

# opening doors



Reinvent  
Yourself &  
Realize Your  
(Business)  
Potential



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## Introduction

Are you facing a closed door?

Many times it seems as if you are making good progress in your personal and professional lives when all of a sudden you face a closed—or even locked—door. The path you saw yourself taking is blocked. Perhaps it's a change in a job situation or even a job loss. Maybe the obstacle is a lack of confidence or uncertainty over what you want and where you wish to go. You might even doubt whether you have it in you to move forward, to find a way around the door that is closed.

I want to help you open the door to your dreams and your ultimate success. Sometimes, that means finding the skills and confidence to find the key to that door. Other times, it means finding a path around the closed door to take another, more rewarding path. In many instances, a closed door calls you to reinvent yourself, to re-think your notions of who you are, what you want and what you do so that you can realize your dreams and achieve your true potential.

It's easy to see a closed door as a dead end, to give up, to concede defeat or accept limitation. But a door is just a door. Doors that are closed can also open. And if a door is locked, remember that there is always more than one entryway to reach your goal. A closed door may be a signal to revise your strategy, to make sure that what you think you want is truly your heart's desire, or to pause and rest before renewing your efforts. It can be many things, but it is not an ending.

As you journey through this book, I hope that you'll find ideas to reawaken your spark, to refresh your enthusiasm, and to renew your passion. Whether you are facing business challenges, obstacles or opportunities, I want to help you move forward with greater confidence in making your dreams a reality. I want to be your partner in reinvention, to cheer you on as you reach new heights. This book is a first step toward opening your future to glorious possibilities. Now it's up to you to take the next step.

## About the author

As the Founder and President of Faith Monson, Success Consultant, Faith specializes in helping others realize their potential for success. Using a number of proven and effective coaching tactics, she works with solo entrepreneurs, interior designers, sales people and sales-driven organizations, and those going through job transition to develop their own unique formula for success. Her coaching tactics include laser coaching, role-playing, brainstorming, and mirroring. Faith also provides business consulting services, with a strong focus on business assessments, market and competitive evaluation, recommendations to clarify and enhance personal and business strengths, visual marketing and public relations recommendations, and interviewing and sales training. Discover more about Faith at [www.FaithMonson.com](http://www.FaithMonson.com).

*“The doors we open and close each day  
decide the lives we live.”*

Flora Whittemore



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# *Section I:*

**Opening the Door  
to Personal  
& Business Success**

## Chapter 1: The Confidence Threshold

Many of us grew up in a time when “confidence” was mistaken for “arrogance.” As children, we were admonished not to “blow our own horn,” to be self-effacing and to modestly diminish our accomplishments even when praised.

Thankfully, those days are gone. Showing self-confidence is a healthy attitude that empowers you and others. A self-confident person attracts people because others are drawn to someone who is comfortable being his or her personal best.

As a success coach, I've found that many adults still hear the old voices in their minds saying that it's wrong to be confident. Nothing could be further from the truth. True confidence isn't arrogance and it isn't pride. Truly confident people know their abilities and their limits. They are sure of what they can do, and aware of where they will need help. Confidence means being comfortable in your own skin, being happy to be you.

Confidence—and our ability to show it—affects every part of life. Businesses begin because an entrepreneur is confident in his or her vision and skills. Companies grow when leaders are confident that they have the abilities and resources to meet growing needs. Dreams come true when we have the confidence to pursue them. Confidence is especially important when it comes to marketing your business. Business owners who are confident about the quality of their product want to tell everyone about it because it meets a need. That's not bragging—that's good business. Look at it this way—if you know that your product or service will make life better for your client, why wouldn't you want to tell them and be of help? That's what marketing is—sharing a solution to solve someone else's problem.

Here are three tips to increase your confidence:

**Focus on the solution.** Think about how your product or service meets a need or solves a problem. If you believe in your product, you won't have time to be self-conscious. Your enthusiasm will shine through as natural confidence.

**Remember your passion.** Find the elements you love about your work. We naturally become more energized and confident talking about something we're passionate about.

**Take confidence one step at a time.** Feeling shaky about a big change? Don't try to take it on all at once. Break a big plan into many smaller steps—maybe as small as micro-tasks you can achieve in ten minutes each day. Mastering each small step gives you confidence to take the next step—and the next. Before you know it, you've reached your goal! A confident business owner will be able to share that confidence with prospects to help them reduce their fears and answer their questions. Confidence grows with proof of competence—that's called empowerment. Belief in yourself empowers you, and your confidence in your solution empowers your clients.

*“If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door – or I'll make a door.”*

Unknown

## Chapter 2: Laser Coaching for Optimum Success

Many busy professionals put off success coaching because they're afraid of the time commitment. They fear weekly one-hour appointments stretching on indefinitely. Because of that fear, they miss out on the benefits of feedback from a professional coach on life, work and success issues.

Laser coaching removes the fear of long-term commitment. With laser coaching, clients hone down their concerns to one bite-sized piece that can be addressed in a single hour. Client and coach work intensively on that specific issue and emerge with an action plan. No further sessions are necessary. Additional laser coaching on different topics can always be added without ongoing commitment.

Laser coaching works best in the following situations:

The client can narrowly define the behavior or obstacle and is clear about its impact. Because laser coaching has only one hour, there's no time to dig into the past or uncover cause and effect. The client should come prepared with a clearly defined problem and objective. For example, a client who is fearful about pulling together a major presentation could meet with a coach to devise strategies for organizing and presenting the material, along with positive reinforcement techniques.

- The problem involves interpersonal relationships such as a problem boss or a difficult colleague. Laser coaching can help develop skills for dealing with difficult people that manage conflict successfully. It deals with the here-and-now, not untangling long-standing patterns.
- The problem is part of a larger issue that can be broken into smaller related pieces. For example, a client who fears public speaking may choose to deal with that fear over a series of laser coaching sessions spread out at her convenience as budget permits. One session might deal with techniques for speaking to a small group, while another session might cover body language and gestures. By breaking a big topic into smaller pieces, it's possible to make progress without a long-term coaching commitment.
- The client has one or two concerns but is otherwise confident about his/her life and career. If a client only needs help with one or two defined concerns, laser coaching makes sense as a time-efficient and cost-effective way to get results.
- A client wants to check out a coach before making a long-term commitment. Starting with one or two laser coaching sessions is a great way to make sure you and the coach are a good fit.

By making coaching a defined project with a beginning, objective and clear end, laser coaching as a technique appeals to many busy professionals. Most importantly, laser coaching makes success coaching accessible to more people than ever before, helping professionals become more confident, productive and fulfilled.

*“When you find the door to your dream marked  
ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE;  
go ahead and walk boldly through it.”*

Unknown



## Chapter 3: Mirror, Mirror –The Key to Success

Do you really hear what you're saying? Many of our limiting beliefs are so deeply ingrained that we repeat and reinforce them in our daily conversations without even recognizing them.

That's why mirroring is a great tool to help break out of limiting patterns. In a mirroring session, you describe your goal, current project or vision for the future, and your coach will reflect back what she's heard you say. The result is empowering and enlightening as you realize the power of your words to reach—or delay—your success. Once you're aware of the way limiting language creeps into your conversations, you can replace it with empowered words that speed you on your way.

Mirroring works by making a person aware of what they're really saying and how their words affect perception. For some people, that can be recognizing the “shoulds” that crowd in and make life rigid. For others, it's becoming aware of a long-time pattern of side-stepping praise and giving self-deprecating replies. Another common example includes unconscious negativity that creeps in, focusing on the risks of every new endeavor instead of the opportunity.

Mirroring is conversational. In mirroring, your coach listens intently not just to what you're saying (the concept) but to how you say it (the words, body language and nonverbals). By gently replaying the actual content (“What I heard you say was...”), the coach creates a safe space for you to see what others are really hearing. This is the first step to changing limiting patterns and changing the way others see you on the job and in relationships.

Experts say that our most successful conversations happen when both parties unconsciously mirror each others' body language, vocal patterns and pitch. By mirroring the verbal and nonverbal cues you're sending, your success coach allows you to become aware of signals you may not mean to be sending and learn to correct those behaviors for more effective communication. By learning to act on the cues others are sending you, you'll be better able to match their emotional state and create improved rapport, making your point more successfully.

**Do you need a “mirror”?** Some common reasons to consider mirroring include:

- People frequently misunderstand your intentions
- You find it difficult to say what you really mean
- You often come across more harshly or less assertively than you intend
- It's difficult for you to accept praise
- You just don't seem to be connecting properly in conversation

Mirroring is a technique that is often used along with other success coaching approaches. It may be part of a onetime laser coaching session, or part of ongoing coaching support. If you're sensing a disconnect in your interpersonal communication at work or in relationships, consider finding a success coach who offers mirroring and begin to see the reflection of success. “Every wall is a door.”

*“Every wall is a door.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Chapter 4: Why You Need a Web Site

Nearly half of U.S. small businesses have web sites, according to USA Today. Even before the financial crisis, small businesses and solo professionals had begun turning to the Internet to reach a global audience and to better serve their customers right next door. Experts predict that companies without a web presence will be at a disadvantage as customers in all industries now expect an online component to doing business.

So why should you have a web site? Here are five reasons why an online presence is well worth your time:

- **World-wide exposure.** Too many businesses and professionals never receive the recognition they deserve because their work doesn't reach a wide enough audience to ignite fame. With a well-designed web site, your information can reach millions of people all around the world—potential clients, reporters, bloggers and corporate decision-makers. That can mean increased opportunities for new projects—and more profit.
- **Qualified, 24/7 referrals.** Your web site transcends time zones to work while you sleep. Today's customers are more likely than ever before to bypass the media when looking for a solution and go straight to the Internet. If you're relying on traditional media for articles and ads to reach clients, you're missing out on an increasingly large share of the market that relies on web searches to find what they're looking for. If you're not on the web, they don't even consider you.
- **Credibility.** Americans now expect to find companies on the web. Companies that lack a web presence look less professional, more limited in scope, and less stable than those with good quality web sites. Even if a prospect finds you through word of mouth, they may rethink their choice if they can't find out more about you online.
- **Competitive advantage.** Your web site defines you. It provides a chance to see your portfolio, read about your recent projects, view or listen to client testimonials and celebrate your show homes or awards. Without a web site, you lose the chance to define yourself, and others may not define your work or speak to your capabilities as well as you would.
- **Self-expression and creativity.** Just as your workspace or your business card make a statement about you, your web site can make a striking visual impression on prospects. Through the design of your site, you can provide a glimpse of your personality and the approach you take to business. A web site allows potential clients to see what you have to offer them. With web audio and video, you can showcase your talent in whole new ways.

Businesses and professionals with web sites have a big advantage over those without. We live in a visual world, so the more visual a web site is, the better you can communicate your talents and ideas. Today it's surprisingly affordable to build a great web site. You'll find other cost savings to having a web site, including reduced costs for printing and mailing, since you can refer prospects to information on your site rather than having to mail documents. Even better, the information on your web site is easy to update, so if you change your phone number, your address or other details you don't have to scrap a box of expensive brochures that are now outdated. A web site is living; it is constantly being viewed and can change with your needs. So let the world see through your eyes. Share your creativity and design-driven thoughts with the world. A great web site will help you achieve things paper will never be able to do.

*“When one door of happiness closes, another opens;  
but often we look so long at the closed door that we do  
not see the one, which has been opened for us.”*

Helen Keller



## Chapter 5: Creativity and the Web Site Advantage

We live in a wired world. Thanks to cell phones and WiFi, all of the information on the Internet is never more than a click away. That's precisely why having a web site is more important than ever before—even for creative, artistic professionals. Those of us who pride ourselves on our ability to create and nurture relationships to build business may cringe at the impersonal nature of the web. But look again. What may seem impersonal at first glance is actually the most revolutionary tool to connect conversations, ideas and solution providers in the history of the world—and you don't want to miss out on it.

Here are five ways you can make the most of a web site for your company:

- **Expand on your portfolio without high printing costs.** In a visual business, creating marketing materials that show your work to its best advantage can be very expensive. Full-color brochures on heavy stock paper with quality binding have a high cost per piece. They're too expensive to mail out to all but the most qualified prospects. A web site can show your work in full color without the expense of printing and distribution.
- **Make a personal statement with audio, video and motion.** Your web site isn't limited to just words and images. The best web sites are interactive. Let your personality shine through by utilizing easy-to-play audio recordings, video clips from speeches, maybe even a video testimonial from a satisfied client. The web is perfect for a visually-focused profession like design, and with the new options for audio and video, your prospects can really get a sense for your individuality as well as your work.
- **Become more than just a pretty room.** Brochures can't tell your story as well as you can. Yet to keep your business running smoothly, you can't spend all of your time meeting with prospects. Your web site can fill in the gap by sharing your design perspective, your style philosophy and your unique impression of trends via click-and-play audio and video. Prospects know that you'll be a good fit for them before they ever pick up the phone to schedule a meeting. That saves time for you and increases the odds that your new client meeting will be a success.
- **Stand out as a thought leader.** Today's editors and reporters do their research online. When they are looking for someone to quote on trends for a given industry, they turn to the web to find experts. They decide which experts to contact based on what they can learn about that person's point of view and credibility—and that is often determined by the expert's web site and online articles. How many interviews have you missed because reporters couldn't find you online?
- **Offer options and added benefits to your clients.** With a web site, you can make it easier for customers to do business with your company. You can offer online payment, automatic email notification when special ordered materials ship, and even sell signature products that you have created. Let your current and past clients know about your recent awards, speeches and show houses—it might just spark a call for a new project!

You can offer online quizzes and downloadable articles and encourage current clients to purchase additional services by educating them about trends or helping them understand the full scope of what you provide. The best thing about harnessing the power of the Internet is that you don't have to do it by yourself. It's more affordable than ever before to work with a qualified web designer and create a site that is not only a great sales tool, but a magnificent showcase for your work. There's really no excuse in today's competitive business environment not to have a web site. Add a web site to your marketing and expand your outreach overnight.

*“The door to happiness opens outward.”*

Unknown

## Chapter 6: Drive the “Brandmobile” to Promote Your Business

Have you ever seen a Bookmobile? Bookmobiles are mobile libraries that take books to neighborhoods that don't have a library, to promote the idea of reading and make it a possibility for people who lack access to books. It gets them excited, and makes reading a real celebration. It brings the hoopla, excitement and razzle dazzle to their front door.

The genius is that the libraries aren't waiting for people to come to them and bemoaning the lack of users. They go where the people's need is greatest and give them access to resources they might not have realized they needed. Did you ever realize that you can do the same thing when it comes to promoting your company and brand? Think of it as the “Brandmobile.”

Lots of professionals work very hard to get into magazines with interviews or articles. Then they sit back and wait for business to happen. But what if some of your best prospects didn't happen to pick up the magazine that featured you this week? They might need your services and be ready to buy, but they didn't see your article. What would happen if you took the article to them?

That's where the Brandmobile concept comes in....through your social media and newsletters. Don't trust to fate that your prospects and clients will read every magazine or blog and see your article. Tweet the article link to your Twitter followers. Mention the recent interview in your online newsletter, with a link to the interview or article.

Blog about it and include a link. Not only are you helping to assure that your prospects and clients actually see your article or interview, but you're doing a courtesy to the publication that featured you by sending them traffic.

Empower yourself. Don't wait for someone else to do it for you. You've got a real accomplishment to herald in your article or interview. Use it to promote your brand by driving your Brandmobile all over the Internet and social media and bring the excitement to your prospects' computer screen. Best of all, this kind of promotion is free!

If you have a press page on your web site (and you should), add the links to your new articles or interviews to that page with a short two sentence recap and the name/date of the publication. Send the link to your Facebook friends and LinkedIn Connections. Use the article or interview as a reason to continue talking about the topic on your blog, going into detail that you didn't have room for in the original publication. In other words, drive the Bookmobile where you want it to go to make sure people who need access to you and your amazing knowledge find you within easy reach.

Not only might this create new business for you by nudging prospects or clients to action, but editors constantly search the web for new contributors and consumers use Google to find professionals. Posting links to your articles makes it easier for people to find you, which leads to more opportunities and more income.

Don't be shy about passing along the wisdom in your articles and interviews. Realize that you have what people need to solve a problem. If you don't share your knowledge and provide ways for people to find you, their problem might never be solved. Let everyone know what you do and what problems you solve. Solving a problem is a noble effort. Be noble.

Where will you drive your Brandmobile today?

*“Ideas can be life-changing. Sometimes all you need to open the door is just one more good idea.”*

Jim Rohn

## Chapter 7: Prep For Success

Making a successful pitch or presentation begins long before you set foot in the prospect's office. How well you prepare has a direct—and essential—impact on the odds of your success. Preparation is much more than having slick copies of your proposal or a knock-out slide presentation. Research, competitive intelligence and minding the details make the difference between success and failure.

**Do your homework before an appointment.** You'd be amazed how many people skip this step. Yet in the prospect's eyes, there's nothing more important than knowing every last detail about his/her company. Check out the prospect's web site in detail, and do an online search to find out the latest news about their company and industry. Find out how their stock is doing and what type of products they offer. Always prepare as if the CEO is coming to the meeting, and you're well on your way to making a great first impression. You'll never be embarrassed by being over prepared.

**Google the person you're meeting with—and the company execs for that matter.** Don't overlook social networking sites. Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and other sites are great places to get to know your prospect before you ever meet in person. For example, a prospect's LinkedIn site will tell you a lot about their career path, education, and their personal network. Not only does this help you put your prospect in context, but it may open opportunities through shared background, common hobbies or mutual acquaintances. All of these elements can be a great conversation starter and can accelerate the prospect's acceptance and trust. If your proposal has significant financial risk for your company, running a Dun & Bradstreet credit check on a serious prospect is not a bad idea.

**Use your network as another source of research.** Ask your business friends and colleagues what they've heard about the company, the industry and the individual prospect. You'll find out details that may impact your proposal such as rumors of an impending divorce, scuttlebutt about a possible promotion or even word that the company may soon be acquired. Your network should have enough people who are not your direct sales competitors that it is safe for you to make inquiries. And of course, offer to return the favor when your contacts need their own information. Some of the best network news comes from former employees or colleagues of the person you're planning to pitch. You can find out a wealth of information about likes and dislikes, personality quirks and character flaws that come in handy to know sooner rather than later. Remember that former colleagues or exemployees may have a personal ax to grind, so if the feedback is negative, delicately listen for validation from other sources.

**Make sure you have good directions to your meeting place**—and drive it in advance if you're uncertain. Having a back-up route is critical in case an accident blocks your main route. Watch TV before you leave home to know where the bottlenecks are. Sure, anyone can get caught in traffic. But truly prepared people who want the account badly are the ones who give themselves more than an hour's extra travel time and use any wait time to review notes.

**Check CNN and the local paper before your appointment.** That way, if your prospect's company or industry is in the news (either for good or bad reasons), you'll be knowledgeable and can adjust your proposal. It's important to monitor a prospect's industry and competitors as well as their company so you can talk about trends and advancements. It also helps to be forewarned about sensitive subjects, such as lawsuits, accusations of impropriety and bond downgrades.

No preparation is every wasted. Often, in the process of preparing for one opportunity, others appear. Roman philosopher Seneca said, "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." Prepare to succeed, and watch what happens!

*"Teachers open the door, but you must enter yourself."*

Chinese Proverb

## Chapter 8: Passion + Energy = Success or Survival

According to a recent statistic, 46 percent of small businesses say they're currently not profitable. That sounds bad....until you realize that means that 54 percent ARE making a profit, despite the recession.

They say that "when the going gets tough, the tough get going." You may not be able to control the Dow Jones Average or the price of gasoline, but you can control your attitude, and you can model and require great customer service from your employees.

Just having a good product today isn't enough. Consumers are demanding more for their money, and that includes not only more service and more value for their dollar but a more satisfying buying experience overall. "Business as usual" won't do the trick.

Think of it this way. Customers are uncertain about the future. Many are afraid that they might lose their jobs. Others have already done so. Purchases that didn't get a second thought last year are now being re-examined. Business-to-business sales are also affected by anxiety in the marketplace. Purchasing managers are stretching out the time between purchases, doing more with less and suggesting that employees buy less expensive alternatives or do without.

All that anxiety means that when a customer breaks down and decides to go shopping, it's an act of courage and faith. Courage, because money spent won't be around later if it's needed and faith that income will outlast expenses. Customers in this edgy mood need to be reassured, because it won't take much for them to decide to forego the expense.

So what experience does that edgy, fearful customer have in your store or business? Does anyone greet them at the door, offer assistance, and thank them for coming? Are salespeople still congregating behind the counter, waiting to be hauled away by the customer? Could your sales people answer a question about your merchandise or service if they were asked?

Do your employees look enthusiastic to be there—or like they're watching the clock? Would a customer get the impression that employees care, that they have a sense of ownership in the company and pride in the merchandise? Are employees humming with energy, or humming to themselves in indifference?

How about you, the owner? Are you still counting on "doing business by accident" because it worked for you before the downturn? Are you investing in marketing and public relations to keep your company (and the solution you provide) in front of consumers?

I had an experience lately that truly drove this point home. In the Washington, D.C. area where I live, a number of restaurants have gone under due to the economy. But one local eatery is going great guns. As I watched the bustle on a Friday night, I noticed the elements that contribute to its success when so many others have failed. For one thing, they serve food that is consistently excellent. They never have an "off night." They're a dependable place to go for a good meal. Next, I was greeted at the door by an employee who actually looked happy to see me, someone who was smiling and engaged. When I asked a question, my waiter was helpful and responsive—and she answered my questions. Employees seemed to actually be passionate about their work; so much so that the person who purchased the restaurant's salmon from a new vendor stopped by my table to see how we liked it and seemed genuinely thrilled that we were happy.

*"Teachers open the door, but you must enter yourself."*

Chinese Proverb

Everyone who worked there seemed prepared and positive. They took obvious pride in doing their jobs well, and it showed in a sense of ownership. They were positive people and seemed excited about what they were doing. When I left, they said “see you again” like they meant it. It might not have been the bar from Cheers where “everybody knows your name,” but I felt as if they would actually remember me and look forward to my return.

Over the top? Maybe. But that restaurant is thriving. If your customers have a choice between a place humming with energy and positive vibes and a place where the help is counting the minutes until the end of their shifts, where do you think they’d rather spend their precious disposable income?

Regardless of your industry, you can take a lesson from the restaurant story. Explain to your staff how customer satisfaction directly relates to staying in business. Reward them for exceeding expectations and acting like the host. Motivate them by bringing in speakers and sharing success stories because like everyone else, your employees are worried by the stories they see on the news. Get rid of poor performers and provide incentives for great service.

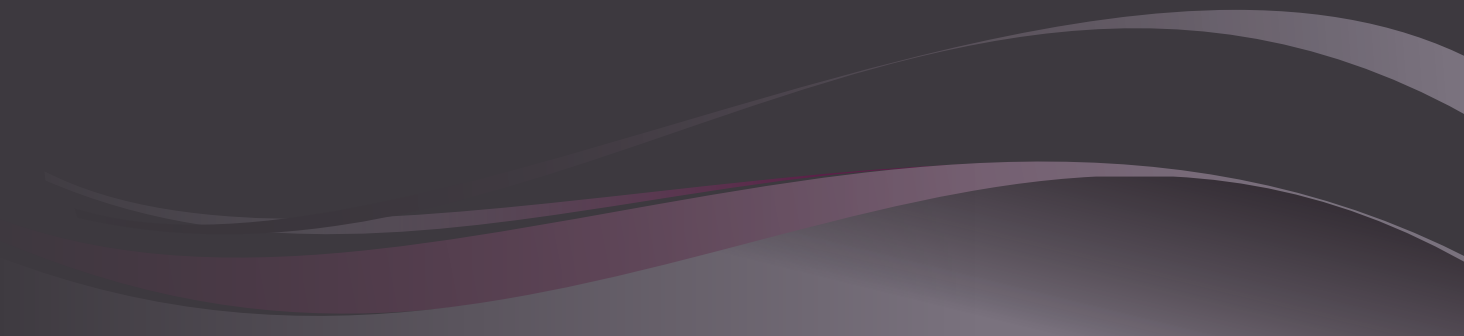
The companies that survive a recession have more than a great product. They have great people who passionately believe they can help their customers and provide value. The bar’s been set higher than ever before. Do you and your employers measure up?

*“A sign on the door of Opportunity reads Push.”*

Unknown

## *Section II:*

### **Opening the Door to Achieving Your Dreams**





## Chapter 9: The Open Hand

What are you holding onto? By that I mean, on what in your life do you have a white-knuckled grip, either trying to steer or trying to hang on?

You might be in a career transition, and using all of your energy to hang onto a job or a career track that you have nurtured for a long time. Or maybe you have a dream that you've been seeking for many years, and you're pursuing it with all your might, holding onto it so tightly your fingers cramp.

Sound familiar? While it's comforting to hold onto what's safe, and we are afraid of losing out by letting go, sometimes the only way to accept the new opportunities life has for us is to unclench our fist and open our palm.

With the recession economy, a lot of businesses are holding on with a tight fist to cash reserves instead of investing in training, replacing equipment or spending on essentials like marketing or staff development. This closes off new possibilities for those companies to grow and position themselves for future success. The fist is closed, so the palm can't receive.

Sometimes, it's the mind instead of the fist that can't let go. Whether it's old failures, insecurities or limitations, make the New Year the time when you let go. Open yourself to new possibilities by making a conscious commitment to being optimistic and positive. Refuse to repeat negatives: about the economy, about other people or about yourself. Instead, look for what's good, even if it's small, and comment on that—to others and in your own mind. You'll see more of what you focus on, and when you focus on good things and open doors, you start to notice brand new possibilities right before your eyes.

Instead of resolutions this year, how about making a list of possibilities? What is your vision for yourself, personally and professionally, in the New Year? What are your intentions? Don't frame these as "if" statements; instead, make them "I can" statements. While you're at it, take the time to celebrate your successes in the year just past.

Write them down. Read them out loud. Congratulate yourself. Too often, we breeze past the accomplishments on the way down our list of things to do. Acknowledge and appreciate your own achievements.

Make this your *"year of the open hand."* Open your hand and heart to new possibilities, and open your mind to new ways of seeing and interpreting the life that unfolds around you. Wonder. Dream. Create. Ponder. Most of all, be. Just be.

*"Everyone is an explorer. How could you possibly live your life looking at a door and not open it?"*

Unknown

## Chapter 10: Risk Opening the Door to Business Success

Business success involves risk. Most entrepreneurs know this when they launch their companies, but as time goes on, it becomes harder and harder to take new risks. We get comfortable. We're afraid of rocking the boat. Doubt creeps in. Dreams die.

Success is a way of life—and that involves taking risks. Don't let fear or anxiety keep you from trying new things or considering new approaches. Technology, business models and target markets change over time. Your business also needs to change or you risk being left behind. Fear tells you that it's risky to move, but the truth is, you risk being run over when you're standing still.

I find that companies are especially fearful to take risks when it comes to marketing. Even if their old ways of marketing aren't working or aren't getting the results they want, many business owners are afraid to try something new. Afraid of the cost, afraid of the possibility of failure, afraid of being too bold. Fear costs them the opportunity to get ahead of the competition.

Trying something new is always risky. Waiting until the idea becomes tried and true reduces the risk—and the benefit. Good marketing uses research and solid experience to develop fresh ways to promote your company while reducing risk as much as possible.

Did you ever realize that your marketing reduces fear for your prospects and clients? By promoting the solution you provide, you reduce your prospects' fear that they won't find what they need. Whether their problem is replacing a computer system that doesn't work, redesigning their home or finding the perfect gift for a special person, the problem is important to your prospect. There is risk for them if they choose a poor solution. If you don't market your company, your prospect may never know that you provide the best approach to solve their problem.

Here are three ways to gain courage for making a marketing change:

- **Visualize the tangible outcome.** You're more likely to find the courage to try something new or take a risk if you have a complete mental picture of how significant the outcome will be. The more detailed your visualization, the more real it will be in your mind and the more motivated you'll be to take the necessary risk to make it happen.
- **Make a plan.** New things become less frightening when you have made a plan to approach them. Gather information, break a big task into small steps, and create a plan to walk through your risk step by step.
- **Hire a guide.** Doing something new is much less frightening—and less risky—when you don't do it alone. If the idea of starting a new marketing campaign gives you the willies, get expert help from someone who shares your dreams. Your best guide will share your commitment to getting tangible outcomes from your marketing program and will help you create a plan to reduce risk and optimize results.

By applying these three tips, you'll find the courage to commit to freshening your marketing with a new outlook and new activities. Make a plan, take a risk, and find out how great it feels to see your marketing plans come to life!

*“Follow your bliss and the universe will open doors where there were only walls.”*

Joseph Campbell

## Chapter 11: Dreams Open Doors

You're only as big as your dreams. As a success consultant, I'm convinced that small dreams cause more businesses to stop growing than any economic or financial problem.

Success is a way of life—and a way of thinking. Are your dreams opening doors for your business, or slamming them shut?

As children, we know how to dream, and we're not afraid to dream big. Children don't dream about desk jobs— they want to become astronauts! They believe everything is possible.

As we grow up, we listen to people who tell us more about what's impossible than about how to create possibilities. People all around us tell us to make our dreams smaller, less risky, more manageable. Or they convince us to stop dreaming altogether.

I'm amazed at how many business owners I meet who had the vision to begin their companies but have now become afraid to dream. They're afraid to open the door to new possibilities because they aren't certain what's on the other side. They've become afraid to take chances, even when the odds are on their side.

I empower clients to find their dreams again and use the power of their dreams to make their companies more successful. Here are three ways to rediscover your dreams and harness their energy for more successful marketing:

- **Don't be afraid to say your dreams out loud.** Ever notice how children tell everyone what they're going to be when they grow up? How come grown-ups won't say their dreams out loud—when they have the autonomy, power and know-how to make those dreams come true? Take back your power by daring to say your dreams out loud to supportive friends, clients, family members and mentors. "I want to increase my income by \$50,000." "I want to grow the business 30 percent by next year." "I want to open a second location." Every time you say your dream out loud, you hear yourself affirming your vision.
- **Surround yourself by dream-friendly people.** That doesn't mean choosing "yes men." It means weeding out the negative people who pounce on anything new and are the first to tell you why an idea won't work. By all means, choose people who value you enough to tell you the truth—even when it requires changes. Surrounding yourself with people who believe in you and your dreams feeds the creative energy needed to make your dreams come true.
- **Know when to ask for help building your dream.** Dreaming is hard work. Sometimes we dream best when we can look to trusted resources to help us assemble the pieces necessary to make our dream happen. Building a "dream team" of advisors and helpers is essential to getting from dream to reality. Choose your dream team wisely to surround yourself with people who can balance optimism, energy and skills. What doors are you dreaming to open? Successful marketing is key to making your business dreams come true.

*"There come a time in a man's life when to get where he has to go – if there are no doors or windows he walks through a wall."*

Bernard Malamud

## Chapter 12: The Magic of Brainstorming

I recently passed a car with a sticker that read, “No Fear.” That got me thinking. I know that, for the driver of that car, “No Fear” was just a brand name. But for everyone else, waiting until we feel “no fear” is one of the top reasons we put off taking risks and keep ourselves from achieving personal goals.

What would you change in your life or business if you had no fear? What would you dare to try? In my experience, fear is usually caused by a lack of knowledge. If you aren't sure how something works, it's natural to be afraid. I've also found that the more you learn and the more you practice skills to tackle whatever it is you fear, the more the fear decreases. Confidence and knowledge banish fear.

As a coach, I find a lot of people holding back out of fear. Fear of the economy. Fear that success might be too much to handle. Fear of change. But the truth is, they usually have all the tools they need to succeed—they just need someone to help with the confidence. That's where brainstorming comes in.

When I brainstorm with someone, we have fun opening all the doors to possibilities and seeing what's out there waiting to be discovered. I help my clients “try on” a new job, or a new personal image. It feels a lot like theatre, because we imagine together. There are no barriers, just possibilities. You can't get into trouble or embarrass yourself by imagining yourself doing something slightly or completely different. As the director/ talent scout, I see my clients differently than they see themselves, and I see them as infinitely more talented than they give themselves credit for. I love pushing my clients off the end of the branch. They deserve to fly, but they just need a nudge. They already have the wings; they just don't know it. When we brainstorm, there are no limits to the ideas, and no one is going to rain on your parade with negatives. I encourage clients to reach way out of their comfort zone and reinvent themselves, using the strengths and skills that they already have.

I am amazed at the talent people take for granted, forget to mention, don't think is unique or valuable. I talk to clients for several sessions and find out a month later, through ruthless digging, that they teach classes, wrote a great article or created a trade show. If we are good at something and do it effortlessly, then often we don't appreciate its value. Clients seem to focus on what they aren't doing and or wish they could do. That's why I encourage clients to do a skills assessment, since they so often leave out major abilities or don't see the potential application for a talent.

Part of the fun of brainstorming is using tools like free association, where I throw out a word and the client says whatever comes first to mind. The ideas are unlimited, and there is no risk, just wide-open opportunities. Often, clients discover that they can take their proven skills, talents and experience and expand in new directions and new roles. Sometimes it just takes feeling confident to move up to larger scale successes, like bigger audiences or larger projects. Other times, it means thinking about different ways to deliver products or services, or a broader target market, a new job, an exciting new career move.

Once we fling open the box and take a fresh look, it's amazing at how much energy fills the room. Bouncing ideas off a supportive coach helps put fear in perspective and enables clients to gain the confidence needed to tackle new goals. Because I believe in my clients, they begin to believe in themselves. That is a powerful transformation that lets clients get out of their own way and be their very best.

Brainstorming is a fantastic tool for entrepreneurs and professionals who feel stuck in a rut. There's no risk, and the possibilities are endless. Get the new year off to a good start with the magic of brainstorming and feel the energy sizzle!

*“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”*

Walt Disney

## Chapter 13: Is Your Inner Coach Supporting Your Transformation?

We live in a culture that offers a “coach” for everything. We have life coaches, business mentors, personal trainers, financial advisors, nutritional counselors, spiritual gurus ... experts of every flavor to help navigate through any life situation.

If you've ever worked with a coach, you know that one size does not fit all. Some coaches take a drill sergeant approach, believing that they can shout and badger you into improved performance. At the other end of the spectrum we find coaches who emphasize the positive and encourage their clients to reach their goals with a can-do attitude. Naturally, there are coaches who land between these two extremes, combining both a push from behind with a pull toward the goal.

But what happens if you are faced with a big decision and have no coach to call on for advice or encouragement? While hiring a coach is a smart decision, ultimately it's the coach inside you that matters the most. As entrepreneurs and solopreneurs, we spend considerable time alone and must routinely make decisions and take action without consulting anyone. We need to be able to rely on our inner coach for support.

Whether you realize it or not, you are continually coaching yourself. The little voice in your head might be helping you achieve success, increasing your energy and improving your attitude, or it may be holding you back from fulfilling your goals. Those thoughts, whether good or bad, will direct the course of your decision-making, your business, and ultimately your life. Here's a reality check: Do you often speak to yourself in a critical way? If so, you have a toxic work environment between your ears! The good news is that you can fire that negative inner critic and replace it with a supportive, wise and fair inner coach.

### So how do you become your own best coach?

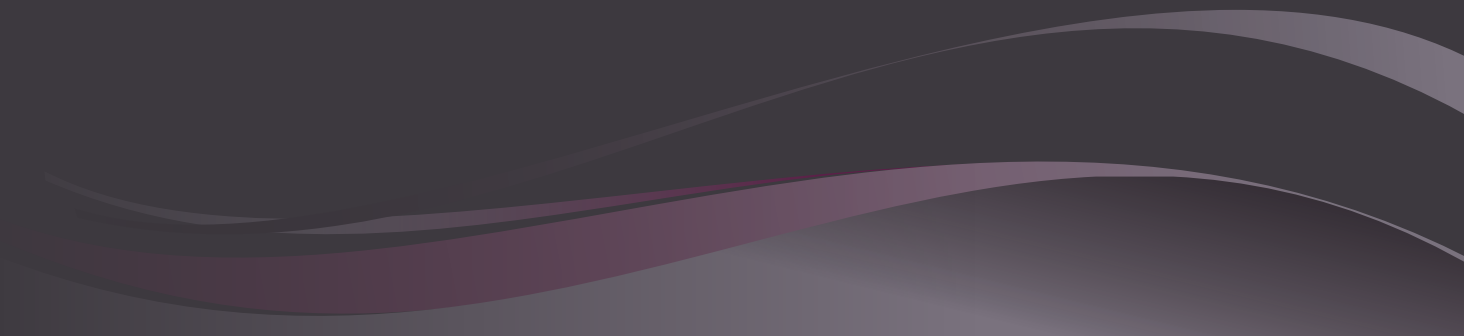
- Don't be too hard on yourself. Set the bar high, but cut yourself some slack if you don't quite make it. Tomorrow is another day.
- Make the decision to believe in yourself.
- Focus on your strengths and don't dwell on the rest.
- Face your problems head-on. Obstacles require solutions not self-recrimination.
- Give yourself a pep talk. You can do this - yes, you can!
- Review and learn from your mistakes, then laugh and move on.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Challenge yourself by creating new goals.
- Break big goals into smaller goals and smaller goals into baby steps.
- Give yourself a hand or a pat on the back when you reach your goals.

Don't underestimate the power of your inner coach. Learn to become your own mentor, cheerleader and advocate, and give yourself permission to feel strong, confident and empowered. People will notice the difference, and your positive energy will attract them to you. When you feel strong and confident about yourself, your clients will feel the same. Give yourself a round of applause ... you deserve it!

*“We must open the doors of opportunity.”*

Lyndon Johnson

*Section III:*  
**Opening the Door to Reinvention**





## Chapter 14: Focused and Flexible

One of the biggest obstacles to success for most people is learning how to stay focused on goals while remaining flexible enough to adapt to needed change. How can you be both focused and flexible at the same time? Don't get caught in a limiting "either/or" situation. There's been noise in recent years that equates learning, changing, growing and factoring in new information with inconsistency. As a result, people fear that "flexible" really means weak. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Growing up means letting go of old ideas, dysfunctional coping mechanisms and childish behaviors that harm us or hold us back. That process doesn't stop until we die. Inflexibility, rigidity and a stubborn refusal to evaluate new information and change accordingly isn't resolve—it's a recipe for disaster.

So how do you manage to be both focused and flexible? I've found that balancing focus and flexibility means moving back and forth along a continuum instead of planting our flag on a single point. At any given moment, our knowledge of the big picture is limited. We have to do the best with the information we have at the time. So with that information, we make plans, set goals and create tasks. Focus is essential to keep us from diluting our efforts and running off on tangents. By staying focused, we distill our energy, creativity and will-power into a force that attracts people to us like a magnet.

Now for the flexibility. Often, new information emerges after we've made our plans. That new information may strengthen our original direction, or it might require us to re-think our strategy. Imagine that you have mapped out a route to a destination, only to find out that there's a bridge out along the way. Only a fool would drive off the cliff rather than adjust course. Changes in the economy, our own health and family circumstances or other external factors may also suggest re-evaluation. That's not "wishy-washy." It's sensible. We like the feeling of being in control that we get when we feel focused. Flexibility, on the other hand, feels too much like having to admit that our original plans were wrong. Don't let your ego get in the way of achieving success. Someone once said that "life is what happens when you're making other plans." The most successful people arm themselves with a plan and a laser-like focus, and then constantly gather and re-evaluate information to make course corrections when necessary.

Focus means staying on target and avoiding distractions, but it should never translate into becoming rigid. While some of my clients struggle to prioritize all their good ideas, others are naturally overly task-focused and need to be reminded to come up for air. Neither extreme is healthy. Healthy focus is neither a harsh task master nor a smorgasbord of too many choices. Ideally, focus should make you feel balanced, less stressed, confident and energized. Focused people feel as if they're in "the zone" for peak performance.

By the same token, flexibility means constantly scanning and incorporating new information to increase the odds of success. It means adapting methods to circumstances to find what works. Flexibility can also mean being willing to adopt "Plan B" (or C, D, etc.) when Plan A doesn't work. Healthy flexibility doesn't lose sight of the goal—but it's willing to admit that there may be more than one path to achievement and that some paths may be better than others. Flexible people don't freak out when something changes their environment. They know they can adapt, and they look for ways that the change can make them even stronger.

Flexibility and focus balance and complement each other. People who achieve success need both traits in order to accomplish goals in a world that is constantly changing. Mastering both flexibility and focus also assures that you won't become outdated, out-of-touch and passé, because you will evolve with the world around you. Add both to your success tool kit, and watch your accomplishments soar!

*"Where ever smart people work, doors are unlocked."*

Steve Wozniak

## Chapter 15: Laser Coaching for Career Transition and Job Interview Success

In 2009, there were two business trends that are changing everything. First, as companies downsize, over twelve million Americans (as of early 2009) will be changing jobs, switching careers and re-thinking their future goals.

Second, many of those displaced Americans will decide to start their own companies. Are you one of them? If so, or if you think you might soon be, take heart. You are about to embark on one of the most exciting adventures of your life. This can be your chance-of-a-lifetime to find where you really belong, and live your dream. But you won't get to your dream by accident.

As they say, "If you don't know where you're going, any destination will do." If you've drifted into your most recent career or job or position without clear intent, then you already know that "any destination" won't do at all. Now is the time to make the change you've always dreamed of making. The opportunity is in front of you. All you need is a guide.

Laser coaching is perfect for career transition success. Laser coaching isn't therapy. It won't fix your marriage or your relationship with your mother, and it won't answer your innermost questions about the universe and the meaning of life. But what it will do, in a few one-hour sessions, is help you set your GPS to get where you want to go, and make sure you're tuned up and ready for the trip. Because laser coaching only takes from one to three sessions, it's quick, affordable and easy to fit into a busy schedule.

Here are five ways laser coaching can help you succeed with a career transition:

- **Image awareness.** Laser success coaching can provide candid feedback on your in-person, on-paper and online image, along with proven tips to look your best and represent yourself well. It's hard to get that kind of honest advice from friends, partners or colleagues.
- **Personal branding tips.** Whether you're looking for a new job or planning to start your own company, you are now your own brand. A laser coaching session can help you pull the pieces together so that your personal brand conveys the message you want others to see.
- **Reframe to find options.** A laser success coach can help you get a fresh new perspective on whatever obstacle is getting you down. Maybe it was an interview that didn't go well, or a loan application for a new business that didn't go through. Instead of dwelling on the negatives, a success coach helps you see the opportunities for growth and formulate a new plan of action.
- **See yourself in a new light.** Sure, you've made a "greatest achievements" list and a "skills inventory." But have you seen new and exciting ways to match skills to achievements in order to reach your goals? In one laser coaching session, a success coach can help you see the gold in what's been in front of you all along.
- **Recognize your wins.** It's easy to get so fixated on the big goal that you miss out on the positive feedback you deserve from the incremental successes along the way. Laser coaching can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and burned out when the process to get from here to there takes longer than you expected.

Because laser success coaching is often just a single session, it fits into even tight budgets. You can schedule an additional session whenever there's a new challenge, a rough patch, or a need for a fresh perspective. You'll be amazed what you and your success coach can achieve in just one hour when you have laser focus!

*"The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence."*

Steve Wozniak

## Chapter 16: Make the Most of Your Online Presence

Are you managing your professional reputation online? Whether you're looking for a promotion or hunting for a new job, it's essential that you take the lead in creating a winning online first impression. Employers, interviewers and headhunters want to find you online, but it's not just to check for indiscretions or lapses in judgment (although there is that, too).

Today, having a polished, professional and intentionally managed online presence is an expected part of a professional resume. Here's a checklist of what your online presence should include:

- **Up-to-date and consistent bios.** Your bio is a concise summary of your expertise, credentials and achievements. It should include a current professional head shot, as well as the key elements of your career. Your bio/profile should be consistent across all of the places where it is listed (company web site, LinkedIn, Facebook, professional and alumni organization sites, other membership sites).
- **A complete LinkedIn page.** By complete, I mean your LinkedIn page should not only have your photo and bio, but it should also list your full resume, and you should request recommendations from trusted clients, colleagues and supervisors to make sure your profile shows you at your best. Make sure that you've added your personal network of contacts to your LinkedIn profile, people whom you would be comfortable recommending or referring. A broad network multiplies the power of your connections, so make sure you add the people you want to stay connected to.
- **Harness the power of Facebook** to engage in conversations, stay connected with casual business acquaintances and showcase your experience in a laid-back way. While it's not OK to add everyone you meet to your mailing list, it is OK to invite the people whose business cards you collect at luncheons and networking events to be your Facebook friend. Have a page just for you, the business professional, and don't mingle personal/professional information. Facebook is also a great place to showcase your portfolio or case studies, and to get conversations going around recently read business books.
- While bios/profiles and a presence on LinkedIn are non-negotiable in today's business world, sites like Gist.com and Naymz.com are nice extras. Gist makes it easier for you to track what key contacts are doing (as revealed by their social media updates) so that you can have current, relevant conversations with important clients, contacts and interviewers. Naymz is similar to LinkedIn and another place prospective clients and employers will go to check out your reputation.
- For those who are looking for part-time work while job hunting or are starting their own professional services firms, joining Elance.com and Guru.com puts you in touch with a global market of prospects. There is a monthly fee to join as a service provider, but it's very small compared to the huge number of project assignments on which you can bid. Pleasing a client on a small project can lead to larger projects or to repeat assignments. As always, make sure your profile and portfolio are complete and show you at your best.

Most of the above-mentioned sites are free, and the others charge a minimal fee. Consider it money well spent for the ability to network on a global scale and to keep in close touch with your business connections. When you use social media sites as part of your professional reputation management efforts, you will see how powerful it is to harness the power of your network while meeting new contacts without ever leaving home. My friend Gail Martin, author of *30 Days to Social Media Success*, recommends that you create a mini business plan for your online efforts to help you stay on track and avoid distractions. She also suggests planning half an hour a day into your schedule to build and maintain your social media and online presence.

Managing your online presence and taking control of your cyber reputation is your responsibility, but it also creates fantastic new opportunities to build and strengthen your professional connections. Start today to update and upgrade your online reputation, and tap into the power of the Internet for your career.

## Chapter 17: Networking During the Holidays

You might be tempted to put your networking on hold during the holiday season, but don't give in to temptation. The truth is, holiday networking can be extremely effective—if it's handled properly. Here are some tips on how to make the most of your holiday socializing without committing any etiquette flubs.

Carry your cards everywhere. I do mean everywhere. Have your business card with you in the car, at the PTA meeting, and at the Chamber of Commerce holiday cocktail party. You never know when you'll strike up a good conversation, and you want to be able to continue the discussion after the party, so keep your cards handy.

Don't push your cards. Seem like a contradiction to have cards handy but not push them? Not really. Holiday socializing has a veneer of being non-business, when everyone knows that it's just business acting low-key. Don't greet everyone you meet with a card or feel that you must end every conversation with a card exchange. On the other hand, when you really connect with someone, you'll want to be able to swap cards.

Never forget that business-related holiday parties are business-related. Whether it's at the office, afterhours or through your professional association or Chamber of Commerce, never forget that business parties are always about business. It's not the time to let your hair down, tell everyone how depressed you are about your finances or your job search, or get tipsy. Always show yourself to be professional.

Take a low-key approach to talking about work. Don't lead with a work-related topic. Trust that in the course of a conversation between two business people, work will come up. Be the one to ask questions and really listen to the answers. That's where you'll find the leads.

Look for ways to help. Yes, you've got your agenda of what you want out of the parties you attend. But if you try to push that agenda, you'll look boorish. Instead, remember that it's the season of giving and look for ways you can help the people you chat with. Pass referrals, offer a recommendation, make connections. It gives them a reason to follow up with you and leaves a positive memory.

Don't assume everyone is on vacation. There are lots of reasons people are in the office during the holidays. They may celebrate a different holiday, and so December is just another month for them. They may not have a lot of family obligations, or they just may need to get caught up. Some managers refuse to take time off themselves to allow employees to be out of the office. This can be a great time to reach elusive contacts via phone, email and social media.

Make the most of social media. Many people will take some time off over the holidays, and when they do, they're likely to be on social media. This is a great time to chat with long-distance friends and business connections on Facebook and LinkedIn. Just make sure any holiday photos you post show you at your professional best.

Say thank you. Even if you can't afford to send all of your clients a physical gift, take the time to send a mailed or emailed holiday card expressing your appreciation for the clients, vendors, referral sources and supporters in your life. If possible, offer a free digital download "gift" as a token of appreciation.

Look for diamonds in your own back yard. Many neighborhoods, houses of worship, social groups and volunteer organizations host holiday get-togethers. Remember that many of the attendees at these events are professionals like you—people who might be able to help you connect, or whom you can help with a referral. I know of a man who has done several million dollars of business with the other fathers in his young son's play group! Opportunities are everywhere.

Network with your internal “board of directors.” Think of the people—past and present, alive and dead—who have inspired you. They may be relatives, teachers, or people whom you know only through their biographies. Choose ten of these people as your internal “board of directors” and spend time thinking about what advice they would give you in your current situation. Yes, it’s only your imagination, but when you internalize the values and wisdom of the mentors in your life, you’ll be amazed what insights you can gain by calling their memory to mind and asking your questions.

By shifting gears with your holiday networking, it’s possible to have a social, enjoyable season while not abandoning the chance to make progress on your goals. Take advantage of these holiday networking tips to have a sparkling New Year!

*“When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.”*

Alexander Graham Bell

## Chapter 18: Silent Sellers

What is your online presence saying about you?

The information people find about you online is as much a part of your business and personal marketing as your resume or brochure. How you present yourself online can make or break a sale, a job interview, a college application or a speaking invitation. Think of it as a “Silent Seller.” Is your online presence working for you or against you—or is it working for the competition?

I’m amazed how many times it seems that an otherwise polished professional is not aware of the negative marketing message that his or her Internet presence (or lack thereof) is sending. Far too often, the in-person and online messages send conflicting signals.

When you’re planning to meet someone in person for the first time, you know the importance of a good first impression. But your potential client, editor or recruiter is likely to receive that first impression long before meeting you. He or she will go online to check out your web site and social media presence. If you don’t make a good online first impression, you may never get the chance to dazzle the prospect in person.

To make a good in-person first impression, you know to be dressed for success and full of personality. You understand the importance of making a positive emotional connection. You know how to share a message about your professional strengths as well as the benefits of your business. And you recognize how vital it is to share your great business card.

Now think about what a prospect, recruiter, editor or potential joint venture partner might find if they begin by searching for you online. Is the Internet a “Silent Seller” for you or a “deal killer”?

Imagine that your name came up in a job search, or that a former client referred you, or even that an editor who got your name is searching online for a good story. Your name is driving the search to your 24/7 online Silent Seller. Will you get a new client, a new job or be published?

The following is a Silent Seller Checklist. The bullets may seem basic but when looking for people on line I find most people need to update, add and professionalize their online Silent Seller.

- Are you easy to find?
- Is it clear what you do?
- Is the info about you accurate and up to date?
- Is it easy to contact you?
- Is there a professional headshot?
- Do you have a bio?
- Do you have a web site?
- Are you on LinkedIn, Facebook/Business? Is your profile complete and current?
- Does your online image reflect the current success of your business?
- Do you stand out from the competition with a clear statement of benefits and value?
- Are there examples of your work, case studies or testimonials?



- How do you compare/look next to your competitors?
- Does your info do a good job of qualifying people before they contact you?
- If your name or company name is similar to someone else's, can a prospect easily find the right information about you?

Whether or not you have thought about your Silent Seller, information that impacts your professional image is already on the Internet. And if there is nothing at all about you, that's even worse, since a lack of online presence can make you seem behind-the-times and not serious about business.

**Try this:** Research yourself as if you are a prospect who was referred or an editor looking for an expert to quote or someone who met you at an event and wanted to look you up as a potential designer. Did you find yourself? Being invisible is not a good thing. If you found yourself, did the information reflect well on you as a professional? How did the information compare with the checklist above? Do this exercise every few months, and make changes to your online information as necessary.

In today's online marketplace, you don't have the option to be offline. It's essential for you to actively manage your online reputation to convey yourself at your professional best. Take ownership of your online presence and control how your web site and social media sites portray you to make your Silent Seller accurate and professional.

*“Commitment unlocks the doors of imagination allows vision,  
and gives us the right stuff to turn our dreams into reality.”*

James Womack

## Chapter 19: Celebrate Your Success to Empower Yourself

Are you stuck waiting for the Success Fairy to pat you on the back?

As a business coach, I talk with many professionals and business owners who never take time for self-celebration even when they overcome amazing obstacles.

Some are uncomfortable acknowledging their success-even to themselves-because they were taught not to "toot your own horn." Others dismiss any milestone short of their ultimate goal as unworthy of celebration. A few just don't know how to recognize success when they achieve it, because they are so focused on the next goal.

There is no Success Fairy who takes care of making sure you get your pat on the back. So you need to learn to acknowledge and celebrate your own successes in order to reap the full rewards of all your hard work.

I encourage my clients to celebrate all the mini-goals and milestones along the way as well as doing a victory lap or end zone dance when they win their ultimate trophy. These mini-goals and milestones might be things like redesigning a web site or getting the first one launched, revising a newsletter layout, giving a speech, or making it through a list of cold calls. These are all successes, and they should be acknowledged as worthy of celebration.

Why is it so important to celebrate the little things? There are many reasons. People who have difficulty acknowledging and celebrating their own successes often also have trouble accepting complements and praise from others. They're almost determined not to hear good things about themselves, or to discount praise in light of the vast number of things yet undone. When you refuse to celebrate, you're cheating yourself out of the rewards of your success every bit as much as if you ripped up a check or declined an award. You deserve better.

Acknowledging successes-even small, incremental ones-helps you gain confidence. You feel empowered when you stand back and realize that you overcame something that was a struggle. That confidence gives you a "yes, I can" attitude and it fuels you to dream bigger and enjoy more in life. It stokes your enthusiasm, which gives you the strength to tackle new challenges.

Recognizing your successes also helps you create a more balanced self-perspective. Many people are very aware of their shortcomings and of the items yet unfinished, but they don't have a realistic picture of their good points. When you stop to enjoy, acknowledge and praise your own successes, you start to think of yourself as a winner. And you are a winner!

I've talked with business owners who have overcome amazing obstacles, only to hear them dismiss their achievement as "it wasn't really a big deal." Oh yes, it is! Many people wilt in the face of opposition, or give up when the going gets rough. The fact that you showed persistence, courage and ingenuity is worthy of praise-first and foremost, from yourself.

When you wait for others to notice and acknowledge you before recognizing your own success, you give away your power. You let others control your feelings about yourself. That's another reason why self-validation is so essential. It is part of owning yourself.

While we have Bosses' Day, Secretaries' Day, Mother's Day and days to acknowledge the importance of other people, there is no National "I Did a Great Job" day. So what's stopping you from declaring your own micro-holiday?

It doesn't even have to wait for your birthday. Do it now! Buy yourself lunch. Treat yourself to flowers. Make a good cup of tea and take fifteen minutes away from the computer to savor your success.

Don't wait until you reach your ultimate goal to celebrate. Break up your big goal into mini-goals and milestones, and celebrate as you go. If you were managing a team on a big effort, you would do exactly that kind of thing to increase morale. Take charge of your own morale and celebrate!

When people don't know how to celebrate their wins, they are more likely to believe only the negative about themselves. They become disempowered, looking to others for validation, and feel worthless when others don't

magically recognize their value. Or, they reach their ultimate goal and suddenly feel empty because they have nothing left for which to strive. Don't be that kind of person. Practice celebrating your achievements, large and small, and feel the power of confidence empower you to continue succeeding. Do it now!

*“In oneself lies the whole world and if you know how to look and learn, the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you either the key or the door to open, except yourself.”*

Jiddu Krishnamurti

## Conclusion

Throughout our lives, many doors open and close for us. Yet the most powerful doors of all are the door to your mind and the door to your heart. No matter what situational door closes for you, if the doors to your mind and heart remain open, you will find a successful way around, over or through the obstacle.

A closed door may make you feel safe, but it also is a barrier to what lies beyond it. Inside our closed doors we are secure, yet isolated. We cannot welcome all the light and warmth outside until we risk opening the door to what lies beyond.

An open door beckons to endless adventure and discovery, but if it never closes, we can miss equally important feelings of safety and inclusion. When you find what truly matters to you, don't be afraid to commit by closing the door to the endless possible options. Some things fulfill us by being ours alone.

A rich life requires knowing when to open doors and when to close them, when to risk being outside, and when to revel in belonging inside. The lesson of a lifetime is in greeting each door you meet in your life as a wise teacher, and learning the insights every passageway offers to you.

A wise man once said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. But it also requires one more thing: an open door and the willingness to walk into the light. As you move forward in your journey, I wish you peace, happiness, and prosperity, and the courage to meet each door with confidence.



opening doors

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