

## The Power of Persistence

Several years ago I accompanied my youngest daughter on a school ski trip. She had never skied, and after a few lessons, stood atop of the practice hill. During the next few hours she fell many times as she practiced her newly acquired skill. However, by the end of the day she was able to ski down the entire hill without incident. It took her dozens of attempts. She fell countless times. But she refused to give up until she accomplished her goal.

Persistence is a critical attribute for anyone who sells for a living or who owns a business. The following story, adapted from "Attitude, Your Internal Compass" by Denis Waitley and Boyd Matheson, demonstrates the impact persistence can have on our results.

Robert the Bruce was the military leader of the Scottish forces trying to preserve their freedom. Six times Robert the Bruce marched his army into battle against the opposition and, six times they were driven back. As they retreated, Robert the Bruce took refuge in a small cave where he pondered his position and options.

Six failures had daunted his confidence, and uncertainty as to whether he could rally the troops for another assault loomed before him. As he sat there, he noticed a spider that had climbed the rugged wall of the cave and now jumped out across the opening to begin its web in this ideal location. As the spider swung out and across, it missed the opposite edge and fell to the floor on the cave. Without hesitation, it climbed the cave wall again and made a second attempt. The wind gusted through the opening in the cave and the spider missed its mark, again falling to the floor. Again without question or pause it climbed up. The spider tried a third, then a fourth, a fifth and sixth time. After the sixth fall it again made its resilient climb and leaped out for a seventh attempt to create its web. This time, the conditions were right; the spider executed its plan and reached the other side. With this first strand in place, the spider quickly completed the rest of the web and had soon caught its first prize.

Robert the Bruce took this as a sign that he must be resilient and engage the opposing army at least one more time. His resiliency inspired his troops and they conquered the enemy on the seventh attempt – and saved their kingdom.

In 2003 I ran my second marathon (26.2 miles). I had trained for several months and felt ready for the race. At the halfway point I felt great. I was running at a comfortable pace and was actually overtaking many other runners. This prompted me to increase my pace. Three miles later I began running out of steam but I still had another 10 miles to run. The desire to quit was almost overwhelming. However, I kept telling myself that quitting was not an option. Failure was not part of my game plan for that run. I slowed down and began taking walking breaks. Eventually, the finish line came into sight and I crossed it with a huge smile on my face. I did not achieve my desired time but I did finish.

So, how does this apply to sales or running a business?

I remember reading a study that stated 80% of salespeople stop trying to contact a potential prospect after approximately three to five attempts. The same study showed that it took an average of at least seven to nine contacts to close a sale with a new customer. The majority of people give up too soon. They don't connect with a prospect after a few attempts so they stop calling.

A business owner faces increased competition, and after trying a few strategies to improve his competitive advantage, gives up because the strategies did not work. A friend of mine was once embroiled in a lawsuit. After a lengthy battle, he finally triumphed with a unique solution. When I asked how he thought of that particular option, he told me that it was the last thing he could think of. His refusal to give up helped him come up with the answer that would solve his problem.

Selling or operating a business for a living requires a tremendous amount of persistence. Obstacles loom in front of us on a regular basis. But it is what you do when faced with these barriers that will determine your level of success. I believe it was Brian Tracy who once said that a person will face the most

challenging obstacle immediately before achieving their goal. The most successful people in any industry have learned to face the obstacles that get in their way. They look for new solutions. They are tenacious. They refuse to give up.

What are you prepared to do to accomplish your goals?

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