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Co-Create

By David Nour

David Nour, author of a new book entitled *Co-Create: How Your Business Will Profit from Innovative and Strategic Collaboration*, is the author of the best-seller *Relationship Economics*. In that book, he detailed the power of strategic relationships and how to make them work. In some ways, *Relationship Economics* is the prequel to *Co-Create*, since effective relationships are at the

heart of co-creation, which is essentially a simple idea: You can build something together that you cannot build alone.

“I first felt the magic of Co-Creation at an Evangelical megachurch,” Nour writes. Nour and his family attend the North Point Community Church, attended by 36,000 parishioners, with another million watching on TV. How did North Point Community Church founder and senior pastor Andy Stanley and his small staff build such a spiritual behemoth from scratch? The first step, writes Nour, was an innovative idea: to target the “unchurched” — Christians who were not attending church on a regular basis. In the middle of the Bible Belt, you can’t attract the unchurched with just another church. So Stanley founded a unique church: no steeple, crosses or communion wafers but plenty of modern live music and giant screens, creating an atmosphere, Nour writes, that “is closer to a rock concert than a worship service.”

In short, “North Point delivers the experience the ‘unchurched’ need — namely, to feel engaged, relevant, with a sense of real belonging that may or may not be directly connected to Jesus,” Nour explains. “And then — and this is the beautiful simplicity of Andy’s strategy — he makes his parishioners partners in co-creating that value.” Specifically, parishioners both create the product, contributing to the worship services’ unique ambience, and sell the product by urging their friends and family to check out a church unlike any other.

Why is co-creation so vital to business success today? Why are we in what Nour calls the “co-creation” economy? The answer, according to Nour, is that pull sales and

marketing is vastly more effective in today’s empowered customer environment than push sales and marketing. In other words, you can’t simply go to a customer, stick a product in their hands and expect them to buy. You have to get the customer to come to you. You have to pull customers in. Nour offers an interesting term to describe this pull: *market gravity*.

How can a company increase its market gravity? There is only one way, according to Nour: by creating the products that they want to buy, not the products that you want to sell. One of the core lessons of the book is that it’s about them, not you.

When Hotels Are Your Guests

If it’s all about them, then co-creation, as Nour explains, begins with understanding them, seeing things from their perspectives. Sometimes, this involves learning how to reverse one’s perspective. Nour tells the story of how one hotel chief executive suddenly gained a radical new insight into hotel guests’ perspective. Mark Hoplamazian, CEO of Hyatt Hotels, was staying at a friend’s century-old house in Connecticut. When he first arrived, Hoplamazian noticed that every time he took a step, he heard the old floorboards creak loudly. Soon, he told a conference audience, “All I could think about is how much noise I’m going to be making while I’m in this person’s house!” As a guest, Hoplamazian took great care not to interfere in his host’s routines, making sure not to get up before the rest of the house, for example. The experience led to what Nour calls a “reverse perspective.” Traditionally, hotels think of their customers as guests. Hoplamazian realized, however, that hotels are guests in the lives of their customers. The best hotels are the ones who interfere the least with their guests’ routines.

Throughout the book, Nour, a veteran strategist, draws on experiences from his own practice as well as others to illustrate the important insights, elements and prerequisites for effective co-creation. Filled with informative case studies, *Co-Create* is a detailed, highly insightful guide to the collaborative relationships imperative to success in today’s environment of demanding customers and innovative competitors.