

“Because that’s the way it’s done” — should a founder listen?

by Jason Cohen on February 19, 2013



“By the way, your id says hi.”

They told me I couldn't sell to The Enterprise with a silly company name like Smart Bear.

They told me I couldn't sell to The Enterprise without a human sales force using Salesforce.

They told me I couldn't sell to The Enterprise over GoToMeeting, with a demo and no slides, from a geek with no webinar.

They told me I couldn't sell to The Enterprise with amateur design and a small-company, human voice.

Oops. I accidentally went and did *all* that at Smart Bear, and only had millions of dollars of revenue to show for it. Largely from The Enterprise.

Does that mean “They” are wrong? Nope. “They” are in fact describing the way most *successful* companies sell to The Enterprise. Nothing wrong with “tried and true.”

Unless tried and true doesn't happen to jibe with you. Unless you can't bear to hire a traditional “enterprise sales guy.” Unless you can't stand content-free language and you choose honesty over formal “corporate” language on your website. Unless you prefer excitement over ROIs. Unless you're happy to compete with big companies instead of becoming one.

I wasn't trying to be “disruptive” or “innovative” or a “maverick.” I just *couldn't do it*. Maybe you're like that, about something.

You'll have a harder road if you ignore “Them” because it leads to gut-wrenching awkwardness. But at least you'll be different.

Sometimes just being different is enough, if it's for a good reason.

Who knows. Do it your own way, but you'd better have your eyes open so you can address the special challenges you're bringing on yourself. Once you buck “Their” wisdom, you can't rely on “Them” when you get yourself into an unusual pickle. You've exited the safe and well-travelled road.

But go ahead and do it. Don't let the “it's not done that way” people win on that basis alone.

Maybe it *should* be done your way.

Printed from: *A Smart Bear*

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