

# DAVID AND GOLIATH

## Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants

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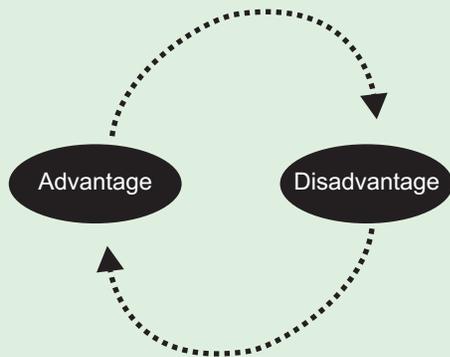
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**MAIN IDEA**

Everyone knows the Biblical story of David and Goliath – little guy beats the big bad bully. The funny thing is we usually get this story backwards. It was David that had all the advantages in this battle, not Goliath.

The real lesson of David versus Goliath is how a perceived advantage can actually turn out to be a disadvantage in practice. This kind of situation crops up in life and in business much more often than you might realize.



When ordinary people confront powerful opponents, the first question that usually gets asked is: "Who has the most power here – and therefore the greatest chance of success?" The real question you should be asking is: "Do I want to play by their rules or by mine?" If you can find a way to play by your own rules, then you increase the odds that you will prevail quite significantly.

Underdogs can and do win more often than you think. The key to pulling this off is not to go against a competitor where they are obviously strong and formidable. Instead, figure out a way to go around, under or over them rather than against them. That's how to win.

*"Much of what we consider valuable in our world rises out of these lopsided conflicts, because the art of facing overwhelming odds produces greatness and beauty. We consistently get these kinds of conflicts wrong."*

– Malcolm Gladwell

**1. The Advantages of Disadvantages (and vice versa)** . . . . . Pages 3 - 5

To illustrate how advantages can in fact turn out to be surprising disadvantages, take three pieces of commonly accepted wisdom:

- 1 Outsiders to an industry never know as much as insiders
- 2 Small classes at school are much better for students than large classes
- 3 You're better off going to an Ivy League college than to excel at an unknown college

In each of these cases, accepted wisdom is flawed. Perceived advantages can and often do end up being disadvantages for all concerned.

**2. The Theory of Desirable Difficulties** . . . . . Pages 5 - 7

While it may sound counterintuitive, there is such a thing as a desirable difficulty. This is a challenge which helps you acquire skills which can be acquired no other way. Desirable difficulties are an essential component in understanding how underdogs can consistently excel. They work in three ways:

- 1 You become inoculated to failure and completely lose that fear
- 2 You begin to act like you have invulnerability and this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy
- 3 You start relishing your underdog status and using it to your advantage warts and all

**3. The Limits of Power** . . . . . Pages 8 - 9

For the power of giants to be viewed as legitimate, it always has to be exercised with restraint. If you don't do that, what you consider an advantage can in fact turn out to be a disadvantage. To be legitimate, you have to use your power in three ways:

- 1 The people you're trying to influence must feel like they can speak up and be heard
- 2 The law has to be predictable – tomorrow's rules must be the same as today's rules
- 3 Power must be applied evenhandedly – everyone must consider it is fair to all

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