

Defending Failed Directions Can Direct You Away from Profitable Progress

"The best defense is a good offense." --Various When circumstances turn hostile for the current direction, most organizations will focus on defending themselves from the effects of the changed environment rather than on reaching out to adapt to the new situation, which creates a diversion from progress and growth. The discussion of defensive postures and how to overcome them presented in this article is intended to help you see the advantages of seeking out new paths when the going gets tough, rather than simply hunkering down and hoping for better times and circumstances to arrive. An enterprise encountering irresistible forces can be likened to a sailing ship. When faced with stormy conditions, the captain can take down the sails, batten down the hatches, and sit below deck hoping to safely ride out the storm. If conditions are fierce enough, this may be the right thing to do. But if you still have the capability to maneuver, your chances are better if you use the irresistible forces to help you get where you want to go; otherwise you may unnecessarily take a merciless pounding. Consider, for example, that hostile circumstances often are affecting others negatively at the same time as they are affecting you. This situation may make these other enterprises willing to become your partners when that option would otherwise not normally be available. The old observation that politics makes strange bed fellows can be applied to enterprise combinations as well. Also, hostile circumstances may only be negative if you try to offset them rather than adapting to the new realities or your improved perception of existing realities. For example, while falling currency values in another country may at first hurt your earnings in selling to the local market using imported goods, they may also provide an opportunity to gain market share through reconfiguring your manufacturing to produce locally in that country or by adjusting the prices you pay suppliers. Keep in mind that your enterprise's strengths can most easily be shifted in a new direction when you have not yet been harmed by an irresistible force. Psychologically, however, most organizations find it easier to institute change in the face of a very threatening situation, that may do harm to the people involved. This is a tendency that your enterprise should resolve in favor of effectively alerting everyone early to the future danger to the organization and themselves of taking a solely defensive posture.

About the Author

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