



DAVID A MARSHALL CONSULTING INC.

**WHAT A TAIL-LESS CHEETAH
CAN TEACH US ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS**

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Take a look at the top photo above. It's of a mother cheetah and her cub that I took while I was on a safari in Natal, South Africa. I used to own a company in South Africa in the 70s, and I like to return to South Africa from time to time to visit old friends.

This time, I took my family with me, and we all went on safari at the Phinda reserve where I managed to shoot that video. Phinda is a reserve that's owned and financed by a nonprofit organization called Beyond. They have reserves like this all over the world, and it's funded in part by the Getty Foundation.

The reason he's going to have problems is that a cheetah's tail acts as its rudder. Any cat, especially a cheetah, has to be able to change direction very quickly when it runs. For example, an antelope will jig back and forth to get away from predators, and the cheetah will actually shift its tail to change direction and follow the antelope.

Without the tail, or even with a very short tail, the cub will not be able to hunt effectively when he's fully grown. He's going to need a partner to hunt with, a partner who will look out for him and let him share in the meals.

The gamekeepers at Phinda — the game reserve in Natal — said they'll keep an eye on our young cub and see whether or not he teams up with someone else so he can feed. If not, they'll have to figure out how to provide for him.

WHAT DOES A TAIL-LESS CHEETAH HAVE TO DO WITH BUSINESS?



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(No, this is not a lesson about “cheetahs never prosper.”)

When I saw the cub, my first thought was “well, nobody’s perfect.” And when I learned what he will need to do to survive, it reminded me of the important business relationships I’ve had over the years, and how I’ve depended on my partners and they’ve depended on me for our mutual survival.

We all have our shortcomings (sorry!) and we all have our strengths and weaknesses. No one can do anything by themselves. And in business, you always need people (staff, vendors, advisors, consultants) who can help you overcome your shortcomings.

Because if you don’t, you don’t eat.

This is the problem many entrepreneurs, and even many executives, have. They think they can, or they have to, do everything themselves. That they have to know how to perform all functions of their business better than anyone else. This is not actually the case — no one expects you to be a master of all trades.

You need people around you who can do what you can’t. There are certain tasks you are responsible for, but you just can’t do. In my case, it’s technology and computers; I’m terrible with computer systems and networks, and implementing enterprise software. Instead, I find people who have those capabilities, and I turn them loose and get out of their way.

In that sense, they are my “hunting partner.” They keep me headed in the right direction and let me make those sudden turns so we can all get what we’re chasing, and we all get a chance to eat. I’m able to do the same for them. I can help them with processes, measurement, and making the leadership decisions necessary to steer the bigger ship in the right direction, and they handle the things that keep the ship running.

About David A Marshall

I am Senior Manufacturing Executive with Corporate Culture Development and Operational Excellence Expertise. Most recently, I was President and COO of Robroy Industries and Board Member where I oversaw the manufacturing organization with four locations in the USA producing high quality electrical products and oilfield products.

During my tenure I worked hard on implementing cutting-edge technology into these facilities. I also managed renovations of several of the plants and build out of one new ultra-modern 130,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Texas.

With my guidance, these companies saw a remarkable **seven** record years of profitability; **eleven** consecutive years with profitability exceeding 20% of revenue; and more than **\$300 million** added to the equity of the business since going private in 2001. I earned my MBA from the University of Virginia: Darden School of Business.

Now I help companies turn around their own company by making the right decision. If you would like more information on how I can help your organization succeed, please visit my website or connect with me on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn.

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