

Doug Ringer's Product Development Accelerator

No. 5, March 2015

A free, bi-monthly newsletter about techniques for improving product development and product management. Past issues are archived for free downloading on our website: <http://www.dougringer.com>.

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ISSN 2331-9119

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Every day I provide brief pieces of advice for accelerated growth.

Competition is Your Friend

I am writing this article the morning after Super Bowl 49 where the New England Patriots beat the Seattle Seahawks in the last seconds of the game with an interception of a very ill-advised pass. While the Super Bowl is just a game for the fans, it is good to remember how competition affects our work.

In sports, it is normal to dislike your team's opponent. If you watch American football or some of the soccer (futbol) matches in other countries, hatred of your opponent seems as natural as breathing. In the business world, where we product managers must think clearly and rationally, I argue that we should revere and respect our competitors. Here's why:

1. Competition adds meaning to your job
2. Without them, there is no reason to improve
3. It is even better, though, if you can position yourself as "peer-less"

Firstly, our competitors add meaning to our work. The competition drives us to improve continuously so we do not become second-rate or even irrelevant if the complacency remains in place too long.

The second point is closely related to the first. Without the competitor improving his product line and presumably winning new customers, there would be no reason for us to improve. Our ego may tell us that we would continue without competition but the reality is that products and services improve because customers want the best value they can find and if we are the best, they will buy from someone else.

Finally, it is best if you can position your products or company to be without peers or “peerless.” This sets you apart from the crowd of competitors so you do not have to compete at only the product level.

Doug Ringer has devoted his career to maximizing the value of product development projects and services. In roles in R&D, manufacturing, marketing, and product management, he has seen change from many perspectives and has a deep understanding of the critical importance of customer focus to an organization's success. He has worked across 20 states and in 3 continents, and has been privileged to assist GE, Ericsson, Honeywell, Meritor, Schneider Electric, and others. Contact Doug at doug@dougringer.com or at www.dougringer.com.

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