

So, You Want to Start A Business?

Written by Jamie Wolf

Wednesday, 29 August 2012 10:00



Where does business come from?

TAKING ACTION – Part 4 of 6

There are two sides to a coin. You can enter through or exit from a door. You can approach business from an external view and an internal view. Where does business come from and where in your life can you take action?

My husband retired from the US Coast Guard. We often refer to the story he told me of one of his ship commanders who said, “The only thing I control is this 82 feet; its speed and direction, its maintenance, its crew. I control whatever happens on board, no more, no less.” So what are you in control of? Where can you begin to take action to improve your business? If you view

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yourself as a vessel, then be in control of yourself, your thinking, your motivation, your follow-through, your willingness to learn, your ability to recover from failure – all these things. Beginning where you are and knowing that where you end up is what matters, start today to focus on your own actions. Control your own ship, be Master of your fate and Captain of your soul (to loosely paraphrase William Ernest Henley in *Invictus*.)

The beauty of this approach is that you don't have to wait for conditions to be right. You don't have to wait until the economy improves, until the loan or financing comes through, until you find the right business partner, or until you have your product exactly the way you envision it. You don't have to wait until your home-life improves, you find your soul mate, you have the money to fix your car, or until the kids start behaving better. You just have to take a good look inside yourself, be honest, and make the decision to view and respond differently. Immediately you will notice things change! Choose not to engage in the same old argument. Choose not to stop at McDonald's one day a week. Choose to turn off the TV for 30 minutes and take a walk or read a business article instead. Choose to focus on delivering more value, securing more customers, increasing your margins, and increasing sales frequency. These are actions!

How does this help you start a business? You've heard of the 3 R's that are the foundation to a basic education – Reading, (w)Riting, and (a)Rithmetic? Well, in business, focus on Resiliency, Referrals, and Revenue. As you pursue your new business, you will Reinvent yourself, Reinvigorate your life, and Revive! But seriously, you are your most important asset. You can't do your best work when you are bored, depressed, or stressed. You also can't expect to last in business if you can't be resilient; in other words, you have to recover readily from whatever setbacks you encounter. Ultimately, even in today's virtual world, business comes down to relationships and stellar customer service. When you exceed expectations, you get referrals. And referrals get you new customers, aka new business, most efficiently. The cost and the time to acquire a new customer goes down as referrals go up. As you concentrate on improving yourself, on being consistent and focused in your daily efforts, on managing better, on improving your service – or, if you are already in business, on ensuring you have the best leadership team for the phase your company is in – improvements in your business will be a natural by-product of your efforts.

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Where do you start first? With yourself. Where else? With your customers! Whether you are selling apps, shoes, services, or ocean tankers, when you deliver solutions that solve problems on-time, within budget, backed by a solid guarantee, and serviced by competent, knowledgeable, articulate, pleasant people with a consistently exceptional response time, you will exceed your customer's expectations and they will go out of their way to sing your praises. Then your company will be right where you want it!

DO's

- **DO** keep at the forefront of your thinking that the lifeblood of your business lies at the point of customer interaction. Without a paying customer, a transaction, you don't have a business – you have a hobby. Regardless of what product or service you offer, the customer must see a value, be willing to pay for that value, and ideally be interested in other things you offer based on the relationship they develop with you.

- **DO** keep thinking about where you are today and where you want to go from here. Remember what's important to you; your integrity will come through in every interaction.

- **DO** know where your customers are. Your internal team, your sales force, your frontline people – they are every bit as much your customer as your external customers. Be sure to create a culture of clear communications, expectations, and value for those who work with you and for you with as much attention as you give to where your next sale is coming from.

DON'Ts

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• **DON'T** feel you must make quantum leaps, going from no sales to many overnight. Focus on getting it right the first time, wow your customer once, under promise and over-deliver (as the saying goes) just for today. Then tomorrow duplicate it – do it again. Improve something if you want to. But don't worry about three years from now. Do your best today.

• **DON'T** forget you are creating a process. Have a plan to develop yourself, to learn, and to think long-term. Don't worry about yesterday – it's over – as you internalize the importance of where you want to end up and what processes you are putting in place to accomplish that goal. Have a plan to attract and retain customers, to get referrals, and to be resilient in the face of setbacks to assure your revenue flows in consistently. As you plan and implement your process, duplicate what works so that as much as possible you end up in a situation where you measure success in customers well-served rather than too many hours worked. Be in control of your ship, and you will be master of your fate!

ACTION ITEMS:

- What one thing are you frustrated with right now? Is it your time management, your progress, your lack of experience, your sales? Think of one thing within your control that you can do differently tomorrow to deal with that frustration. Then do it!
- Think of two recent customer service encounters you have experienced – a good one and a not-so-good one. Write down what made each experience positive or negative. Now draw out how the ideal customer service experience will go for your customers. Sketch out what you can put in place for your customers to rave, give referrals, and generate more revenue for you.
- Plan to keep checking in with this series to learn next steps to start a business.

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- Be sure to check out my new book and workbooks. The Kindle versions will be available on Amazon soon (paperback to follow!)
- Send a question to Jamie.wolf@theStartOver.com! Tell me what's happened for you so far. Thank you!

Beaufort resident Jamie Wolf is the author of 'Start Over! Start Now! Ten Keys to SUCCESS in Business and Life' and ten accompanying guidebooks. ☐ If you're ready to be Master of your Fate and Captain of your Soul, she invites you to come on board! Jamie offers online courses and coaching for entrepreneurs and people interested in starting over or in starting their own business. Visit her at <http://www.thestartover.com>

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