

# Competition Keeps Everybody Sharp



By T. Patrick Hurley

It's rough out there for all of us. It doesn't matter whether you're a corporate officer, private equity investor, lender, investment banker, or other professional. Competition is brutal, sometimes even ruthless.

We either adapt or disappear. The good news is that ACG helps us to adapt. Sure, many of our members compete with each other, and more than a few chapters compete with each other. Most of us are competitive by nature, or we'd be doing something else. We are still arguably better off as a result because competitive pressure makes us work smarter.

The base value of ACG is that you can leverage it to suit your individual competitive needs for contacts, market knowledge, and developments on multiple fronts. ACG is also unique because you can very efficiently keep a real-time bead on many of your competitors. Only ACG can offer that valuable combination of benefits.

Our organization is essentially about making the pie bigger and inviting everyone to the table. We all have to buy into this in order for the overall organization to remain competitive. It's not easy to do and it requires a host of competitors to collaborate for the common good.

That can hurt at times, but it's essential if we're to build the muscle ligature that Ram Charan stressed in our strategic planning effort in 2005 as mandatory for the organization to achieve sustainable success. The power of one ACG translates into maximizing value for every member.

We must push ourselves and strive to reach

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the next level and the next by drawing on all the resources in our local communities and worldwide. There really is no choice if we're to be truly successful in continuing to attract top talent and growth in both the quantity and quality of deal flow, participation and content, sponsorship, international expansion, and all the things that it takes for ACG to remain a center of influence.

ACG is not all about deals. It may seem that way much of the time. The broader focus has to be a balance of both corporate and personal growth. We must continue to hone our appeal to the dynamic people who are dedicated to growing the businesses that they run or own. That is the pie filling. That requires the individual and collective creativity and commitment throughout our organization.

Each of us also is responsible for the image and integrity of ACG. There is no excuse for less. Every one of us should promote the highest standards and expect the same of all other members. Every single member of your chapter is a reflection on you, so expect him and her to uphold your

standards.

Competition today is tougher than ever. For every situation winner these days, there are many unhappy others. Careers gain momentum or stall on marginal differences and a little luck. Auctions, in particular, produce both triumph and great disappointment.

Timing can save or sink deals. A few dozen basis points can swing important financings. Often unfathomable nuances influence hiring decisions for a variety of services. Whether it's an auction or a bake-off or RFP, a coup or a squeeze-out, holding on or losing out this time, it all matters, and most of us cannot help but take it personally.

That's in large part what drives us, why it excites us and sometimes makes us cry. It takes fortitude and constant vigilance to more than merely survive. ACG is here to help you stay sharp and thrive in this increasingly competitive environment.

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