

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1787 Is the Clock Ticking on Your Employer?

The oldest company in North America just closed its doors. It stuck it out for 355 years, and there's a good chance you've never heard of it. I'm Jerry Roberts, and unless the name on the top of your paycheck reads the United States government or the Government of Guam, there's a possibility that your employer might not be around as long as you expect. Let's talk about company longevity, next on The Extra Point.

Did you do a fast search on the oldest company in North America during the break? If not, it's the Hudson's Bay Company, with headquarters in Canada.

Established in 1670, the company was granted a royal charter by the English government, allowing it to monopolize trade in huge areas, including parts of Canada and the U.S. Midwest.

The company's domain extended from northern Minnesota and North Dakota to the Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and beyond.

At its peak, the company generated hundreds of millions in revenue, even retaining significant wealth after surrendering 95% of its territory to the newly formed Canadian government in 1870. How about that? They gave back almost all of their marketing reach, and they were still pounding out millions.

Modern times haven't been kind to Hudson's Bay. They've had to close retail stores and ended up in bankruptcy, owing over a billion dollars. Online competition and Covid finally took them down.

Billions of people lived and died during the 355 years that Hudson's Bay operated. I'm sure their passing came as quite a shock to many, likely similar to Americans seeing Sears go away after 133 years.

Retail business is incredibly tough, what with so much being bought online. I've heard people say that if we're not careful, everybody will

close their doors and all we'll have is Amazon. Well, the founder of that company isn't so sure. Jeff Bezos once remarked that no company is too big to fail, predicting that even Amazon might one day face bankruptcy.

Historically, large companies typically endure for about 30 years. Is there somebody out there, getting ready to plot the demise of Amazon?

There are still companies across our nation that have a little gray hair, if not pure white. Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway just celebrated its 186th anniversary, if you count the age of the oldest organization the company owns.

New York's Con Edison is over 200 years old, but that's just a drop in the bucket if we look to the north of us, to Japanese construction firm Kongo Gumi, which traces its origins back to the year 578. How big would the cake have to be if they threw themselves a birthday party? Big enough to hold 1447 candles.

And what of us here in Guam? When I came here in the 1970s, the retail landscape was dominated by two names: Ken Jones of Jones & Guerrero Company, and Mark Pangilinan. Gibson's came in the 80s, shopping centers sprung up, KMart, Home Depot, and now Don Donki.

Through it all, we've seen businesses open and close, launching dreams on one end, and closing chapters on the other.

The two oldest companies in Guam, to my knowledge, are Atkins Kroll, in Tamuning, at 111 years, and Butler's in Sinajana, at 110. Calvo's Insurance is moving close to 90. There are many at 30, 40, 50, 60 years and more.

How do you last in business? How could you start a company and make it that long?

Here are four keys to having a chance at that kind of longevity.
(Con't.)

1. Adaptability to change. Companies must be willing to evolve with market trends, technology, and consumer preferences. Staying flexible and responsive helps businesses handle challenges and seize new opportunities.

2. Strong leadership and vision. You need people who can guide a company through changing times. Leaders should inspire innovation, and provide development opportunities.

3. Customer focus. Understanding and prioritizing customer needs is crucial. Building strong relationships and continually seeking feedback can help companies enhance their products and services.

4. Financial resilience. Maintaining sound financial practices, such as managing debt and building reserves, ensures companies can weather economic downturns and invest in future growth. Typhoons, bird flu, Man made disasters like Covid, and the list goes on. You need money skills to make it in Guam.

So, how long will your company be around?

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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