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Surviving the Wild and the World: A comparison of backpacking and international business expansion

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Surviving the Wild and the World:  
A comparison of backpacking and international business expansion.

Backpacking in the wild can be an extremely challenging and physically tough sport that offers rough terrain and the need for basic survival skills. It is also a tremendous time to relax and enjoy nature. These two ideas may seem somewhat disparate, but they are both harmoniously linked together in the sport of backpacking. One could spend all day walking and climbing through twenty miles of sharp elevation changes, roots, rocks, and rivers and streams of all sorts only to arrive at the most breathtakingly beautiful waterfall. It is here that the work pays off and the backpacker is rewarded for his or her struggles with the true beauty of nature. This reward is something many backpackers seek when set off on their adventures; however, others see the sport as nothing more than a physical challenge to build their body. The world of business is no different. Many people pursue a rigorous path of hard work and long hours in order for the big monetary payoff. Others find enjoyment in the office they hold, and they relish the feeling of helping someone. Regardless of why a person chooses to pursue the sport of backpacking or the world of business there are some essential things that every person must think through and consider before taking the trail, whether that trail be in the backcountry or in an office. And, once there, he or she must remember some very important tips in order to fully and safely enjoy these exhilarating sports. The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the dangers that backpackers face when on the trail and how these can either be avoided or, at least, planned for, and to show some of the
parallels that can be found between the sport of backpacking and world of business, particularly in reference to international business functions.

Backpacking dangers can be separated into two distinct categories: circumstantial and accidental. Some of the dangerous circumstances a backpacker can find himself or herself in can be by accident, but for the purpose of this paper we will designate them by these two categories. The circumstantial dangers, which we will examine first, are inclement weather, getting lost, hazardous terrain, and dangerous wildlife. The accidental dangers which will be covered are metabolic imbalances, topical injuries, and internal injuries. Though these are by no means a complete list of all possible dangers involved in backpacking, they do cover many of the hazards that a backpacker is likely to face, given enough time on the trail.

The first circumstantial danger is inclement weather. Even with all the meteorological equipment and information we have today it is still impossible to forecast weather with complete accuracy. The prepared backpacker must always expect that the weather has a chance of turning bad. In the spring, summer, and fall this usually means rain, and in the winter it is snow. In either situation it is best to be prepared to face whatever nature has to offer. Kristin Hostetter, of Backpacking magazine, says in an online article that having a dry sleeping bag will make you a “much happier camper”. In fact, she notes that backpackers should “Buy a waterproof stuff sack if your bag doesn’t come with one…line the sack with a garbage bag for extra protection…[and] pick a high and dry campsite,” (Hostetter, Avoid). It is crucial to have the necessary rain gear, like a stuff sack, to prevent essential items from getting wet due to unexpected rainfall.

Likewise, in the winter when the chance of snow hangs over the backpacker’s head, it is
important to not only layer up but to also bring extra clothing and food in case of colder
weather and being stranded in a snowstorm. Gorp.com emphasizes the importance of
warm clothing and a technique called layering when going backpacking in the cold
weather. They state that “The trick to layering is to combine the right clothing in the
proper order, trapping the air warmed by your body heat while letting moisture vapor
from your body's perspiration be conducted away from your skin,” (Gore, Learning).
Using this technique of layering to insulate the body will allow the backpacker to be able
to adjust to temperature changes and conditions by determining how many layers are
necessary.

As with inclement weather, getting lost is something that is neither planned nor
enjoyable, and thus a backpacker should take precautionary steps to avoid such a
problem. Karen Berger notes in her article entitled “The Ten Essentials” that both a
compass and a map of the area are essential tools for a backpacker. Beyond that it is
important to really know how to use these items. The term orienteering is used to define
a skill that involves being able to use one’s surrounding to plot oneself on a map. With
this skill getting out of a lost situation might not be too hard. Without which, it is better
to stay put and wait for help because you are more likely to only become more lost with
aimless wandering and this will make it harder for search and rescue to find you.
Another tip to prevent a truly dangerous situation when lost is simply letting someone
know before going backpacking the trail that you will be on, when you plan to start, and
when you will finish and call them. This way the contact will know if they are not
contacted at the designated time that there is a possible problem and they can then alert
the necessary authorities. Notably, the most important advice for a lost backpacker is
simply common sense. The backpacker should just do the simple things: try to plot their position on a map—a topographical map is best for aiding positioning—set up camp in secure area, have a way to signal to rescuers, and remain calm until able to form a plan to rectify the situation.

Hazardous terrain is yet another challenge that the avid backpacker is likely to face. As previously mentioned, it is very helpful to use a topographical map when plotting a trail course for a trip because it will help to prepare the backpacker for the type of terrain they will face. One of the biggest dangers, though, is avalanches. Depending on the location these can come in the form of snow, rock, or even ice, usually called an icefall. In order to prepare for these dangers one website suggests, “training, monitoring weather conditions to learn the history of the snow pack, digging hasty pits, modifying the route, passing one-by-one through dangerous areas, wearing avalanche beacons, and carrying avalanche probes and snow shovels,” (Wikipedia). Other helpful suggestions include pitching tent during the winter in a safe location. Underneath a tree sometimes ice will form and can become quite dangerous, often referred to as a “widowmaker,” if a large enough piece falls on an unsuspecting victim. This phenomenon, called an icefall, can be easily avoided by carefully choosing the tent location. Aside from these things, it is also important to use extreme caution whenever dealing with moving water in a backpacking situation. Cold water “can sap energy quickly,” as Wikipedia.com states, and can result in drowning. Also, rocks located in moist areas near a water source can be very slick and endanger a backpacker by causing an easy opportunity for a sprained ankle or worse.
Finally, animals are the last circumstantial danger that backpackers are likely to face. Predatory animals, such as bears or cougars, pose a threat to a backpacker because of how dangerous they are. Though they rarely ever seek out humans as food, these animals can and will attack under certain circumstances, usually self-preservation. Bears are known to attack many times in an effort to protect their baby cubs. Another reason for attack is simple surprise. When a backpacker surprises an animal it will sometimes instinctively attack, again out of self-preservation and fear. A practical suggestion to prevent this is to regularly make a loud noise of some type in order to alert animals to your presence. Some animals cannot hear, though, like snakes. This increases the risk of surprising the animal along the trail. Venomous animals, like snakes, scorpions, spiders, and bees can be dangerous to a backpacker not from the actual bite but from the effects of the venom. The venom can lead to anaphylactic shock which can kill a person, but there are kits, like Epipen and Ana-kit, that are available by prescription to counter the effects of the venom (Dupler, *Wilderness*). It is best to know the area where your trip is going through and the types of dangerous animals that might be located there. This will be the best tool to help you be prepared for the possible dangers.

Injuries come in many shapes and sizes, and, though sometimes they cannot be prevented, they can be planned for. The first type of injury we will look at is a topical injury. Topical injuries are those which occur on the surface of the skin. Many times a first aid kit, which should contain such things as bandages and disinfectant, can help to alleviate the immediate danger of a topical injury, but some injuries require further medical attention and if a backpacker sustains one of these more serious injuries they
should try to see a medical physician as soon as possible. Some of the more common types of topical injuries are listed below:

- Frostbite
- Sunburn
- Snow Blindness
- Burns
- Lacerations
- Rashes
- Thorns

These common topical injuries are caused by many normally occurring things in nature, and can usually be prevented. Frostbite, caused by extended exposure of the skin to cold weather can be prevented by adjusting clothing to minimize exposure and by taking precautionary measures when dressing and choosing a sleeping bag. Sunburn, which can occur from exposure to the sun directly and by the sun’s reflection off snow, can be easily prevented with sunscreen. However, many people are still burned because they forget to apply sunscreen to places like the bend in the knees or they do not think that they’ll need it because there are some clouds in the sky. The goes to show that one of the best things a backpacker can do is to not underestimate the power of nature. Snow blindness will actually occur as a result of the sun’s ultraviolet force being magnified off the snow for an extended period of time. This dangerous threat which actually burns the cornea can be prevented by wearing sunglasses with a high grade of UV protection.

Burns and lacerations are things which usually occur as a result of carelessness. Many of the burns and lacerations that occur on a backpacking trip come from touching a hot
stove or playing with a knife. Extra care should be employed to prevent these types of topical injuries. Rashes are usually the result of plant ignorance. Rashes can result from exposure to plants like poison ivy, stinging nettle, and many others. Simply knowing what these plants look like will help the backpacker to avoid these plants and these rashes. Finally, plant thorns which can be lodged into the skin are dangerous because if ignored they can cause more serious problems later on, and depending on their location they can cause discomfort when hiking the trail. (Wikipedia)

Another type of injury is the internal injury. These injuries, which are generally defined as sprains, blisters, or back injury, are type of injury that occurs beneath the surface of the skin. Ankle sprains, one of the most common types of injury sustained by a backpacker is usually caused by a misstep on the trail. Tripping over a tree root or misjudging the distance on an elevation drop can result in a sprain that can immobilize the injured person. This is dangerous because, without help, a serious ankle sprain can keep an individual from being able to hike back out to safety and help. Many times wearing proper hiking boots can help to prevent such injuries. They also will be the key component to preventing blisters, which result from irritation and friction to the skin. The proper hiking boots go a long way to helping a backpacker enjoy a trip with more comfort. Back injuries are another common injury sustained by backpackers due to the heavy weight which they carry. First, it is important to have a good backpack with a recommended hipbelt as that will help to distribute the weight correctly and place it on the hips instead of the back. There is still danger, though, from continual lifting of the pack on and off the ground. Therefore, it is important to pack your bag with a manageable weight that you have tested and always lift the bag using the strength from
your legs and not by bended over and putting the strain on your back. Other internal injuries can include any number of things like broken bones or bruised ribs, but these usually require immediate medical attention and should be treated with the utmost care.

Finally, metabolic imbalances cause problems for many backpackers. One of the most common is dehydration, but this and other common types are listed below:

- Dehydration
- Malnourishment
- Hypothermia
- Heat Exhaustion
- Altitude Sickness

These injuries are usually preventable, and a backpacker should always plan carefully before leaving and make sure to have preparations to combat these problems. The USDA Forest Service states that “Adults require a half gallon (two liters) of water daily, and up to a full gallon (four liters) for strenuous activity at high elevations. To avoid dehydration, drink water as often as you feel thirsty. Higher elevations require more water to be drunk than lower elevations,” (Hiking, USDA). Following these suggestions can significantly help a backpacker to avoid dehydration on the trail. Malnourishment usually occurs because of a lack a food. This can come in two forms. The first is hunger which the backpacker feels when they didn’t pack enough food and they have to skip breakfast on the last morning; this is not really malnourishment. Malnourishment occurs when a backpacker is lost or caught out on a trail with no remaining food supplies for multiple days. As a result, their body is weakened and their judgment is impaired which will result in bad decisions that will have an adverse effect much sooner than the
malnourishment which takes weeks to kill. The USDA Forest Service in its article entitled “Hiking and Backpacking Safety” says that hypothermia is the number one killer of people who recreate outdoors. Thus, hypothermia, which is a potentially fatal drop in the core body temperature, is one of the biggest dangers a backpacker faces. Hypothermia occurs most easily when a person is both cold and wet. It can cause confusion and impaired judgment like malnourishment which only adds to its danger. Protective clothing can help to prevent hypothermia, but certain material like cotton is often discouraged because it soaks up water—including sweat—very easily, which puts the wearer at even greater risk for hypothermia. Heat exhaustion is another condition that results from a metabolic imbalance, and is potentially fatal. This occurs most often when the sufferer is dehydrated and dressed too warmly for the weather. It helps to avoid direct sunlight and keeping cooled off by using water, either by drinking it or pouring it on the head. If someone is suffering from heat exhaustion, which can progress to heatstroke, they usually require hospitalization to counter its powerful effects. Finally, altitude sickness, which usually occurs at elevations above 2,000 meters (8000 feet), is a result of changing altitudes too quickly without allowing time for acclimatization (Wikipedia). Acclimatization can take several days, even weeks when climbing something like Mt. Everest, but can be sped up with the use of certain drugs. Each of these aforementioned conditions is life-threatening and should always be treated as quickly as possible.

After the previous pages one might feel like backpacking is much too dangerous and should not be attempted, but in reality with careful planning and good equipment a backpacking trip can be a tremendous experience. It is always important to know the
area that you will pass through and prepare for it specifically. By following this advice, which is pertinent for everyone—beginner and experienced backpacker alike—one can truly enjoy nature and will have no problem surviving the wild.

Now, having looked at some of the risks inherent in the sport, we will take a closer look at some of the necessary supplies to help you more fully enjoy a trip on the trail. First, we will look at the backpack. There are many different makes and models of backpacks and trying to recommend one is

backpackers realized that this would never do and so they developed a frame to prevent the weight from resting uncomfortably on the back. Some of the first frames, external frames, that were created were bulky, rigid frames that were not very comfortable, though much better than just a plain bag on the back. The important features of these frames were the stays that transferred the weight of the backpack from the shoulder and back to the hips where much more weight could be easily carried. These aluminum stays allow the backpacker to carry much more weight then previously possible. Later, the internal frame was introduced to the backpacking world. This design, which mimicked the weight transferring stays of the external framed
packs, covered the aluminum frame and installed padding to create a comfortable design that fit the contour of the back in order to also improve stability. So, though not necessary, an internal frame backpack is highly recommended. Another important feature of the pack is the hipbelt. As previously mentioned the “beefy hipbelt” is where all the weight that is transferred from the stays is distributed. It is crucial to find the right kind of hipbelt, though (Gear Buying, *Hiking and Backpacking*). One that is too soft will not support the weight correctly and will hurt the hips and lower back. Likewise, one that is too hard will bounce off the hips and eventually cause painful bruising. So, do not be fooled by the soft comfort of a hipbelt while testing it out in a store; instead, you should try to pack a backpack in the store with as much weight as you would be carrying on the trail and then walk around the store for a bit in order to determine if the belt will do the job. While many packs have similar frames and supports they tend to differ most significantly in their exterior design, and one thing that is always most noticeably different from pack to pack is how many pockets it has and where these pockets are located. There is no right or wrong as far as pockets go. Some people prefer to have lots of pockets while others prefer a much simpler design. Either way it is important to have enough space in your external pockets to fit your essential items, such as a first aid kit, because you need to be able to reach these things at a moment’s notice. Finally, you want to have a pack that is waterproof. This is important for protecting some essentials on the inside. It is important to understand, though, that no pack is fully waterproof so it is important to take precautions and bring along plastic bags or something similar to put some of your supplies in to insure that they will stay dry.
Once you've chosen your pack there are a couple of things that you need to know in order to pack it correctly. First, most bags will have a sheet of material on the inside that separates the main compartment from a lower compartment. In the lower compartment you want to pack your tent and sleeping bag, remembering to leave the tent poles out as you will pack them on the outside of the bag. This will separate your bag and tent from other supplies like clothing, food, and cooking gear so that you will be able to easily access them from the lower compartment zipper without having to dig through the rest of your supplies. Above this, in the main compartment, you should pack all your clothing, cooking essentials, and food. Heavier things should be packed towards the bottom and closest to the person’s back with mid-weight gear being placed at the top of the main compartment. It is also important to center the weight in the pack because this will help not only the backpacker’s stability but also the weight distribution and thus the overall comfort of the pack. As previously mentioned, it is necessary to keep all essential items such as water and a first aid kit in either the top or other external pockets so as to provide easy access. Finally, the sleeping mat and tent poles should be strapped to the back of the pack, usually down at the bottom where there is a designated spot. This method of packing will help the pack to sit more comfortably and provide more ease for those longer trips.

Next, one important thing that every backpacker needs is a tent. Choosing a tent can be difficult if you don’t know what to look for. Tents break down into basically two different categories: three-season and four-season, or mountaineering. Three-season tents are used predominantly during spring, summer, and fall seasons, though it is possible the cold winter weather in such a tent. Four-season, or mountaineering, tents are
used mostly for colder situations and well adapted for use during the winter. Regardless of what type you are looking for there are some particular areas that you need to consider when purchasing a tent.

The first thing to consider when purchasing a tent is the size. You must consider how much you want your tent to hold. How many people will be sleeping in the tent? Does it have room for both you and your bag? You must determine your exact needs before looking for a tent. Generally, the recommended size (e.g. “holds 1-2 people”) can be held as true. In a tent such as the 1-2 example it will comfortably hold one person with extra room, but two people with bags will be an extremely tight fit.

Your next consideration must be the weight of the tent. When backpacking long distances it is important to be as lightweight as possible. This means shedding needless pounds wherever possible, and there’s no place easier than with the tent. Some large family tents can weigh up to thirty pounds, but the correct, lightweight tent for two can weigh as little as two pounds. With many miles to go on a trail it is important to find the right tent for you at the right weight so as to make the miles go by more easily.

Next, ventilation is a major concern when buying a tent. When camping in the spring and fall it is nice sometimes to have a breeze blow through the tent. In the summer, however, without a cross-wind the backpacker has little chance of comfortable sleep. So, when choosing a tent it is important to consider what time of the year you will be using the tent and buy one with ventilation that matches your needs. The three-season tent will generally work in the summer, but there are tents made specifically for hot weather. An advantage to a tent with good ventilation is the avoidance of condensation.
Because air is able to move freely through the tent less condensation builds up on the outer walls.

Another consideration when making a tent purchase is the type of tent fabric. Most lightweight tents are made from either nylon taffeta or ripstop nylon, both of which are durable, quality fabrics that weigh somewhere around 2 ounces per square yard. However, larger tents are usually made with different materials which are generally heavier and cause more condensation because of their thicker-walled design. Tent fabrics are made to be able to “breathe” so as to offset the condition of waking up in a damp tent. However, there are some things which you can do that might hurt your tent without you realizing it. Many people will use a waterproofing spray to try to make their tent more water resistant. Though this might provide favorable results at the beginning, it will damage the tent fabric and cause it to not be able to “breathe” as easily and will create more condensation inside the tent than before. Another danger is a strong bug spray called a fogger. Though it comes in many brands, this popular type of bug repellent will weaken the tent fabric and allow water to pass through more easily. This is another reason why it is important to invest the money to buy a high quality tent so you won’t have to worry about the waterproofing and why you should always keep your tent zipped up so as to keep the bugs out.

This leads us to the issue of workmanship. A tent is reflective of the money invested in it. It is not worth spending less money on a tent. A lower quality tent will cause less comfort, less durability, and quicker signs of wear. Expect to pay around $200 for a good 1-2 person tent. There are many features that make a tent one of higher quality. One of the features is something called lap-felled seams. These are seams
similar to what is found on a pair of blue jeans. They are stronger because they are actually four layers of fabric with a double row of stitching (Logue, *Gorp*). The seams on a tent are some of the best indicators of a tent’s quality. You should always pull at the seams and look for give in the stitching. A good tent will have extra stitching and reinforcements at the stress points, which are sections of the tent that receive the most pull.

Waterproofing, though, we’ve somewhat covered the issue already, is one of the most important issues when buying a tent. You need to buy a high quality tent with waterproofing, but something more practical that you can do out on the trail to provide extra protection is to carry along an extra tarp. This can be placed overhead to act as a second roof for the tent, or it can be placed underneath to prevent any soakage from taking place.

Another logical consideration is the set-up process. How easy is the tent to set up? You don’t want a complex tent that takes too much time. Sometimes a backpacker will arrive at a site as the sun is going down and it is crucial to be able to make camp fast. Thus, a tent with a quick, simple set-up process is a good advantage to have. So, buy a tent that you can put together in a minimal amount of time.

Finally, the color of the tent is an important, though usually misunderstood, element to consider. Many people will choose a tent that has earthy tones—brown, gray, green—because they feel that these colors look more natural in the wild. However, they could not choose more poorly. The choice of a tent’s color should be more based on how easy it is to see in the forest. It is important to have a tent that stands out against a green and brown background because if you are stranded, hurt, or lost and there are rescue
searchers looking for you then you want them to have the best chance possible to be able to see your tent amongst the trees. Thus, you should always buy a tent with bright colors to make it stand out.

Next on the list of considerations is what type of sleeping bag to buy. First, you must determine what type of weather and what time of the year you plan to use your bag. The features of the bag, like how winter bags will have a draft collar designed to retain heat around the neck and a hood to trap heat in close to the head. Other differences are simply more stylistic in nature, such as how big the foot box, a place for extra room at the bottom of the bag, is and what type of zipper is being used. There are similarities in all bags, though, and just like with tents it is important to test these certain features to check for quality workmanship. Particularly the zipper areas and seams should be pulled and stretched to test quality, and another key sign of quality is the amount of excess material left on seams. With tents, backpacks, and sleeping bags where there are stress seams they should be stitched with extra material left hanging off. This is to prevent damage if the extra material should fray. Thus, this is another sign of quality.
to look for in a bag. Besides determining the necessary temperature rating and other related features to fit your needs, though, it is important to consider some of the other dimensions of a sleeping bag.

First of these considerations is the size and shape of your bag. Depending on your height and weight you need to find a bag that will fit you comfortably without being too tight. The discomfort of a bag that is too small can result in many lost hours of sleep. There are also multiple styles of bags. This is somewhat of a preferential choice based on which bag fits your body style and that you like the design of the best. There are some bags whose design will actually help to provide extra warmth. Bags with a hood at the top that can be tightened around the head, sometimes called “mummy” bags, are useful for trapping heat that escapes from the top of the head. Besides designs like the previously mentioned one, though, this tends to be a personal choice based more on how it suits you instead of how it suits the conditions.

Once you have chosen the size and style, or shape, of your bag then you need to make some decision in two other areas of the bag design: the shell and the fill. The shell is the material used for the exterior of the bag. Like tents there are similar choices in this area. Anything from nylon taffeta, light and cool, to gore-tex waterproof, warm and dry, can be found for the shell material. Again, this choice should be made based on the condition in which you will be using the bag. Next, the fill must be chosen. There are two general categories of fills for sleeping bags: synthetic or down. There are distinct advantages and disadvantages to both fills. Synthetic, for example, still provides some insulation and warmth when wet and it’s also cheaper than down. On the other hand, it’s bulkier, heavier, and wears down over time faster than down. The advantages of down
can be seen in both its price, weight to warmth ratio—it’s very warm and insulating, while also very light—and it long lasting quality as it can last for decades. However, down is nearly worthless if it gets wet and it also costs much more than synthetic. So, there are tradeoffs for each material, but both offer features that can be helpful depending on the situation. So, yet again, it is important to buy with your backpacking situation and area in mind.

Finally, there are some tips that you can follow to help your bag maintain its quality and last longer and also to help to provide you with more warmth. First, you should always do all you can to keep the bag dry. When inside your backpack your bag should be in a protective bag. A throw bag, often used for precious materials on a rafting trip, works very well to insulate the bag from moisture. Another option is to put the bag inside a plastic bag, such as a garbage bag, and this too will help to prevent wetness. It’s a good idea to always shake your bag out before bedding down for the night. This is particularly important to do with a bag that has a down fill because this will help to maintain the quality of the down material. Also, you should always use a sleeping pad when backpacking. Not only will this provide you with more comfort, which will result in less back problems which could be potentially debilitating, but also it will put another layer in between yourself and the ground which will help to provide more warmth. Finally, in a cold weather situation it is always a good idea to eat something or to walk around before getting in your sleeping bag. This will increase your heart rate and get your blood circulating better, which will help to bring up your core temperature. With a low core temperature it is hard, sometimes impossible, for you to warm up your sleeping bag. However, if you exert the energy to get your temperature up before getting in the
bag then you will be able to warm the bag up with considerable more speed, which is very important to getting a good night’s sleep during a cold night on the trail.

The next important thing to consider when going backpacking is what type of clothing to wear and bring. It is not very hard to pack for the warmer months, but many people get in trouble when they try to pack for a cold, winter weather situation. Because of this, we will focus this section on how to dress for a cold weather backpacking trip. The key to dressing for this situation is a technique called layering, which is best explained in Gorp.com’s article, “Learning to Layer: Enjoying winter from the inside out.” In the article, they emphasize the technique as a three layer process that involves three distinct types of layers: the wicking layer, the insulation layer, and the shell layer. The wicking layer is the first layer, which touches the skin, and it should be comfortable and warm yet able to breathe so as to allow moisture to escape. The next layer, insulation, can actually be multiple layers. It is important to have enough clothes here to keep you warm as you can strip off unnecessary layers as you go. This allows the backpacker more versatility as it is simple to take off layers to dress for the moment. These layers can be anything that trap heat and allows moisture to escape. Fleece is a good material for this layer, though there are multiple choices. Also, it is important to note that cotton is a bad choice for either of these layers because it is not very breathable and does not dry quickly, which is a bad combination in the cold. Finally, the last layer, the shell, should be some type of jacket that emphasizes its ability to be a wind and water resistant material. This needs to be something that takes the brunt end of the cold and wind. Its job is not to provide the warmth; that is the job of the other layers. This layer just needs to stop the initial blast of cold air and moisture. Also, it is very important to
keep your extremities warm. You should always wear a good hat on your head to trap in
the heat, gloves on your hands to keep them warm, and quality socks—not cotton
material—and boots to keep your feet warm and insulated. All this combined will make
a cold weather trip not only much more comfortable but also much more safe.

Something every backpacker must bring and plan for is water. It is a good idea to
initially bring as much water as possible. However, it is impossible to carry as much
water as would be necessary for drinking and cooking on a multi-day pack. Thus, you
should always have a plan for how you are going to get water on the trail and what
precautions you will take to insure that it will not be harmful. There are many possible
diseases that can be carried in the streams and water sources you come across while on
the trail. There are some things you can do, though, to protect yourself. First, the best
way to purify the water is to boil it. This may not be an option sometimes as you will not
build a fire in the middle of the day just to purify water. So, something every backpacker
should have is a water pump. This simple device filters the water and gets out much of
the soil or other small objects that might be in the water. This alone is not enough,
though. You should then put iodine tablets in the water. This will treat the water for
most if not all of the potential germs that are in the water. Even using all of these
techniques, though, will not completely protect you from the chance of some germs in the
water. However, if you put all of these elements together then the risk of getting sick
shrinks significantly. Finally, you should always have as much water as possible. Some
areas do not have many easily reachable water sources, and you might have to go long
distances in between sources. Thus, it is very pertinent to take as much with you as
possible at each location. The danger of dehydration when backpacking is very real and must be taken very seriously.

Finally, we will end with a look at the “ten essentials” that every backpacker needs to have. Many experts agree and Karen Berger asserts in her article “The Ten Essentials” that the following items are among the most important to anyone pursuing a trip into the backcountry:

- Map
- Compass
- Water and a way to purify it
- Extra food
- Rain gear and extra clothing
- Firestarter and matches
- First aid kit
- Knife or multipurpose tool
- Flashlight
- Sunglasses and sunscreen

Many of these we have already covered in the above pages. So it will suffice to say that with these items it is essential to know the purpose of each and how to use them when on the trail.

Now, you might curious as to just how all this information about backpacking in the backcountry relates to the world of business. Conducting international business is a must for nearly every company. Thomas Friedman emphasizes as the overall theme in his book *The World is Flat* that globalization is occurring for many reason, but regardless
of the reason for a business to continue to be competitive in their own regional area they must also be a global competitor. This can mean anything from recognizing the cost advantages of importing products from China to finding new foreign markets that have a growing demand for your product. Every major business is a global competitor, but not every business chooses the same way to compete globally. This is similar to how even though all backpackers go backpacking, they do not all choose the same path and the same gear. They choose what gear suits them best and what path leads them to where they want to go. Essentially, each backpacker chooses what he or she wants or needs to accomplish their goals, as far as where they want to go—the path—and what they need to help them get there—the gear. Every business has a different goal and because of this there are many different approaches to try and reach these goals. However, even when companies have the same goals, like backpackers with the same destination, they use different techniques and approaches, like backpackers who use different gear, to arrive at their goal. We will assume, for purposes of this paper, that the goal of a particular business is to become an international competitor, or an MNC (multi-national corporation). We will discuss the similarities between backpacking and international expansion in the areas of international venture options, gear choice for the backpacker, and possible threats from certain expansion strategies, safety hazards for the backpacker.

Whether choosing a tent, sleeping bag, backpack, or even the clothing to bring on a backpacking trip the smart backpacker goes through many of the decisions that were discussed beforehand. They have to consider the types of tents, their fabric, weight, and many other options for each aspect of the necessary gear before they purchase them. Likewise, in business there are many different options, or paths, available for
international/global expansion. The question is: Which option is best for my company? This decision should be based on the personnel, competitive business strategy, and overall goals of the business. Depending on your particular strengths or weaknesses you should choose an international entry strategy that best fits your company. There are predominately seven types of entry strategies for companies looking to expand internationally and they are as follows:

- Exporting
- Licensing
- Franchising
- Contract Manufacturing
- Joint Ventures
- Wholly Owned Subsidiaries
- Strategic Alliances

Each of these strategies has their own advantages and disadvantages. Some are more risky than others. Exporting, for example, does not put the company at much risk because they are still doing business mostly in their own country. They are likely to not be at much risk for currency translation and there are not as exposed to cultural, political, and economic upheaval. On the other hand, they are not actually located in the foreign market and thus have to try to manage their distribution through an importer in the foreign country. They have little to no control over how their product is presented in the country; they can only insure that it makes it there. In opposition to this is something like a joint venture. This is a much riskier proposition for a company because it means joining with another firm in the foreign country and partnering to produce, sell, and
distribute the product in that foreign market. This is dangerous because sometimes, even with extensive research, the entering company may choose the wrong partner and end up with a firm that badly affects their company's performance. Thus, when entering into a joint venture it is important to form a well-established, respected firm that has a solid customer base and a good reputation for quality products. Even then the entering company is still at risk of opportunism. This occurs when the host country company learns how to make the entering company’s product and then turns around and produces it on their own and sells it at a cheaper price. Many companies have seen this opportunity and taken the design of quality product and turned it around for their own profit, which usually results in the demise of the original product. This is a huge concern for a company entering into a joint venture. One of the advantages, though, with a joint venture is that the entering company gets to retain much more control of the product and the decisions made. Because they can send own people, also called home country nationals or expatriates, to the foreign country they can be influential in many of the marketing and product distribution decisions. Companies will usually use this approach when employing an ethnocentric strategy, believing that the product and marketing design they use in their own country will work worldwide. However, the joint venture is also a prime organization structure for the use of a polycentric approach. This approach, which recognizes that certain marketing techniques and product features must be changed from country to country, utilizes the host country nationals that they hire or partner with to adapt their product and marketing strategy for the local culture. It also helps to have these host country nationals because they know the "system," and can be extremely helpful when trying to navigate the local political network. Each of these entry strategies
has its own unique advantages and disadvantages that give the entering company varying degrees of control and risk. Like with choosing gear for a backpacking trip, a company must determine which strategy is the best fit. But, when a backpacker chooses that he needs a three-season tent because he will only be camping in the summer and fall he doesn’t just pick any three-season tent. Instead, he looks at many different brands and tests them on the aforementioned qualities. This is a very pertinent point for the internationally expanding company to understand as well. Once a company decides that they are going to use a particular strategy, like a joint venture, they must test the market and strategy to determine the exact path they will follow. With each strategy they must test the market to see if there is a solid potential customer base. They must also determine is the competitive advantage they enjoy at home is sustainable abroad. If they are a low cost leader, then they must determine if they can survive in foreign market where the average prices are lower than their home country. They must also take considerable time to analyze every possible firm they can partner with. A quality partner can make all the difference in a joint venture. So, you can see that as with backpacking business companies cannot just select any strategy (gear), but that they must examine the options within each consideration and find the one that best fits their company.

We have already mentioned some of the dangers of global expansion, as with the example of opportunism in joint ventures, but there are some things that companies much consider and plan for before going abroad. First, the political environment in many countries is unstable at best. In the case of countries like Cuba that turned communistic overnight, many privately owned businesses were nationalized and essentially just taken away from their rightful owners. This is a real risk in unstable countries, and the best
thing a multi-national-corporation can do is to try to avoid these countries. However, when unavoidable it is best to pursue a strategy that leaves your company with the least amount of physical presence in the foreign country. A strategy such as exporting is best because it requires no offices or personnel in the foreign country, and thus has the least political risk. Another concern is the socio-cultural issues that a company might face when expanding to a foreign country. If unfamiliar with local customs a company is likely to make many mistakes when dealing with nationals. For example, when Coca-Cola entered the Chinese market they tried to translate their name phonetically into the Chinese alphabet (Morrison \textit{Bite}). What it literally translated to, though, was “bite the wax tadpole,” not something they really meant to convey. Or the classic case of when Chevy introduced the Chevrolet Nova in Mexico, which was a huge translation mistake because “no va” in Spanish literally means “it’s doesn’t go,” (Henderson \textit{Top Ten}). So, not strangely, there weren’t many people lining up to buy a car that didn’t run. There are also economic risks associated with expanding globally. In countries with an unstable currency, the entering firm has a risk of currency translation problems because they are getting paid in the host country’s money but that money is devaluing against the dollar and so they are losing money constantly. They can decrease this chance of currency translation by buying forward on the currency market or by simply doing business in areas with more stability. So, you can see that as with backpacking there are many risks associated with the path towards the goal in business. Just as backpackers must watch out for avalanches so companies must watch out for cultural changes or political instability. Companies can prepare just as a backpacker prepares for these risks, but as with backpacking it is best to be familiar with the terrain, or foreign country, that you are
entering. By learning about the possible political, economic, and socio-cultural risks and factors in a foreign country a company can be better prepared to face any given situation. And, by carefully considering the many factors before choosing an entry strategy the company can be better situated for success by following the path that best suits them.

Some of the more clear parallels can be drawn between some of the risks associated with backpacking and risks associated with international business, or really just business in general. The first of these parallels can be seen in the comparison of business with inclement weather. As previously discussed the backpacker faces varied challenges depending on the season when it comes to the weather. When on the trail the conditions can change for the worst at a moment’s notice, and the backpacker must always be prepared. International businesses are no different. In a foreign country, particularly an emerging country with an unstable economy and government, the conditions can change very quickly. Overnight coup d'états are not uncommon in unstable countries, and they can result a very dangerous situation for any business located there. For example, when Hugo Chavez took control of Venezuela he nationalized many of the privately owned businesses. The same thing occurred when Fidel Castro took control of Cuba. Both of these events resulted in many companies who had locations in the countries losing millions of dollars. This is a very big risk that firms must consider when entering a country that has a shaky past as far as political stability is concerned.

Another interesting similarity can be seen when comparing getting lost when backpacking and when, figuratively, getting lost in the business world. Getting lost can happen for many different reasons when hiking, but in the business world getting lost happens many times because of too much diversification. Many businesses can develop
one successful product. After much success they will find themselves tempted to introduce a new product, and if that is successful they will begin to pursue and even wider product lines. Sometimes this works. Take P&G for example. They have multiple product lines, even in the same product category as the case of laundry detergent (P&G owns Tide, Gain, and other performing brands). Other firms struggle with this overload, though. When a company pursues too many different product lines they have the risk of losing focus on their primary product. This primary product is the company's core competency; it's what the entire company was built around. When the company loses focus it usually means they have quit trying to improve the product and instead they are just trying to introduce new products in other categories. What happens then is that some other company comes along with a better version of the product and all of the sudden the company who originally had a corner on the market finds themselves with next to nothing. They realize they are lost in a forest of products. They are so spread out that none of their products have a specific advantage because they don't have enough people to research and develop properly. Companies in this position need to also take the advice of a lost backpacker: calm down, assess the situation, do the simple things to prevent from getting more lost, and find a way to get out of the situation. This is exactly what a "lost" company needs to do. They have to take a step back and look objectively at their company. They need to assess their situation, and find out what they can do to prevent losing more money. Many times this means shutting down product lines and rediscovering your core focus. You have to find a way to get out of the bad situation. This means finding what your company can do well, and building the company up again around that core competency.
Another danger that companies face internationally is hazardous terrain. Like backpackers, companies would be well-advised to thoroughly know the terrain they are expanding to in order to know the risks of moving there. As previously mentioned, a country with an unstable political environment is definitely hazardous terrain for a business. However, there are other equally hazardous situations for business. Businesses can be in danger when entering countries that are economically unstable, suffering from civil war, have a cultural adverse to Western culture, and many other options that could make the country a hostile environment for a company to enter. Even if there is a large market of people sometimes that is not enough reason to risk entering a country. In case of a country like Iraq or Iran, or any Middle Eastern country, there is a strong stigma concerning Western culture, like that of the United States. Because of their religious and political background many of the people in this area dislike what they think the United States stand for, and thus refuse to accept many U.S. products because they consider them offensive. Even if a company has a developed a product that would truly help these people they would struggle to sell it in this area like they do in the U.S. Beyond the fact that cultural differences would dictate that the advertising message and packaging of the product as a whole would have to be adapted to fit the region, an entering company from the U.S. would have to overcome the instinctive dislike that these people hold against Western culture and the things it produces. Another important aspect of the hazardous terrain discussed for backpackers was the danger of an avalanche. Though these avalanches can come in many different forms in both backpacking and business there is one type of avalanche that poses a serious threat to an internationally expanding business: economic collapse. When an economy collapses, regardless of the reason, the currency
devalues and businesses operating there can lose millions, even billions, of dollars in currency translation costs. Situations like this have occurred multiple times throughout history, like when the Brazilian economy collapse and went into a severe recession and the value of the rial, the Brazilian currency, plummeted. Another case is when the small economy of Thailand collapsed resulting in the ultimate collapse of every southeastern Asian country and the devaluation of each country’s currency. So, it is very dangerous to pursue business in an area with an unstable economy. There are ways to avoid such problems, though. Just as the backpacker prepares for an avalanche so a business can also prepare for a currency downturn. First, they can do business in the foreign country in the home country’s currency. This forces the people they do business with to do the exchanging, and thus they aren’t exposed to any translation risks. Another option is to buy forward on the currency market to hedge investments. This helps to secure a certain exchange rate in the future so you can be sure you will have the exchange rate you desire. All these techniques, though, won’t fully protect a company, but they will help to keep the damage at a minimum.

Finally, there is one more danger that both backpackers and businesses face: predatory animals. We mentioned earlier that many of the dangerous animals won’t attack unless provoked. Well, when a company expands into another country they are invading the territory of some other company, a predatory animal, and they will provoke it to attack. This is yet another reason why a smart business must always thoroughly assess the market it is entering and see what companies already have a presence there. In this way they will be better prepared for how to defend themselves against attack. These predatory businesses will attack in many different ways. One way, for example is with
price. They will undercut the entering company’s price because they have less shipping expenses and can afford the short term loss if it will get rid of the entering company. Another way is that they will use local influence to make like harder on the foreign company. Doing business in many foreign countries is all about being able to navigate the confusing governmental regulations and processes. Many times companies will hire locals to help their company be able to get through all the red tape without too much trouble. It is hard enough to do this without opposition, but if a local company has an inside political influence, which is not uncommon, it becomes even harder because someone on the inside is also working against you. Another type of attack comes against the company trying to export. If the companies in a country feel like they are not ready to have such competition being shipped in they might appeal to the government for help, making the argument that they are an essential business and if they lose the ability to produce the particular product in their own country they will be in trouble. Many governments will listen to this plea, and in order to protect their small local business will enact tariffs and other trade barriers to make the price of the exporting company’s product skyrocket. The company then has little to no chance of being able to sell that product there at such a high cost and must then leave. So, as you can see there are many different ways that a company might be attacked by the incumbent firms in a foreign country.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that you know what you might face in a given area, and be prepared with the necessary tools or contingency plans to protect yourself. And, if you can follow these principles in both the areas of backpacking and international expansion, then you just might be able to survive both the wild and the
world.
Bibliography


