

When your business is a game

# Spear Communications

Understand. Be understood.

30-1954 Bloor Street W. Toronto M6P 3K9 ◦ (647) 882-1965 ◦ [spearcommunications.com](http://spearcommunications.com)

In business, we talk a lot about teams and teamwork.

You know, like a baseball or a basketball team.

A game, right?

So if business has teams, it must be a game.

Well, not exactly. Most entrepreneurs and CEOs would not say that they're playing a game.

And it's too bad, but we all know why.

A game is fun. Frivolous, even. Sure, we may play it to win, but it's not real.

Not the way business is real.

I want to challenge this way of thinking.

Now, I understand that there are differences between building your business and bowling on the weekend.

I'm not suggesting that we ignore these differences.

But let's think about the similarities, and how a simple shift of perspective can simplify our lives and give our work a different, more powerful focus.

Because there are times we need that.

Business is complicated, and we have a tendency to make it even more so.

Take me for example.

There are a hundred things I'm thinking about in a typical day.

As a business person I have to think about marketing, product development, cash flows, networking and a dozen other things.

And each one of these areas requires study, monitoring, measuring and refinement.

When I started my business, I studied everything from pitching to color psychology.

I learned what kind of tie would lead to the highest conversion rate and how to make copy more sticky using power words.

But it's impossible to keep on this way, year after year, without burning out. You can't focus on a hundred details and manage them all well.

And even if you could, would you say it's fun?

Wouldn't you rather focus on the one thing that energizes you?

I know I would, and I've found that one thing.

It's The Game.

The game is simple. It has one object: to get as many of the right people on the team and into the game as I can.

I can use a phone, or get on an airplane, or take the subway, or connect on the Internet.

Nothing is forbidden in the game. As long as I am achieving the goal, it's all good.

The purpose of everything that I do is to support the goal.

The game gives me my focus and my priorities.

And, as with all games, there is structure and order, and there are rules.

The structure, order and rules exist to help me play the game.

Without these, my actions would have no meaning.

"Where," you ask, "do the structure, order and rules come from?"

I create them, and I can also change them as needed. After all, it's my game.

But there's a prime directive I must follow when I create or change the game, and that is the game's objective—to bring the right people into the game.

And who are the right people?

The only way to answer this question is to go out into the world and play the game.

You must have noticed it.

Whether it's road hockey or a neighborhood basketball match, once the game gets going, the right people show up.

Because they know the game, and they like the game, and they want to play it.

It's the same in the game of business.

Or it would be, if we were creating a game we wanted to play. The game that would attract others who want to play.

When people love a game, they play hard. They are driven to win. The goal is simple and plain, and they pursue it with zeal.

They do this because it's fun.

Oh sure, there are a lot of things in your business that aren't fun, that you have to do.

Things like balancing the books, tracking inventory, and dealing with unhappy customers.

But remember: the game is about going out into the world and finding the right people.

The people who enjoy balancing the books, the people who are brilliant at tracking inventory, the people who are so good with customers that rarely is there an angry one.

The game puts the right people into the right positions.

You don't want the person hard-wired to score goals tending the net, and the game doesn't want that either.

In my work as a team builder, I've seen the practical benefits when business leaders put their energy into building teams that want to play the game as fiercely as they do.

You end up with team members that all share the same goal: bringing more and more people into the game.

Pretty soon everyone on the team is doing, on their own initiative, what you once did alone: building up the game, by following the rules and structure—or by



modifying them as needed, always with an eye on the goal.

Some of your team members are busy attracting new customers.

Some of them are building strategic relationships with your business partners.

Others are tending to your suppliers.

Everywhere you look, your people are growing the business.

And it all started with a decision to love what you do, to do what you love, to make it about playing hard and having fun.

When business is a game, you can't do it any other way.



**- Wayne K. Spear is the Founder and President of Spear Communications. This article is part of his ongoing series called "Thought Bombs."**