

Business Success as an Outlier

BY JENNIE M. XUE



Jennie M. Xue is a digital entrepreneur and a prolific author based in northern California. She was previously known as Jennie S. Bev.

Contrary to what motivational speakers believe, Malcolm Gladwell posited that many variables are at play in “successful” individuals: they are more than intelligent, courageous, and persistent in achieving goals. They are “outliers,” meaning that success is an accumulation of, among others, consistent training of 10,000 hours in five years, good “entry” timing, which part of town or country you were born in, who your

parents are, what economic era you were born in, and which month of the year you were born in.

On top of these, one must have sufficient talents and skills to showcase to the world. The same also applies with products and services that businesses offer. Being an outlier certainly helps a business and outliers can help it even more.

First things first, let us discuss the traits of an outlier business.

Which businesses are “outliers”? Amazon is definitely one. It had the advantage for being one of the first players in the

Being an outlier certainly helps a business and outliers can help it even more.

online retail world. It also started with one of the easiest products to market: books. It was founded in 1994, when the Internet was in its infancy, so it enjoyed almost non-existent barriers of entry. Being a pioneer in the field is definitely an outlier element.

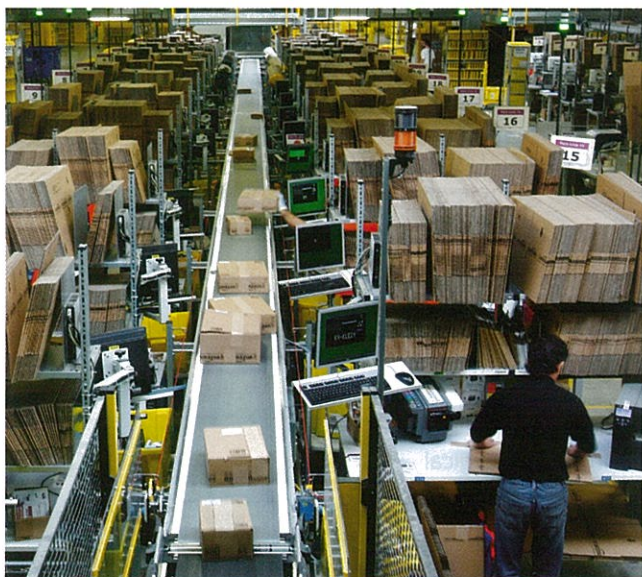
Amazon was established in Seattle. It is the home of Microsoft, Starbucks, Nordstrom and Boeing. Thus, it is home to a pool of highly-educated individuals. Great timing, great headquarters location, and a great business model.

Amazon’s business model encourages repeat orders. Despite its low 2% profit margin, Amazon is likely to enjoy long-term customer loyalty. It is another outlier element that only a handful of companies enjoy.

A business as an ecosystem comprises of many individuals who make things work. Every individual has his or her own job description, some of which are more repetitious than others and some are more strategic and creative. A collective consciousness also makes a business. And a collective consciousness that comes from outliers would make a great business.

Posted strategically, individuals with various “outlier” traits would magnify a business. Combine it with business’ specific outlier qualities, we will have a winning business. Maximizing a business with outlier attributes is often overlooked. Thus, it would make more sense for a business to do more than hiring good people, it is time to hire the best people for the job.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has the rare quality to try new things. For the first time in history, the biggest player in the digitalization of publishing also owns one of the most respected newspapers in the world: Amazon is the owner of *The Washington Post*. Many successful individuals and businesses are outliers. We can learn from them. 



Workers pack boxes at Amazon’s logistics centre.

MICHAELA REHLE / REUTERS