

Leveraging Life Lessons

THE POWER OF A HURRICANE

The dramatic life impact of Katrina and Rita has triggered introspective thinking among many of us...including ourselves. During a recent discussion, our reflection led us to ask each other the question: what life lessons can we gain from Katrina and Rita and what lessons do we already possess that we are not leveraging? It wasn't too long into our conversation before we realized that as devastating as the hurricanes had been there were blessings for those who would be willing to engage in a personal assessment and tap into the lessons called life.

After several conversations we came to some conclusions that we thought might be worthy of sharing. Our hope is that these observations will be helpful to you in discovering your own insights. Initially, many of us were overwhelmed by the pain and suffering associated with the hurricane devastation. But we must also challenge ourselves to find deeper meaning and apply the learning to our life. How many times have you heard yourself say, "I have my priorities straight". It usually goes something like this: I value God (or some higher being), family, work, friends, and on and on... But when we take a closer look at the way that we actually spend our time as well as the values and principles that guide our everyday lives, there are simply too many inconsistencies between what we say and what we do.

Katrina & Rita teach us a lot about resiliency. Indeed, it is what is referred to in the business world as a great "case study" of human resiliency. In a time when the business world is changing so dramatically resiliency is critical for success. Unfortunately it is often in the difficult times that we discover the depth and richness of who we are. Soon the cameras will disappear and hurricane Katrina will be a memory. That is the true tragedy of the situation. Before we know it we are back to the daily grind. The question is this: **are we leveraging the lessons that life provides us and are we using the learnings to make a difference for ourselves and for others.**

So we offer the following lessons on ways that we can gain positive insights from hurricane Katrina in a profound way.

LEVERAGE

Lesson#1 - **Understand what you value and align your priorities in life** to support those values. If family really is your top priority make the decision today that no matter what is happening around you, you will seek solutions that help you honor family first. Chasing the carrot is great... becoming successful is great... but not at the price of everything else that you value. And consider the possibility that with discipline, conviction, and determination, you may even be able to have it all! Tap into these attributes; because believe it or not you have them.

Lesson #2 - **Build a survival mindset.** No one knows when they will be faced with devastation. Devastation doesn't know gender, age, culture or skin color. It is truly an equal opportunity event. So, how does one deal with devastation? You build a survival mindset. You must believe that no matter what, there will be options, and you will survive. Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster.

"Devastation doesn't know gender, age, culture or skin color"

Remember 9-11... it was an act of evilness. Bad things can befall any of us at any time.

Decide today that no matter what the future holds you are a SURVIVOR! Think about surviving, mediate on it, visualize it and it will come to pass!

Lesson #3 - **Build a community.** The reason why so many complete families were found dead together in the wake of hurricane Katrina is because the culture of the gulf cost residents and Louisiana victims was rooted in a premise that there is no greater honor than family supporting family! No matter if it is Katrina, Rita, or someone backstabbing you in the work environment you must be resolved and determined that you will be successful! You must become your greatest fan and your worst critic. Surround yourself with people who will be honest and tell you that which is true...even if it hurts! Relationships are so important in life and in business. No matter how strong and resolved that you are to succeed; we all need support, nurturing and care. It is important to make relationship development a high priority. And remember... take care of those who take care of you!

"You must become your greatest fan and your worst critic...make relationship development a high priority"

RESILIENCE

Lesson #4 - **Don't be afraid to take risks.** We all take risks everyday. Did you drive to work this morning? Did you take the train? Indeed that was a risk. Why? Anything can happen at any time. Unless you are willing to live on an island (by yourself) you are engaged in risk taking.

And even on the island you risk an encounter with the mammals that inhabited the land before you got there. Can you say snakes?! Many of the hurricane victims will have to take a risk and start in a new place. Maybe you are facing the possibility of a new job, a new boss or even a new company. Sometimes in order to reach a higher level of performance, of quality, of meaning, you have

"We all take risks everyday...Anything can happen at any time"

to be willing to take a risk. If you are reading this thinking, I'm not a risk taker, I'm far more analytical in nature, consider this: risk taking is no more than developing a concept, validating the concept, assessing the viability of the concept, connecting with others to support the concept, engaging the concept and executing the concept. How analytical is that? Very and it is "strategic" risk taking at the same time.

Lesson #5 - **Become a chef: make lemonade out of lemons.** Have you ever thought about what it takes to get through a difficult situation? All of us will face challenges in this life. It may not be Katrina but it will be something. Life is tough, and we must make the most of the hand that we are dealt. How do you do that? You accept the worst and the rest becomes easy. Find the silver lining....it is there waiting to be discovered. That's making lemonade out of lemons. Whether it is divorce, the birth of a special needs child, the decline of an elderly loved one, there is a silver lining. What's your silver lining?

"Find the silver lining"

Lesson #6 - **Focus on the positive.** I'm sure you've heard the saying that "Today is the first day of the rest of your life". But do you believe it? In order to continue to not only survive but thrive, you must celebrate the small victories and focus on the positive. It could be something as simple as getting dressed this morning. Do you know how many people can't dress themselves? Do you know how many people wake up in the morning and have no idea who they are or better yet where

they are? If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world. The next time that you are tempted to sink into the “poor me” mindset resist, stop, reflect and count your blessings. Learn to reinforce the positive! No matter how insignificant you think that an occurrence is; find the positive; mark the date and time and celebrate. Confidence, conviction and commitment are formed out of belief and taking one step at a time! Belief comes from advancing and as long as you are alive you have the option of advancing. Choose it!

Lesson #7 – Use your experiences to help others! Maybe you have reflected on your life lessons and concluded you have little to offer the world. You are absolutely, positively wrong! Every person on this earth has been put here for a reason. The question is: are you fulfilling the purpose behind that reason. One way that you can do this is to share your testimony. By sharing your life experiences, you enrich someone else’s life. Don’t let the trials or the triumphs of life short change your ability to move from success to significance. You are significant and a catalyst for creating the future. Use your voice.

“Leverage the lessons that life provides and use the learnings to make a difference in your life and others”

To all those who lost their lives in hurricane Katrina & Rita may God give your soul rest. And to those who lost their way of living, may resilience become your bedrock. May you remain steadfast in your focus on finding a silver lining that becomes a bridge to a new world of possibilities that are positive. May you know in your heart that you have marked your page in history because of the powerful life lessons that you have afforded the world as it relates to priorities, relationships, surviving in the midst of chaos and family. You are truly an inspiration and a reminder to us all of the true riches of life. May we never forget the life lessons!

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