

WINNERS NEVER QUIT. QUITTERS NEVER WIN.

ARE YOU RIDING A DEAD HORSE?

Quitters never win. Winners never quit.

These platitudes are so ubiquitous that they even show up in (erk!) tattoos.

If these statements are true, then you can go ahead and call us losers. Quitting — or at least changing direction — is a special skill that takes time to properly develop.

Yes, we just called quitting a “special skill.”

This isn't the: “I'm going to take my ball and

go home” kind of quitting you experienced on the playground. This is more of a: “We've looked at everything objectively and strategically, and what we're doing is not working anymore” approach.

There's a Dakota proverb that says: When you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount.

You knew we'd explain that creepy dead horse headline eventually, right?

Business guru Seth Godin writes about quitting in his best-selling book *The Dip*, and he seems to agree with the proverb.

In *The Dip*, Godin explains that — in every business or journey — there is a time when it gets really hard. (We probably don't have to tell you that.) Many people get 85% of the way to success, but — right when they get to the moment of truth and things get hard — they hit a roadblock and panic.

Godin addresses that moment of truth and discusses how to decide whether to: a) push through the hard time, or b) throw in the towel.

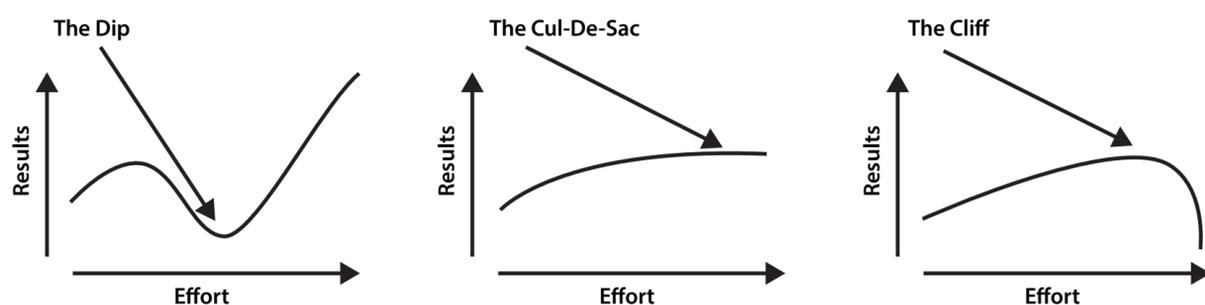
The key? Determining whether you're in a dip, a cul-de-sac, or on the edge of a cliff.



“The Cul-de-Sac is boring, the Cliff is exciting (for a while), but neither gets you through the dip and both lead to failure.”

-Seth Godin

Let's take a closer look at these options.



A DIP:

A dip is temporary. It's tough, but with some additional effort and resources, you can theoretically push your way out of it and continue on your journey.

A CUL-DE-SAC:

A cul-de-sac may appear, at first, to be the same as a dip. The scenery is the same. There are no giant, blinking, neon signs warning you that you're in a cul-de-sac.

But, as suburbanites know, cul-de-sacs are functionally dead-ends. You can keep driving in a circle around the cul-de-sac, but you won't get anywhere. It will never get better, no matter how hard you try. (No offense intended to cul-de-sac dwellers. It's just a metaphor.)

A CLIFF:

Cliffs are often easier to spot. Take cigarette smoking. You know that there's only one clear ending to the journey you're on. For a variety of reasons, some people keep taking that journey.

CASE IN POINT:

For me (Stephanie), my professional cliff was the moment I decided to stop doing hands-on accounting work for clients and work on creating a business. I realized that there was no good outcome from the path I was on. There were better, more qualified people out there I could (and have!) hired to do accounting work. My attention was too divided, and it was only a matter of time before I messed up and disappointed a client (or worse).

I was on a cliff. I backed off and re-routed the journey.

So let's say you're in that hard spot. Is it a dip? A cul-de-sac? A cliff? The hardest part is knowing. Proverbially speaking, this is where you have to diagnose the horse and decide if it is dead — or just tired and limping.

And what if the journey is all wrong from the first place? A dip is only worth pushing out of if you're in the right dip. (Whoa. This just got all kinds of existential.)

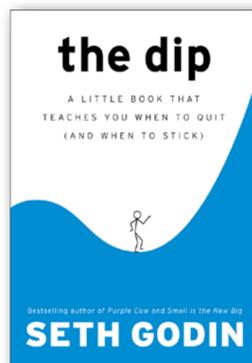
Pushing through a dip demands additional investment. It's a risk. Making investments to push through one problem means reallocating those resources from somewhere else. Where's your return on that investment coming from? Is it coming at all? This is harsh, but perhaps you should only push through a dip if you're pretty confident in your ability to be spectacular at whatever you're aiming to do

Do you feel like you need a nap after reading this?

We know. It's heavy stuff, and it has to do with your entire livelihood — maybe your entire purpose.

You don't have to face these types of questions alone. We highly recommend Seth Godin's book, and we also highly recommend taking partners to talk through the tough stuff. If it's financially related, a good CFO can be an invaluable partner who can look objectively at the numbers and provide an expert opinion.

We hope your horse is trotting along, smelling the roses and basking in the sunshine. If not, start diagnostics immediately.



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