mantra of survival of the fittest are poor students of evolution.

For nature is governed first and foremost by the law of reciprocity, of mutual benefit;

And those that thrive are masters of fit, who live in harmony with their environment.

The lion may roar loudest and declare itself king of beasts, but its subjects are only the foolish and the fearful;

The lion is ruled by its appetite and loyal to none but its own pride, declaring all creatures to be potential lunch.

The lion is the hunter of prey, the ruler by might and the

The elephant is quieter, yet stronger and wiser, gentler and kinder, survivor of epochs and inspirer of respect.

The elephant lives to nurture relationships in the herd, declaring itself friend of all creatures and enemy of none.

The elephant is the builder of roads, the gardener of seeds and the plumber of waterholes.

Those that gaze across the vast plains of Africa and see only aggression are trapped in their own distorted view of the world;

Those that walk beneath the living canopy of South America's rainforests and contemplate war are blind and deaf;

Those that plumb the depths of the oceans and speak only of the race to extract resources are numb to life.

Business is a reflection of life itself:

An animated web of dynamic relationships, intimately connected;

A grand synergy of doing more together than is possible individually;

A collective breathing together, which is the true meaning of conspiracy.





The inspiration for commerce is nature:

The bees and butterflies are not competing with the flowers and fruits they pollinate;
The millions of creatures that join together to form coral are not at war with each other;
The badger and the honey bird are not enemies battling to the death for their precious nectar.

The lesson of competition is cooperation:

Waves are a feature of the sea, yet waves are not the sea; and even waves sway to the music the moon;
Storms are a feature of the weather, yet storms are not weather; and even storms are a symphony of nature's elements;
So too, competition is a feature of business; yet business is not competition; and even competition is a choral performance.

A wise company will learn to ride the waves of competition, but build its strategy on the ocean currents of cooperation.



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