

Adversity Gives You Strength

By John Boe

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How can you stay motivated in the midst of turbulent times and a sluggish economy? How do you persevere when many companies are reducing spending and customers seem to be holding on to every last penny in fear of an economic downturn? Every challenge you encounter in your life comes with the seed of equivalent or greater benefit. Adversity is a hard teacher, it never leaves you where it found you; it will either build you up or tear you down.

Selling in these challenging times requires determination and fortitude. Are you a quitter? Do you give up or give in before you give out? Quitting is habit forming; it becomes easier each time you do it. Thomas A. Edison documented 10,000 failed attempts to develop the light bulb. A reporter asked the great inventor how it felt to have failed 10,000 times. Edison responded, "Young man, I didn't fail 10,000 times trying to invent the light bulb, I simply found 10,000 ways that it wouldn't work!" Think about how different our world would be if Edison had been a quitter. The last time you failed, did you stop trying because you failed - or did you fail because you stopped trying? Having the will to persevere when times are tough is a characteristic commonly found among self-made millionaires. Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up. You must expect to encounter temporary setbacks and potholes of adversity along the road to success.

During the early years of WW II, the German U-boat blockade devastated Great Britain in an attempt to starve this island empire into submission. Nazi submarines, operating in wolfpacks, roamed the North Atlantic attacking and destroying convoys unmercifully. They sank an alarming number of military and merchant ships, denying Britain desperately needed provisions. The British Royal Navy, concerned with tremendous losses of ships along with their crews, commissioned a study to determine what might be done to reduce the number of casualties during sea rescue. During post rescue interviews, an interesting discovery was made. Remarkably, the survival rate among young, presumably more physically fit sailors was much lower than among their older shipmates. The interviews revealed that the older, more experienced sailors had survived primarily due to having overcome prior adversities in their lives. These experienced sailors had developed courage and confidence in the face of tragedy. The head of the research project, Kurt Hahn, was so moved by this discovery that he developed the "Outward Bound" program, to train young sailors. Through a series of progressively rugged challenges Outward Bound helped young recruits develop the internal fortitude necessary to survive harsh physical challenges. The next time you are faced with adversity, learn from it and know that you are becoming a stronger person because of it!

John Boe, based in Monterey, CA, helps companies recruit, train and motivate top-quality people.

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