

TACTICS

By James Collins.

Tactics are short-term responses to a problem. Once they prove successful, they become standard in a person's normal operating procedures. Over the years, I have observed associates who have demonstrated tactics, which raise them well above the normal crowd. They do something different, which for them is quite successful and for me is memorable.

Traveling at night on the subways through the South Bronx and into Manhattan can be hazardous. If you are small and appear weak, you are a target for the thugs and thieves. Many hard working people enter the subways both day and night, understand this concept and plan to defend themselves in various ways. A young man two years my senior 'Little Dan' was about 5 foot two and weighed about 100 pounds. Yet he worked the night shift for years, traveled the IRT Lexington line, and escaped being assaulted, accosted or robbed. I was aware of his reputation for being an untouchable and wanted to learn his secret. We were having a beer one night and I related his reputation and asked him what kind of a weapon, he carried.

He replied, "Just my two sheets of toilet paper."

Startled, I asked, "Dan, what are you talking about?"

"My worst time traveling is about three in the morning, coming home from lower Manhattan. I am often in a subway car all by myself and I always sit in the middle between the doors so I can see people come at me from either side. As I approach the tough stations, I take my toilet paper tear into little one-inch strips, wet one end and pasted to the side of my face. I add some to my cheek and some to my forehead. Then I twist my baseball cap to a crazy angle and start talking to myself. When pair of thugs comes into the car, they take one look at me, roll their eyes at each other and leave. The toilet paper has saved me many times over the last few years and a couple a times it was the same thugs and obviously, they remembered me. With that, he reached into his pocket and showed me his toilet paper sheets.

Pat Clancy, a distant relative, was a little old Irish cop also slight of build and big in reputation. Known as the toughest cop in the riot squad in the New York City Police Department, he was deceiving. New York is a tough town and to have this reputation in a population of 8 million was notable. At a family graduation party many years ago, I was sitting next to Pat and we were having a beer. I related to him the story of his reputation and asked him if there was anything I could learn from him that might help me in an altercation in New York.

Dan laughed and said, "You do not understand how a person my size, and I am half your size, can clean out a riot in a dance floor and still survive. Let me explain it to you. When a fight starts, all the big people like you, stand toe to toe and slug it out. Everybody is looking for the next big person to take on and

nobody looks down at the floor. That is where I am with my nightstick. I bend down low and hit them in the ankles. They fall to the floor and I hit him in them on the head. I can clear half a dance floor before they even know I am in the room. Of course the rest of the riot squad is also at work and in no time at all, the riot is over."

A classmate of mine employed the third tactic, which was quite effective. He was a good engineer, intelligent, talented and innovative. However, in the elite organization we worked in, that was a common denominator. After five years, I moved on to another firm for a great opportunity. My friend stayed in place and started using an interesting tactic to advance in the organization. He studied the organization chart and strategized who above him, if promoted, would allow him to move up in the organization. Once identified, he contacted a couple of recruiters, forwarded the resumes of those blocking his advance. He also sent glowing accounts of their capabilities their education and their management skills. They then received offers that were too good to turn down and as they left the organization, management refilled their position and he either moved into it or his boss moved up and he followed his boss. Eventually my friend ended up as the president of a major corporation. It was like watching an artist at work. Rembrandt would have been proud.

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