



## *Today's Opportunity to Win in the Marketplace:* **WHY IT'S YOUR BEST EVER**

By Ben Fischer, President, CROSSMARK Sales Agency

**THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO WIN** in the marketplace than there is in our industry today.

It's an industry in which a retail business can be created, and in approximately 40 years, come to dominate the landscape profoundly in the following ways:

- *Become the largest retailer in the U.S.;*
- *Attract a majority of U.S. shoppers to its stores every week;*
- *Successfully launch its own brands, which in turn compete for brand leadership in their categories; and*
- *Become powerful enough to branch out into other areas of service, including financial services.*

It is hard to envision how a company as successful and powerful as this could ever be dethroned, but it can happen.

You probably thought I was talking about Wal-Mart in the example above, but despite the uncanny similarities, Sears is the retailer I was describing.

Yet, after Wal-Mart opened in 1962, it eventually toppled Sears as the leader in retailing. I am not trying to make the point that Wal-Mart could be dethroned; I think the world's largest retailer itself believes that it could. That is why it continues to try different formats and enter into new services.

No, my point is that **our industry will allow anyone to win who aligns with the consumer, and will punish anyone who does not.**

Aligning with the consumer sometimes gets lost as companies grow and evolve, and they forget that the consumer is always changing.

Look at some of the retailers who are winning today.

Dollar General and Family Dollar, for example, found a consumer base that no one else was fulfilling. Their businesses have exploded in the past decade. Between the two of them,

they have 14,000 dollar stores operating today. Costco and Sam's Club did not open their doors until 1983, and they had combined revenues of \$89 billion last year.

Look at Whole Foods Market. Founded in 1980 with a staff of 19 in Austin, Texas, Whole Foods today employs more than 39,000 people in the U.S., Canada and the U.K.

There are a lot of ways to align with the consumer or a consumer base. A platform built around convenience, service, price, selection, quality and/or enjoyment all solicit and entice different consumers for different reasons. But to get to those consumers, a retailer has to decide **who it is and who it wants its core consumers to be.**

From a manufacturer's perspective, the same dynamics exist. Think about the number of categories and brands in stores today that did not exist just five or 10 years ago: Lunchables, bagged salads, Swiffer sweepers, antibacterial waterless hand wash, soy milk, iPods, cell phones with cameras, TiVo, BlackBerry devices, etc.

You can always win in any industry by coming up with new ways to reach and serve the consumer.

If you are a manufacturer, it would also be in your best interest to **understand which retailers provide you the best opportunity to reach your targeted consumer** — not only to align with them, but to **help them succeed.** The retailer's success and your success are not mutually exclusive; they are intertwined.

**That is why we believe so strongly in providing customized solutions for our clients.** It's not just the competition that can make or break you; *it's that constantly changing consumer base.*

Align with them, fulfill their needs, and you will win. ■

**CROSSMARK**®

[www.crossmark.com](http://www.crossmark.com)