

## **An excerpt from *Saving The World At Work* by Tim Sanders:**

The Law of Abundance essentially states that there is always enough to go around. There are enough customers, enough talented people, enough recognition, enough of whatever is needed. Based on his research into personal effectiveness, bestselling author Dr. Stephen Covey suggests that we would all be more effective if we developed the abundance mentality: "It opens possibilities, alternatives, and creativity."

People who possess an abundance mentality can find contentment where others find envy. Let's say you work at a company where another business unit has received a large research-and-development budget. Rather than feeling envious or rejected, those who see life from the vantage point of abundance choose to be happy, because the money is beneficial to the entire company and all will ultimately profit.

Suppose your biggest competitor figures out a way to produce its product in a much greener way, reducing its environmental impact without increasing price or lowering quality. The media respond by showering the company with accolades. For those who believe in abundance, this is a win/win for everyone. Those driven by the scarcity mindset, however, will focus on why the idea will not work for you, or worse, denigrate it as greenwash propaganda.

People with a scarcity mind-set resent others' successes, even those of their own teammates. For them, life is a zero-sum game: If one person wins, another loses. In the business world, the Law of Abundance suggests that companies and individuals can find ways to solve pressing social needs, whether the problem requires money, resources, or time. Why? Because such companies and individuals believe that this way of thinking will ultimately lead to more money (fresh customers), more knowledge (valuable feedback and information from grateful clients and customers), and more time (as recipients of your generosity reciprocate the favor and offer their resources in the future).

I see abundance thinkers as Big Pie People. They know the pie of life is big enough for everyone to get a slice. They're the ones who discuss possibilities instead of limitations. They approach every shortage as a creative challenge. They never think, to quote poet Robert Lowell, that "the light at the end of the tunnel is just the light of an oncoming train." We should all be Big Pie People. We can all create a bigger pie rather than fight over who gets which piece. The basic unit of business value creation is no longer limited by raw materials such as steel, land, or fuel. Today, the basic building blocks of business growth are bits, not bricks; it is based on intellectual capital, not just capital.

Futurist Alvin Toffler calls today's era "the Third Wave," the wave of information. "For the Third Wave civilization," Toffler writes, "the most basic raw material of all, and one that can never be exhausted, is information, including imagination. Through imagination and information, substitutes will be found for many of today's exhaustible resources."

The information superhighway offers a solution to the dependence on scarce resources, especially when it comes to business needs. Banks such as ING Direct or E-Trade Inc., which would have previously required brick-and-mortar locations, exist almost entirely online and are growing faster than their land-based rivals.

Factory managers employ waste-reduction programs to stretch their energy supplies to more than meet their needs. Retail stores expand their shelf space to infinity with Web-based locations. Hospitals tap into an endless stream of global experts and specialists via highspeed Internet video connections. A material shortfall is just an issue that needs to be addressed with information and imagination. With ideas, anything is possible.

The abundance mentality works on a personal and professional level, too. A great idea remains worthless as long as you hold on to it. But if you share it with your colleagues, your

idea grows more valuable over time. You gain valuable feedback, which more often than not improves the idea.

The Law of Abundance allows you to become a problem solver instead of a corporate Chicken Little. You see possibilities rather than deficiencies. You look for synergy instead of division in your business dealings. You give instead of take, because when you feel like you have plenty, something inside you says to give something back. Over time, you'll find your attitude rubbing off on your colleagues, employees, and teammates, creating a feeling that together anything can be solved.

While working for CEO Mark Cuban at Broadcast.com in 1999, I witnessed the power of choosing to think in terms of abundance rather than scarcity—especially in times of great change. When Broadcast.com was sold to Yahoo!, two tribes formed inside the company: the “We gained something” group and the “We lost something” group. The latter group responded to the acquisition with fear and regret, afraid that their titles would be downgraded and that they'd lose their autonomy. The more this group talked amongst themselves, the more upset they became. The Yahoos found them very off-putting and few survived at the company for more than a year.

Meanwhile, the “We gained something” group chose to see the acquisition through the lens of abundance creation. Before, we had 1 million monthly visitors, but now we had 100 million. And when it came to resources, we had four hundred more engineers available to help us solve problems and serve customers. Moreover, we believed Yahoo!'s brand would bring us more authority in the market and, over time, more expansive budgets. Many who fell into this group, including myself, were transferred to California and given bigger responsibilities.

The choice to view life through the lens of abundance will give you confidence to be generous and cooperative during good times and bad. Think about when you are charitable on a personal level, donating money to worthy causes or giving time to help out your community. You do it because you believe that there's enough to go around. We all need to take this belief to work.