

## “When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Going”

It's the oldest of all clichés. “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” I love it because it is so simple and can be applied to so many aspects of our lives. Business life, personal life, spiritual life; we can all think of instances in our own lives where this saying firmly applies.

For those of you who know me well, you know that I am a big sports fan. I love baseball, football, basketball and golf. Of all these sports that are played by ordinary men and women, I believe golf gives us the greatest opportunity to peek into the character of those individuals who choose to play the game.

Have you ever played golf with someone that throws their clubs? What about the golfer that can't keep his mouth shut while others are trying to hit? In my opinion, the most annoying golfer of them all is the golfer who always seems to have an excuse for every bad shot. Like I tell my 7-year old son – “Excuses are for losers.” Certainly these poor-sport golfers are not playing in harmony with “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”

Greg Norman was quoted as saying “The best golfer's welcome bad weather. You always knew 85 to 90 percent of the field was complaining. The rest find a way to get it done.” Essentially what Greg was saying is “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”

Among his peers, Tom Watson, a five-time British Open champion, is the indisputable choice as the best bad-weather performer of the modern era of golf. His three-under-par 69 in the second round of the 1979 Memorial Tournament, when the wind chill sank to 13 degrees and the wind gusted to 30 mph, is engraved in the minds of many tour players. “Tom was always the best bad-weather player we had on tour,” Jack Nicklaus says. “He's the best I've ever seen. Whenever it's windy, howling and cold, he seems to shine.”

Do you know a fellow Allstate Agent that runs their business like Tom Watson plays golf? When the product isn't competitive they just continue to find new ways to get it done. How do they do it? “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”

In his heyday, golfer Tom Watson viewed the harsh elements as an opportunity to separate himself from the competition, and he genuinely enjoyed the challenge. “It's not for everyone, but I found playing in bad weather to be fun,” says Watson, “I was prepared to deal with whatever Mother Nature was willing to dish out.”

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WOW! Talk about words to live by. Tom Watson says – “I was prepared to deal with whatever was dished out.” How simple yet profound. Tom even states that he found playing in bad weather to be “fun.” Are you serious – fun? I can think of a lot of words to describe playing golf in 13 degree wind-chill and fun would not be one of them.

Tom Watson is golfs version of who we all strive to be as business owners. When a day at his office (the golf course) was difficult he saw the fun in the challenge. How do we view our jobs/businesses when things are tough? Do we focus on the challenge ahead or do we soak in self-pity?

I think I have learned a few things from Tom Watson and his dominance of bad weather golf:

1. Change is going to happen – sometimes good, sometimes bad,
2. You must always be prepared to deal with the unexpected, and
3. If you are going to do it, do it with a smile on your face

Let's look at each of these three individually:

#### 1. Change is going to happen – sometimes good, sometimes bad

Not much to say here. We all know change is right around the corner. If your product isn't competitive, guess what? It soon will be. If making money is easy today, guess what? It is going to be hard tomorrow.

#### 2. You must always be prepared to deal with the unexpected

When looking at this from a business perspective, I think an appropriate descriptive word is Cyclical. Are you prepared for the cyclical nature of business? Are you spending every penny of your take home pay during the good years? If this is the case, then you are not ready and prepared to deal with the down years.

Do you manage your business quarterly or annually based on the wide or narrow availability of opportunities? Do you have a succession plan, life insurance and contingencies for the future? If yes, then you are prepared.

#### 3. If you are going to do it, do it with a smile on your face

This one seems silly, but it might be the most important of the three. Why? Because everyone is watching you. A sour attitude by the boss will make its ways into the customer's ear. This is a fact.

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I really understood this concept in 2002. I had been working with a referral source for a little over a year and every conversation with this individual was less than pleasant. He was always upset even when I was delivering good news. Finally, I got an opportunity to work and communicate with others in his office. Unfortunately, these individuals had the same negative/crappy attitude. This was not by coincidence. They were simply conforming to the mold that had been presented to them by their boss.

### **Tying it together:**

When I was doing my research for this editorial, I stumbled upon Wikipedia which in my opinion does a great job of explaining “When the going gets tough, the tough get going”:

*The meaning of the phrase is “When the situation becomes difficult, the strong will work harder to meet the challenge.”*

I love this, but I still struggle with one thing – Who are “the strong”? Is it a chosen few who have superior talents and resources? I don’t think so. I think “the strong” is anyone who chooses to be strong when the situation is difficult. In fact, I think a slight tweak of Wikipedia’s quote is in order. Here is my version:

*“When the situation becomes difficult, some will choose to become strong by working harder to meet the challenge.”*

Whether you agree with my version of this quote or not, one thing is for certain. During difficult times, the recipe for success is hard work.

### **So what is the takeaway?**

I hope you develop your own takeaway, however, the takeaway for me has been added to my New Year’s resolution (in addition to getting in shape):

1. I will be the source of a positive attitude in my office – regardless of what issue we are dealing with
2. I will continually monitor my business for
  1. Opportunities, and
  2. Change on the horizon
3. When change does happen in 2013, I will greet it with a smile and work harder

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