



Be a Lion to Life's Hyenas

By Mary Ann Miller
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These are the hyena days of summer. You know the feeling – you've made it across the desert of a long hot season. Along the way, you've battled against a series of economic challenges. You've strengthened your stamina with lots of water, maintained your equipment, and trained yourself and your staff. You can tell the end is in sight. Just around the corner are cooler air and more customers.

But it's Arizona, and what's around the corner are nature and karma laughing at you.

The president of another non-profit commented last week that it's no longer comforting to hear that everyone is feeling the challenges of the economy. I agreed. We're all bucking down, doing what we can to make it through these tough times, while trying to position ourselves for the future by building relationships, streamlining processes, honing our core competencies and narrowing our missions. But it's hard, and it's tiring. Here are some tips we all need to get through this:

- Ask for help. Don't think you can do it all alone. If you're having challenges in your business, give us a call. The Tempe Chamber staff is happy to sit down and brainstorm ideas. Sometimes all you need to do is talk over your ideas with someone outside.
- Gain perspective. One of the best, albeit strangest, bit of business advice came from a friend who told me, "remember, they can't poke your eyes out." Keep in mind what's really important: it's not the amount in your portfolio or the "stuff" in your life.
- Think Maslow. Do what you need to do to take care of basic needs. Think of partnerships, sales approaches and positioning that you've considered and discarded before. Times are different and everything should be on the table.
- Market yourself. While it may seem like an easy place to cut spending, now more than ever you need to be out in front of people. Build the relationships and name recognition that will not only see you through the downturn but set you up for a quick recovery.
- Take small breaks. Whether you're looking for customers or looking for a job it's hard to take the time, energy and funds to relax and replenish your spirits. Find that photo or web site that will transport you or a moment or so every day. Right now, I love to check in on the baby panda at the San Diego Zoo's Panda Cam.

Recently I contacted a cohort who's been in the business for 30 years and asked his advice on handling the challenges we're all facing in our businesses. He said we should go to lunch with a friend who doesn't know what we do, and don't tell them about it. Sometimes we just get so engaged in what we're doing we don't see what's happening outside our universe.

So talk to friends, go to lunch, and don't let the hyenas get you down.