

My Trip Down the Stairs

“Pity the man who inherits a million and isn't a millionaire. Here's what would be pitiful: if your income grew and you didn't.”

-Jim Rohn

The moment is frozen in my memory like a movie, perfectly preserved and stored, able to play out in the screen of my mind at a moments notice. Even now, years after that day, a lump rises in my throat at the mere thought of sharing it with you.

But I will share, because it is important.

The story begins innocently enough. Like many young people, I left college to enter the working world full of hopes and dreams of wealth and success. In my quest for a job, I sent out resumes and requested work in the field of computers. Why computers? Well, I had discovered that I had taken a liking to the study of computers and especially personal computers and software. I also found that not only did I enjoy it, I had an aptitude for computers that had gone undetected throughout my school years.

Fortunately, one company gave me a chance. I picked up and moved to another city, got an apartment and went to work as a software training manager. Days, weeks and months passed as I enjoyed my new position teaching software applications to customers of the computer company. I watched, listened and learned, intent on providing the best training possible for my customers. My spare time was spent learning new software programs and tricks to make it easier for my students to utilize the tools of their computer.

A few months into my job, my boss called me into his office and laid out something I'd never seen before. In front of me was some new kind of software, cables and hardware designed to create a personal computer network. It was the newfangled way of connecting smaller computers together, just like the large computers of the past had been connected.

I immediately saw a trend. If I could just start to understand this computer networking thing, it could really lead somewhere. Plus, I was intrigued by the thought of entire companies connecting their computers together. The year was 1985 and I had no idea the magnitude of the “trend” I thought I saw. The Internet had not yet formed in the way we use it today, and most companies still used mainframe computers exclusively for computing power. I couldn't shake the idea that I was supposed to pursue this line of work, even though I didn't exactly know what “it” was.

As a kid, I had always been the troubleshooter of my little group of friends. Many times I was called on to solve a mystery involving some kind of emergency – whether it was a wounded animal or a broken bicycle. Solving problems was my passion, and I often stuck with it until I understood the subject's inner workings before moving on. Little did I know that the very inquisitive little kid in me would become the foundation for my entrepreneurial adventures to come.

Faced with the computer networking puzzle my boss had presented me, I immediately went to work. But this problem was a little bit harder to solve. Actually, it was a LOT harder to solve. Each time I thought I understood how computer networking worked, something new would come up and shake my confidence. For 6 months I struggled, simply trying to get two computers to talk to each other through the maze of network cables. I stayed late and came in early. I read the

Getting Back Up Again

"The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: decide what you want."

–Ben Stein

As I drove into my sister's driveway, she was waiting for me. Tears streamed down her face as she saw me, injured and defeated, hardly able to move. I was tired and embarrassed. This was not the way I wanted to present myself to my little sister.

"Come on," she said, as she took me by the hand. "It's warm inside."

We walked together into the house without speaking. Words just simply weren't appropriate for the moment. She helped me get into some fresh clothing, helped me clean up and gave me some fresh coffee. A soft pillow and warm blanket was what I needed and she knew instinctively how to make me feel safe. That night, I slept deeply for what seemed like the first time in years.

The next morning, she told the rest of my family the truth about my situation, that I was safe and resting comfortably at her house. I knew the next call would be mine to make – to my lawyer. I was shaking as I picked up the phone and made the appointment. The very person who would answer the phone would be my own mother. You see, my mother worked for the law firm where my attorney was a partner, and she wanted me to come in – right away. I did, wearing my sister's clothing and trying to cover up my injuries. That same day, I filed divorce

papers and gave up my interest in the business – the same business I had worked so hard to build.

Why am I telling you all of this? Some might say I want you to feel sympathy but that is simply not the case. I am telling you this because I want to show you, through my story, that every person has a choice. Through my life and experiences, the ups and downs, I have never once said “why me?” and pretended to be a victim of circumstance. Even in this situation, as unpleasant as it was, there was a lesson and a reason for the experience. Just as whatever you are experiencing today could be positive or negative, or some combination of both, you experience a situation so that you hopefully will become a wiser, stronger person. Either way, you choose how you experience life. Personally, I believe that there really is no positive or negative experience – it simply is what you make of it. Having said that, I’ll ask you - What are you learning from today’s experiences? Have you ever really stopped to think about why things are happening to you? Have you ever thought how your circumstances might be serving you in your life? My choice at that time was to leave my life behind and build a new one. As painful and difficult as it was, it was the right choice for me. You also have a choice in every aspect of your life – always. Your ability to choose your reaction is really the only control you have in your life. You can’t control others – you can’t control circumstances. But by taking control of your choices, you can create miracles for yourself and others.

Several weeks into my new experience, the full impact of my decision hit me. I had no place to live, no income and no business. My first action was to find an apartment. Second, I decided to rebuild my life and continue on my career course.

Notice I said *decided*. See, I had something going for me in that moment that many people don’t understand. I had already

Making the Right Decisions - Every Time!

"Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act.

There is no other route to success."

–Stephen A. Brennan

A deep feeling of satisfaction fell over me as I looked over my dreams list that outlined my vision for the future. Some things on my list hit me hard – they were so close to my heart that I felt inspired and motivated more than ever– I was digging deep into my core desires. Others on the list, I thought, would be “nice to haves.” Being a troubleshooter at heart, I set out to determine why certain things on my list gave me chills and nearly had me in tears just thinking about them, and why other things didn’t seem so almighty important.

While I had known that in the past I worked hard for things I was passionate about, things that made me happy and allowed me to serve others, I didn’t really understand why I did the things I did and why I achieved certain goals and not others. Sometimes I felt like I had worked so hard for something, only to experience frustration and confusion over the end result. Have you ever had an experience like that? I’m sure you have and maybe you have wondered the same thing. Other times, things came so easily, I almost had to pinch myself to believe that it was really happening. I had always tried so hard to please others that it was now time to figure out what really made me tick – you know, the inner workings of my being that seemed, like a perfectly tuned compass, to always know better than my own thought processes what was right for me.

It was about this time in my life that I was introduced to the concept of personal values. While I had known about the concept for years, it never really occurred to me that it was all that important. The depth of its importance would not become fully known to me until many years later, but as I strove at that moment to understand my personal self, the idea of personal values was like a ray of light shining through to help me on my path. Something concrete, tangible and understandable lay before me. At that time in my life, I really needed something to cling to.

So what are personal values? Well, essentially your value system is a set of governing principles and qualities for how you live your life. Everyone has a value system and everyone's values may be different. There is no right or wrong with your values, because they are yours and yours alone – nobody can dictate them or choose them for you.

Values determine your whole being; including your expectations of the world, other people and yourself. Values can shape your attitude and dictate your actions both good and bad. Have you every thought about a time when you proceeded in a direction you now know was absolutely wrong for you? How did that make you feel? Remember that feeling because it will visit you whenever you are about to do something that is not in alignment with your value system.

Before you can move forward toward a goal or become successful, you must learn to become congruent with your own personal value system. This starts by defining the things that are really, really important to you. Sitting on my sister's couch, it was hard for me to think past the basic necessities and things I needed at that moment, like shelter and income, but I took a

Breakthrough! To Success

"Opportunity is often missed because we are broadcasting when we should be tuning in."

—Anonymous

Have you ever had an experience where you're thinking about someone and they call you on the phone? I guess these signs are everywhere, but it wasn't until recently in my life that I began to notice things – little things – that crept into my daily life. I would think about something and it would appear. I could mention a decision I had made and someone or something would appear to help me fulfill that decision. New thought gurus call this “manifesting” – the process of bringing that which you desire into physical reality. While it would be quite a few years before I understood this concept consciously, the process I had taken to create the exact idea of what I wanted, and the clear vision of what it would look like, had set a very strong foundation for getting results.

And results were coming in fast.

Three days after my goal-setting had produced a plan to become a speaker, a flyer arrived in my mailbox from a well-known national public seminar company. “Wow,” I thought to myself, “I wonder what it would be like to be a speaker with this company?” Then it hit me – I could just call them and find out what it would actually take to work with them! What a gift! I had in my hands the exact information I needed on one of the largest public speaking companies in the world, and I wanted to be a speaker!

And then it happened.

The monster of fear and self-doubt raised its ugly head. “Who do you think you are?” the imaginary voice said slyly. “You’re just some do-gooder trying to make a buck. You don’t have anything worthwhile to say, and no one wants to hear you anyway. What makes you think you could be a successful speaker?”

What if the voice in my head was right? What if I really was a no-good loser, with nothing worthwhile to say? Maybe, I decided, I should just stick to what I know best and continue computer consulting forever. At least that way I knew I would be safe and secure in my little niche and not put myself out there in a bigger way. Plus, I’d never traveled alone before, I’d probably get stuck somewhere and miss my flights, embarrass myself or say something stupid. It was probably better that I just forget it.

The flyer lay on my table for a week. Every day, I’d walk by it, convincing myself that there was no reason to really make the call, that my dreams and wishes were way beyond my reach and that there was no way a huge company like that would want some lowly computer nerd like me to teach their customers. Plus, I’d probably never even get past the receptionist.

I went back to my notebook to draw up a different plan.

As luck would have it, (or was it a sign?) the page to which I opened up the notebook had only one word on it – FREEDOM. I was reminded of my dreams and vision, of traveling to wonderful places and writing a book. I needed to become a speaker, if only to see what it felt like. I ignored the voice in my head, picked up the phone and dialed. The receptionist answered. “Hello, how may I help you?” she inquired.

Is it January Again? Where Does the Time Go?

*"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then,
is not an act, but a habit."*

– Aristotle

In my first year as a public speaker, I hit just under the \$100,000 mark in sales. Not too bad for a rookie. In my second year, business exploded and in my third, I hit the half million dollar mark. My business was growing rapidly and I needed to make sure that I had appropriate daily, weekly and monthly habits in place to help maintain my growth.

I knew from past mistakes that there were a couple of danger spots that I needed to watch out for in my business. First, I knew that this current income revolved around my physical ability to work and that could be a potential problem. Second, I knew that this was the revenue mark where I would need to decide to grow and add more employees or stay the same size. Before I could make any decisions, though, I needed to take another hard look at my habits, make some adjustments and put some new success habits in place. Looking at the areas of my personal habits, I categorized them into health, time and money. Then I pondered each one individually.

I started with my health. Was I eating properly? Exercising? Did I weigh too much or too little? Did I have energy? Asking myself these questions, I discovered that while I had started out well, my eating habits and personal care habits had slipped back into old, work-harder and longer hours patterns. I needed

to set some boundaries for myself so that my body could appropriately keep up with me. Starting with sleep, I changed my habit of going to bed “whenever” and adjusted my sleep habits to what I actually needed. How did I know what my body needed? Well, while on a vacation, I went without a watch for a week to see what I did naturally. I discovered that I wanted to drift off to sleep around 10 or 11 and that I naturally woke up at 6 or 7. I needed quite a bit of sleep. But I knew that I needed that because I worked mentally (and sometimes physically) very hard during the day. Sleep was my body’s way of rejuvenating. So I made this change first. Today, I am very protective about my sleep, and I still go to bed and wake up at the same times, no matter what time zone I find myself in.

Next came the habit of time. I discovered that I had been feeling anxious because I felt like I just didn’t have enough time in the day. Entire afternoons would slip by and I wouldn’t even notice, I was so busy. Not good. I developed a system that I still use today for managing my time, and I’d like to share it with you now. It’s fun!

The first concept I developed for time management is called the theme. I took the current year and gave it a name, “The Year of _____.” Then I filled in the blank. My first themed year was The Year of Money Making. Another year, the theme was Creation and Focus, and another was Systematize My Business. Each year for 15 years I’ve had a theme. It’s the beginning of both time management and focus for me.

After I chose an annual theme, I developed monthly themes according to the need I had that month. October might be “Clean Up My Office Month” or “Get Three New Customers a Month.” Once again, I found focus and organization (those things I wasn’t so good at, remember?) by creating a monthly theme. I even have taken the theme concept to weekly, daily and at times, even hourly themes. Right now as I’m writing

It Doesn't Have To Be This Hard

"There are two big forces at work, external and internal. We have very little control over external forces such as tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, disasters, illness and pain. What really matters is the internal force. How do I respond to those disasters? Over that I have complete control."

– Leo F. Buscalgia

Simple solutions work the best. By that, I mean that whenever I was working on a problem, needed more money, more time, or more clients, I discovered that I could come up with all kinds of fancy plans, procedures and task lists, but in the end all I ever needed to do was pick up the phone and ask a question.

And that's exactly what I did to grow my speaking business.

As I said before, my business grew exponentially. Why? Because I basically just kept doing one thing, and doing it over and over again. I kept asking for the business. Yep, it's true. I was a technical expert, someone who had experience with a particular side of the computer networking business. So I asked myself, "Who would benefit from hearing me speak?" Corporations, training organizations and anyone with a computer network would be fine, but I wanted to connect with the large companies, those who had money to pay me and who had lots of problems to solve.

I asked myself "Where would all of these companies go for knowledge?" The answer was simple – to corporate training organizations. I did a little bit of research and discovered that there were many corporate training organizations that catered

to large corporations with technical needs, and I compiled a list. Bingo! What a great way to go where my potential customers would be. Then I got on the phone. Just like I did before.

“Hello,” I would say to the training manager, “I would like to know how a trainer like myself could work with your organization.” Each time, they would give me the requirements and I would get more information. Soon I learned that many of the training organizations worked with trainer-brokers. A broker in the technical industry is like a temp agency. Technical trainers contracted with the broker, and the broker had the relationships with the larger organizations. Now I had another group of people to talk to, and I did.

After following up with the information I received, I started to receive calls. Could I be available to teach classes in Houston, Denver, Santa Clara, New York, Toronto, and other places? Would I travel? What other topics could I teach? Did I have a specialty?

Soon I was traveling to corporate organizations and training companies all around the United States and Canada. I would deliver my training and send a bill. I had an assistant help me with all of the paperwork, travel arrangements and follow up so that all I had to do was know my stuff and talk about it. And that’s exactly what I did.

Learning from my past mistakes with money, I became an even better money manager. I doubled my contributions to my own funds, worked harder with my financial planner, and learned more. I took on the part time job of “Money Manager” as an important part of my future. I had plenty of cash to buy things I wanted and purchased my first real estate investment property.

Realizing a Dream

"If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

– Henry David Thoreau

Yep, a book. That's what I needed. A book positions you in the public's eye as an expert and that was exactly what I had dreamed about. Now what? I had never written a book before and I had questions. Thousands of them.

How do I start? What do I write? How does the book get published? How do those little graphics in the books get on the pages? What is an editor? How is a cover created? The list went on and on.

By this time, I was working heavily in the service business I had chosen, solving problems for people in their corporate networks. I decided to call Laura and I told her of my desire to write a book. She told me she was planning to attend a seminar being produced by Sylvia in Switzerland and thought maybe we could talk about it there. I knew that continuing education was not only a part of my business, but an essential part of keeping up with the fast-moving computer industry, yet I just wasn't sure if I should go all the way to Europe to get it. Especially when I could just meet with Laura in the United States. Something compelled me forward though, so I purchased a ticket to the seminar and booked my flight. I grew excited to see Sylvia and Laura and I began to look forward to the trip.

When the day came that I was to leave for Switzerland, I was ready. Ready to go to the next level, whatever that would be, and ready to accept whatever was next for me in my career. I knew that this could be a defining moment in my life and I wasn't sure how it would all play out. But it didn't matter much to me – I knew in my heart that I was going to a new place, both physically and in my life.

I arrived to see Sylvia's smiling face. She warmly greeted me and welcomed me to her country. Due to the time change, it was morning. I had been flying all night and wanted to get some sleep, but knew that if I did that, my whole day would be thrown off. We got some breakfast and set out to see the countryside.

My first experience of Switzerland was beautiful. As we wound our way out of town and into the country, the quaint little farms and houses along the way gave way to rolling meadows, fields and grand expanses of land that was home to sheep and cattle slowly grazing along the fence line. I marveled at the beauty of the land, the water and mountains, and took in the fresh clean air.

We arrived at her house and she proudly showed me around. We settled in with a cup of hot tea and proceeded to curl up on the couch and talk – girl style. For the next several hours, we laughed, cried, giggled and dreamed like two long lost friends, which we were. It was wonderful.

Eventually, the conversation turned to business.

“What's next for you?” I asked Sylvia.

“Well,” she said “I think it's time to write a book.” Here was a huge sign for me. I didn't need to hear her say it twice.

“Me too!” I exclaimed. “Have you ever written one?”

Bringing Vision Into Reality

“Asking is beginning of receiving. Make sure you don't go to the ocean with a teaspoon. At least take a bucket so the kids won't laugh at you.”

-Jim Rohn

Romance. What a concept. Actually, it was a concept that I had previously dreamed about, but had never truly experienced. Now, I was ready. From the moment I met him, I knew that Alan was the man I was going to marry. This was a strange and wonderful feeling for me. I was scared, but I never let fear stop me before, and I wasn't about to start now.

For several years, we had a long distance relationship. He lived in Arizona and I made my home in the Midwest, in Wisconsin. We commuted back and forth and kept two sets of clothing, toiletries and basic personal items in both locations. Have you ever had a long distance romance? Twenty five hundred miles is a really long distance, and we had our share of ups and downs over the years. It required a plane ride just to be able to spend some time together, and I was grateful that we had the money and desire to make it work out.

I guess every relationship situation has its breaking point, and after several years the long distance nature of ours had taken its toll. We found ourselves at a “make it or break it” point and locked in irons – each wanting the other to pick up their life and move to a new city to be together. I worked really hard to convince him to move to Wisconsin. After all, from my perspective, I had a business, employees, partners, real estate, and lots

of work to do. He had a job in Arizona and skills that any employer would want to have. But I had a secret. Every time I left Arizona I cried, not wanting to return to the cold Midwest. I did it, though, because the thought of leaving my family, my business, my house and the only life I knew was almost unthinkable to me. Fear again. Ugh.

Being the kind of person he is, Alan took a temporary position in the Midwest. We decided that at the end of the position, in three months, we would either love each other even more or hate each other and call it quits. It was a rocky time. We went through almost the whole three months without knowing what we would do. Emotions were high. We were in love and we knew it, but neither of us wanted to move. I left for a speaking engagement for a few days and we promised to have a discussion when I returned.

While I was at my event, Alan had an accident on the ice-covered sidewalks in northern Wisconsin that left him on crutches. He did not tell me what had happened and I returned, eager to see him. When I got off the plane, there he was, hobbling around with a broken foot on crutches in the dead of winter in Wisconsin. He grinned and gave me a hug, but I knew there would be no discussion. There was no way he was going to move from his beautiful, sunny Arizona. It would be up to me. I would have to face my fear once again if I wanted to be with the love of my life. Another lesson learned. Sometimes the world clears the way for you to be able to get what you really want in your life. I really wanted to move to the sunshine-laden state, get away from the cold and snow, and now the opportunity had opened itself up to me. All I needed to do was grab it.

And there was something else happening for me. With all of the things going on in my life that I was passionate about, my business had grown. A lot. By this time, I had a partner and

You're Not Crazy, You're an Entrepreneur!

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Yes!" I exclaimed excitedly, to Alan's proposal of marriage. "When?"

"Well," said Alan, "how about in August?" I did the math in my head and panicked. August was only three months away.

"I don't think I could plan something that fast – not with all of these other things happening. I've barely unpacked!" Excitement turned to nervousness.

"Don't you worry," he said calmly. "I'll take care of everything." And that's exactly what he did. The first thing he did was call my mother. Can you believe it? My own mother! He did this completely without my knowledge and he set up a time to meet with her. I would later learn that my husband-to-be was a little old-fashioned, quite detail-oriented and cared a lot about family. At this moment, he cared about MY family.

When Alan and my mom met for dinner, he came prepared. He had earlier asked me what my mother's favorite flower might be. I thought it was a test to see how much I knew about my family, but I was wrong. He wanted to approach her with a bouquet of her very favorite flowers – daisies. And that is exactly what he did. He handed my mother a bouquet of daisies and said simply "I'm in love with your daughter." My mother melted. The pure love and openness in his eyes said everything that needed to be said.

That year, on August 26 we said our vows in front of a small but tight knit group of our family and friends. Our union had all of the love, support, confidence, affection and happiness that my previous marriage lacked. No drama, just lots of fun. Alan had thought of everything – all I had to do was show up, wear a great dress and smile. I didn't think I could love or appreciate someone so much. I still do today.

After the wedding, I began to settle into my new life in Arizona. I had discovered necessities like groceries, dry cleaning and where to get my pedicures (yes, that is really important when you wear sandals most of the year) and life had slowed considerably for me. I was still speaking publicly occasionally, and the rest of the time I was brokering other speakers and trainers into corporations for very specific, high tech subjects. Alan had a job that required him to travel and he was gone many weeks, but home most weekends.

My work was pretty simple and met my money needs, but something else was brewing inside. It was a feeling I had never consciously experienced before, and I didn't know what it was. It was an uneasiness, restlessness and sadness I didn't understand. I had no reason to be experiencing any of these things. Additionally, the thoughts in my head which had always been a part of my personality came through at blinding speed. Partial sentences, observations, quotes, songs and distractions filled my head. I couldn't remember from one hour to the next what I had planned to accomplish during that time. When Alan would return from his trip, I wasn't always the happy professional woman he had married, and I felt horrible. The frustration and noise in my head became unbearable, and I called a professional psychologist I had known when I lived in Wisconsin.

"I think I'm going crazy," I said, feeling afraid and alone. I told her about the noise in my head. "It's like there's a party going

Becoming a Lifestyle Entrepreneur

“Money will buy you a bed, but not a good night's sleep, a house but not a home, a companion but not a friend.”

– Zig Ziglar

Armed with my new understanding of myself and my talents, I went about the exciting idea of starting another company.

“What do you think?” I asked Alan, after explaining my idea to him. “There must be a lot of entrepreneurs and small business owners out there who really want to grow their business but are stuck not knowing quite how to go about it. I know how. I’ve done it and I can help them.”

“I think it’s a great idea,” he said after listening to my description. “Go for it. I believe in you.” Those would be the very sweet words he would utter many thousands of times in the next couple of years.

I went to my favorite place to think – the coffee shop. As I sat down, I smiled to myself, happy that I now understood why I had appreciated the buzz of the people, the machines and the music. The background noise provided me with the opportunity to focus properly. Strange to a non-ADD person, I know, but it works for me.

Of course, I saw opportunity everywhere, and I now knew that I was susceptible to impulsive actions as I had been in the past. But I had a dream. My company would be an educational company, training creative entrepreneurs and small business owners

to grow without the stress. I would provide the training by utilizing the same skills and methods I already knew, such as through seminars, books and other resource materials. I would provide one-on-one mentoring and group coaching and education.

And I would expand globally.

“Huh?” I said aloud, “Globally? Where did that come from?” I looked around me, thinking that maybe someone had whispered something in my ear when I wasn’t looking. But there was no one around – just me and my coffee. Still a bit shocked, I began to consider the idea that had popped into my mind. Soon, I smiled from ear to ear. Of course! Why not? I had been working on the Internet for a few years already, studied direct marketing and thoroughly understood the online technology. Why wouldn’t I build a global organization from the ground up? Divine inspiration had hit, and I was listening.

I spent the afternoon in the coffee shop, drawing up my plans. It made a lot of sense – I would build my presence on the Internet and then when I was ready to launch my business, my products and my speaking again, people would know who I was. I dreamed that I would be called by people for speaking engagements, that I would walk into crowded rooms and people would know who I was, and that by building this platform first, I would be able to reach a global audience who probably had many of the same issues as people in the United States were having with their small businesses. The 25 million or so small business and home offices in the U.S. suddenly expanded to a much larger number, and I was pretty excited.

Plans in hand, I suddenly found myself once again in the throes of fear. This one was a new one however, and it hit me hard. It was the fear of loss.

The First Principle of Business Success - Defining The Leadership Vision

“A leader's greatest obligation is to make possible an environment where people can aspire to change the world.”

– Carly Fiorina, Hewlett-Packard,
addressing the MIT class of 2000

So what holds small businesses together? It starts with the passion, motivation and drive of the business owner to experience success. As the business begins to get busier, the owner becomes busier, often working late into each night to complete the daily tasks. Right around this point in time, the business owner decides that expansion is not possible unless he or she hires the first employee.

Knowing that this had been a problem for me in the past, Alan and I sat down and I really dove into that master question – What do you want? – as I continued to draw up the plans for the new and improved business I would be creating. Each step of the way, I referred back to my values list, my personal and professional goals and truly asked myself how reaching each of these goals would change my life. One day, I found myself reminiscing about the first time I became an employer...

Oh, the excitement! I remember when I got my very first employee, some 17 years ago. It was an exciting time. The person came to work ready to perform his duties, and I gave him some instructions. He was a trained computer technician, able to do many of the tasks that I had been doing for my customers. I was able to go on to bigger and better (and much more fun) consulting jobs, which I did. For a while, things

were great. We would talk occasionally, work out some technical glitches, consult on customer issues – all of the very task-oriented items on the job.

Then, one day I got a call from one of our very best customers. “The new guy is really good,” the customer told me, “but he just doesn’t do the same things as you do.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, wondering if his technical skills were not as up to date as I thought they were.

“Well,” said the customer slowly, “He doesn’t ask people if it’s okay to use their computer like you used to do. He doesn’t give us a recap of the solution like you used to. And he really doesn’t give us options to solve the problem like you used to. There’s nothing really wrong with him technically, but we don’t feel as cared for as we did in the past.”

I felt horrible. How could my employee treat my customers differently than I did? Hadn’t I told him how important customer service was to our company? Hadn’t I told him how in order to expand, we used referrals? Hadn’t I told him how we kept a constant watch on our customer’s network equipment and alerted them to upgrades and new technology solutions? Why wasn’t he doing all of the things we talked about?

I didn’t take the time to talk to the employee though. Instead I jumped right back into “I can do it better myself” mode and took over the client’s account. When the same thing happened again, I started to think that my employee wasn’t really doing such a good job, and jumped once again at the opportunity to pick up the pieces and do it myself. Suddenly, I found myself working those really long hours again, wondering why in the world I had thought that expansion was ever a good idea. I would just stay small – a true one person operation, just to keep

The Second Principle of Business Success - Delivering the Marketing Message

*“The purpose of a business is to create and keep a customer.
All business activities must be focused on this central purpose.”*

- Brian Tracy

“But I’m afraid of marketing,” one of my clients once said to me. “I’m a much better consultant than I am a marketer. Isn’t there a way to make a million dollar business without so much marketing?” She paused for a moment. “Well, maybe I’ll just settle for less.”

“Is that what you really want?” I asked her gently. “No,” she replied, “but I really don’t know how this marketing stuff works.”

“Relax,” I said “I’ll help you. We’ll do it together.”

Have you ever felt terrified or lost when it comes to the marketing of your business? You know that in order to get the word out about your product or service, you must, well, tell people. Not just any people. You must get the word out to the very people who will most want your product or service – your target market. Ugh! For some, the very thought of marketing sounds like bragging or being pushy and all in all just no fun.

Marketing is really a couple of things all rolled into one. It is the process of producing, packaging, positioning, promoting and pricing your product or service for clients. The 5 P’s. For each of these help is available through other professionals such

as graphic designers, branding specialists and market research specialists. These people (or you) can develop a method by which your products have a consistent look, communicate a specific promise and are priced appropriately. Getting them out to your market is the promotion part of marketing, which requires a little more thought.

I didn't know this when I started my first company. And I'll let you in on another little secret – I was one of those people that thought marketers were pushy, slick executives who didn't care at all about anything but selling their products.

I was wrong.

The whole idea of marketing involves attracting potential customers to your business, establishing a relationship, producing a sale and filling the order. Once again, I made one of the biggest mistakes in business – expecting people to buy my products and services because I knew they were good, but not properly communicating their uniqueness or benefits to my potential customers.

I never really thought about what I was really selling. Think about it for a minute. When you go into a department store to buy perfume or cologne, do they list the ingredients on the front of the bottle, prominently displayed for your convenience and education? Hardly. Perfume and cologne is called “Joy” “Happiness” “Glow” “Brut” or “Steel.” These are words that have you thinking “If I just buy this perfume, I'll have these things in my life.”

And that's exactly what they want you to think.

So what are you really selling in your business? Is it freedom, or empowerment, inspiration or health? Is it creativity or security, fun or joy? Take careful notice here, these are all values

The Third Principle of Business Success - Creating the Turn-Key Business

"The problem with most failing businesses is not that their owners don't know enough about finance, marketing, management, and operations -- they don't, but those things are easy enough to learn -- but that they spend their time and energy defending what they think they know. My experience has shown me that the people who are exceptionally good in business aren't so because of what they know but because of their insatiable need to know more."

-Michael Gerber

As a service professional in my first growing business, I was always excited when new customers were added into my business. After all, I thought, wasn't that why I was here? To help people? As my referrals grew and more people wanted to work with me, I eventually realized there was going to be a problem.

A big problem.

There simply wasn't enough of me to go around.

I think this is probably a defining moment in every service business – that moment where you realize you either expand or stagnate. Many business owners simply choose what they believe to be the path of least resistance – continuing to do everything themselves – because they believe that it would be too hard to expand. “I can do it better and faster myself” is the mantra of many small business owners, and it is a damaging idea. This was a lesson I learned early in my career and it was

a lesson I did not want to repeat.

It was around the time that I had just left my first husband and I was doubtful about a lot of things – especially my ability to lead others. I knew the time had come for me to truly be a leader in my business and my life. At first, the responsibility seemed overwhelming. Self-doubt filled my mind. What if I made the wrong decisions? What if I led people down the wrong path? What if, what if, what if? The questions were endless and I realized that my fear was creeping up again.

I know now, but was learning then, that in order to conquer fear, I had to take action. But what action? I wasn't sure, but I knew that I needed to learn how to be a business owner, not just a "brain for hire." I wanted to grow my business to expand and have a presence without me. What a concept! How would I do that? Could it be done? I didn't know of any people in business for themselves who had that kind of freedom. But I knew the answers had to be out there – I just didn't know where to find them. I made the decision to find the answers.

What happened next might seem a little bit strange to you. I had learned about the five P's of marketing – Product, Packaging, Positioning, Price and Promotion and how these could be applied to building a business. I was pretty much on the wrong track, questioning how a small business owner could create a business with more service products, when I fell asleep. Then I had a dream. In that dream, I had taken the knowledge in my head and turned it into a book, audio programs and home study courses. I had a fully functional business that ran with or without me, and I was able to come and go without being tied down to the business. I was able to love my life! Four more words popped into my head.

Products.

Plans.

Process.

The Collaboration Nation

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

- Andrew Carnegie

"My life would be so great if there were no people around," joked my friend as he struggled with yet another conflict in communication between himself and his partner. "I'll never work with partners again."

Does that sound familiar? How many of us tried to start a business with a partner, hoping for sweet success and making all of our dreams come true? It probably started out well, with each partner having great intentions for the business. You dream together and make plans. You think big and the more you are together, the more you consider new ideas for the business. The possibilities are endless and you are both very excited! Then, one day, you have your first conflict.

"I thought you were handling the accounting," you say to your partner. "I thought you were doing it," replies your partner. "I'm no good with those details."

"What?" you shout, furious. "I thought you were the one that was good with the details!"

"Well," says your partner "I thought the same about you." And thus starts the unraveling of the partnership, as each partner admits the assumptions they made about the other person.

Instead of going into the partnership based on true skills and entrepreneurial style, the partnership was formed with passion and dreams, and a “gut” feeling that things could always be worked out in the event of a conflict.

While I guess I’ve been pretty lucky as I’ve had really good partners to help me build my businesses, I’ve also had my share of wrong choices, fueled by excitement and emotion more than by the actual skill-set or mindset of the people I’ve chosen to work with. Luckily, no choice anyone makes is required to be permanent, and decisions can be undone. While this is not always a pleasant task, in order to be happy (which, if you’ll remember is our purpose) we must sometimes “undo” a choice that previously seemed to be a good one. There is nothing wrong with making mistakes – everybody does. Trying to make those mistakes into something they are not, is only going to cause more damage. This is business and the best choices need to be made for the health of the business and personal lifestyle success.

So how do we make those choices, stay flexible and create working relationships with other people to help us get all of the work done? In the past, most small businesses have attempted to build internal teams of employees using methods to evaluate potential employees that were more like guesswork and less strategic in their implementation. Most new employers simply chose a person who they would think might be good for the job and hoped for the best. I know I certainly fell into that category at one point.

Lately, however, I’ve been looking at a new shift in how small business is done. Consider the corporations that are crumbling under their own weight, “downsizing” or “rightsizing” employees to create corporate environments that are more streamlined. People are now expected to handle the duties left undone by the

The Fourth Principle of Business Success - Expanding The Wealth

“Make a decision to be successful right now. Most people never decide to be wealthy and that is why they retire poor.”

- Brian Tracy

As I shared with you before, when I started investing, I was a complete novice, barely understanding how the expansion of wealth even works. I had come from a family with hard working, conservative parents who also did not really understand much about investing, only that in order to achieve wealth expansion, you must invest.

So much for getting financial advice from my parents.

When I swallowed my pride and sought out my first financial advisor, I learned more in the first hour-long consultation than I knew in all of my years prior to that meeting. But there would be a lot more to understand. However, through all of the confusion, one thing remained clear – it is a theme that has been throughout this book, throughout life and as I would learn, applied to wealth expansion as well. The first thing my financial advisor asked me were the four words that would ultimately move me forward – four words I applied to every aspect of my life whenever I was confused, chaotic or overwhelmed. I think you might already know by now what they are.

“What do you want?” asked my first financial advisor as I sat across from him in his office.

Good question, I thought to myself. I had no idea. Though at that time I was completely unable to answer that seemingly simple question, those four little words made an impact on me that day that I will never forget.

Have you ever felt overwhelmed, confused or unsure of yourself? Of course you have. So many choices and so little time. In all aspects of our life, we are told what we “should” do. Need to grow your business? Most people turn to friends or acquaintances for advice. And believe me, there is no shortage of advice. Need to expand on the Internet? Do search engine optimization, Pay Per Click, Banner advertising, Ezine advertising, write your own newsletter, write articles, exchange links...the list goes on and on. Having a conflict with a partner, employee or contractor? You can get loads of advice on what to say, how to act, and how to respond. There are hundreds of books that give exact blueprints and put the words in your mouth for you! How to talk to difficult people. How to respond in any situation. 101 ways to pay someone a compliment. Methods and advice are plentiful. But how do you know which advice to take?

The reality is – it’s all probably good advice. And it’s probably true that each strategy worked well in each situation for the person delivering the advice. But you become paralyzed by the input, unable to make a decision on how to move forward, or if you do make a decision, you do so tentatively, hoping that you can rely on the person who delivered the advice on which you are basing your decision.

If you make choices solely based on other people’s input, you are missing out on a critical piece of the equation – your personal desired ultimate result. In other words “What do you want?” Other people’s advice will not come in the context of