How To Survive Tough Times

(Part I-Finding Work)

By Homesteader

Someone once said . . .

Tough Times Don't Last-But Tough People Do!

There are times when each of us may have to tighten our belts a notch or two.

Whether due to loss of income or other forces outside of our control we may sometimes be hungry, cold, thirsty, scared or frustrated.

What can we do to tide us over until times are a little bit better?

First, let us talk a little bit about human nature. Realize that our desires are almost infinite in number. When we are hungry, we may desire food. When we see an attractive person of the opposite sex, we may crave loving. When we feel lonely, we may desire companionship. When we are bored, we may desire stimulation. When we are wronged we may seek revenge.

And this circle of desire and gratification of our desires usually lasts our entire lives. As soon as one of our desires is fulfilled, one or sometimes multiple other desires will arise to take its place.

And if our desires are not fulfilled, we may experience frustration, anger and helplessness.

Most of us have heard of and understand Maslov's hierarchy of Needs. We know that in order to ensure our physical survival we need air, water, food and protection from the elements. We need to have our emotional wants satisfied and we all desire some type of fulfillment.

But when times have gotten really tough, you need to look at the foundation of the pyramid and concentrate on physical survival; for without that basis, everything else becomes much harder to attain.

So when things have gotten a little bit tough in your life, it is going to be your job to discern whether these desires that seem to hit us from all sides are real needs that you must have to ensure your physical survival or merely wants or 'glamour' which have nothing to do with the current situation at hand.

This takes work, discipline, maturity and courage to do, but it is possible as many others have demonstrated.

In our present day and age, most of our physical needs can be solved by either bringing in more money, keeping more of the money we do possess and/or spending less of what we do bring in.

And please note, that this may not always be the case; there may come a time in our generation when money won't solve our physical needs and we may have to rely on other resources to ensure our physical survival.

But for the present time we will look at ways we can both increase our cash flow and decrease our expenditures.

There are as many ways to increase the immediate cash coming in to your life as there are people if you are healthy and willing to work. Some ways are easier and smarter than others; sometimes you don't have much of a choice over what you can do. But you can bring in small and large amounts of cash in a variety of ways.

1. You can trade your time, energy and skills to others in exchange for money or other items of value

-Each of us has 24 hours each day that we can use as we desire

-Everyone who is in good health has energy with which to perform work

-Everybody has had different experiences and learned some skills in their life

These 3 items we each posses are a valuable commodity for trading purposes. The trick is to find other people who are willing to trade their money for your time, energy and skills.

The first thing you need to do is a self-assessment. What skills do you possess? how long and how hard can you work? Take out a blank sheet of paper and list your daily routine. What actions do you perform every day which other people may want you to do for them? What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? Hobbies? Occasional tasks? Other resources at your disposal which others may want to use? Specialized education or skills? Get a good guide and prepare a proper resume.

Most people have basic skills sets; we can read; write; perform mathematical calculations; make basic decisions; answer the phone; communicate with others; perform physical labor; etc.

And with these basic sets of skills, and the right methods and attitude, we can always find someone who is willing to pay us for using these skills.

Always!

Does this mean that you have to find someone or some company which has a so called job?

By no means!

Many people get stuck by looking for a job in the classifieds and unemployment office, etc.

Remember, what you are looking for is WORK and someone who will pay you to perform that work!

(though sometimes a job is the easiest way to go about this, and if it happens to be something you like and are especially skilled and educated for, so much the better).

Remember that you have something they need-they have something you need and an exchange can be worked out if the two of you can be brought together in some way.

So when the chips are really down, how can you find someone who has work?

First, you can check the normal channels like the classifieds, unemployment office, job dbases or temp services because this is where people who need someone usually go. Use your network of friends and associates to see what they know-let them know that you need work.

But if you don't have any luck this way, then don't let this stop you.

Prepare your list of the skills you do have (or resume) and target your work market. If you have a specialized set of skills, knowledge, tools or equipment, so much the better.

Now go to your local yellow pages and find the companies that might be able to use your skills. (No one in your local yellow pages? then go to the library or internet and look in the phonebooks for different cities).

Make a list of each of your prospective targets and their addresses. If they don't have a physical address listed, call the company and use your social engineering skills to get a physical address.

Make a list of at least 100 companies and don't stop until you have at least 100.

The next morning (or in your spare time if you already have a job), dress appropriately and with resume in hand start hitting the streets. Make it your goal to visit 20 of the names on your list each day. Never call asking for work-always visit your targets in person.

Now this can be a very scary thing to do. Why? Because it is a form of sales and you are cold-calling on your prospects and always risk being rejected. It is a numbers game and most of the people you visit are going to say no.

So how can we make this a little bit easier and maybe even fun and earn some extra cash in the process?

When you first walk in the door or approach the workplace be observant. Notice what people are doing that you may be able to do also. Look around the area and see what needs to be done

which no one is doing. Use your imagination. Make sure you pick out at least one thing you can do immediately.

This does take practice, so you may want to make a habit of it wherever you are at; there is always work that needs doing-it's just that sometimes we don't see it unless we are specifically looking for it.

Walk up to the receptionist or one of the workers and put a pleasant smile on your face and say "Hi, do you have any work I can do for you?"

Now 99.9% of the time they are going to say no or direct you to someone who can answer your question. Occasionally you may get lucky or they may ask you to fill out an app or for your resume which they will put on file and immediately forget about.

So what now? You are going to screw up your courage and say "Man, I'm really desperate for any kind of work. I have a wife (or husband) and 3 kids to feed and we are going to lose our house if I can't get some money today. I noticed that you needed your windows washed. . . I'd be happy to do that or anything else for a buck or two." (or trash taken out or parking lot swept or lumber piled or etc-remember to be observant when you approach).

What happens next is sometimes amazing. Sometimes they will have you do the work and pay you out of their own pocket; they may call the boss in; other times they will still say no, but you have definitely made an impression and the next time something is available or even if they hear about some work someplace else they may give you a call.

What you have shown them by this approach is that 1) You are someone who actually needs work 2) You are someone who is willing to actually do work 3) If you have dressed appropriately, are polite and have some skills they need that you are someone they might actually like to hire sometime in the future or recommend to someone else.

Is it slightly demeaning? Yes and it does take courage to do, but remember . . .

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You can get used to it and can even become an expert at it.

But use the words exactly as I wrote them. Why? because they work! Write them down and rehearse them in front of a mirror to get the correct timing, sincerity and tone of voice.

1. Smile pleasantly as you approach.

2. "Hi, Do you have any work I can do for you?" (notice I didn't say a job)

3a. They say no, not right now

3b. They say please fill out this application.

3c. They say What can you do?

3d. Let me check or go talk to the boss

3e. Doesn't matter what they say-move on to step 4.

4. "Man, I'm really desperate for ANY kind of work. I have a wife (or husband) and 3 kids to feed and we are going to lose our house if I can't get some money TODAY. I noticed that you needed your windows washed . . . I'd be happy to do that or ANYTHING else for a buck or two."

5. Wait-Look them in the eye and don't say another word until they respond, no matter how long it takes. (this is a very important and crucial point-even if they go about doing something else, just stand there, don't say a word and look at them-even if it takes 5-10 minutes or longer-wait until they respond in one way or another and stand your ground!).

6. If they still say please fill out this application, take it, fill it out and write in HUGE handwritten letters at the top-I'M DESPARATE AND WILL DO ANY KIND OF WORK!!!

7. When turning it in, say "I'm on my last legs; isn't there anything I can do for you RIGHT NOW???"

8. WAIT for a response.

I, myself used this technique plenty of times as a kid still in High School, with no special skills or opportunities and was never without either work or money.

The first time I tried it was when all of the Mines, which were our primary industry were shut down and unemployment hovered above the 10% mark. I had applied at all of the job openings I could find and the competition was cut-throat with more than 100 prospects showing up for one of them. There supposedly wasn't a job in town and people were desperate for any kind of work.

I made up a small resume and hit every small business in our small town and 2 or 3 construction sites in 3 days of prospecting.

My first day I made around $25 in extra cash, was referred to 2 other people who might have work (they didn't), and got a job painting a woman's bathroom and cleaning up 1 mans yard.

The second day I made around $20 in extra cash and had a part-time job offer which I accepted as a laborer on a construction crew.

The 3rd day I made around $40 in extra cash and got some week-end work as a maintenance man at 2 businesses, got some work cutting and hauling 2 cords of wood for 1 man (who later referred me to 2 others), some work cleaning up 1 woman's garage (I kept some items she was throwing away and re-sold them later for more than $100) and some work insulating an attic.

I was later hired full-time by the contractor, obtained 6 contracts for week-end yard maintenance at businesses, had 8 more jobs that people wanted me to perform around their own homes, was referred to 3 other people who might have jobs and was offered 2 jobs at a later date.

And this was during tough times when there was supposedly no jobs to be had (but notice, that there was WORK)

And for a total time investment of 3 days (better than sitting around moping and watching the tube).

And I still have calls occasionally from some of these people who want work done (and this is more than 25 years ago!)

I have been thinking about writing a small series of articles like this for a while, so Facta Non Verba, I decided to put it to the test in today's clime. Maybe I was just a young kid and they felt sorry for me (partly true). Maybe times have changed. Maybe it wouldn't work in the big city.

So last week, I went to the nearest big city just to see if it would still work. (I couldn't really do it where I live; I am way to busy and can't take any more work and people know me and would probably think it was just a joke or another one of my crazy ideas; not to say that if I really needed to, I surely wouldn't let pride stand in my way).

So here I am in the big Metropolis. I had previously made up some one page resumes which had a local phone number and address and listed my skills as someone with a High School Education with previous work as a convenience store clerk, carpenter, security guard and painter.

I picked one street which had a lot of small businesses and activity on it and decided to test 20 places. No targeting or anything else.

Unfortunately, the first place I stopped, a gas station convenience store wanted to hire me right away, so I had to skedagle out of there.

The next place was a book store and they were pretty rude and basically told me not on your life.

The 3rd place was a small group of offices and the receptionist had me wash the windows and water the plants and paid me $10 out of her own pocket.

The next place was a doctors office and they took my resume and put it on file.

The next was another small office building and one of the businessmen made an appointment with me to do yard work the next Saturday and they had me sweep the sidewalks and parking lot and paid me $5.

Next was a credit union and they made me fill out a job app and put my resume on file.

Next was a woman's clothing store and after accusing me of being a pervert they showed me the door :)

Next few were some other small offices and they took my resume and put it on file.

Next was a small music shop and he had me pick up around his trash bin and do some other general cleaning and paid me $5.

Next was a small body shop and when they found out I didn't have any skills they said no.

I decided to stop after this one as it was already starting to get a little late in the day and I had to be heading home. And I just wasn't that motivated. All in all the experiment had gone OK. Total cash earned was $20, picked up 1 part-time job, was offered 1 position and had faced a little rejection (which was good for my soul :)

So will it still work?

I firmly believe that I could make a full time living of doing this if I ever needed to and have way more work than any one person could ever do.

I don't care who you are or where you live. If times get tough and you need money you can always get work if you are healthy, willing to work, actually get out there and talk to people and be willing to face your fears.

Now I must admit that I have learned plenty of other easier and more profitable ways to get some extra cash over the years, but just remember that . . .

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(to be continued in Part II with . . . Creating Your Own Work).