Something Happened in 146 BC That Significantly Affects Your Business Today



A moment in history will help your appreciate your competitors.

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I'll do the math for you: 146 BC was 2,165 years ago. That's a very long time. But something happened that year that not only changed the course of human history, but also could very much change the course of your business today. Actually, it was two things.

First, Rome was the dominant power on the Italian peninsula. It's main rival in Africa was Carthage. Since 264 BC, Rome had

been fighting the Carthaginian Empire – once the preeminent power in the Western Mediterranean – in what is today known as the Punic Wars. The wars made Hannibal, the fierce Carthaginian general who menaced Roman armies for decades, into a historical legend. Its battles were fought on both sea and land with the resulting deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians and soldiers. By the end of the fighting, the once great city of Carthage was in ruins, most of its citizens were sold into slavery and its numerous settlements were taken over by its Roman conquerors.

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That end came in 146 BC, but that same year also saw another great Roman victory. At the Battle of Corinth, Roman legions defeated the once powerful group of city-states that, since the fifth century BC, made up the Achaean League. That victory, combined with its victories over Macedonia in the year before, allowed the Roman Republic to take over firm control of Greece.

Both victories were watershed events in human civilization. Since its founding in the 8th century BC, the Roman Republic enjoyed an era of global dominance in history that would last for the next 600 years, a period that delivered no significant rivals. Sure, there were the Gauls, the Germanic tribes, the Brits and the Israelites. But compared to the wars that threatened the very existence of the soon-to-become empire, these enemies were more nuisance than real threat.

Unfortunately, that date,146 BC, also began a very ominous trend for the newly emerged superpower. Absent of any substantial enemies, the leaders of Rome turned inward. They fought each other. They raised independent armies. Their people suffered through civil wars and both benevolent and cruel dictators. A huge disparity between the wealthy and the poor emerged. There was little technological progress.

Ultimately, the emperors and the ruling class became too complacent and the once great power collapsed on itself, bringing on a thousand years of dark ages that served to reverse the progress of human history.

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This happened because of what happened in 146 BC. Without a significant rival, competitor or enemy, the organization that was Rome began its long and bloody descent. You could argue that it took many centuries for it to happen, and you would be right. But the tipping point was then. When you have no competition, you lose your ambition. You become less focused on growing and more focused on maintaining. You focus on petty problems and ignore the things – investments, technologies, opportunities – that could further expansion.

This is what ultimately happened to Rome. Could it happen to your business? Hopefully not. At least, not while you've got a worthy competitor or two to keep you on your toes.

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