

So, You Want to Start a Business?

Written by Jamie Wolf

Wednesday, 30 January 2013 11:03



The Life Lesson Whisperer

Listen Intently, Part 2 of 6

Most people think of themselves as coachable until someone tells them what to do. It's amazing how quickly the delusion of "I'm very flexible and open to new ideas, plus I really need help turning things around" gets exposed! You know the old saying, "Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger"? Well, it wouldn't have to get so close to killing you if you were listening intently in the first place!

Here's a common example of feedback that gets ignored until it gets more demonstrative – people who buy homes (or other items) beyond their means, or at least beyond their stated budget, and then act surprised when the financial stress pours over into other areas of their lives. (And I'm NOT picking on realtors here – I'm making a point about decision-making based on feedback.) Let's say Joe and Sally plan to buy a home and they are comfortable with a budget of \$270,000. They've saved \$54,000 – 20% of their budget – as a down payment. They give the realtor a range of \$225,000-\$270,000 hoping that they'll find something in the lower end of their range. The first thing that happens is the realtor says, "Oh, with the amount you've saved I can show you a house for \$324,000" – which is the high end of their budget PLUS the money for the down payment (NOT including the amount for the down payment.) The next thing that happens is the bank says Joe and Sally are actually approved for an amount of \$325,000 – so now the realtor adds the \$54K to that amount and shows them a house for \$379,000 which they totally fall in love with and just have to have. Do you see how they just went from thinking they'd look at a house for \$225K and after their down payment would only have mortgage payments on a balance of \$171,000 – to suddenly having mortgage payments on \$379,000.

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That's a BIG difference!

What does this example have to do with listening intently? If they were following their own ground rules they would simply pay attention to the numbers and rationally stick to the plan they'd carefully crafted for themselves. Instead, 5 years from now they are so stressed about their high mortgage payments- and in fact are even missing making some payments - they are fighting all the time. In other words, the pressure had to increase beyond the spreadsheets in order for them to pay attention to the information that was there all along.

(By the way, the same thing happens with other major purchases and payments: cars, boats, businesses. People start with a fixed number in mind and end up compromising when the dealer massages the numbers and redirects people to look only at the monthly payments. Just because you can afford a monthly payment now doesn't mean it makes sense to commit yourself to borrowing that much in total. Can you say upside down? Underwater? That's what happens when people over-commit on a purchase and later end up owing more than the real property is worth.)

Don't be the person who ignores logic and rational thinking when it's whispered gently to you. Don't be the person who is wringing his hands when the universe has escalated to screaming at you because you weren't paying attention any other way!

There are so many ways the world first whispers to you, then raises its voice, then increases the frequency and urgency of communication! If you get quiet, and get honest, I bet you can find examples of this in your own life or your own business. It's pretty easy to look at other people and see how it's happened to them. It's a little more difficult to be honest about your own experiences. Start now; it's a great first step!

Here are some questions that require introspection, honest answers, and intent listening. Are you having more headaches at work? Are you falling into the habit of having more than a few drinks at the end of the day? Are you paying for your groceries (or rent or other essentials) with credit? Have you put on more than just a pound or two? Are you missing your kids games or plays? Are you starting to feel sick on Sunday afternoons when you think about going to your job or business on Monday mornings? Are you avoiding phone calls and leaving mail unopened? Are you feeling disengaged from your work or feeling like you just don't find anything terribly interesting and fulfilling anymore? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you haven't been listening to the feedback that is always all around you.

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Here's another series of clues. If you have suffered more than one bad relationship, if you have had serious financial troubles more than once, if you have been let go or laterally transitioned more than once from your job, or if any one particular unpleasant circumstance has happened more than once ... the universe is getting louder to get your attention! I know, because I used to be a bad listener, too!

So what can you do to head things off at the pass, grow as a person, and grow your business?

- Reflect honestly on your own behavior
- Be alert to your resistance to change and new ideas
- Be sincere in your desire to improve your own behavior
- Take personal responsibility for your behavior
- Consider if you are honestly ready to take action towards real, positive change
- Be willing to step outside your comfort zone
- Be committed to change
- See your flaws as opportunities without getting defensive
- Understand that constructive criticism is helpful, not threatening
- Consider how your current approach affects others and be genuinely interested in improving their situation by altering your actions
- Be alert to your own coping mechanisms and let go of "I know that" responses
- Lose your skepticism and cynicism; it doesn't make you look smart and it definitely prevents any chance for forward progress!
- Consider trying new things and explore how they feel over time
- Understand that even if one new way 'doesn't work' it may lead to a new mindset and habit that does work
- Be truly ready and willing to eliminate or modify self-defeating behaviors that limit your successes, personally and professionally

Next time the universe – or someone – tries to tell you what to do by whispering life lessons in your direction, do yourself a favor; listen intently so you can grow as a person and grow your business!

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

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