

Spartan Race's Unbreakable CEO

"Considering what happened at our first event we should not have continued." - Joe De Sena Founder and CEO of Spartan Race.

Entrepreneurs have to be gritty, resilient, and passionate. You can't be "soft." Successful companies either win the race to find product/market fit or outlast the competition. All while navigating unpredictable obstacles that can stop you in your tracks. At any time, you can lose a key employee, your biggest client, or a racer that gets stranded on a deserted island for eight days...wait, what??

That's right. On Joe De Sena's first event, a participant went missing in the British Virgin Islands after drifting 150 miles in a dingy boat. It took eight days and Richard Branson's helicopter to find him on an uninhabited island.

The experience impacted De Sena, but it didn't stop him from building the world's largest obstacle race and endurance brand. Spartan Races has taken the world by storm. Its races test competitor's fortitude through unforgiving obstacles and terrain.

Pivoting To Overcome Obstacles

Joe De Sena has demonstrated an entrepreneurial drive since his pre-teens. Before he set the goal of pulling 100 million people off their couches with Spartan Races, he built a multimillion-dollar construction and pool business in college and created a Wall Street trading firm.

Now, Joe De Sena continues to be the driving force behind Spartan Race. As a resilient entrepreneur, he's stood firm in the face of failure. Being a Spartan is becoming unbreakable. This is the culture that Spartan Race, its participants, and Joe De Sena live by.

Losing someone on a deserted island wasn't Joe's last [business](#) obstacle either. In the early years of Spartan, De Sena would invest time and money into an event, only to have one racer show up.

When Covid-19 hit the world in full force, it would've been easy for an events business like Spartan to fail. "By all standards, Spartan could have easily been wiped out this year." Building an unbreakable mentality helped Joe to overcome the obstacles 2020 threw at him. "Life doesn't always give you what you want, or even what you need. Sometimes it just gives you obstacles because it wants to."

Joe has broken down obstacles from the Spartan races, explaining how each obstacle parallels real-life experiences. Spartan Race isn't just about a one-time event you overcome; it's about building the mindset and skills to survive whatever obstacles are thrown at you in business and ultimately, in life.

CEO's Have To Be Able To Overcome Obstacles

CEOs are always going to be putting out fires; something will always go wrong in startups. Hopefully, your first event doesn't end with a frantic race to find a missing person. If it does, how you react to it, will define the short and long-term success of your business.

To run a Spartan Race you need grit, resilience, and passion. You can't be soft. You have to move past each obstacle and be ready for the next one. Sounds an awful lot like running a

business doesn't it?

Watch Joe De Sena tell the lost racer story here: