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Overcoming adversity? Make control your ally

Denver Business Journal - by [Garry Duncan](#)

For salespeople, adversity isn't a stranger and may seem a too-familiar companion to many.

Adversity is defined as circumstances severely interfering with a desired goal or accomplishment. Facing adversity with health issues forces people to exercise more, change behaviors, diets and lifestyles to avoid future problems.

Successful selling also requires becoming bigger than the adversity, and it forces you to change.

Generally, salespeople are the most optimistic and resilient at dealing with adversity. Yet even the best occasionally are challenged to stay motivated in the face of a major loss and an increasingly turbulent economy.

It's best to keep a level head, research details for a better understanding of the reasons behind the circumstances and assess whether the situation is unchangeable, or something that can be resolved or worked around.

Being optimistic, tenacious and focused on finding solutions is important. One thing is certain: Adversity changes people for the better or the worse -- but it does change everyone.

It's like the story of the potato, egg and coffee all facing a pot of boiling water. The egg goes in fragile and comes out stronger, the potato goes in strong and hard and comes out soft, and the coffee changes into a better and more flavorful form.

Facing adversity in sales is like that. You can let adversity strengthen or weaken you.

During World War II, Winston Churchill was alarmed when he learned that the percentage of casualties was much higher for younger soldiers than older ones. He wanted to know why.

Researchers found that older soldiers had a higher ability to deal with the adversity of war than did the younger ones. They attributed the difference to the fact that the older soldiers had more experience taking control and facing adversity. They were partly right.

One common thread seems inherent in determining one's ability to deal with adversity. That factor is control. The belief or perception of how much you can personally control or affect events directly relates to your ability to deal with and successfully handle adversity.

That makes sense. If you feel you have no control or impact, why would you be motivated to

take action? Clearly, if you believe you have some control or impact in the outcome, your ability to rise up to adversity greatly increases. Without control, you become a victim, and victims are helpless.

Perception or belief in your ability to affect others and events is paramount because it would be impossible to measure accurately how much control anyone has in any given situation.

So how can you enhance your ability to handle adversity? You can do several things.

Recognize what you can and can't control. You can't control what other people do. Anyone with children will attest to that fact. You must place your focus on those things that you can control.

You do have control over how you assessed the sales opportunity in the first place. Did you get happy ears or did you really gain evidence of the need? You do have control over who you call, and the number of calls you make, and how many backup opportunities you have in the event you lose a prime prospect.

You have control over what you say and do during sales calls.

How you think through and how you react to challenge is your choice.

You have control on how you follow up and how you manage time.

The choice is yours on how you feel about failure and loss, how to apply self-discipline to control outcomes, and finally, how to do your best.

You can choose to believe you can overcome.

Our history is rich with examples of overcoming adversity. For 230 years, each generation has overcome adversity to maintain freedom, reach goals and accomplish great things.

The older soldiers in World War II did have more experience, but it was their belief and perception that they could overcome that saved them.

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