

Former Telus executive peddles survival guide for B.C. businesses

Roy Osing's *Be Different or Be Dead* provides insights into prospering in tough economic times

MICHELLE HOPKINS

Only months after opening the **Velvet Room Boutique**, **Deborah Richardson's** sales slumped as the world economy nosedived.

When she heard about author, entrepreneur and internationally recognized business consultant **Roy Osing's** seminar at the **Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce**, she signed up.

"I found his seminar and his book (*Be Different or be Dead: Your Business Survival Guide*) to be very practical," said Richardson, who runs her women's fashion store with her daughter and another employee. "I have already put into place his tip about identifying who you want your customers to be and then change your methods to attract them."

On Osing's advice, Richardson identified a new target market, the 25- to 35-year-old artistic female.

Richardson is also working with her designers to offer loyal clients free gifts of books, magazines and fashion products.

"When Roy spoke about what your company could offer to go above and beyond for customers, we came up with that idea," she said.

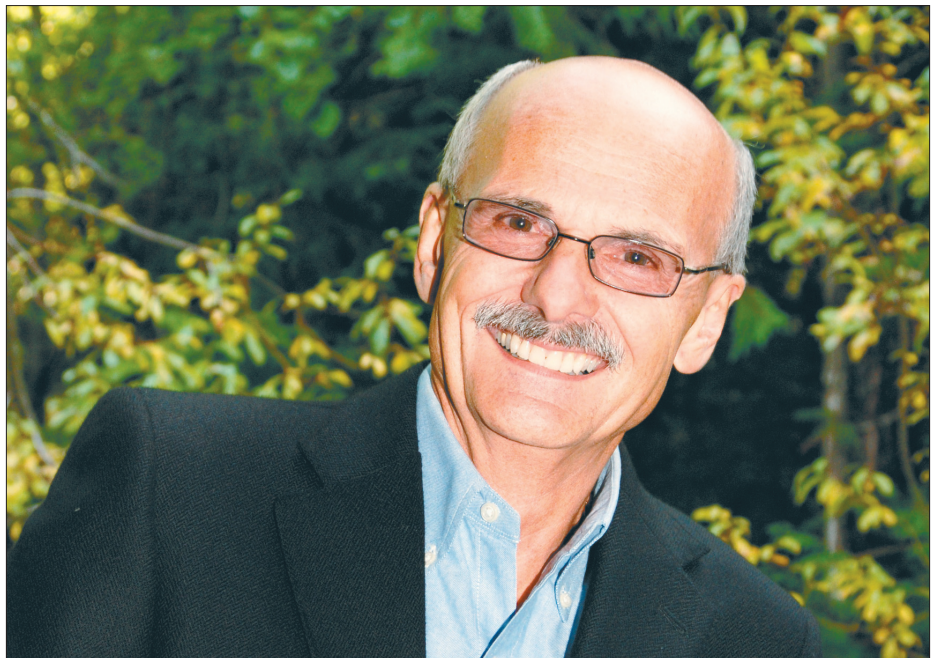
Richardson is also using Osing's strategy of building her business one customer at a time.

"We're working harder to wow our clients by offering superior one-on-one customer service."

Customer loyalty is invaluable, according to Osing, who also outlined a number of simple principles that companies can adopt to "bulletproof their business."

"Companies need to be different," he said. "They need to create added value that makes them stand out from the pack. My book is a how-to on what to do to survive in a world where customers are more demanding, prices more competitive and where there's very little customer loyalty."

Osing, who retired in 2002 from **Telus Corp.** (TSX:T; NYSE:TU) after a career as chief marketing officer of the telecommunications giant, said he presents proven and practical ways to help companies increase their bottom line and immunize them from failure.



Roy Osing: "companies need to be different; they need to create added value that makes them stand out from the pack.... ask yourself if your company can afford not to build relationships and create dazzling business experiences"

"I back it up with examples of many companies who are thriving despite the times."

He pointed as an example to **WestJet** (TSX:WJA;WJA.A), which is considered Canada's most profitable discount airline.

"My daughter-in-law's suitcase was lost in transit when she arrived in Hawaii," said Osing. "Not only did the agent apologize profusely and explain what happened, but more importantly, the employee was empowered (didn't have to check with a supervisor) to tell her to go out and buy clothes for her children and WestJet would reimburse her."

"The power of word of mouth is huge. You need to give people something to talk about. WestJet does that extremely well."

Osing added that companies need to empower their warriors, the ones in the trenches, the ones who deal with their customers.

As to the cost of offering such stellar customer service, Osing said: "Turn it around and ask yourself if your company can afford not to build relationships and create dazzling business experiences."

Osing then cited **A&B Sound Ltd.**, a company that teetered on

the brink of bankruptcy more than once before the retail music giant shut down permanently in November 2008.

“A&B Sound couldn’t give customers a compelling reason to buy from them,” said Osing. “With increased competition from **HMV** and **Future Shop**, [it] couldn’t seem to create and sustain a competitive advantage.”

Thomas DeSchutter of **DeSchutter Financial First Financial Securities Inc.** and the president of the **Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce**, agreed with much that Osing spoke about during his seminar.

“His presentation suggested the removal of idiot policies and empowering your sales and service teams to use common sense and deliver exceptional customer service,” said DeSchutter. “He references the book for examples and ideas, so I would conclude that there are a number of practical tips avail-

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able. His ideas have already worked for big business, and I would suggest that any size business would benefit.”

Telus has partnered with Osing as a sponsor on his numerous speaking engagements. While at the telecom giant, Osing was responsible for implementing many business strategies. He helped expand Telus’ data and Internet services to \$1.4 billion, developed and managed a number of strategic relationships with global partners and was instrumental in increasing its high-speed Internet business by 20%.

More information about Osing’s book and upcoming seminars and workshops can be found at www.bedifferentorbedead.com. The website’s “be different quiz” can help companies assess their strengths and challenges. ■
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