

5 Lessons from a Long Shot. A Heartening Belmont Victory.

By Bobette Kyle

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Like many, I watched the Belmont Stakes hoping to see the first Triple Crown in 24 years. Instead, I saw the 70-1 long shot, Sarava, appear from nowhere to win. We should take heart from this unlikely victory. As small business owners, managers, and entrepreneurs, the "big shots" often see us as long shots - worth a cursory notice, but rarely more.

As I listened to trainer Ken McPeck and jockey Edgar Prado after the race, I realized their win was not a fluke. Victory was the result of several intelligent actions and decisions. Apply these same actions consistently, and you can win your own "Belmont Stakes":

1) Learn from your mistakes.

Just before the Belmont, Ken McPeck was fired as Harlan's Holiday's trainer (The "better" horse.). Instead of becoming bitter, McPeck learned a lesson from the experience. He analyzed his past actions and took steps to improve. As a result, he brought Sarava in days early so the horse could get a feel for the track. After the race, it was noted that all of the top three Belmont finishers had trained on the track days before the race.

We have all been criticized for our performance, actions, or ideas. It is easy to become defensive, blame others, and dismiss the criticism as off base. Next time, when you receive a criticism or suffer a set back, use it as a learning opportunity. Look for the grain of truth in the criticism or figure out what you could have done differently and take action to improve.

2) Have faith in yourself.

In each of two interviews, Prado's first point was that he and McPeck had kept the faith. They did not give up despite what others thought. This was not blind faith, however. They saw signs of a champion in Sarava that others overlooked. They developed those strengths and they persevered.

Critics are rarely as close as you are to a situation. They do not know all the details and cannot understand all that you are thinking. When you see an opportunity that others do not, take a cue from these winners and persevere.

3) Don't automatically dismiss the underdog.

Sarava was McPeck's third string horse. After losing two early favorites - one to injury, the second when the horse's owner moved him to another trainer - he was left with the underdog Sarava. It

would have been easy to give up the dream. Instead, while others ogled expected winner War Emblem and superstar trainer Bob Baffert, McPeek looked for strengths in his own horse and saw what others did not - a winner.

It is easy to look at the superstars and reigning champions in our own industries and become discouraged. Instead, look for strengths in your situation and take advantage of the opportunities they represent.

4) Know when to make your move.

Jockey Prado deliberately ran fifth, behind War Emblem, through most of the race. When the favorite choked, weakened from a stumble at the gate, Prado was ready. He made his move, riding around War Emblem, and then pushing past others to earn the victory.

Strong competitors are not infallible. Look for chinks in the armor. Also, do not discount "Murphy's Law", which can strike without prejudice. When an opportunity arises - whether one you created or one presented to you - be ready to make your move.

5) Speak up but stay humble.

During interviews, McPeek pointed out what he had done to win the race, but he did not brag. His competitors are still major contenders. He knew that bragging about the Belmont win could mean eating crow in a future race.

The same philosophy holds true for our own successes. The situation ebbs and flows. Today's victors may be tomorrow's strugglers. Being humble and likable when you are in the spotlight can garner support through future difficulties.

Follow these five lessons from a long shot and I will see you at the races!

To learn more about Ken McPeek, visit the McPeek Racing Web site, <http://www.mcpeekracing.com> . As a side note, have a look at the "Points of Difference" page for examples of positioning and differentiation.

About the Author

Bobette Kyle is author of "How Much For Just the Spider? Strategic Web Site Marketing." She used techniques detailed in the book to bring her own site, [WebSiteMarketingPlan.com](http://www.WebSiteMarketingPlan.com), from a ranking of 17 million to 54 thousand+ in less than four months. <http://www.WebSiteMarketingPlan.com/sr.htm>

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