



# Don't hit the brakes when you hit the gravel

Bởi:

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*“It is our self-preserving nature, to see something daunting on the trail, and slow down. Slowing down gives us the illusion of increased control. But riding slowly requires more control, balance and energy. When we ride cautiously, the rocks are bigger, the climbs longer and the ability to stay upright diminishes. Conversely, steady forward movement reduces energy demands, and decreases balance and skill demands. Momentum carries us over obstacles with less exertion and effort. When we approach a part of the trail where our inclination is to slow down, we should try the opposite and speed up.”*

Susan Thompson: *Mountain Biking for Life: Finding Your Path*

If you're speeding along down the road on your bike and unexpectedly hit a patch of loose gravel, the temptation is to immediately hit the brakes. But if you do, more likely than not you will just as quickly hit the ground. A much safer approach is to coast, to ride it out as you gradually slow down, keep your concentration and maintain your balance, and not even think about falling.

We're faced with similar challenges in our everyday lives. At the first sign quarterly profits might not hit the expectations of analysts and shareholders, the CEO might be tempted to slam on the brakes by slashing “discretionary” expenditures like advertising or staff training. Although it might take longer for the effects to be felt than would a tumble from a bike, the damage can be very real, and it can take a long time to heal.

At an organization where I once worked, I was holding a staff meeting in a department characterized by low morale, marginal productivity, and lousy attitudes. When I asked about this, a participant remarked, “It all started when ‘the suits’ decided to save money by canceling the employee picnic. It was the one nice thing they used to do for us.” I'd been at the organization for a number of years, but I'd never heard about an employee picnic. “Picnic? How long ago was this?” I asked.

The response: “Oh, I don't know – five or six years ago.” We on the management team were furiously pedaling away, wondering why our “knees” hurt so much, oblivious

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to the wounds that had been inflicted five or six years earlier when a previous rider hit the brakes on the proverbial patch of gravel.

The effects can be similarly traumatic at home. A teenager comes home way past curfew. Instead of riding it out until morning, when the situation can be handled with love, compassion, and understanding, the parent slams on the brakes: "You're grounded! Give me the car keys and go to bed." Though it might not be superficially obvious in the morning, a wound has been inflicted that will require first aid if it is to heal properly. The danger is, like the long-forgotten (by management), long-remembered (by staff), cancelled employee picnic, what might have been a minor abrasion can turn into an ugly scar.

If you mentally rehearse your reaction to hitting a patch of gravel before it actually happens, you're less likely to panic when it does. So, too, in business and in life. If you anticipate the possibility of an economic downturn, or a rebellious teenager, and mentally rehearse your response, you're more likely to respond with intelligence rather than react in anger.