



My friend Tom McMakin wrote, "If you can't say you are the largest or best in a category, make your market definition smaller. Shrink the pond." After all, what's more compelling: "We offer accounting services for small businesses," or "We were voted the best accountants for e-commerce companies with revenues between \$1 million and \$10 million by the members of eCommerce Fuel?" As Tom would say, first is best.

Sure it is. But isn't there a catch? Isn't your ability to tighten your market focus inversely related to the size of your addressable market? That's the reason why small towns have general stores and big cities have specialty boutiques. Merchandisers in big cities can tighten their market focus in order to differentiate themselves and still make a living off a narrow slice of a big pie.

Of course, businesses can seek to expand their addressable market in order to allow them to offer differentiated specialty products and services. That was true 100 years ago. It's true today. To do so, businesses use technology, whether it's the telephone and railroad or the internet and container ships.

The point is, if all or part of a product or service can be delivered across time and distance, it will be. That's because businesses will be compelled to narrow their marketing focus in order to differentiate themselves and-- at the same time-- expand their addressable market in order to survive and thrive.

You can reach the world, but the world can also reach you. That means you must be world-class in order to compete-- wherever you are. However, world-class is contextual. A world-class basketball player is usually different from a world-class gymnast. In what context-- in what pond-- can you deliver world-class products and services?