

The David and Goliath Principle: Business Success Against the Odds



What's the David and Goliath principle? It's pretty simple, and if you're the little guy, the underdog, or the one without the best odds of winning, but have experienced success, you may have used the David and Goliath principle without even realizing it. Let's take a look at it, break it down and learn how we can use it more purposefully, for even greater results.

The David and Goliath Principle Explained

Most of us are familiar with the Biblical story of David and Goliath. In the story, the Philistine army had gathered for war against the nation of Israel. Both armies were at a standoff, facing each other, each camped for battle on opposing sides of a steep valley. David, the youngest son of Jesse, who was likely just a young teenager at the time, was sent by his father into the battle lines to check on his older brothers and bring back news to the family. There was no internet, no news updates or cell phones at the time, so David was basically sent to assess the situation and bring back word to the rest of the family.

David was a little bit different than the average person. He was willing to look at things from an entirely different perspective than others did. He was the kind of person, even from a young age, who was willing to stand alone if he had to. These are the people who make a difference.

When David came onto the scene, he probably had full intentions of doing exactly what his father asked him to. He showed up expecting to make sure his brothers were okay, get a few details about the progress of the battle, and return home with the news. I'm sure he probably didn't start his day thinking, "Hey, I bet I'm going to put an end to the war today." But, on the other hand, the thing about people like David, is that they are always open to whatever comes their way and don't automatically fall in line with the way everyone else thinks or sees things.

Sometimes a fresh perspective holds the key.

How Are You Viewing the Situation?

For the two armies engaged in the battle, the situation seemed clear. The Philistines had Goliath, a self assured giant warrior who had built himself quite a reputation in battle. He had always been the winner and the Israelites were clearly intimidated and afraid of his reputation. But, they were thinking according to Goliath's rules or according to only one perspective, and in that scenario Goliath *did* have the clear advantage.

Each army was arranged on opposing sides of a steep valley. According to the situation they could see, it would play out something like this: One of the sides would make the first move and

advance toward the opposing side. Whoever made this first move would be at a strong disadvantage and completely vulnerable to the opposing army. Each side was waiting for the other to attack, and of course, with Goliath in the mix, the Philistines had the advantage. There he stood, taunting the Israelites, trying to get them to make the first move.

When David came along, he brought with him a fresh perspective. He had never been involved in a battle such as this before, so he wasn't pre-programmed to think according to the unwritten rules of battle. (In my blog post entitled [*Are You Living Your Life on Autopilot?*](#) we discuss the dangers of allowing yourself to fall into self sabotaging thought processes and learned behavior).

When David came on the scene, he didn't know or care about Goliath's reputation. He hadn't been intimidated by him for 40 days like the rest of the army. He was looking with fresh eyes. David was a shepherd and had years of experience protecting his father's flocks from predators. To him, fighting Goliath wasn't much different than battling a bear or wild animal. David had God on his side as a shepherd, and he knew God was on his side that day as well. He quickly assessed the situation and volunteered to fight Goliath. Here's where the fun comes in.

Pushing Past the Obstacles

The first thing that occurred after David convinced King Saul to allow him to fight Goliath is pretty comical. David was given the weapons and armor that everyone else used. In other words, David was being pushed to operate according to the unwritten rules. "This is how it's always been done. This is the armor we always wear. This is how you should battle Goliath."

Fortunately, David was no dummy. He knew he wouldn't have a chance if he battled Goliath according to Goliath's rules. That's what a fresh perspective does. It allows an individual to assess a situation for what it truly is, instead of by the rut it has fallen into. David went against Goliath with the tools he knew best, not Goliath's armor. The giant warrior laughed at him for his apparently childish plan, but he wasn't laughing for long. If you are aware of the end of the story, David simply reached into his bag, pulled out his slingshot and a few stones (these were the tools he had become an expert with), and within a few minutes Goliath lay dead. That's all it took? Yes. That's all it took. Of course, if David would have put on King Saul's armor and tried to fight Goliath on Goliath's own terms, things would have turned out quite differently. But David knew who he was, what his strengths were, and how he could gain the advantage.

How does this translate over to business success? I'm glad you asked.

If You Want Something Different, *Do* Something Different!

Most business success and great innovative ideas come by way of recognizing a problem or situation and making the necessary improvements. If you've ever operated on this level, you now know it's the David and Goliath principle. You may not have been the biggest guy, or the

company with a prior history of success, but just like David, you recognized a weakness and an opportunity, — you reached into your bag, pulled out your slingshot and the rest is history.

An industry I can use as an example is the software that brought Wall Street from operating in batch time over to operating in real time. Back in the late 1980's and early 1990's, traders would make their decisions based on information that was scattered across a number of databases. The trader would collect all of the information and, on a biweekly or monthly basis, would collate and analyze it in order to make trading decisions. Looking at it from today's perspective, you may be thinking how archaic this sounds. Now, of course, Wall Street operates according to real time processing. At any given moment, you, as an investor, have access to the same information as a financial planner, mutual fund manager, or anyone else. How did this evolution occur?

Vivek Ranadive, who was born in India and decided to travel abroad to attend M.I.T. in the 1970s was the first to found a software company devoted to real time processing. He recognized the flaw in the system the way it was and relentlessly labored to change it. His philosophy, "If a businessman waits until the end of the month to collect and count his receipts, which is how batch processing works, then there is a gap between the events in the company — sales — and his understanding of those events." What Ranadive's company accomplished was to consolidate the databases into one stream, for businesses and for Wall Street, so current, up to date information and data could be collected instantaneously. This allows for better decision making and has been hugely successful. One man saw something different and decided there was a better way.

In my own career, I could have fallen in line with the status quo. When I first entered the field, I expected the financial services industry to be quite a bit different than what I discovered. The conflicts of interest and the entire drive of the industry was not as it appeared. Instead of helping individuals plan for a rewarding financial future, I discovered an industry fueled by greed, with most professionals doing whatever it took to earn their commissions, often at the client's expense.

At that point I had a decision to make. Would I fall in line with the status quo, or would I find a new way to operate? I chose to side with and fight for the rights of the client, which is how The Financial Coach and the work I do today originated. At first, of course, it seemed an uphill battle, but I soon discovered there were others in the industry who shared the same vision, to protect the financial client. It wasn't easy at first. Standing alone rarely is, but if you make the decision to break away from the crowd and follow the path you know is right, you'll experience a level of success you probably never dreamed of.

How Can *You* Benefit From the David and Goliath Principle?

In your own business, as well as in your life, it's vital that you pursue your own dreams, regardless of whether you've got a fan club cheering you on or not. If you've got an innovative idea, a new way of doing things, a passion for excellence, keep moving forward. Don't pace

yourself according to what the rest of your industry is doing. If David would have walked up to the other Israelites, asked them what they thought, and asked for everyone's opinion, he would have set himself up for discouragement. Instead, he assessed the situation, made his decision, and followed through.

Don't be afraid of failing and don't be afraid of standing alone with your ideas. David was the least likely man for the job, but he's the one who slew Goliath. What giants are you chasing after today? It's time to pursue, and turn your dreams into reality.