

## Anticipate and Deal with Possible Problems

Written by Steve Marr

Monday, 19 November 2018 00:53

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I worked with “Matt,” a client who had 65% of his business with one client who had a staff of eight serving the key client. Early in my consulting I asked Matt what he would do if his largest customer walked away. Matt replied that he really didn’t know. I explained to Matt that while it wasn’t pleasant to think about the possibility, he needed to make a plan just in case it happened.

Unfortunately within 18 months his largest customer departed. As unpleasant as this was Matt had listened to me and prepared for this possibility. He didn’t have to spend the month thinking about what to do; he simply started implementing his plan which unfortunately included releasing several contract employees. Also, in the 18 months leading up to the loss of this large account, Matt had followed some of my advice to work diligently to build other customers so that when the large account went away; it took only 40% of the business. While it was a serious loss, it wasn’t catastrophic.

In my own life and with business, I’ve always looked at what was the worst possible circumstance that could happen without getting overly negative. I accept the reality that the worst could occur, so I make a plan for what I would do if the hammer fell. The positive aspect is I am able to stop wasting a lot of time and emotional energy thinking about something I can’t control in the future. I’ve already thought about the worst case and have a plan in place to move forward. At that point I leave the situation to the Lord and move on focusing elsewhere.

When a client is concerned about a catastrophe, I advise them to write out and define as clearly as possible exactly what they are concerned about. Then we try to assign a percentage of probability to it. I may live 500 miles from an active volcano that potentially could blow its top sending several inches of ash in my direction. I can take some limited action to protect myself. However, I also know the likelihood of such interruption is maybe one in 1,000, not very high. That prompts me to take basic steps and not think about the possible eruption too much.

Also by identifying the concern and developing a basic plan, you will save significant time because you won’t need to devise a plan when you’re already under serious stress.

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For example, tactical fire departments map out major buildings and work on plans for fighting fires in these large structures, fires they hope they never have to attack. However, when a 20-story apartment building catches fire; the fire department doesn't stand around outside and ask what's the plan. They simply attack with the plan that was already written.

By thinking through problems and establishing a plan to mitigate difficulties, we often see that the possible disaster is one we can work through rather than be overcome with analysis paralysis.

King Solomon wrote, "A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences."(Proverbs 27:12, NLT) In your life, personal and business, be the one who is prudent and foresees danger.

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