



## Relevance Today and Tomorrow - Lessons from the Fall of the Circus

While it came as a surprise to many, a victory for some, and a tragedy to others the recent announcement that the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus will fold their tents in May should serve as a cautionary tale to every business owner!

In existence for 146 years, the circus has withstood its share of challenges as while leaders navigated the circus to capture a healthy share of entertainment spending. So what went wrong and what can you and I take from this abrupt ending?

Feld Entertainment, which owns Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, is based near the Ringling Brothers Museum in Sarasota, Florida. If you are ever in Sarasota, a trip to that museum is certainly worth your time as it will remind you of the golden years of the traveling circus. In those days the circus literally was a moving city that not only produced the "greatest show on earth", but often produced the "only show in town" or in neighboring towns for long stretches of time.

Despite efforts to change the way the traditional three-ring circus engaged audiences (e.g. interactive apps or opening up the ringmaster position to women), the circus has not been able to stay relevant, particularly above the lawsuits and public perceptions emerging about the use and treatment of animals for entertainment. Speaking about issues that led to the decline of the circus, Kenneth Feld the CEO of Feld entertainment noted,

*"Let's face it, times change. And there's been more change probably in the last decade than in the preceding 50 or 70 years so entertainment has changed, attention spans, the traditional family unit is quite different today than it was many, many years ago...Kids drive what parents do with them. In the sense of entertainment where you take your kids is where your kids demand. And if it's not part of their life every day, they have no point of reference to demand that."*

Notwithstanding your personal reaction to the end of the traditional circus, how are you managing and leading your business to address the changing wants, needs, and desires of your customer base? Are you considering how your products and services are being positioned to be a "point of reference" for not only today's customer but to the next generation as well?

P.T. Barnum once said, "The noblest art is that of making others happy." As the circus goes dark, we should take pause to ask, "How happy are we making our customers?"

## Timeless Wisdom

"Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions."

- Dalai Lama

From the blog:

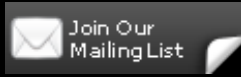
A decorative graphic featuring the text "Customer Resolution 2017" in a bold, black, serif font, with "Perfect Experiences" below it in a blue, cursive font. The text is surrounded by several stylized firework or starburst patterns in red, blue, and white. A small black dash is centered between the two lines of text.

# Customer Resolution 2017 - Perfect Experiences

I am proud to say that Horst Shultze, the founder of the modern-day Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, has been a mentor.

One day, I was asking Horst about a client of mine that was struggling to engage customers. As I presented the challenge to Horst, I explained the efforts the company's leaders had exerted to, "Improve the quality of their customer experience so that most customers had less pain during interactions".

[Continue reading the full blog post.](#)



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