

Outwit. Outlast. Outplay.

Last week, I had the pleasure of participating in Bloomberg Corporate Philanthropy's Your Path, Your Future event. [City Tutor](#) mentees received an open and informal discussion about my role, career journey, and insights into financial markets. While preparing material for this event, I found myself thinking about the reality TV show *Survivor*.

As shocking as it may sound, over its 25-year existence and 48 seasons, I continue to be a devoted *Survivor* fan. If you are one of the few who is unaware, the goal is to 'Survive' for 30 days against 18 contestants on an island by using strategic thinking, social skills, and physical ability to avoid being voted off.

What's fascinating about *Survivor* is that the most athletic, the smartest, or the most social never make it to the end, even though viewers always pick those 'top' players as the favorites at the start. In fact, the best in each category is typically voted off much sooner than you would think. To take home the one-million-dollar prize and be crowned the sole *Survivor*, the winner ends up having the right combination of these three skills and, of course, let's not forget, a bit of luck. Career success, probably surprising to most, is a lot like the game of *Survivor*.

Many of us graduate from college with the goal of becoming a trader or portfolio manager, which we attempt to make possible via typical and/or unconventional paths. I managed to make the transition from the back/middle office, while others may take the traditional approach of a career progression that looks like Analyst -> Junior Trader -> Portfolio Manager. Both paths are difficult in their own ways, and neither is a guarantee of a \$1 million reward. However, by examining the key strategies of *Survivor*, we can draw compelling parallels to the skills and experiences that are necessary to be successful in achieving career goals no matter the path we take:

- **Adaptability:** In *Survivor* you must be flexible to changing circumstances. The game is unpredictable, and being able to pivot your strategy is crucial. In your career adapting to new roles, technologies, or company changes is critical for career growth and resilience. It is always important to take on additional responsibilities and understand as many functions and processes within the business as possible. This will make you indispensable and a likely candidate for a promotion.
- **Social Game:** In *Survivor* you must maintain good relationships with other contestants and form a strong alliance. Being likable can help you avoid votes against you and secure jury votes if you make it to the final. In your career

networking, teamwork, and effective communication are essential for collaboration and career advancement. Relationships are key to being successful in any role. Also, see [TO EXECUTION AND BEYOND](#).

- **Physical Ability:** In *Survivor* you must perform well in challenges to win immunity and rewards. This can keep you safe from being voted off and provide advantages. In your career maintaining physical (and more importantly, mental!) health will help you stay productive, focused, and avoid errors. Additionally, and although not a 'physical ability', attention to detail is vital in any role but certainly the strongest quality a Portfolio Manager can have. Without it, you will fail at the job.
- **Strategic Moves:** In *Survivor* you must make bold moves when necessary, such as blindsiding strong competitors or using hidden immunity idols effectively. In your career assessing risks and making calculated decisions can lead to successful projects and career opportunities. New job opportunities, internally and externally, will arise often. It's important to choose these job moves wisely. Too many will classify you as a 'job hopper' and too few could get you 'stuck' in your current role. NB, blindsides is one *Survivor* skillset I would not suggest using 😊.
- **Jury Management:** In *Survivor* if you reach the final, you need to convince former contestants to vote for you to win. This requires showcasing your strategic gameplay, social bonds, and overall contribution to the game. In your career you always need to have buy-in and trust from senior management and investors. Highlighting knowledge and understanding of markets, including liquidity and execution, effectively provides reassurance. Additionally, participation in conference panels and mentorship events will help attain industry acknowledgment and respect.

The recent financial market environment has been a tough one. Belief in what the company is building, trusting the process, and always working on the *Survivor* skillsets are the key to not being 'voted off'. The career game of *Survivor* only ends at retirement, and everyone is trying to Outwit, Outlast, Outplay!

P.S. How has the prize money not been increased in 25 years!? Considering an inflation rate of 2.8% since 2000 the winner should receive over \$2 million today!



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