



STRUGGLING DAY TO DAY? HERE IS YOUR SURVIVAL TOOL KIT

by Martin Lush,

I was with a client the other week helping them manage the outcome of a tough audit. While sat in the room late one evening, two things struck me: how tired and stressed they all looked and their relative inexperience. Their average age was 35, although some looked considerably older! Over a coffee, it was clear they were very committed and hardworking and wanted to do their best; they just didn't know how. Two years earlier their company encouraged those over the age of 50 to leave, who took thousands of years of priceless intellectual property with them. In short, those that remained had no-one to go to for guidance, advice, mentorship and support.



On returning to the office I contacted 30 people whom I have known and respected for many years. High caliber "streetwise" professionals with an average of 30-35 years' pharma experience, most of whom went through our Qualified Person education program. Like a lot of our QPs, they now hold senior leadership positions in their respective companies. I asked them the following question:

"What single piece of advice would you give the young and aspiring pharma professional that would help them survive and prosper?"

Here are their recommendations based on nearly 1,000 years of combined experience. Read carefully, there are some real gems!

IN NO ORDER OF PRIORITY:

1. "When you're in the middle of a crisis or you've made a final decision, ask yourself if your actions and decisions will pass the "headline test". What would the newspapers say about it? How would headlines sound? What would you say to reporters? This is a great way of cutting through company politics, short-termism, vested interests and local expediency to get to the "right thing" to do. Remember the right decision is often the hardest."
2. "Refine and improve your risk-based decision making skills. Always be structured and consistent in your approach and remember decision making is a skill that can be learned, refined and improved."
3. "As you move up the ladder always remain visible, connected and available. You need to keep your finger on the pulse."
4. "Change your attitude to problems and mistakes. When something goes wrong, focus on the learning gained. Concentrate on the problem, not the person. You will be amazed how much progress you will make."
5. "Remember there is risk in everything. Perfect your risk assessment skills but remain balanced and pragmatic. The more risk averse you become, the greater the risk."



6. "It's vital you never lose the trust and respect of your colleagues and the regulators. Maintain your honesty, integrity and transparency no matter what."
7. "When faced with any challenge, always remain part of the solution, not the problem, and never use fear to get what you want. You only get away with it once."
8. "Never surround yourself with people who only agree with you! You want colleagues to challenge and question your decisions. Resolve disagreements by exploring differences of opinion, not defending them."
9. "You are not the font of all knowledge. If you want respect, just admit you don't have the answer. Humility goes a very long way in gaining respect."
10. "When you have to make tough decisions, take time to explain why to those impacted – your rationale, your reasons. Above all, always be consistent and pragmatic. Don't make mountains out of molehills."
11. "Leadership can be lonely. Work hard to create and maintain strong relationships in all areas of the business and make sure that you continue to learn from each one of them and provide them support in return. You get back what you put in. The best leaders are those with the strongest networks."
12. "Remember it's your relationships that dictate how successful you are. Treat people in the way you wish to be treated."
13. "Be expected to have opinions on everything. Opinions are good. They are based on principles that run deep as a result of your training and experience. Remember that facts are your friends. As facts change, change your opinion but never change your principles."
14. "Listen twice as much as you talk. Remember, listeners control conversations."
15. "Get yourself some good mentors. People who listen and advise but give you the freedom to decide."
16. "If it's popularity you're after, you are in the wrong job. Just make sure you are respected, not feared."
17. "Never be pushed into decisions on the spot; take time to reflect. Decisions made when stressed and tired are usually wrong."
18. "When communicating with senior management, use their language not the language of QA. Always provide options that make business sense. Explain your reasons and rationale. Lastly, communication is measured by the response you get. If it's not what you expected, change the way you communicate."
19. "Provide good education and training to cross-functional teams. You can then delegate with confidence."
20. "There will be times of extreme pressure and stress, so be prepared. You will need to develop skills and mechanisms to do this at home and at work. Remember your health and relationships at home matter most. Take either for granted and you will be in trouble."
21. "Always lead by example, and maintain transparency and consistency in all that you do. Remember everyone views the world differently and no-one thinks like you!"
22. "Join the NSF alumni group. Two days per annum spent sharing best practices and you will realize you are not alone."
23. "Always keep up to date and fresh; don't let technology pass you by. Every day is a learning opportunity."
24. "DBA may have morphed into NSF, but it's the same people. They have been there and done it and have acted as my lifeboat on more than one occasion. Keep them on your speed dial list. From my experience, they genuinely care!"
25. "Always challenge the status quo; never accept it. It's only those who push the boundaries that make progress."



26. "Become an 80:20 person in your thoughts and actions. Focus on the 20 percent that really matters... You can't do everything. Remember energy follows thought so only focus on what matters. Do the basics better than anyone else."
27. "Sometimes the situations you face may appear overwhelming. Just tackle whatever you're faced with one bit at a time. "
28. "If you make the development of your people your priority, you will never be short of followers."
29. "Invest in quality thinking time away from distraction one hour each day."
30. "Never allow people in your charge to forget the importance of what they do in making medicines that matter. If you are not passionate about what really matters, why should they be?"

NEXT STEPS:

- > Print this off
- > Discuss with colleagues
- > Review it daily (put it above your desk)
- > Commit to learning from the very best – those that have been in your shoes and understand your world
- > Remember to give us a call at any time – we are only at the end of the phone if you need some free advice. We will guarantee you absolute discretion, honesty, support and solutions.

One last word. You don't have to do any of this at all. Survival isn't compulsory.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Martin Lush has over 30 years' experience in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry. He has held senior management positions in QA, manufacturing, QC and supply chain auditing and has conducted audits and education programs for many hundreds of companies in over 25 countries.

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