

Scary Times Tips

By Sandra Wiley, COO and Senior Consultant, Boomer Consulting

Everyone feels uneasy these days with the economic ups and downs that have become a part of everyday life. A good friend and mentor, Dan Sullivan, recently shared with us some excellent advice and encouragement to manage life during these "scary" times. I've summarized his points here, and I hope they are as helpful for you as they were for me!

1. Forget about yourself—focus on others

Fear can drive people to focus inward, making them feel isolated and helpless. The best strategy is to go in the opposite direction, expanding your connection with others - focusing on helping them transform their negatives into positives. The more you contribute in this fashion, the less you will need to worry about your own situation. You will become a source of confidence for everyone else.

Applying This To You and Your Firm: Seek out your best clients, take them to lunch, meet them for breakfast or even meet with them on their home turf and talk to them about their business. Listen and assure them that you are there during this time. You don't have to have all the answers, you just need to assure them that you understand and that you will help in any way you can. Connect with them!

2. Forget about your commodity—focus on your relationships

In scary times, people become frightened about the viability of their "commodities" - the things they sell and the jobs they hold. A more strategic response is to disregard your own commodity and focus on deepening the power and possibility of all your relationships - with family, friends, team members, suppliers, clients, customers and prospects. Every time you strengthen a relationship, the viability of your commodity, without you focusing on it, will increase.

Applying This To You and Your Firm: Clients are important, but take extra time during this moment in history to reconnect with your family, staff and friends. This is a great time to try that concept they call life/work balance! You may find that a scary time turns into one of the most rewarding times of your life.

3. Forget about the sale—focus on creating value

Most people don't like being "sold" even during the best of times. When times are scary, people turn sales offers completely off, put their hands up and slam the door shut. What they need at all times, however, is value creation – that is, solutions to help them eliminate dangers, capture opportunities and reinforce their strengths. When you focus on providing these three solutions, sales will naturally follow.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: Talk to your clients! Talk to them about the dangers they face and find ways to help mitigate these. Talk to them about their opportunities and how they

can take advantage of the positive parts of their business. Talk to your clients about their strengths. Compliment them about what they're doing great—it will magnify their confidence.

4. Forget about your losses—focus on our opportunities

Things you had and things you took for granted may have disappeared. Some people never get over this fact. They keep trying to replay their old games. A better strategy is to start an entirely new game – using new ideas, new energies, new tools and new resources. A big opportunity is available now for achieving far more than you ever did in the past.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: During tough times it is easy to slide into the murky depths of feeling sorry for yourself. Allow yourself to do this for 24 hours – then get over it. Start looking for new ways to play the game. What is not working and what can you change? What new services can you create? What new technology can you implement? What new people could you hire that will offer new capabilities? Don't allow yourself a pity party, only allow for a celebration of new opportunities!

5. Forget about your difficulties, focus on your progress

Things may not be as easy, but difficulties can either defeat you or reveal new strengths. Physical muscles get stronger by working against resistance. The same is true for the “muscles” in your mind, your spirit and your character. Treat this period of challenge as a time to make progress in your growth as a human being.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: Find time for you. Consider how tough circumstances can foster a stronger you. Document your thoughts on paper or an online journal to help clear your mind as well as discover new ideas and sources of inspiration.

6. Forget about the “future”—focus on your today

“Future” is a word that describes an abstraction; it doesn't exist except as an idea. The only reality is the one you create for yourself through each day's contributions, achievements and results. Ignore the “experts” who never saw the present circumstances coming. Focus on what you can do over the course of each 24 hours, and you'll be the only expert on the future you'll ever need.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: Focus on making progress of some sort every day. Make a list of the things you will do, the people you will see and the conversations you will have with your clients every day. Take time to cross things off the list and reflect on the success you created by making daily progress. A little caution – don't set yourself up for failure by putting too many things on the list! Be realistic.

7. Forget about whom you were, focus on who you can be

Many people define themselves by external circumstances. When these abruptly change, they don't know who they are, so they keep trying to be who they used to be. From now on, take your cues from the inside – from your dreams, ideals, values, and operating principles. These need never change, regardless of the circumstances. Take advantage of the present external confusion to become self-directed, self-managed, and self-motivated.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: Self-directed means taking responsibility for yourself. Self-managed means that you will not wait for someone else to tell you what to do. Self-motivated means that you create value for others and for the firm without being poked and prodded to accomplish tasks. Proactive is the word that comes to mind. If you focus on the

person you ultimately want to be and proactively keep your thoughts on that person, your difficulties will seem much less daunting.

8. Forget about events, focus on your responses

When things are going well, many people think they are actually in control of events. That's why they feel so defeated and depressed when things turn bad. They think they've lost some fundamental ability. The most consistently successful people in the world know they can't control events – but continually work towards greater control over their creative responses to events. This period, while things are uncertain, is an excellent timer to focus all of your attention and energies on being creatively responsive to all of the unpredictable events that lie ahead.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: When you are dealt bad news, do you have a tendency to think about it incessantly, talk about it for days, let it keep you awake at night and absorb it into every part of your life? A more positive approach is to focus on how you can respond to the news. It might be easier to complain, but in the end it is certainly not good for you, your staff or your clients. Focus on looking at things through new glasses with a positive spin. Talk it, think it and absorb the positive responses you start to feel.

9. Forget about what's missing, focus on what's available

When things change for the worse, many desirable resources go missing – information, knowledge, tools, systems, personnel and capabilities. These deficiencies can paralyze many people, who believe they can't make decisions and take action. A strategic response is to take advantage of every resource that is immediately available to achieve as many small results and make as much daily progress as possible. Work with every resource and opportunity at hand, and your confidence will continually grow.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: Take inventory of what you have. Consider the personnel, technology, clients, services and knowledge that you and your team members possess. Knowing for certain what you have can instantly build confidence for your future. Doing this exercise on your own is fine, but involving your team will build a great deal more confidence in them as they help build the inventory!

10. Forget about your complaints, focus on your gratitude

This is a time when everyone must make a fundamental decision: complain or to be grateful. When negative news becomes dominant, the consequences of this decision are much greater. Complaining only attracts detrimental thinking and people; gratitude sparks opportunities for the best thinking, actions and results to emerge. Focus on everything for which you are grateful – communicate this – and commit yourself each day to the best possible consequences.

Applying This to You and Your Firm: Make time often to cultivate a grateful attitude. This does not have to be a hard exercise. Commit to finding someone each day for whom you feel grateful and thank him or her. Genuine gratitude expressed in spoken words is the greatest gift you can give.

Tips from *The Scary Times Success Manual, The Strategic Coach*, by Dan Sullivan