



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

Stepping Stone

October 2008 – Issue No. 32

Are You in a Slump?

by Dave Miller



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A “slump” can be defined as a “decline in performance.” Maybe you feel you’re in one now professionally. If not, my guess is you remember a period of time when you were. You know, those time when

- You just aren’t getting any breaks—prospects aren’t buying, clients seem to be leaving in droves, etc.
- You seem to be making more mistakes and missteps
- Things aren’t gelling as well with your coworkers, supervisor, customers and strategic partners
- Your self-confidence is in the toilet!
- In general, all the metrics you use to define your success are going downhill and you’re starting to wonder if you’ll ever recover.

CHASE UTLEY—THE SLUMP

I’m a die-hard Phillies fan and have been thinking a lot about slumps since the entire Phillies team seems to be in one this month. Specifically, let’s look at Chase Utley. I would submit that Utley is “baseball incarnate”—he’s all about hustle and he’s totally humble. He’s a modern-day hero and role model.

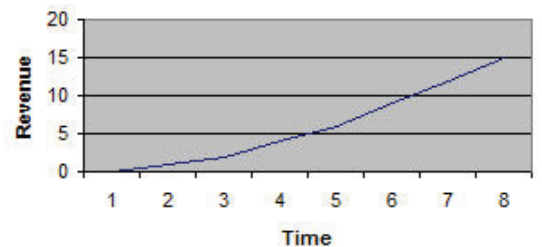
This year there is talk about Utley being the National League MVP. This is because, up until June 3, Chase was playing incredible baseball. His batting average was .325, he led the league in home runs (21) and was second in the league with RBIs (runs batted in). He also had more All-Star votes than ANY other player in the league!

If you’re not a baseball fan, please bear with me—there’s a point here. This month, Chase Utley went from playing “unconscious baseball” to falling into a 0-for-24 batting slump (he went 10 for 61 from June 3 until he finally got a hit on June 24). His batting average fell to .291, he was second in the league with home runs and 4th for RBIs.

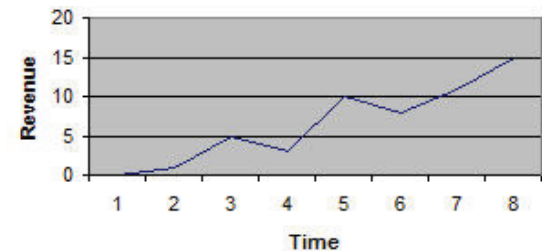
BREAKING OUT OF THE SLUMP

During this time, Chase was interviewed and said that the way for him to break out his slump was to take it day-by-day and keep practicing the fundamentals. It got me thinking about the slumps we have in our businesses or careers.

One principle about success is that the trend line is almost never steadily increasing like this (especially within a year):



Rather, it may look more like this:



I found some interesting stats about Chase Utley BEFORE he had his big slump this year:

- First 23 games – he had 10 home runs and 21 RBIs
- Next 21 games – he only hit .221
- Next 25 games – he hit .330 with eight home runs

So even when he was achieving unarguable MVP status, Chase still had difficult stretches where his performance was anything but stellar.

PRACTICING THE FUNDAMENTALS

So how do you and I break out of our slump? We need to practice the fundamentals. What are they? Let me suggest five:

1. Take a break.

One thing Chase did was sit out a game. Ironically, the next night he got a hit and snapped the slump. So although it killed him to sit out because he loves to play so much, it was beneficial. Sometimes we need to get away from our game and focus on other aspects of life or even “veg out”. We’ve been pushing too hard—we’re trying to force it. Taking a break allows us to “reload”.

2. Take care of yourself physically.

I’ve been guilty of underestimating the value of being at peak performance physically. If you’re not making the time to take care of yourself, you will find yourself in slumps more often. Give yourself the permission to exercise, eat right and get enough sleep. I broke out of a slump when I began a new exercise routine. I was concerned about the time exercising would take, but in the middle of my run, I had a great business idea. If I had chosen to sit at my desk instead and ‘force the creativity,’ I would have missed out on this great idea! The time you invest in yourself will come back to you in multiples.

3. Master your mindset.

Just like you need to take care of yourself physically, it’s critical to monitor and condition your thoughts and beliefs. Our thoughts and beliefs directly impact how we feel and, ultimately, what we do. One of the most valuable things I’ve found in snapping a slump is to take time to reflect on what’s going on inside me. What beliefs are operating in me? Which ones do I need to adjust or transform? Then I take the time to condition those thoughts and beliefs. Slumps affect our confidence. We must be vigilant to combat the beliefs that disempower us.

4. Do the “little things” every day.

It’s tempting when you’re in a slump to try to hit a grand slam. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to come up with the big hit. Instead I recommend practicing the fundamentals of your business or career. This means doing the little things that we know have worked in the past. Things like picking up the phone and following up on leads, writing an article or setting up a speaking engagement (if you’re in a marketing slump).

When I was in one of my slumps, a wise friend told me to simply “keep marketing yourself every day and let the results be what they may.” In other words, keep doing the little things. Initially, I sarcastically thought, “Thanks a lot—that’s really helpful!” Thirty days later, I had more business than I could handle and enjoyed a long upward trend!

Identify three to five daily fundamentals that you know work (when you actually do them) and do them each day—the results will take care of themselves.

5. Get support.

Don’t try to get out of this slump alone. Get the support of a friend, partner or coach to help you stay with the first four fundamentals I mentioned. Isolation is death rattle, especially when you’re in a slump. Remember, no one gets successful alone. We’re meant to be in relationships and help each other.

So take comfort in your slump—you WILL get out of it. Practice the five fundamentals above and you’ll get the success you deserve! By the way, Chase Utley went 4 for 5 the other night!

What are your methods for breaking out of slumps? I’d love to hear from you. You can e-mail me at dave@BusinessGrowthNow.com. ●

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