

Survivor

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While watching television the other night and "channel surfing," I came across the show "Survivor." The basic theme is that the participants try to "outwit, outplay, and outcast." For a moment I thought it was a training film produced by some of the practice management groups! The "players" entered into "challenges." If you win, you get "immunity," which allows you to remain in the game and continue to "play." Without immunity, you may be voted to leave by the other players at a tribal council. The basic plot is to survive.

Does that sound familiar? No, I am not referring to the show. I am referring to life and private practice! In some ways, you need to outwit, outplay, and outlast the competition to be a survivor. That show hit home for me. I felt it should be mandatory viewing at every school. Based on what I hear from the students, it is!

The show has the players divide into two groups (tribes). One of the tribes took the name of "Kucha." The Kuchas made a flag and were proud of their name. In my many discussions with doctors around the country, I find that they too form "tribes." They are not part of the Kucha tribe, but some are part of what I call the "Debta" tribe. They are proud to be members of this select group and are working toward the elimination of the namesake - debt. They pay off any debt, no matter if it is good or bad, ASAP. (By the way, that is not another tribe, but stands for "as soon as possible." There probably is an ASAP tribe, but that is another article!) The members of this tribe don't want to discuss any other uses of their money. Their focus is very simple, and so are their minds!

Another tribe I have bumped into in my travels is the "Kredita" tribe. This group has as its idol a plastic card with lots of symbols that are not ancient. The symbols are accompanied by words like "Visa," "Mastercard," "American Express" and "Discover" to name a few. The group's goal is to use this plastic card to obtain as many earthly goods as it can, even though it can't afford them. Its members differ from nonmembers in that they do this constantly, and make sure that the card is charging them the highest possible interest rate available. To do otherwise is to be banished from the tribe immediately, even before a tribal "council" meeting! It is forbidden to search for a lower rate, or even call and ask the plastic god to lower the rate on your symbol.

There is a very small tribe that is almost extinct. It goes by the name of the "Kasha" tribe. This group believes that it doesn't hurt to have some cash on hand. (This group is being investigated for "un-American" activities and thinking.) It realizes that there are opportunities that present themselves from time to time, and if you have cash, you can take advantage of those opportunities. The word is that this group will always be a small player, but they may outlast the other group. Time will tell.

If we were invited to a tribal council meeting, which group would you want to represent you? Are you a Debta, Kredita, or Kasha? (By the way, the Kasha tribe is not representing buckwheat grout!) So which is it? You want to be a survivor, don't you? Can you outwit, outplay, and outlast the competition?

To which tribe should you belong? I would like to hold membership in all of the tribes. I would belong to Debta as long as I could keep my focus on the fact that debt is not necessarily a good thing, but also understand how to work with it. Which debt should I liquidate first, and what debt should I learn to live with? Which has tax advantages? If I could have an even mix of things, then membership in that tribe isn't so bad.

The Kredita tribe is another story. Using credit cards to keep track of business expenses is not a bad thing at all. Calling and trying to get the interest rate lowered to a fixed rate of 10 percent or lower is also a good thing. The best terms now are probably from a credit card for loans. Where else can you get cash at prime interest and even make a lower payment each month if you want to? Think about that one.

Kasha is a tribe that is close to my heart. I would love to see the membership grow. I always stress to my clients that cash is king, and it is a good idea to have at least \$10,000 in a money market account as an emergency/opportunity fund. I was probably the person who formed this tribe! (By the way, this is in addition to a money market account set up just to pay your quarterly estimates. Like I said, I believe in the Kasha tribe.)

So, there it is: a combination of tribes that will certainly guarantee you immunity at any tribal council! Are you ready to play? With that winning combination, you are assured to outwit, outplay, and outlast the best of them. You are now a survivor!

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