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it's all in the mind



Success (and survival) – it's all in the Mind

Natalie Braid
Senior Project Manager
Maximus International

I've recently discovered the phenomenon termed 'Deep Survival' – why some people who are faced with life and death situations survive and others perish.

A recent article in the Sydney Morning Herald ('Deep survival: why some cheat death at the extremes of pain' by Glenda Kwek. September 29, 2011) provided a number examples of Deep Survival, such as Lincoln Hall, a veteran Sydney climber who was left for dead while descending from the summit of Mount Everest in 2006 and Ricardo Sirutis, a Colombian executive who went missing for 10 days while bushwalking on Moreton Island in Queensland in 2005 - wearing only shorts, a shirt and sandals.

There are many stories of individuals who have overcome unbelievable odds, and through inner-strength, have pulled themselves to safety. But why? What makes these people different? Does this ability to survive translate into the business world? The commonalities of survival stories seem to come down to four key behaviours:

1. Be prepared

In survival situations this means knowing the conditions you are getting yourself into, letting people know where you are going, when you will check in and having the correct equipment.

To be successful in the business world this translates to planning to become what you plan to become. No one stumbles across success. You have to know what you are trying to achieve.

First you have to understand yourself. Leverage your strengths and strengthen your key weaknesses. Then visualise what it is you want to

achieve. Successful people whether consciously or unconsciously, attract the success they want by visualising their goals as already accomplished. Lastly, be sure you have the correct equipment in your personal toolkit, be it skills, knowledge or networks.

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."

– Colin Powell

2. Practice

In emergency situations, such as in the event of a fire, it's proven that having evacuation strategies in place, and walking everyone through them ensures a better chance of survival – you need to go through what you would do in a crisis situation. Bear Grylls (Man vs Wild) caters to those who want to be prepared for any situation in which they may find themselves. The series features Grylls dropped into inhospitable places, to demonstrate localised survival techniques.

In a work environment, this would be demonstrated through practice – honing those skills determined to lead to success. This can be accomplished through activities such as goal setting, time management, and decision making. Setting specific and measurable goals with milestones and preparing an action plan to achieve them.

The difference between your average person and a successful one is often shown to be due to concerted effort to improve. By continually stretching themselves just beyond their current abilities and identifying specific elements that require improvement, driven people focus on just those things until they're improved. Then it's on to the next aspect.

"By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart."

– Confucius

3. Be visible

Make it easier for rescuers (or supporters) to find you. Whether in remote environments or corporate life, no one succeeds by 'hiding their light under a bushel'. For survival, this means not walking away from the site of the crashed plane or car, wearing bright clothing or carrying a mirror.

In corporate life it means don't conceal your talents or abilities. Being visible or sharing your skills with others increases your sphere for success. Talking about your objective with others – or 'sending it out to the universe' – reaffirms your intentions, to others and yourself.

You may discover others who can assist you on your journey. Whether increasing your networks, or a trusted advisor or mentor who can provide you with feedback. Feedback on results cannot always be determined in isolation. In many situations, a teacher, coach, or mentor is vital for providing crucial, impartial, feedback to ensure you are heading in the right direction.

"Without promotion something terrible happens... Nothing!"

– P.T. Barnum

4. Be determined

Psychologist Jim McLennan from LaTrobe University said a key aspect of "deep survival" was the ability to control fear and keep a level head. "Instead of either fleeing without thinking, or freezing and huddling and becoming passive, they kept looking out for danger and for opportunities to escape. They don't give up," he said.

To be successful you have to know you are focused – you decide what you are going to do and you have to do it.

"Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm."

– Winston Churchill

Failure can be a key ingredient in success. If you traced the footsteps of a successful person, you

would likely pass the remnants of multiple failures. Those who don't achieve success most likely quit after their failure. If you want to succeed where other people fail, you have to step right over failure and keep walking. The people who don't make it let failure defeat them.

Success is possible for anyone who is willing to achieve it. There are many who want success, but you have to be willing. Your outlook and the way you define success, opportunity, and work play a large role in determining your outcome.

Natalie Braid Senior Project Manager

Natalie has an extensive background in project management, with proven capability in the management and execution of leadership, management and personal transformation programs.

Natalie's particular strength is relationship management. Prior to joining Maximus International, Natalie worked on a wide range of development programs at all levels of management within Lend Lease on a global scale. From team leader to executive level development, Natalie has worked with national and international business schools including The Wharton School at University of Philadelphia, where her stakeholder management was recognised as "world class".

Within Maximus International, Natalie has worked with organisations such as QBE, News Limited, Coca-Cola Amatil, Eli Lilly and BNP Paribas. Natalie plays an integral role in working with our clients to ensure the smooth delivery of project objectives. From project initiation, Natalie is responsible for the planning and controlling of all aspect of a project including project scope, budget, key milestones, internal and external stakeholders, resourcing and monitoring, implementation and ongoing communication.

Natalie holds a Bachelor of Business Degree majoring in Marketing and Management and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.



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A Level 11a, 17 Castlereagh Street Sydney NSW **P** 02 9216 2800 **W** maximus.net.au