

# OPINION

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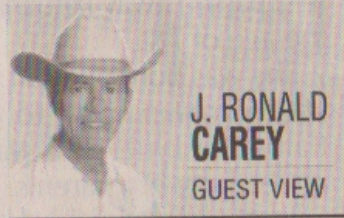
## Marketing: Difference between dead, alive firms

With Kodak's bankruptcy, we are reminded of the susceptibility some organizations face. That is, being first in their field may not be best.

In Kodak's case, the company invented — and was the early leader in — digital photography.

Then others came along with improved features, Kodak did not respond, and it was suffocated. This is a common event in business. That is, innovators being good at an idea but not being able to sustain it profitably against competitors, who take that notion and then control the market.

The first in become the



first out.

Here are examples of idea originators who started the race but did not finish in first place:

- The first supermarket opened in 1930 in Jamaica, Queens. It was King Kullen.
- The first package express organization was the Railway Express Agency.
- The first sugar-free cola came to market in 1958. It was R. C. Cola's Diet Rite.

- The first automobile assembly line and the country's best selling car 1901-1904, was Oldsmobile.

- The first commercially available ball point pens were an Eversharp and a Reynolds in 1945.

Now let's look at companies that used to exist, got the ball rolling, then dropped that ball. They are listed next to the currently flourishing companies who serve essentially the same market as their predecessors:

- Howard Johnson's — Denny's.
- Rexall — Walgreen's.
- Robert Hall — Men's Warehouse.

- Gulf Mart — Walmart.
- Osborne — Dell.
- Trans World Airlines — Southwest.

None of the companies on the right did all that much any different from those on the left.

They took the same concept and then they improved it by adapting to consumers. Those winners understood the primary factor that makes a difference in business for those who wish to succeed: marketing.

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