

NETWORKING Times®

MOVING THE HEART OF BUSINESS

Success in the Face of Adversity



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What is the upside of adversity?

VOL 8, ISSUE 4 JULY-AUG 2009
\$7.97 US / \$10.97 CAN



0 74470 197227 3

“What’s the upside of adversity?”

Each issue, “Our Times” asks a panel of commentators to contribute their views on a particular question or topic designed to gain perspective on the world of networking today. For this issue, given its focus on success in the face of adversity, we posed this question to four guest writers: “What’s the upside of adversity?” Here’s what they said.

Ad Astra per Aspera

By Svetlana Kim

Several years ago, a good friend of mine was in a serious car accident. A few months later she sent out a spellbinding account of her recovery on stationery headed with “Ad Astra per Aspera,” Latin for “to the stars through adversity.”

How pretentious, was my initial reaction, but as I read further I was more and more humbled.

Her story made me think of my Russian-Korean grandmother, White Pearl. In the fall of 1937, Stalin ordered the forceful deportation of nearly 200,000 Koreans from Sakhalin Island, directly north of Japan, into Central Asia. My grandmother was twenty-two years old and is today one of the few survivors of this deportation. This traumatic experience became her life lesson about overcoming adversity to build strength and character.

Being a successful networker and entrepreneur today requires the same qualities that my grandmother taught me: perseverance, passion, faith, a burning desire to succeed, au-

thenticity, commitment, attitude and a good sense of humor. Here are seven secrets for overcoming adversity from White Pearl:

- *Love what you do, and do what you love.*
- *Tough times make tough people.*
- *Be authentic.*
- *Never give up on your dreams.*
- *To overcome fear, face it head on.*
- *Doing nothing is a risk.*
- *Anything is possible.*

While neither deportation nor illness has touched my life quite so dramatically, my story as a refugee from Russia became my lesson in overcoming adversity.

Arriving in U.S. with one dollar in my pocket, not knowing English, taking a bus from New York City to San Francisco, not eating for three days and not knowing that Greyhound buses had bathrooms was very challenging. I worked as a cleaning lady, a department store clerk and a stockbroker, became an executive with Lancôme, ran The Business Women’s Network,

a division of NBC Universal in Washington, D.C., and worked as a fundraiser for then-Senator Hillary Clinton. In 2008, I published my first book, *White Pearl and I*.

Through my own experiences, I realized the value of what my babushka White Pearl had told me years ago: “Face every situation with faith, hope and love. Embrace all that life throws at you, good or bad; neither of them will last forever. Life is a gift from God, and it’s up to you how to use it.”

Ad Astra per Ardua—we all can reach stars! ■



SVETLANA KIM immigrated to the U. S. from Leningrad, Russia, in 1991. Today she is an entrepreneur, community leader and author. Most recently, she became a 2008 Asian Academy Hall of Fame inductee. Svetlana shares this acclaimed honor with Norman Mineta, the former Secretary of Transportation and Labor Secretary, Elaine Chao.
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