Rule No. 3 —Differentiate or Die.

If your business blends in, it's already falling behind. In crowded markets, blending in is a slow death. The only way to lead, not just survive, is to break away from the pack by creating clear, compelling differentiation. This isn't about being slightly better. It's about being meaningfully different in a way that customers recognize, value, and talk about. If you sound like everyone else, customers will treat you like everyone else.

The Hard Truth

Competition is expensive. Most businesses choose it anyway.
If your pitch includes the words 'we're like [competitor] but better', you don't have a business, you have a prayer. Better is not a strategy. Different is. Tell me something your competitor cannot say, or get out of the lane you're already losing in.

Ask Yourself —

- Where are we competing by default, rather than by design?
- What do our best customers say makes us different, and are we amplifying that or burying it?
- If our top three competitors disappeared tomorrow, would we still need to exist?

Action Steps —

This Week's Task: Find Your Difference

Most business owners and operators can list what they sell.
Far fewer can clearly explain why customers should choose them over everyone else.
This week, step outside your assumptions and test your differentiation.

Complete these five steps:

1. Write one sentence that answers: What makes our business different?
2. Ask five customers the same question without giving them hints or options.
3. Compare their answers to your own. Highlight where they align, and where they don't.
4. Identify one strength customers consistently mention that you aren't emphasizing enough.
5. Commit to one change this week that makes your differentiation more visible, whether it's your messaging, customer experience, product offering, or service model.

Success Looks Like:

- You have evidence, not assumptions, about what customers value most.
- Your team can consistently explain what makes your company different.
- You identify one practical way to strengthen or better communicate your unique value.

Remember: You don't have to be different in every way.
You simply have to be different in the way that matters most to the people you serve.

— *From the Founders' Desk*
One of the best strategic exercises I've ever used comes from the **EOS® Vision/Traction Organizer™ (V/TO™)**.
Early in the process, leadership teams are challenged to identify their three unique differentiators;
the handful of qualities that truly separate the company from its competitors.

I've always admired the simplicity of this exercise because it forces clarity. If your team struggles to name your three differentiators, or if everyone gives different answers, that's a signal worth paying attention to.
The strongest organizations don't just know what makes them different; they communicate it so consistently that employees, customers, and prospects all tell the same story.

This Rule helps you with; escaping price wars; identifying and claiming uncontested market space; clarifying what makes your business unmistakably valuable; refocusing efforts on innovation that customers actually care about; and avoiding the trap of trying to be everything to everyone.

TOP 3 priorities this week:

the LEDGER

Practice the principles.

Recommended Reading —

***Blue Ocean Strategy*, by W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne**

“The only way to beat the competition is to stop trying to beat the competition.”

Each day, set 2 specific actions that move this week's Rule into practice and help complete the Action Step by week's end.

WEEK 14

monday

tuesday

wednesday

thursday

friday

saturday

sunday

notes —

this week...