



The “Scary Times” Success Manual

by Dan Sullivan

At Strategic Coach®, our business is helping successful entrepreneurs increase their sense of direction, confidence, and capability in all areas of their personal and business lives. We originally created the piece below by request from our clients in response to the climate of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty that followed 9/11. Since then, we receive requests for it whenever times become more uncertain. These ten strategies keep the focus on opportunities for growth, progress, and achievement that arise when the world around us gets more turbulent. We hope they support your creative thinking, communications, and actions as you navigate the months ahead. Please feel free to share widely.

1 Forget about yourself; focus on others.

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

2 Forget about your commodity; focus on your relationships.

In uncertain times, people become frightened about the viability of their “commodities”—the things they sell and the jobs they hold. A more strategic response here 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 will increase.

3 Forget about the sale; focus on creating value.

Most people don’t like being sold to at the best of times. When times are uncertain or scary, they turn off, hang up, and slam shut. But what people want at all times is value creation—that is, solutions that help them eliminate their dangers, capture their opportunities, and reinforce their strengths. When you focus on providing these three solutions, the sales will naturally follow.

4 Forget about your losses; focus on your opportunities.

Things you had and may have taken for granted sometimes disappear. Some people never get over this. 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. As the world changes, opportunities suddenly become available to achieve far more than you ever did in the past.

5 Forget about your difficulties; focus on your progress.

Things may not be as easy as they once were. New difficulties can either defeat you or reveal new strengths. Your body’s muscles always get stronger from working against resistance. The same is true for the “muscles” in your mind, your spirit, and your character. Treat this whole period of challenge as a time when you can make your greatest progress as a human being.



6 Forget about the “future”; focus on today.

The “future” is an abstraction. It doesn’t exist except as an idea. The only future that has any reality is the one you continually create for yourself through each day’s contributions, achievements, and results. This is an excellent time to ignore all those 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.

7 Forget about who you were; focus on who you can be.

Many people define themselves by external circumstances. When these abruptly or unexpectedly 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 external confusion to become self-directed, self-managed, and self-motivated.

8 Forget about events; focus on your responses.

When things are going well, many people think they’re 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 toward greater control over their creative responses to events. Anytime there is fear, uncertainty, or discomfort, it’s an excellent time to focus your attention and energies on being creatively responsive to all the unpredictable events that lie ahead.

9 Forget about what’s missing; focus on what’s available.

When things change for the worse, many desirable resources are inevitably missing, including 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 in order 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.

10 Forget about your complaints; focus on your gratitude.

When times get tough, everyone has to make a fundamental decision: to complain or to be grateful. In an environment where negative sentiment is rampant, the consequences of this decision are much greater. Complaining only attracts negative thoughts and people. Gratitude, on the other hand, creates the opportunity for the best thinking, actions, and results to emerge. Focus on everything you’re grateful for, communicate this, and open yourself each day to the best possible consequences.

The Strategic Coach® Program offers successful entrepreneurs a place to regularly reconnect with these attitudes and with their own goals and ideals, regardless of what’s happening in their businesses, their lives, or the world around them. For more information, call 416.531.7399 or 1.800.387.3206.