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Alan Hall, Contributor
Speaker, author, investor and catalyst for entrepreneurial growth.

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How Business Champions Overcome Adversity: 5 Powerful Steps

Starting and running a business can be extremely challenging. Most entrepreneurs and managers find new obstacles to remove and towering barriers to scale every day of the week. We often encounter disruptive situations in our personal and professional lives such as a divorce, the death of a loved one, illness, the loss of a favorite customer, the departure of a valued employee, a shortage of funds, or even a lawsuit.

Successful business leaders – or people in general – don't give up when adversity strikes. They find the ways and means to carry on. What can we learn from those who have faced catastrophe and won?

1. They remember the overarching goal they hope to achieve. It's the magnet that propels them forward. They recognize that the benefits of accomplishing the objective dramatically outweigh whatever negative situations they encounter.
2. They seek assistance from others. Wise entrepreneurs know they can't win the battle alone. When times are tough, they reach out to friends and associates who can provide assistance and guidance; people who are genuine and highly supportive.
3. They maintain a positive attitude. They keep their chins up. They choose not to let negative thoughts rule the day. They view the future with optimism and hope.
4. They keep their composure. They don't panic. They take a deep breath and remain calm. They know that night will be followed by day; a new day of opportunity.
5. They try again and again. They get right back on the horse that threw them. They don't quit. They consider the lessons learned and make the necessary improvements to ride one more time.



Stock Photo - SAMUI, THAILAND - APRIL 22 2012: Samui triathlon 2012 event. Overall champion David Dellow in action during finish the triathlon on Sunday 22 April 2012 in Ko Samui island, Suratthani, Thailand.

I recently spoke with a young business executive who survived an Iron Man competition in Florida to learn how he overcame the unexpected adversity of his amazing race – a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike ride, and a 26.2 miles

marathon.

“Along with more than 3,000 competitors of all ages and experience, I began the first leg of the race swimming in very strong ocean swells and a left-to-right current. Within a few moments, I was inadvertently kicked and punched as we fought for a favorable position. In the first 500 meters, my lower lip took a blow and began to swell, followed by a kick to my face with seawater filling my right goggle.”

“I left the ocean after a grueling hour-long swim.”

“After 18 miles on my composite bike with 94 miles to go, my front tire went flat. Terror is the only way to describe what I felt. I race on tubular wheels, meaning there is no way to change a flat. You either fill it up or your race is over.”

“I tried filling the tire with a CO2 cartridge, but the nozzle broke on the inflator. What to do? I jumped back on the bike and rode 4 miles with a flat tire followed by running with my bike in hand for 1/4 mile to an aid station to find a pump. Fortunately, there was enough slime in my tire to keep the tire inflated for the rest of the race. However, I lost 25 minutes of valuable time.”

“To catch up, and with 20 more miles to go, I pushed myself way too hard. It was the biggest mistake of the day. Having overdone it, I was unable to eat and my stomach was in knots. I didn't eat at all through the rest of the race (46 miles with no food).

“With 16 miles from the bike finish line, my bike seat broke and became fixed at a 70 degree angle. Biking into the worst headwinds of the day and unable to go into aero position, I was extremely uncomfortable and feeling enormous stress. Despite all this adversity, I finished the ride at 5:38:48, a half hour behind my goal.”

“I paid dearly while getting through the bike competition; my stomach issues were so bad at the start of the run, I could only speedwalk the first three miles of the marathon. In time, I would run for 1/4 to 1/2 mile at a time.”

“At every aid station, I poured water over my head, ice down my shirt and drank a mix of Coke and water. I did the first half of the marathon in 2 hours and 30 minutes, way behind schedule.”

“I continued to run/walk through mile 17, but decided to fight through the pain and pick up the pace with 9 miles to go. I ran/jogged, holding my side the entire time. There were a lot of miserable folks out there with me so I decided to be a positive and affirmative guy to everyone I passed.”

“At mile 25 I decided I had to finish in style. I gave everything I had left, running a 7 minute mile to finish the race. I could hear people on the sideline shouting, ‘Go, Ironman!’ I finished the marathon in 4:50, an hour over my desired goal.”

“As I crossed the finish line, I jumped and slapped the finish arch. The



This executive somehow found the strength to land a "jump finish" at the end of his grueling Ironman race.

announcer called out my name and declared me an **Ironman**. I must admit that at that moment, it was all worthwhile. It's still an emotional and amazing feeling. I finished the total event in 11:47:59 (a full hour above my race goal, but it didn't seem to matter at all). I had achieved my goal by overcoming every challenge I faced."

"I am grateful to my wife and family for their unstinting support and encouragement. I thank the Ironman organizing team and the phenomenal support of the volunteers who assisted me and others along the way. I would not have survived or finished the race without their invaluable help."

Whether it be an Ironman competition, personal challenges or the obstacles we experience in business, all winners must have the will and determination to move forward. I salute the entrepreneurs of America who never give up.

Do you have an interesting or informative story to tell about enduring to the end? I welcome your ideas and comments, as always, either here or at @AskAlanEHall or www.AlanEHall.com.

Author: [Alan Hall](#) | [Google+](#)

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