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# LIVE LARGE, TAKE CHARGE

## Why 800-Pound Gorillas Think Bigger Than Anyone Else

It's five years from today. Five years into the future.

On that morning five years from now, you'll wake up with the help of an ear implant that doesn't disturb anyone else; take a shower with an antiterrorist body wash that wards off microbes of mass destruction; get into your 100 percent electric, nonpolluting car; and pull into your office or workplace drinking coffee from a reusable cup that knows how many times you've reused it and credits you automatically at the convenience mart the next time you stop in.

Pretty cool, eh?

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What's happened in the future is that the 800-Pound Gorillas of the world have taken action to make these new products successful. They were the companies that created the innovations, saw the market potential, and did what needed to be done to bring them to life. They were the salespeople in those companies who took the products, identified the markets, created the sales plans, and went out and made it happen. By their efforts, they made our lives a little easier, our planet a little more livable, and they made a few dollars doing it.

Will you be one of them?

By our definition, 800-Pound Gorillas are the dominant players in any marketplace whose tactics and techniques result in an "unfair share" of the available business. They're the trendsetters, the ones others watch and follow. From technological toys to colon-cleaning products, they are the movers and shakers in every major business category whose efforts are inspiring others, helping others to take action, and setting the pace for everyone else to follow.

The saying goes that nothing happens until somebody sells something. That's only partially true. The reality is that nothing *truly* happens until an 800-Pound Gorilla gets hold of it.

Imagine that Google had entered the online search business thinking that it only had enough guts to build a modest platform; that Ticketmaster was content to be a regional box office; or that the New York Yankees had resigned themselves to being just another baseball team. Instead, each has become an icon of its genre—a presence that's impossible to ignore as a competitor.

Before we go any further, let's be clear about the term we're using throughout this journey. Some would

argue that the term 800-Pound Gorilla is synonymous with aggression, bullying, or disregard for ethics or decorum. Others may even have the image of King Kong swatting away the competition from atop the Empire State Building. Interestingly, for the majority of the people you're about to meet, that image couldn't be further from the truth. Becoming a dominant player often happens not because of one's brute strength, but because of the things one does to earn his position through strategic planning, conscious choices, relentless execution, and/or good old-fashioned hard work. If such an individual's results give others the impression of a King Kong-like competitor, well, that may be purely a case of mistaken identity.

Selling is a risky business. There is a leap of faith that's necessary when choosing to invest time and energy in a job, a company, or an industry when the eventual payoff lies somewhere down the road. One of the key differences between those who plod along and those who become 800-Pound Gorillas is the latter's ability to think bigger—or take bigger risks—than anyone else.

Those who have become the dominant players in their chosen fields have already asked and answered a few fundamental questions that suggest they are thinking bigger than others:

Where do I stand now in comparison to others?

Where is the future of my industry, and what will I need to do to be a part of it?

Do I want to be the dominant player and enjoy all the benefits that go along with it?

How must I think—and what am I willing to risk—in order to get there?

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New York Yankees owner and former day-to-day operations chief George Steinbrenner is one of the biggest thinkers in all of professional sports. He has been known for taking huge risks on the best players and paying them record-breaking salaries—and over the years, his team has become one of the dominant franchises in the sport. To say the least, Steinbrenner is driven to succeed. “Winning is the most important thing in my life after breathing. Breathing first, winning next,” said Steinbrenner, when discussing how he ran the Yankees. Although he passed control of the team to his son Hal in November 2008, the Yankees are easily the most valuable baseball franchise on the planet today: *Forbes* magazine estimated its market value in 2008 at approximately \$1.3 billion, far higher than the number two franchise, the cross-town New York Mets, valued at \$824 million; and the Yankees’ archrivals, the Boston Red Sox, at \$816 million. By every measure, the Yankees are in a class by themselves, and baseball fans are passionate about the Yankees in one of two ways: they either love them or they hate them.

Since the team’s inception more than a century ago, the Yankees have won more World Series championships (26), have more representatives in the Baseball Hall of Fame (23), and have had the highest average home attendance (42,785 in 2008) of any team in baseball. Although every team sees a challenge when Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez, Mark Teixeira, Jorge Posada, CC Sabathia, and the other Yankees come to town, the teams’ owners love what the Yankees do to increase the excitement level—and fan attendance—in their ballparks; their average visiting attendance (34,477 in 2008) is the highest in the league.

That kind of excitement and attendance comes from big thinking; and it also comes at a price. Steinbrenner’s

2008 player payroll was \$209 million, a full 30 percent higher than any other team in baseball. New Yankee Stadium—a brand-new ballpark built directly across the street from the original 1923 Yankee Stadium—opened in 2009 at a cost of \$1.6 billion. And although the Yankees organization touts the fact that 85 percent of the seats are less than \$100, its average per-game ticket price is the most expensive in all of sports.

Steinbrenner hates to lose, which is why he and his Yankees will continue to be the 800-Pound Gorilla of professional baseball in the United States.

So is that all it takes to become a dominant player? Get a big pile of money, buy the best players, and put it all on the line? Sometimes. Interestingly, what business is learning is that even the little guys can become 800-Pound Gorillas by *thinking* bigger than others.

The Tampa Bay Rays had a 2008 payroll of a paltry \$43 million, second from the bottom in Major League Baseball. Yet, the overachieving Rays beat the Yankees and everyone else in the American League to make it to the World Series in 2008, leaving the Yankees, Boston Red Sox, Chicago White Sox, and other well-heeled clubs to sit at home and watch.

How did they do it?

In the 2007-08 off-season, Rays owner Stuart Sternberg knew he needed a clean break from the past. The team had never won more than 70 games in any of its previous 162-game seasons, and the Rays were dead last in 2007. So Sternberg began by changing the team's logo and colors, dropping the word "Devil" from the team's name (formerly the Tampa Bay Devil Rays). "We were tied to the past, and the past wasn't something we necessarily wanted to be known for," Sternberg was quoted as saying just as the

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team started its '08 season. "Nobody's running from it or hiding from it, and we're proud of certain aspects of it; but this is something the organization was able to really put their arms around."

Sternberg's young general manager was Andrew Friedman, a 31-year-old former Wall Street analyst who had never worked in Major League Baseball before. Using his analytical skills, Friedman saw an opportunity to put together a young, hungry group of talented players who would perform beyond others' expectations.

The team's manager was Joe Maddon, a brilliant baseball tactician and motivational guru who inspired the young players to achieve at a higher level. The result: a 97-win season, a 28 percent increase in attendance, a 99 percent jump in TV ratings, and an exciting and unexpected World Series appearance. Although they eventually lost the series to Ryan Howard and the powerful Philadelphia Phillies, the Rays' meteoric rise from worst to first was largely due to thinking bigger than anyone else had dared to think.

It's a comforting and energizing thought for everyone who has ever felt like their time will never come.

## IF YOU DON'T SEE IT, CREATE IT

As noted, 800-Pound Gorillas think bigger than the average salesperson, which often means that if you discover that something doesn't exist, you look to create it yourself.

Lee Salz is a sales and management authority, author, speaker, and president of Business Expert Webinars (BEW), an e-learning company providing online webinars for businesses and individuals ([www.BusinessExpertWebinars.com](http://www.BusinessExpertWebinars.com)). Webinars are a hybrid of Web-based content and teleseminar, in which participants listen to live audio of

the presenter via a phone line while viewing a PowerPoint slide show online on their computers. In October of 2007, Salz was asked to deliver a webinar to a live virtual audience of 1,300 people. The sponsor of the program had paid \$25,000 for the privilege of the webinar exposure, but Salz was paid nothing for the event. "It didn't take me long to figure out that I should be doing these and getting paid," Salz says.

After the webinar, he looked for a company that would help him to deliver similar webinars to the salespeople and managers who could benefit. "I just didn't want to mess around with all the other behind-the-scenes stuff—the credit card fulfillment, the reminders to the participants, the phone lines, and all the rest."

In his search for a place in which to do that, however, Salz was astonished to find that such an animal did not exist. "No one was doing what I wanted to do," he says. "I was blown away."

So rather than be discouraged, he saw a business opportunity.

Salz began to look into ways to build a business to give speakers like himself a platform to present cutting-edge material inexpensively while allowing consumers of the information to attend for a fraction of the cost of a conference or live in-person event. He found the right technology partners, contacted fellow speakers with good content, and devised a generous revenue sharing arrangement: Put on your own webinar for \$99 and host it at BEW; you'll receive a good portion of the revenue, and BEW will pick up all the other expenses and technical headaches.

"We learned a lot in those first few months," recalls Salz, "and so did our speakers."

When a webinar was scheduled, Salz would post a speaker's topic and description information. "In reading

these descriptions, we learned that many were brilliant speakers on their individual topics but were not the best marketers and sellers of themselves." Their descriptions lacked sizzle, and attendance at the first webinars was weak.

"As a writer and a speaker myself, I just assumed that everyone could write a good, accurate description of their own webinars that would entice people to sign up," remembers Salz. "I found out that for most people, it's not easy to write accurately about themselves." Salz saw opportunity in the problem, and created an arm of BEW that would offer marketing and copywriting services for speakers who wanted to improve their webinar attendance and results.

Salz also learned that most speakers were "solopreneurs," often multitasking on several projects at a time. "People would call us with just a few days to go, not having sent out any e-mail invitations or promotional pieces about their upcoming webinar. We knew it wasn't because they didn't want to do a good job; they're just busy people, and needed a system of reminders to keep them on track and focused." He created a 30-day webinar coaching tool that sent e-mail prompts to each webinar presenter every few days, reminding him or her to do certain things necessary to ensure the event's success.

Business Expert Webinars now has over 150 different speakers, with 750 individual live webinars on its schedule today, and more to come.

## THE ONLY PERSON YOU WON'T SURPRISE IS YOURSELF

Those who successfully think bigger are often so good at it that they don't even consider the consequences of failure. They see the finished picture so clearly—it's actually



more of a surprise to them if it *doesn't* happen the way they envision it.

Louis Lautman is the executive producer of *The YES Movie*, a feature-length inspirational film released in 2009 documenting the 'how-to's' of success from more than two dozen young American millionaires ([www.TheYesMovie.com](http://www.TheYesMovie.com)). That may not seem unusual on the surface; but up until he completed this project, Lautman had never been involved in the film industry before.

"People told me I was crazy," Lautman laughs today. "But most of them didn't see what I saw clearly, which was the potential of this project, the movement it could start, and the millions of lives it could impact."

Prior to producing the film, Lautman owned and operated his own sales training company, where he ran in-house training seminars and programs for salespeople. "The business was going well, but I was turning 30, and I [realized] that I could do something much bigger with my life than I had already done," he says.

Strangely, Lautman had always thought that he would be engaged in a film project of some sort. "I didn't know how that was going to show up in my life, but I knew I'd be involved somehow."

Lautman had written many e-books, video training courses, and other materials but had never considered producing a movie. Throughout his career, however, he had seen so many young people breaking the mold in business that it seemed to him that someone needed to tell their stories. "I saw kids making millions of dollars, succeeding and making a difference in creative, unconventional ways," Lautman recalls. "My first thought was to do a book about them." As he thought more deeply about the plan, however, he became convinced that a movie would be more

impactful, reaching more of his younger target audience and affecting a much larger group of people.

So he simply got up one day and decided to do it.

He created the plan, found the resources he needed, and made it happen. "Your belief system dictates what you're capable of doing," Lautman says emphatically. The film was shown—among other places—at the legendary Cannes Film Festival in France in 2009. "It's the biggest and best film expo in the world. I believed in this project, and I knew it was that good, so I just said, 'Why not?' and just went ahead and did it."

To further his mission, Lautman founded the Young Entrepreneur Society—an organization that already has thousands of members worldwide—to help people turn their passions into businesses. Y.E.S. makes resources, connections, seminars, and information available to those who want to pursue their dreams of business ownership.

"When I had my small training company, I thought I was big-time, traveling coast-to-coast," recalls Lautman. "Now I'm the founder of an international company, an executive producer of a movie, and a partner with hundreds of people around the globe to inspire others to build their own businesses. All I did was think bigger and act on it—and look what's happening."

## DOMINANCE DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN B-I-G

What is equally as impressive is the fact that within most every organization exists a salesperson or two who does a significant portion of the business within that company. In their own smaller universe, they also qualify as dominant players, unfair-share-getters—800-Pound Gorillas.

Michael J. Malone was a pioneer in what restaurants and retail organizations call "foreground" music, or music used as an integral part of a restaurant or retail store's theme. If you've ever found yourself enjoying the atmosphere of a T.G.I. Friday's, tapped your toes to the beat inside a Starbucks, or gotten lost in the luxury of a Victoria's Secret, you've been captivated by Malone's product; his company, AEI/DMX Music, set the audio stage in these kinds of trendy environments for many years.

Malone started AEI in 1971 using endless-loop, four-hour audio tapes that resembled giant 8-tracks, programmed with the kind of music and tempo that would give the store owners exactly the kind of environment they wanted. AEI became a \$100 million company, providing music to major retailers, hotels, restaurants, and the airline industry. The company was sold via merger to Liberty Media in 2001, but in the early days, Malone was the company's number one spokesperson and sales rep.

"There was a point early on where we needed one big client to really give us the momentum we needed to survive," Malone said in a company-wide sales meeting several years ago (at which the author was in attendance). "I had two big meetings that day in the same town, and they were both large casual-dining restaurant clients. If we could get just one of the two to sign up, we'd be okay. If we didn't get either of them, I wasn't sure if we were going to make it."

The two companies' headquarters were across town from one another. Malone went to his morning meeting and gave his best presentation, adding that "Company B across town is doing this, and you need to be on board, too." That wasn't exactly true; Company B's meeting wasn't until that afternoon. "I was so sure they should both be customers that I just got a little ahead of myself," said Malone.

Most of Company A's meeting attendees were fairly uninterested in Malone's presentation—until the mention of the competition, whereupon they sat upright in their chairs and looked around at each other. "We need to do this," they all said, but decided to hold off signing the deal until the end of the day.

Disappointed but undaunted, Malone went across town for his afternoon meeting with Company B, where he mentioned that Company A was lined up with AEI. "They're doing it over there?" they asked. "We can't let them get the jump on us." As Malone left their headquarters with a signed contract, he went to a pay phone to call Company A; they also signed that afternoon.

With the combined weight of both of these trendsetting customers on AEI's client list, business soared. Was Malone nervous that one would call the other? "It was a risk I was willing to take at the time," he said.

Beyond the obvious caveat of stretching the truth, the real lesson to be learned in Mike Malone's example is that 800-Pound Gorillas are always thinking bigger, taking calculated risks, and acting as if they're already there—which allows for success to come that much sooner.

## TAKEAWAYS

### Thinking Bigger Than Anyone Else

- ◆ **Being an 800-Pound Gorilla begins by thinking like one.** Those who think small rarely achieve dominant status. When you think bigger, bigger things are naturally attracted to you.
- ◆ **To become a dominant player, first answer these fundamental questions:**
  - ◆ Where do I stand now?

- ◆ Where is my industry going?
- ◆ Do I want to be an 800-Pound Gorilla in that industry?
- ◆ How must I think, and what must I risk, in order to get there?
- ◆ **Understand and welcome the notion that you can become the dominant player in your specific niche, market, or territory.** You don't have to own the world; you just have to own that corner of the world in which you choose to be the best.
- ◆ **Don't be afraid to visualize yourself being a bigger player right away.** Think about what being the dominant player in your world would look, feel, smell, taste, and sound like. Gauge how different that is from your current situation today. Measure the gaps that exist between your "today" position and the "dominant tomorrow" position in several categories, and decide what needs to be different in order to achieve a dominant position in each of those categories (quality of service, product performance, product value, and so on).
- ◆ **Accept and embrace the risks associated with being bigger.** Dominant players are almost always studied, emulated, envied, and criticized. Prepare yourself for that possibility. Ask yourself, "What are the consequences if I *don't* think bigger?" Become comfortable with the feeling of being the dominant player if you're not already.
- ◆ **If you don't see what needs to exist, create it.** Someone had to be the first in every category, every niche, and every kind of business model. If you discover a market that needs serving, don't be afraid to innovate to serve that need.