

Staying Alive, Staying Alive

By Michael Katz

A few weeks ago, during my Tuesday night basketball game, somebody fainted.

Not fainted, as is usually the case. I mean *fainted*. As in plop, straight down to the ground, right there in the middle of the court.

And so we all rushed over and stood around him, wondering what to do.

Wondering, because **out of the 20+ men present, our combined medical knowledge was discouragingly weak.**

How weak? Let's just say that in the competition that night for "Most Prepared to Treat a Possible Heart Attack Victim," it was a tie between a financial planner who claimed to "watch a lot of Discovery Channel programming" and a guy whose dog had recently given birth.

Luckily, our fainting man sat right back up and was ultimately, perfectly fine.

Nonetheless, it was scary. And, given that the vast majority of participants at this weekly event are well north of 40, we knew this could happen again.

And so the following week, **a dozen of us showed up at the local fire station on Wednesday night and plunked down \$10 each for a crash course in CPR.**

I have to confess, I found the whole thing a bit confusing. Yes, they've done a commendable job of dumbing down the complicated business of restarting a human heart (any medical treatment that hinges upon singing the Bee Gees' "Staying Alive" while being administered is clearly intended for the liberal arts majors among us).

But still, a lot to remember.

One detail, though, did stay with me: As the person performing CPR and if there are bystanders present, before beginning, **you are supposed to pick somebody out of the crowd, point directly at them and shout, "You there! Call 911."**

The key point, apparently, is "pick *somebody*." Because, as our cheerful instructor Dave cautioned, if all you do is shout, "Somebody call 911!," it's very likely that nobody will assume they are somebody (still with me?).

He went on to explain that with no one "officially" in charge, **most people will conclude that others are more capable and more experienced, and therefore do nothing.** By singling out an individual, that person is suddenly empowered to take action.

Guess what? **When it comes to asserting a point of view and behaving as an expert, we solo professionals often think the same way** – somebody(s) else knows a lot more than we do.

Outside the confines of a company – in a place where job titles, org charts, tenure, office size, etc., have little significance – the solo professional world is also one in which nobody is officially in charge.

Which means that if you're waiting for the local newspaper to call you up and happily inform you that "we've been watching and you have earned the right to speak your mind," you'll be waiting for a long time.

Instead, I recommend taking a page from my new friend Dave, the CPR instructor: **Assume authority and take decisive action.** Share your point of view, take a position, publish lots of content, offer lots of advice. (tweet this)

Might you make a mistake, be disagreed with or even say something stupid? I guarantee it.

But, as Dave observed, **"Everyone else is as scared and unsure of their capabilities as you are.** Just remember that when somebody's heart stops beating, their chance of survival decreases by 10% every minute. Even if you don't perform all the CPR steps perfectly, doing nothing is the worst possible action."

When it comes to standing out from the crowd, being seen as an expert and growing your business, **that's about the best advice I've ever heard.**

Michael Katz is Founder and Chief Penguin of Blue Penguin Development. He specializes in helping service professionals stay top of mind by positioning themselves as "likeable experts." Sign up for his free newsletter, The Likeable Expert Gazette, here. (LINK: <http://bluepenguindevelopment.com/subscribe/>)