

Competition - The New Fanaticism

com·pe·ti·tion

n.

1. The act of competing, as for profit or a prize; rivalry.
2. Rivalry between two or more businesses striving for the same customer or market.

Source: The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

Are we born competitive? If so, am I an aberration?

Everyone strives for the same share of the pie, whether it's an energy contract, a place in Nursery School, or a seat in the Senate. Everyone also believes there's just that much that can go around, so, someone has to lose. When everything is perceived as a contest, Mutually Exclusive Goal Attainment (MEGA) becomes the standard.

What about doing something just for the sake of doing it well? The collapse of Enron has a clear message: Wall Street doesn't know what it's doing anyway so why not just be decent for a change? Why not do something just because it makes you happy, just for the sheer satisfaction of a job well done.

I want to be successful. I believe in what I am doing with intensity and passion. I want to be a winner, but does that automatically mean that someone else must be a loser?

"Contrary to accepted wisdom, competition is not basic to human nature, and actually poisons our relationships, damages our self-esteem, and holds us back from doing our best".

Alfie Kohn, author of "No Contest - The Case Against Competition"

Surely there is more to life than bottomline earnings, P/E Ratios and the shareholder. Then again, maybe not. There is the "little problem" of the earnings press release that will make or break the value of the share. Hey, no problem, fudge the figures but remember to withdraw when the time is right and pray that Wall Street will forget the earnings press release that shook the bourses.

America rules the world and the Global Corporation rules America. So, who calls the shots at the end of the day? The Big 5? The SEC? The folks responsible for GAAP? Agressive CFOs? People say that there's nothing like healthy competition. Beat the crap out of the other guy because he wants what you want. The battle for the hearts and minds of consumers all over the world rages on, unabated. "Jo chaho ho jaey laikin phir bhee yay dil mangay more".

There is no such thing as healthy competition. Why did it take McDonalds to arrive on the Karachi scene for Mr. Burger to spruce up its act? Why couldn't Mr. Burger have painted the premises because the plaster was peeling before McDonalds arrived?

Bill Gates, the ultimate icon of the go-go 90s, TIME's Man of the Year: To the top thou shalt go, just kill whoever gets in your way. There are role models all around us. Take your pick, emulate the nastiest and the baddest cause these are the guys who WIN.

Where does this insanity begin? In the womb of the woman! A child is conceived. The child MUST go to school. There is obviously, in every school, a quota. For each seat at a "good" school, numerous applications are received. At this point, since the child hasn't been born yet, the parents compete with other parents for the prize. The parents are good at this and are willing to stand in line for an application form, a line that, at some schools, begins to form at 5 o'clock in the morning. The well-heeled, of course, send their servants 'to do the needful'.

Once the child gets into school, he shares a classroom with approximately 29 other children. Obviously, two children can't get first position. And from there on begins the rot. From age 3 onwards, we are sucked into the vicious cycle of competition and nobody has the balls to get out of the game.

This game is filthy and I don't want to play it. The top spot is very relative. In my books, I have already reached the top. I am doing what I am doing because I believe in it. I want to strive for perfection because my customers deserve to get the best of what I have to give them. I don't want to "beat" anyone at what they are doing.

If I can't be successful by doing a dishonest day's work, then I may have failed

in society's eyes but not in my own. I know what I have done and how I have done it. At the end of the day, nothing else matters ...