



Do you need a Game Changer?

By Gary Ramer

Learn how key hires opened new doors for three companies

Is the sky really falling? Or has Chicken Little simply broken into a desperate panic over a falling acorn? Grim marketplace indicators are raising widespread anxiety about the future. A beleaguered economy, job losses and double-digit sales declines in manufacturing signal more tough times. But is it all doom and gloom? Or are there hidden opportunities here if you change up your game?

Your perspective and approach will determine how effectively your company weathers the market conditions at hand. You

can either let the market determine your fate or take swift action, retool your staff and change your strategy. Here are a few stories how pivotal staff hires helped three companies open new doors and turn their situations around.

Game Changers

Company A is a New York-based, family-owned boutique apparel company that does \$75 million in annual sales. Like other companies in the industry, they were already struggling amid the looming forecasts of meager holiday sales. Revenues

had dropped. Budget cuts and staff layoffs were imminent.

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About that time, 24 Seven came across a sales executive with a track record for innovation and generating big deals. A game changer. For the purpose of this story, let's

call him Mark. We advised the company to meet with Mark to check out his credentials. Keep in mind, Mark is not your run-of-the-mill sales exec. He's a larger-than-life personality, an independent thinker. At first glance, he didn't fit the conservative company's manager profile at all. But, beyond the surface, Mark offered exactly what the company needed: a track record for turnarounds and solid industry relationships.

After the company interviewed and hired Mark, he quickly proved our instincts were right on the money. Thanks to his experience and industry connections, Mark expanded distribution for the company by generating new business with big retailers like K-Mart, Sears, JC Penney and Lord & Taylor. He also struck a deal for private label lines with several household brands, adding millions in new sales. Now, instead of planning layoffs, the company is adding new staff to help them support the new business. What a turnaround. One person with the right skills, the right contacts and the right mindset, made a huge difference. Mark changed the game.

Timing is everything

In another scenario, a twist of fate led a start-up international accessories company and a displaced sales executive to join forces. A savvy mover and shaker-type female sales executive with 17 years of strong category experience and great retail ties, lost her job last summer when her employer downsized. We'll call her Anne for our story. Out of work and facing a grim market, Anne was definitely more open to opportunities she would have otherwise passed up. On the other end of the equation, the Hong-Kong-based start-up was dubious about expanding into the U.S. market but just needed the right person in place to get their launch off the ground quickly. We introduced them and, of course, things clicked right away.

Anne was offered the job and has since leveraged her deep store relationships to introduce the company's product line to key retail buyers. Spring orders are coming in right and left. Now Anne is helping her new employer work out plans for the expansion of its U.S. sales force.

Timing and the right set of circumstances paved the way for this perfect match between a game changer and a start-up. Anne is making her mark and her results are clearly generating excitement for the company's U.S. launch.

From downswing to rebirth

For some game changers, making a difference or leading the comeback of an ailing brand is exactly what gets their creative juices flowing. They thrive on risk and challenge. In our next case study, this is exactly what appealed to a game changer that went to work for a premium denim brand that had fallen on hard times. The manufacturer was the first to make premium denims hip and chic in the 1990s, but began losing its following among loyalists as other high-end denim brands emerged.

As the brand eroded, company execs tried a combination of strategies to turn the situation around. First, they changed their marketing campaign. Then they updated the product. They also hired several key people. Nothing worked. The company was about to close its doors when we introduced them to a game changer that we'll call Greg. Greg has 20 years of better denim experience with a few household brand names and wanted a new opportunity where he could really make a difference. While most people wouldn't dream of accepting a job with a company with a shaky future, the challenge had huge appeal for the game changer in Greg. He knew his tremendous ties with retailers could help turn the company around. He was right.

Greg joined the company and the brand is already experiencing a rebirth. To date, he has added nearly \$15 million to his employer's bottom line. In this case, a turnaround hinged on not just hiring a new sales exec, but hiring a game changer who could bring the right contacts and mindset to the company.

A perfect storm of opportunity

The common theme in all three stories is the perfect storm of circumstances that have drawn the right people together at the right time. Game changers are more

readily available in today's market due to downsizing and business closures. Now is the perfect time to take a closer look at the people on your team. Do they see unique opportunities in the marketplace at hand?

The people you have on your team now will make all the difference in how your company fares in this historic market environment. Is it time to add a game changer to your team?

Do they have the right contacts to move your brand? Or are they immobilized by the bleak conditions? The people you have on your team now will make all the difference in how your company fares in this historic market environment. Is it time to add a game changer to your team?

About the Author



Gary Ramer is a Senior Account Manager for 24 Seven, a premier, full-service talent resource for the world's leading brands in Fashion, Marketing, Creative

Services, Retail, Beauty and Entertainment. He has more than 20 years of experience in the wholesale and retail sector and now recruits senior level talent at 24 Seven. To learn more on how 24 Seven can help you add game changers to your workforce strategy, call Gary at 212.966.4426 or any of our other office locations.

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