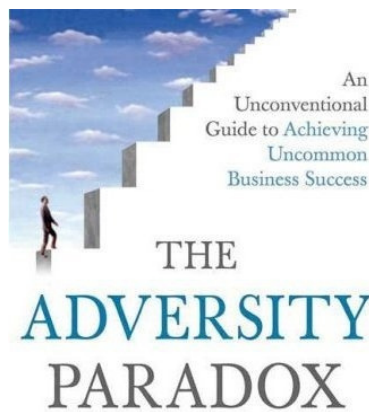


The Adversity Paradox

An Unconventional Guide to
Achieving Uncommon
Business Success



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About the Authors

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J. BARRY GRISWELL
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■ The Big Idea

Harvey Mackay, Doris Christopher, Pete Dawkins, Clay Jones and John Pappajohn know that recovering from career-toppling adversity and going on to achieve pinnacles of success lies in firsthand knowledge of "the adversity paradox". They all attest to having found that the knowledge they gained from overcoming adversity played such a crucial role in their success trajectories that they now consider adversity a friend.

While many motivational business books promise easy access to prosperity and power by way of secret insight, quick and easy steps, or "insider tips" that are dubious at best, *The Adversity Paradox* tells it straight and offers no secret formula or silver bullet. Instead it offers candid accounts from those whose skills, resourcefulness, and confidence have been tested by adversity and who have put their misfortunes to good use by gaining invaluable business lessons from them.



Bob Jennings is President of Lean Management Inc. Prior to starting his own company he was President of EFCO Corp. Mr. Jennings received his bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa and his MBA degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

<http://www.adversityparadox.com/bios.asp>

■ Why You Need This Book

This book offers lessons that are practical and inspirational and which can be applied at any stage of your career. You can be one of those people who emerge from even the most humble of beginnings or the most devastating of setbacks to achieve the success you've always dreamed of. No dream is ever impossible.

The paths to success are diverse, but *The Adversity Paradox* identifies patterns that anyone can study and learn from. Business people working to overcome humble beginnings, lack of knowledge, unexpected setbacks, or any manner of misfortune may find the greatest tool for creating business success in this book.

■ The Business-Savvy Profile

These business-savvy competencies can be found in any profession, including the one you're in. How proficient are you in each area? Plenty of people are good, but the business-savvy are great – consistently great.

SYSTEMS AND LINEAR THINKING. In his seminal book *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge describes systems thinking as the "discipline for seeing the wholes." It's "a framework," he writes, "for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static snapshots", while linear thinking involves following a straight path. Business-savvy people need not only be adept at both systems and linear thinking, but must also have a feel for when to employ systems thinking and when to go linear to get results.

CONTINUOUS THINKING. The business-savvy's minds never turn off. They're constantly running what-if scenarios in their heads and assessing the general risks and rewards for potential outcomes. The practice of continuous thinking can often fuel audacious dreams and goals: If the mind is constantly churning, inspiration is more likely to strike.

SYNTHESIZING. With such a profusion of information, the business-savvy need a superior ability to sort and prioritize data, especially in today's environment of information overload. It's the process of turning the data we receive into salient information.

KNOWING WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW. It's a matter of being aware of where your information voids are, of knowing where your area of expertise stops, and, in some cases, where another person's begins.

COMMUNICATION. Peter Senge identifies two types of communication within an organization – discussion and dialogue. He states, "In discussion, different views are presented and defended. In dialogue, different views are presented as a means toward

discovering a new view... Dialogues are diverging; they do not seek agreement, but a richer grasp of complex issues.”

EMPATHY. This enables the business-savvy to have a good understanding of what others are thinking and feeling, which allows them to stay consistently a step or two ahead of the game.

■ The Individual Human Capital Profile

This is an individual's portfolio of assets in which he or she has invested that can produce future positive outputs. Business leaders who have benefited from the adversity paradox have tended to build their success upon the following components:

1. Introspection. This is the practice of observing one's self – one's personality, strengths, and weaknesses, overall performance, motivations, goals, ideas, and capabilities – and conducting honest self-assessments.

List the number of orbiting satellites you have who are acting as mirrors. They could include family members, friends, co-workers, supervisors, and so on. Depending on your aspirations and goals, there may also be many more objective mirrors, such as income level, awards, and positions changed.

2. Values Behavior. Good values, and behavior that matches those values, are paramount to maintaining a positive trajectory over long periods of time. Compromising values may get someone ahead in the short run but will always bring him down in the long run. Honesty and integrity are the foundation for any type of success – honesty with others and, more important, honesty with oneself.

Stated values may not mean a whole lot. It's behavior that gives a true indication of who you really are. In the best-case scenario, your stated values are always in accordance with your actual behavior. Ethical behavior is a function of adequate moral reasoning, which is indicated by how far you have climbed the hierarchy of moral development.

3. Work Character. If you buy into the theory that success is about reaching your personal potential, about achieving stretch goals and doing it “right,” there must be hard work.

Work character is a broader concept than work ethic. Work character consists of one's physical work ethic, one's cognitive work ethic, and one's particular skills to lead.

Make a commitment to reach your goals, and not only will your over-all work character and job performance improve, you'll also find that work will quickly become more

fulfilling. Your new skills and increased motivation may even lead you to the position you've always dreamed of.

4. Purpose and Passion. If hard work is critical, then we need to find a way to really enjoy our work so that it's no longer work, but rather something we're passionate about. The trick is to view work as a means to far greater benefits or enjoyment.

Purpose comes first. Once you find your true purpose, passion will follow. Passion can be a great measure as to whether you've found your purpose or not: if passion never arrives, move on and try and find a different purpose.

It may take time to discover a purpose. Stick with a task until you're sure that passion won't develop. Purpose may change over time.

5. Thirst for Knowledge. The power of knowledge and lifetime learning is transformative. It can be absolutely essential to your success.

Your success is significantly impacted by the foundation of knowledge you already have or will possess in the future. If you haven't already found a thirst for knowledge, it's not too late. You never know when something will ignite your thirst for knowledge, but you do have to create optimal conditions for it. So be a sponge! Get out of your comfort zone and try something new or more challenging. Make learning an adventure!

■ The Power of "And Then Some"

One of the greatest things about the power of "and then some" is that it's available to all of us – people of every age, every profession, every educational level, every level of experience. No special skills are necessary – just the willingness to learn from adversity and to put in some extra effort. And if you're lucky enough not to have experienced full-scale adversity, you can start by applying the power of "and then some" to all the setbacks, obstacles, and even daily nuisances that will always arise in business.

THE KEY TO BEFRIENDING ADVERSITY

An educational setback, a physical injury, a career disruption, or the death of someone very close to you or on whom you were dependent all have the potential to derail a success trajectory. Thankfully, there is the power of "and then some." Harnessing this power starts with choosing not to make an enemy of adversity but a friend. The next step is actually applying the basic principle of "and then some" to everything you do.

Put in the extra effort above and beyond others at work, and then expand the principle into a full cycle of self-improvement. Bringing the power of "and then some" to

everything you do will have an immeasurable positive impact on the development of your human capital. And a fully developed individual human capital makes for increased business savvy, and therefore success – success you may have never believed possible.

And just think – it all started with adversity.

MULTIPLYING THE POWER OF “AND THEN SOME”

Positive thinking is integral to befriending adversity and to harnessing the power of “and then some.” To face adversity and to conduct some honest and effective introspection, you need to have the right frame of mind. Without a positive attitude, you’ll simply wilt before adversity.

The discipline of positive and optimistic thought needs to be continually worked and perfected until it is an ingrained habit, as second nature to us as brushing our teeth every morning.

■ Using the Adversity Paradox to Triumph over Unexpected Trajectory Changes

Being business savvy, having fully developed human capital, and performing well don’t immunize one from having a career catastrophe. A sudden trajectory change can be caused by any number of adversities that are out of one’s control, including technological advances that eliminate jobs, a natural disaster, illnesses, economic misfortunes, slip-ups, and unjust conspiratorial overthrow.

The sudden loss of a career is disastrous for anyone, but the business-savvy are able to rely on their human capital to either rebuild a career or reinvent themselves. Such success born of wholly unforeseen adversity is tantamount to overcoming the catastrophic.

Here are some important takeaway questions to guide you through the process:

- You may not have faced a midlife trajectory change, but you have to realize that the chances for being blindsided are always there. Take an inventory of your own human capital development and the history of your success trajectory. What adversities have had an impact on you? How did they impact you? Did they cause you to do some human capital building?
- If you missed an opportunity for human capital building, figure out right now how you can benefit from the experience: It’s never too late. Hindsight is always twenty-twenty; what did you learn from the adversity? How can you use what you learned to positively impact wherever you are right now in your career trajectory?

- If you evaluated yourself as strong in any of the human capital components, how have they helped you overcome adversities? If you're weak in any, what concrete steps can you take to strengthen them?

■ **Practicing the Paradox**

If you can accept the wisdom the adversity paradox offers, you can count on emerging from difficult situations with the kind of business savvy you can't get from any course, seminar, or training program. So get on the unconventional path to business success right now. Find opportunity in obstacles. Regard setbacks as a chance to start anew with more focused intentions. Befriend adversity, and let the adversity paradox lead you into a realm of business and personal success you never suspected was possible.

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