

Self-belief helps overcome odds

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Dubai is expected shortly to welcome a newly discovered Scottish singer who embodies the triumph of self-marketing, something many of us may need to cultivate at this time of economic uncertainty.

Susan Boyle has attracted special interest by looking the very opposite of how she sounds, as reflected in her face and rounded figure. Local people in her home village enjoyed hearing her sing in church, but any idea of her singing professionally was thought to be out of the question in a highly competitive field where audiences expect youthful glamour.

Then at 48 years old, she appeared in a televised UK talent show in front of an audience and judges, who had never heard of her and who were singularly unimpressed with her when she came on stage.

But she surprised everyone when she opened her mouth and sang *I Dreamed a Dream* from *Les Misérables*, with a beautiful voice that received a standing ovation and the highest praise from the panel. Since then, her rendition of *Cry Me a River* on YouTube has received over 100 million internet hits!

In another recent story from London, a war veteran, Major Phil Packer, tragically injured in Iraq and who was told he would never walk again, has just managed to finish the London Marathon, even though it took him two weeks. And prior to this, he had already rowed across the English Channel for charity. Whether or not he will ever make it to Dubai on his two crutches, we don't know, but it would be rash to write off the possibility.

Those two recent news items have captured the imagination of the British public - partly because we enjoy stories of people overcoming personal barriers and also perhaps on another level, where they see this economic recession as challenges to be overcome and where people have to summon special reserves to achieve the so-called impossible.

"You'll never walk again" is not so different from "You'll never work again". And it too is asking to be proved wrong. To watch that soldier, so badly wounded at the peak of his powers and then classified as disabled, defiantly completing a marathon, was an inspiring sight indeed.

Now we have to encourage newly-redundant workers to think the same way, tapping personal potential they didn't know they had - mental adrenalin, you might call it.

And then, what about Susan, the singer, whose lack of opportunity has worked against her for most of her life? Well, this recession may put you in a few challenging positions before the sun comes out again. One of my redundant executive clients had to spend two months working in a baker's shop, sometimes having to serve the wives of his one-time subordinates. I told him he was doing the right thing, marketing himself, even on a low level, maintaining his self-respect and self-belief until he found something better. Which, predictably, he did.

Key points: Confidence level

- Newly-redundant workers need to maintain a stubborn self-belief
- Any self-doubt or self-esteem must be fought and overcome
- Life is never a straight line it goes down as well as up

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