

Plan Your Success In Seven Ways

By Chuck And Sue DeFiore

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Many businesses lose money yearly because they don't think creatively about the future. They run their businesses doing what they think they should: dealing with customers, dealing with problems, ordering for their business, and paying their expenses. They act like their business is a job. They are surviving and that's it. They are not looking at the big picture. They need to use their business as a stepping stone to success. Picturing themselves as a successful business person, and setting up a plan to succeed.

Many of the businesses today are started by people who have been downsized or laid off. They are used to showing up for a job and getting paid, and this is how they are operating their business.

The first thing you must do is to find out what you are really good at. Many people want to know, "How can I make more money?" Unfortunately too many business people never ask themselves, "What am I good at?" They need to do so, and then ask it again every time they want to do something new. This is one of the biggest reasons businesses fail. The owners did not focus on what they were good at and did best. This does not mean you can't try something different. What it does mean that it is best to go with the skills and experience you already have.

The second thing you need to do is take an objective look at yourself. Take a piece of paper and write down what you can and can't do. Picture yourself hiring you. Would you hire yourself? Would you be impressed? What do you know best? What are your hobbies? Can you turn that hobby into a business? Remember you work best at something you enjoy.

I was an exceptional secretary, so I started a word processing business. I loved typing and taking dictation by telephone, writing up letters, proposals and setting up identity packages. However, I hated having to drive around town to pick up and deliver projects, and cold calling for business. So after losing money, I shut down the business. A couple of years later I started another business where I was the assistant to businesses, but worked from my home. I got to do all the secretarial aspects, but out of a home office. All I had to do was send flyers and mailers to independent contractors. I also worked with answering services for referrals and gave them business, plus a cut of my fee.

What this means is you need to discover what your likes and dislikes are. People like to work at things they do well. They enjoy themselves more. A test for you is to think back over the last couple of days. Then make a list of the things you enjoyed doing. Think about when you were the happiest and what you were doing.

The third thing you need to think about and be able to recognize is: What your competitive edge is. After you do the above test and find out what your strengths are, you will find that some of these strengths give you an advantage over your competition. Do your particular strengths and abilities help you provide exceptional customer service? Can you do something or produce something that others can't?

If you already have an edge over others, put it to use. Make your customers aware of your unique qualities. The way to accomplish this is to be sure any advertising or promotional campaign you employ highlights your unique selling points.

The fourth thing you need to do is to plan ahead. While your business concept or product might be unique now, as we know people love to copy what is successful. So you need to plan for the long run. You need to be aware of what your competition is doing and keep your customers coming back.

The fifth thing is that just because there are things you don't like about your business, doesn't mean you give up. Yes, there are going to be certain things you like better than others. Every business person feels this way. However, if you don't like anything about what you are doing, then you might want to start a new business. Be sure before you do so, you give yourself the above test.

The sixth thing is sometimes you just need to make some changes in your business. See if there are certain things you can cut out of your business, a product or service, which you might not enjoy and it is not a profit center for you. Then drop it, and concentrate on those things that are generating a profit.

Maybe you need to make changes to make your job easier, such as buying new software, or a new computer system. Maybe hiring someone on a part time basis could take some of the workload off your shoulders, and allow you to concentrate on other business matters.

And last but not least is to be sure you take what you've learned about yourself, and set up a plan for your business for the future. Don't forget to write down what you're good at and ways that you can apply your skills to making money. You can take this information about your skills and put it in your promotional materials. Be sure you always have a notebook (or a voice recorder) with you to jot down notes to yourself, new business ideas to try. You want to be sure when you do write these things down that you also put a date next to them to implement that idea or strategy. This will give you goals to work for. Be sure to put these goals in a prominent place in your office. I put my goals on index cards and then put the index cards on my desk, on my calendar, and on my bulletin board. By having your goals visible to you, it will help you to stay on track. And, that is what it is all about – keeping your business growing and prospering.

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