



PHENOMENAL  
**SUCCESS**  
STORIES

*The*  
SIMPLE PATH *from*  
SURVIVAL *to* SIGNIFICANCE

**HOWARD PARTRIDGE**

## DEDICATION

*To Santiago, my best friend in the whole wide world  
(Next to my wife.)*

*You have been by my side through survival, success, and  
now, significance.*

*Thank you for helping me reach my dreams and helping  
so many others reach theirs.*

*May you reach your biggest dreams in life as well.*

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# *FOREWORD*

*by Santiago Arango*

At the age of sixteen, I came to the greatest country in the world with my mother. We escaped a country that had been destroyed by a war that began in the 60's and sadly, continues today. We moved because we were left with no choice.

I started high school in The States as a junior and while attending school I met Elise, now my wife. We decided to get married right out of high school. (I can't imagine how I would react if my daughter told me that she would like to get married at the same age as we did.) I quickly realized that I needed a job before we were to get married, and thankfully her father had a solution; I could apply to be a carpet-cleaning assistant at the same company he worked at. So I came in for an interview with Howard Partridge and his business partners; with long hair and not dressed for an interview at all.

I am immensely grateful that Howard saw something in me that day that I didn't see in myself. When I began working at the service company, Clean As A Whistle, I started as an assistant in the field, and was able to move up to Lead Technician.

While working in the field one day I hurt my back and was out for nine months doing therapy. When I came back to work, I was put in the office and started to work in operations, helped to get things organized in the mornings, and would help answer the telephones throughout the day. After finding what I was good at and enjoyed doing, I eventually ended up working in inside sales, administration, and marketing.

However, everything changed when Howard introduced me to Zig Ziglar. I heard Zig say, "You are who you are, and what you are, because of what's gone into your mind. If you want to change who you are, or what you are, change what goes into your mind." I thought it couldn't be that simple. I had heard Howard teach that many times before, but only at this point was I ready to listen. I started to change the things I listened to while driving, the things I watched on TV, and how I spent my free time.

I really enjoyed marketing and sales so I honed in on my skills and really started to focus on learning as much as I could about the systems we were implementing in the business. The more I learned, the more I enjoyed

it, and the more I started to become a different person. Over time, the things I found interesting at the service company became small to me; I wanted to do more. Thus I began to help more at Phenomenal Products, Howard's coaching company.

I helped set up and break down at events – moving boxes and helping with tech stuff. As I helped at the events I was able to meet small business owners who came with all sorts of problems. When they came to another event, I saw how they had improved, and had more freedom as a result of Howard's training. This is where I saw the importance of what Phenomenal Products did.

When these owners shared that they were so consumed in their business and didn't have time for family life, it brought me back to being a little boy. My dad was a business owner and would often not come home until after I had already gone to bed. I didn't see my father for several weeks at a time because he was always working. That's when the mission statement of Phenomenal Products clicked for me. "To help small business owners stop being a slave to their business." I recognized that I could be a part of something life changing; not just for the owners, but their families, and employees.

I continued to learn and sought to understand what Howard was doing to help others and how he was doing it. Using Howard's training, I continued to work and develop myself. I discovered a big passion of mine was wanting to help other people have more free time to spend with their families as well. In turn, I started helping the rest of the team at Howard's service company. It took a little while, but they started to change too! They started accomplishing goals they never believed they could do, and as a result, the business grew too.

Today, I have completely moved into Phenomenal Products and I am fulfilling my passion by helping people have freedom, and accomplish their goals and dreams. I am continuing my education and will do so as long as I can, in order to grow myself and help as many of those around me as possible.

Howard has become more than a boss, and even greater than my best friend; he became the igniter of a passion that I would have never understood was within me. I will be forever grateful to him for helping me realize my potential and for helping me develop myself. Being involved in

the lives of small business owners completely changed my life and my family's life for many generations to come.

For me, success is a journey. It's a journey that anyone can follow, and the success stories in this book will motivate you to follow the path that so many others have followed. This book will help you to see that you *can* be more successful, and you *can* help others on your team to understand and believe the same.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*To the co-authors that contributed to this book, I am so very proud of each and every one of you.*

*To the Inner Circle Community, for making these stories possible.*

*To My Phenomenal Team (Family):*

*Rick, for your constant mentorship, and wisdom. (Roll Tide!)*

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*Michelle, the Messenger, for getting me around the world without a hitch, making our events go just as smoothly, and helping us get the message out.*

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## Introduction

### What's *Your* Definition of Success?

*Success.*

Everyone seems to want more of it, yet we all have a different definition of what “success” really is.

Or do we?

If you're like most people, you probably want more money, better health, more meaningful relationships and a stronger Spiritual life.

You picked up a book called *Phenomenal Success Stories*.

Why?

Was it because you know someone in this book?

Was it because you want more success for your life or business?

Both?

Regardless of the reason, I'm glad you did, because when you start digging into the subject of “success” it can become puzzling. It seems the more you explore, the more definitions come to the surface.

I spent an entire day with Rudy Ruettiger, the real guy that the hugely popular sports movie *RUDY* was about. Rudy had a dream to not only attend Notre Dame, but to play football there. You probably know the story – he wasn't smart enough to get into Notre Dame, and was too small and too slow to play college football.

Against all odds he not only got into Notre Dame, but somehow made the football team. But he didn't get to play until the last game of his senior year. With the game well in hand, legend has it that the players began to solicit the coach to put Rudy in.



They began to chant “Ru-dy, Ru-dy, Ru-dy...” Then the fans joined in. “Ru-dy, Ru-dy, Ru-dy...” Coach had to put him in. He played the last two plays of the game and sacked the quarterback.

The crowd *roared*.

Success! He not only attended Notre Dame, and not only played football, but had this unexpected, heroic end to the four-year journey.

After the Notre Dame experience, Rudy began to dream about making a movie one day. He faced many tough battles, but after much perseverance Rudy succeeded.

As we sat in Zig Ziglar’s recording studio that day, I began to see that Rudy wasn’t going to give up his philosophy easily. I pressed him on success and its meaning. The more I dug, the more explanations emerged.

The audio turned out to be very moving and meaningful, but I felt like I was tussling with an eight hundred pound gorilla! Every time I asked him what I thought was an obvious question, he diverted to another story or illustration.

I wanted to know whether there was a “bottom line” of success. Is there a *simple* definition? Is there a way to state the essence of success in one sentence? Is there a way to simplify the “secrets” of success?

As it turns out, there is. But I had to prod and pry for over twenty years to settle the issue for myself.

That is what this book is about. *Simplifying success in a way that can be understood and accomplished by anyone*. Of course this book is specifically pertaining to small business success, but these lessons can benefit anyone with a will to succeed.

Over the past two decades I’ve been able to spend time with some of the world’s top experts on business and success. I’ve studied them, spent time with them, observed their relationships, and even been blessed enough to be mentored by a few of them.

And of course I’ve had my own experiences.

From being raised on welfare, moving to Houston with nothing but 25 cents to my name, building successful businesses, becoming an international business coach, and enjoying the blessings of life. I've had a phenomenal journey of success myself, to say the least.

Here's one thing I've learned...

Success is *simple*.

But it's not *easy*.

Over the past thirty-two years of building my own businesses and twenty years of leading small business owners, I've sought to condense the complex subject of "success" into simple systems that, like I said earlier, anyone with the desire to succeed can implement.

By doing that, many small business owners – some featured in this book, have become more successful in not only their business, but most importantly, in their *life*.

The **one** and **only** reason your business exists is to be a vehicle to help you achieve your *life* goals. As my good friend David Frey likes to say, "No amount of business success can compensate for failure at home."

In the first couple of chapters, I'm going to lay out a **simple success system** that *will* bring you more success when followed. Next, we'll look at **The One Thing** that will determine whether those simple steps will actually be taken.

The result of implementing these simple systems is *many* phenomenal success stories. And that's the rest of this book... *Phenomenal Success Stories*.

Since my team and I began helping small business owners around the world, we've received an overwhelming number of success stories. Every day we get feedback from our coaching members, sharing how their life and business is changing before their very eyes. You'll learn a handful of those stories in this book.

True success stories inspire us and validate the facts for us. These stories are not just theory or opinion, but *actual* experience from *real* business owners that have faced the same obstacles you face every day.

People that have the same desires and path as you.

I've also included the latest version of my own story. You may have heard my story before, but this time you'll learn a bit more. Hopefully, hearing it again or learning the extra details I've included will inspire you to stay the course in your own success journey.

I hope these stories will inspire you to do the things you need to do, so you can become the person you need to be, so you can have the things you want to have in life and business.

Let me say that again...

To *inspire* you...

So you can *become* the person you need to become...

So you can *do* the things you need to do...

So you can *have* the things you want in life and business...

Please understand that success is just the beginning. More meaningful than success is *significance*. Being significant means making a difference in the lives of others. The good news is that regardless of where you are right now – whether you're in survival mode, relatively successful, or phenomenally successful, you can be more significant right now.

You can make a difference in other people's lives *right now*.

You don't have to be "successful" to be significant, but if you want to make a difference in other people's lives, being more successful can help you make an immense difference.

For example, if you're broke and in debt, how are you going to help others with their financial needs? What about health? The more energy you have, the more you can help others. And relationships? If you get better at connecting with others, doesn't it make sense that you might be able to influence them for the better?

Conventional wisdom seems to believe the more successful you are, the less you'll help others. I don't believe that. Success doesn't *make* the person, it *reveals* the person. It's like a magnifying glass.

People sometimes use the term “filthy rich,” which means “ill-gotten” gain. The assumption is that if someone is very successful financially, they must have done something immoral or illegal to get it. Where did that assumption come from? It’s the way we’ve been conditioned by society.

What if a person becomes very successful financially through honorable means (like building a profitable business)? That person can help a lot of people. It’s all a matter of the heart.

Unfortunately, this is one of the reasons people seek *not* to be successful. This mindset isn’t even a conscious thought. Most people want more success in their life. But subconsciously, many people suffer from “fear of success.” Subconsciously, they think they will have to be someone they’re not.

How people handle success stems from their own internal values rather than external forces. Someone wins the lottery, only to be broke again. Their internal values are revealed. The good news is that people can change. When the spotlight reveals the defect in our character, we can adopt new values and learn new skills.

*We can change.*

For example, the person who wins the lottery usually loses it all because they don’t have values that support their new financial position. But that person can adopt new values around money, and therefore learn new skills to better manage that money.

Why is it that an immigrant that comes to the U.S. with nothing becomes a multi-millionaire, while people who grew up in the States struggle to pay their bills?

It’s because the immigrant learned the simple systems of being successful financially, and was willing to live by those systems, while the person that grew up in abundance took them for granted and didn’t practice the same systems as the immigrant.

If you truly care about people, you’ll be generous when you’re successful. If you don’t care about people, you’ll use success to feed your own ego. Perhaps being more successful may reveal some things in your life you would like to change. For example, if you instantly became famous,

would you still care about those that helped you when you were struggling?

My contention is the more successful you become, the more you can use your resources, talents, and newly acquired skills to help others. *That* is fulfilling.

You may think the more successful you become, the more demands there will be on your life. Although that may be true, the trade-off is probably worth it.

Perhaps people will want a bigger piece of you, and maybe they will even expect that you'll share the wealth with them (even though they haven't done anything to deserve it).

It's true that the more people that seek you out, the more demand there is on your time, but it also puts you in a tremendous place of influence where you can help a lot of people. I've seen it first hand being around people like Zig Ziglar and John Maxwell. In fact, I'm one of those people that wanted to get close to them and get a bigger piece of them!

Nevertheless, I've always tried to add value to them. I support those I want more of through my finances, service, encouragement, promotion, and any other way I can think of.

If people want a piece of you, give it to them if you can. Help them be more successful, because *that* is what life is all about. As my good friend John Maxwell says, "Once you get a taste of significance, success will never satisfy." I have a plaque on my desk that says, "Success is making a difference in the lives of others. Happiness is watching them grow because of it." That's significance. The best part is, you can start becoming more successful and significant *right now*.

My good friend and business partner Tom Ziglar says, "Success is getting more of the good stuff in life. Significance is helping others get more of the good stuff in life." Of course he likes to call it "Zignificance" in the Ziglar world, but that's another story altogether!

So, are you ready to get started?

## Chapter One

### The Simple Success System

John Browning, one of my best friends in the world, told me that my gift is making the complex, simple. Others have told me the same. Maybe it's because I have a simple mind. Maybe it's a gift. I don't know.

Of course I have a *lot* to do – and there's a LOT I want to do, so I need simple systems to maximize time, energy, and resources. I want to eliminate as many steps as possible to get to the goal faster.

I also feel a deep internal need to distill everything down to a simple point. Over the past couple of years, I've been working on a book around the concept of building community in a business and I talk to my friend Jodi Carroll, a brilliant leadership trainer, about it from time to time. In each of our conversations I try to nail down each concept with a simple thought or a set of steps and I think it drives her crazy. And when she won't let me do that, it drives *me* crazy!

My good friend and colleague Ellen Rohr likes to say, “The simpler you make it, the farther you can take it”. I implemented her simple financial reporting systems in my business and it helped my businesses become hugely profitable.

Just having simple, daily systems for life and work makes everything easier. For example, I pay my bills once a month rather than as they come in. I pay everything through online banking and it takes me only a few minutes per month. All of my business mail is handled by staff. I rarely have anything in my in-box. If I do, it's a personal correspondence that has already been opened and checked by someone.

Another example (there are many) is my casual dress code. When I dress casual, I wear the same kind of shorts and the same kind of shirt *every day*. Instead of thinking about what I'm going to wear, I just grab one. A few years ago, the store that sells that brand was having a sale, so I bought about 40 pairs of shorts and about 40 shirts. That way, I wouldn't have to buy casual clothes for a few years.

I have a routine every day that maximizes time and energy. I call it my Daily Time Capsule. It's simply taking an hour or so every day to focus

on my top projects. I created a simple organizational system where everything has a place. That simple system helps me stay focused on getting the most important things done each day, and it keeps me focused on the outcome I want in my life and business.

You can learn that system in my third book *Think and Be Phenomenal – The 5 Levels of Being Phenomenal*.

I eat the same thing every day, which drives my *wife* crazy. It might sound boring, but my routine is unchanging. When you're living your dream, you don't mind doing it every day.

In the movie *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray played the role of a weatherman named Phil. Disgusted with the monotony of his life, he was forced to repeat the same day over and over. Stuck in Punxsutawney day after day forced him to attempt to create excitement in his life. When he realized he wasn't going to die, but he would wake up to the same day over and over again, he began to live dangerously, including driving a truck over a cliff.

Then he realized he could use that day to make a difference in the lives of others. As he began to respond to the opportunities to help others, his day became filled with wonder and joy. Repeating *that* day over and over is worth doing.

When John Maxwell spoke at my conference, he took the stage and said to the audience, "If I could have dinner with you and ask you some questions, I could predict your future." Sounds pretty arrogant, but he followed by explaining that he would ask about your daily routine. "Success is found in the daily agenda." John says, "What you *do* everyday, will determine your future."

How do we simplify success? First, let's ask the obvious question:

"What *is* success?"

This question is about as ancient as "what's the meaning of life?" Perhaps they're one and the same.

I've heard lots of definitions of success from very influential leaders.

John says, "Success is knowing your purpose in life, growing to reach

your maximum potential, and sowing seeds that benefit others.”

Zig said, “Success is doing the best you can with the hand you’re dealt.” He also said, “Success is living a balanced life.”

Earl Nightingale said, “Success is the progressive realization of a worthy goal or ideal.”

Tom Ziglar says, “The fastest way to success is replacing bad habits with good habits.”

Darren Hardy, former editor of a magazine with the very name *SUCCESS* says, “Success is hard work. There is no secret. It’s just focus, determination and true grit.”

Gary Keller said, “Success is getting what you want.”

I agree with all of those definitions. So, how to do I simplify this?

My definition of success is...

**“*Becoming the person you were created to be.*”**

When you *become* the person you were created to be, you’ll *do* the things you need to do, and therefore *have* the things you are supposed to have. In other words, you must understand that you were created for a purpose. You were also given a unique, irrevocable gift. But in order to reach your destiny, you must discover and develop your gift.

You’ve probably heard that success isn’t a destination, it’s a journey. That doesn’t mean you don’t have goals or a destination in mind. Think of your dream as the destination and your goals as the mile-markers along the way. The journey is about who you become along the way. Zig said, “It’s not what you *get* when you reach your goals, it’s *who* you become.”

I’m a different person today because of the goals I’ve reached (and the ones I’ve missed). Your growth journey is never over. You want to continue to grow until the day you die. And when you pass on, you want your legacy to continue making a difference in the lives of others.

It’s about who you BEcome. I also talked about this quite a bit in my third book, *Think and Be Phenomenal – The 5 Levels of Being Phenomenal*.



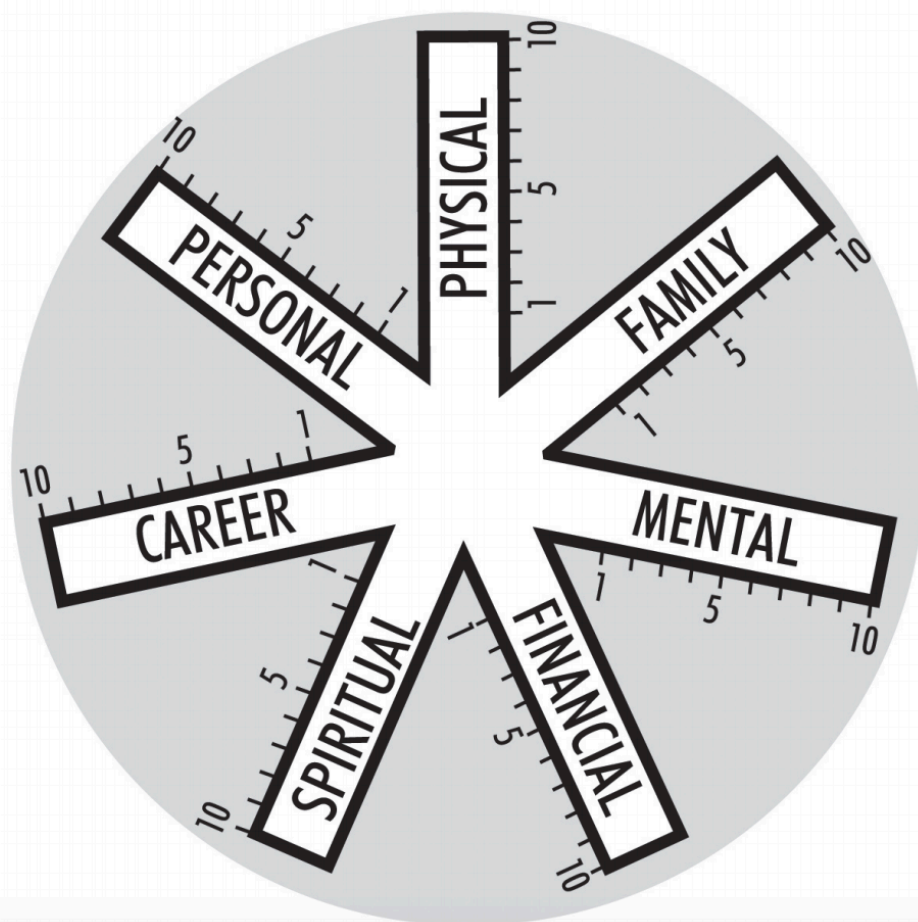
Be content with what you *have*, but never be satisfied with who you're *becoming*." Did you catch that?

Be satisfied and grateful for what you have. Remember that 880 million people on planet Earth don't even have access to clean drinking water. But your personal growth is an ongoing journey and the most fulfilling part of it.

Who are you becoming?

Dale Carnegie said, "Success is getting what you want. Happiness is *wanting* what you get."

I like to show people the Wheel of Life that has the seven core areas of life (Spiritual, Mental, Physical, Family, Career, Financial and Personal) and then ask them, "Which of these areas were you created to be *UNsuccessful* in? Of course, they always kind of chuckle and admit "none of them."



I'm also quick to point out that it doesn't mean that everyone is supposed to be a millionaire, but it also doesn't mean that you should be broke and in debt either. Not being able to pay your bills is *not* success.

It doesn't mean that everyone is supposed to have a beach body, but it also doesn't mean you should be unhealthy when you could be healthy.

I had a friend that had MS (Multiple Sclerosis). On a scale of 1-10, how would he rate his physical condition? He would rate it only based on how he could impact his condition. Did he take his medicine? Did he do his part? Remember, success is doing the best with the hand you're dealt.

The same goes for Family. You can't change anyone. If you are doing your part, even though the other party is not responding, you can give yourself a high rating. When you're willing to change, it opens the door for them to change.

How you rate yourself as "successful" or not doesn't depend on things outside of your control. As long as you are being the person you are supposed to be in each of those areas, you can give yourself a high rating.

It doesn't mean your Spiritual gift is the same as everyone else's, but it also doesn't mean that you should be anything less than what God has called you to be in that area.

That spoke on the wheel brings me to another point...

Sometimes things happen in our life because of the sheer Grace of God. I call that being "blessed." Being *blessed* is something God does for us, not something we do. In other words, many times God gives us blessings we may not deserve. That's called Grace – undeserved mercy.

There are times that God just brings good gifts into your life for no apparent reason. They were not earned, they were just gifts because He loves you.

Of course, there are things we *can* do to receive more blessings from God. Not that we *do* things in order to *get* things, but when we honor God and we're faithful in life, many "blessings" will come. It's a promise from our Father.

I love what Psalm 37:4-6 has to say...

*<sup>4</sup>Delight yourself in the LORD;  
And He will give you the desires of your heart.*

*<sup>5</sup>Commit your way to the LORD,  
Trust also in Him, and He will do it.*

*<sup>6</sup>He will bring forth your righteousness as the light  
And your judgment as the noonday.*

### **So, how do we break this all down into a Simple Success System?**

First, do the Wheel of Life Assessment. You'll be able to rate yourself in the 7 areas of life and fill out an assessment of where you are now. Then set some goals in those areas.

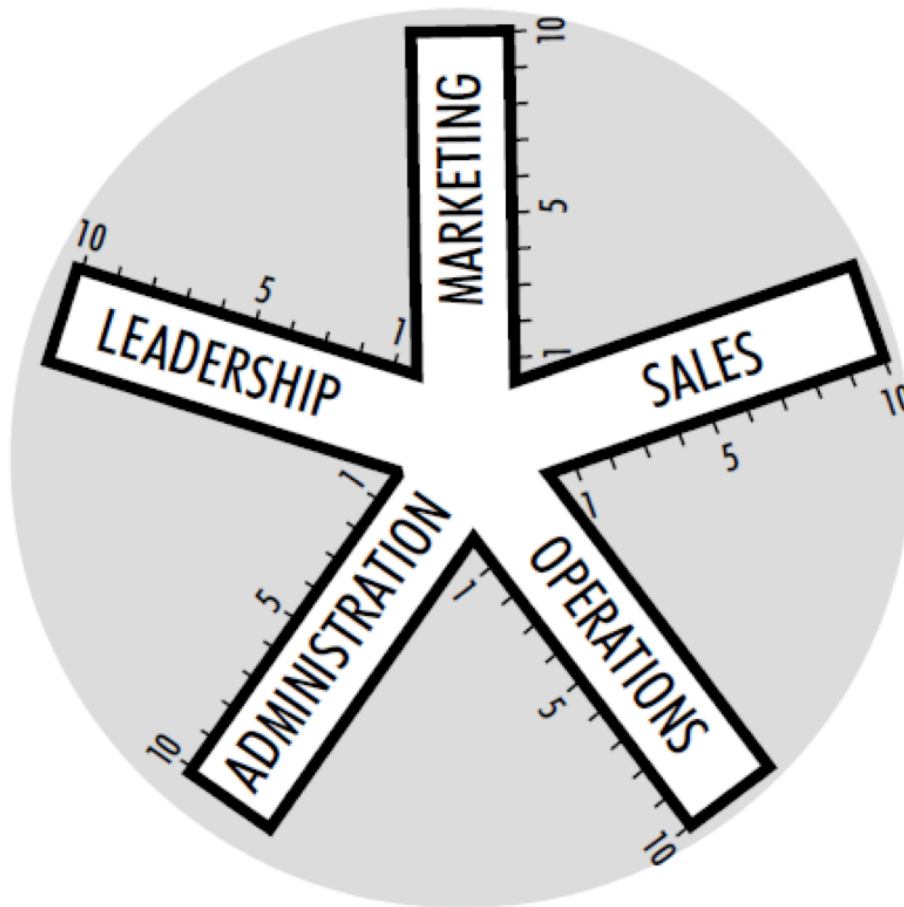
Get the full Wheel of Life Assessment at:

[www.HowardPartridge.com/Success](http://www.HowardPartridge.com/Success)

Second, as a small business owner, you'll want to do the Wheel of Business. Rate the 5 areas of business and fill out the assessment. This will give you a systems checklist to improve your business.

## Download the Full Life and Business Assessments at No Charge

Get the full Wheel of Life Assessment and Phenomenal Business Assessment at: [www.HowardPartridge.com/Success](http://www.HowardPartridge.com/Success)



### The Simple Success System

As I mentioned earlier, you've probably heard that success isn't a destination, but a journey. It is a journey, but there *are* mile markers and specific points along the way. I drive from my home in Houston to my home

in Destin, Florida; I know that in two and a half hours I should be in Lake Charles, LA. I can track my journey because there is a specific goal.

But in life, you never arrive until it's over. Then, you begin a new life that's never over! But that's another story altogether.

My good friend Michael Gerber encourages entrepreneurs to have a big Dream. He says the Dream is the impossible. In other words, the Dream has to be so big that it's not even possible to achieve it. The reason that is important is that it will cause you to create a BIG vision.

In his phenomenal book *Awakening the Entrepreneur Within* Michael says, "A vision is comprised of your primary aim and your strategic objective. The first is the Vision for your life. The second is the Vision for your business. Together, these two visions become the driving force for the growth of the company."

The driving force. Hmmm... your business is a vehicle. The one and only reason your business exists is to be a vehicle to help you achieve your Life Goals. You must first have a vision of where you want to go in life. Be sure you are clear on WHY you are going where you are going. This is called your purpose. Why is that important? When you have a big enough WHY, finding the how becomes easier.

Only when you have a clear vision for your life can you create the right vision for your business. The only thing worse than building a business is to look back and realize you built the wrong business!

### **The Simple Success System starts with GPS.**

Today, we use GPS on our devices or in our vehicles to get where we want to go. Pilots use GPS to navigate. Hey, you can even use GPS if you're walking or riding a bike. One of my favorite things to do when I travel is to rent the public bicycles that some cities have in their downtown areas. I've toured Nashville, Washington D.C. and even London on a public bicycle. Riding up to Buckingham Palace on a \$2.00 per day bicycle felt a little weird, but it was fun!

Okay, here are the simple steps to success using GPS...

**Step 1: Determine where you are.** Use the assessment tools on the download link to determine where you are now on the business and life assessments. GPS can only give you directions once it knows where you are.

**Step 2: Determine where you want to go.** Set some life goals in each area of your life using Zig Ziglar's 7 Step Goals System (also available to download on the resource page).

**Step 3: Create a plan.** The goal setting process calls for a Plan of Action. You'll need to have a plan to get where you want to go. Success doesn't happen by accident. It happens by design. In my coaching program we have a simple business planning document we use as a roadmap to follow for success in business.

#### **Step 4: Build your systems.**

The S of GPS is Systems.

**Goals.** Where you want to go. These are the specific, measurable mile-markers toward your dream.

**Plans.** How you will get there. This is your roadmap. This is your route.

**Systems.** Once you know where you want to go, and you have a map, you'll need at least one vehicle.

Think about your business as a vehicle. Just like an automobile or an airplane, there are a number of systems that work together. A system is a group of working parts that duplicates results consistently. When I rent a car that has gasoline in it, all I need is a key to start the engine. And of course I need to know where I want to go, and I need my route.

You can learn to fly an airplane if you don't already know how. Once you know how, flying an airplane – any airplane – is a series of checklists. Of course, there's training and experience you need. We'll get to that in a moment.

Look at your business as a set of systems. There are five systems altogether that I outline in my 2<sup>nd</sup> book *5 Secrets of a Phenomenal Business*. You'll also learn what those systems are when you download the business

assessment on the resource page at [www.HowardPartridge.com/success](http://www.HowardPartridge.com/success)

You may feel like you have a good business right now, but when you download the business assessment, you'll realize how much work your business really needs to become a *phenomenally* successful business. After all, you didn't pick up this book to have *mediocre* success, right?

### **Step 5...**

I've dedicated the entire next chapter for this step, because it contains the golden key to success. It's *The One Thing* (other than the Grace of God) that will determine your success or failure. It's the one thing that will determine your level of success.

*The One Thing* changes everything...

## Chapter Two

### The ONE Thing

Several years ago, one of our Inner Circle Coaching members John Michailidis (also featured in this book) gave me a book called *The One Thing* by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan. Gary Keller co-founded Keller-Williams Realty, the largest residential real estate company in the world.

In the book, Gary Keller shared that he was failing. He sought help and found it in the form of a **coach**. Within three years his company began a period of sustained growth that averaged 40 percent year-over-year for almost a decade.

I read the book several times, listened to the audio book multiple times, attended two of Gary's lectures at Keller-Williams, and then got certified as a Certified One Thing Trainer. Although the *The One Thing* book is about focus, productivity and purpose, two things are made very clear:

1. Gary's breakthrough came in the form of a **coach**.
2. Three pages in the book are **key** to everything else.

The first 186 pages surround what *The One Thing* calls the Focusing Question:

*What's the one thing I can do, such that by doing it, everything else becomes either easier or unnecessary?*

It's a life-changing question, but without a coach – without accountability, implementation and growth just doesn't happen. In fact, I'm convinced that one of the reasons we have so many problems in this country is that we don't have mentors as we grow up as young people today. Where are the role models?

Pages 187-189 in *The One Thing* hold the real key to success. Those three pages in his book talk about the power of *accountability*.

Here are a few quotes from those three pages (and from the course)...



“One of the fastest ways to bring accountability to your life **is to find an accountability partner**. Accountability can come from a mentor, a peer *or in its highest form, a coach.*”

“Research shows that individuals with written goals were 39.5 percent more likely to succeed, but individuals with written goals **and weekly accountability were 76.7 percent more likely** to achieve them.”

“*Elite performers seek out teachers and coaches* and engage in supervised training, whereas amateurs rarely engage in similar types of practice”

“Ideally, a coach can ‘coach’ you on how to maximize your performance over time. ***This is how the very best become the very best.***”

“***A coach is invaluable.*** In fact, you’d be hard pressed to find elite achievers who don’t have coaches helping them in key areas of their life.”

Like Gary, as I began to review my own life, I realized that where I had been phenomenally successful, I had a coach. Where I wasn’t, I didn’t. For example, my early mentor had a profound impact on my life. Bill Beckham was my spiritual mentor and he helped me see and realize my gifts. He helped me become the person I was created to be.

Interestingly enough, even though he was my pastor, he was the first person to tell me about *The E-Myth*. Because of that advice, I met Michael Gerber himself, and Michael became a mentor to me. The result? I built a turnkey business, which is the only reason I get to write my fifth book on the subject.

In 2005, I began a health journey and lost fifty pounds. At forty-five years old, I was thin, healthy and ripped! I was a beast. How did I do it? A nutritionist and a trainer. Translation: Coaches.

How did I get unhealthy again? I fired my trainer, and had my supplements shipped rather than meeting regularly with my nutritionist.

How did I get healthy and fit again? I got on a new simple system with a coach!

Several years ago, my business was in tremendous debt and scraping by on high interest credit cards. How did my company become hugely

profitable? A financial *coach* by the name of Ellen Rohr.

Many years before that, my marriage was in trouble. How did we get back on track? My brother and his wife sat me down and asked me some very hard questions. Denise and I have now been married over 32 years at this writing. Today we even do marriage seminars together and we've been able to help many others improve their marriages.

Several years ago, my coaching business had become a job to me. I was stuck and my business wasn't growing. How did I get unstuck and become an international business coach with a phenomenal coaching business? A mysterious man in black seemingly dropped out of the sky onto a beach in Florida to help me. His name? Mark Ehrlich, who I met through none other than Michael Gerber himself. Mark encouraged me to follow up on my relationship with Ziglar, resulting in my becoming the exclusive small business coach for Ziglar and the world's first Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainer.

How did I become a better leader? Yes, I read books, but more important, I have a *coach* that continues to invest in me and coach me to be better. His name is Rick Jones. He was with Dale Carnegie for over 33 years and owned the award-winning Houston franchise for over 20 years.

I continue to invest in coaches that help me go to the next level. For the last few years, John Maxwell, the #1 leadership expert in the world, has personally mentored me. In fact, at our first meeting he asked me, "What's the greatest life lesson you've ever learned?"

My answer...

**"Get around people who have already done what you want to do."**

The night before Zig Ziglar appeared on my stage, we had a private dinner with about 14 people. Zig reminded us of this by saying, "Remember, none of us got to where we are by ourselves." He also said, "If you ever see a turtle on the top of a fence post, you can be guaranteed he didn't get there by himself."

**The ONE THING that will make ALL the difference in your business and your life is the right COACH.**

The “right” coach. Someone who has already traveled the path you want to travel. Incidentally, the original definition of the word *coach* comes from the word *carriage*. Think of the stagecoach of the Old West. A coach gets you from where you *are* to where you need to *be*.

So, Howard, are you soliciting me to hire a coach in Chapter *Two* of your book?

Yes, I am!

Here’s why...

Let’s face facts. Today people are more distracted than ever, and everyone’s attention span is very short. The #1 reason small businesses don’t grow (or do as well as they could) is what I call **F.T.I.** (Failure To Implement).

The path to mastery requires apprenticeship. We must have someone to support us, to encourage us, and to hold us accountable.

Next question. “Howard, are you asking me to join your coaching program?”

My answer: “Why NOT?”

If you’re a small business owner reading this book, of *course* I want you to join our coaching community. But my first job is to convince you that you need a coach. Whether you choose us or someone else, be sure to get *someone* that has traveled the road successfully. There are too many “business coaches” out there that have never owned a business, other than owning a coaching business (that may not even be successful.)

Here’s a little wisdom from Mr. Ziglar himself...

**“Get the Right Advice” – Zig Ziglar**

Being the exclusive small business coach for Ziglar’s business owner customers makes me a wee bit biased, but we do have to recognize that Zig Ziglar was a very wise man, an American Legend, and, most importantly, a

man that lived by the same principles backstage as he taught on the stage. To top it off, he is probably the most quoted speaker of our time, and touched an estimated quarter of a billion people on the planet through his books and audio recordings.

In his very last book, *Born To Win*, Zig shared these seven points of criteria to choose a coach:

1. They have good character
2. They have a track record of success
3. They are good listeners
4. They are good decision makers
5. They tell the truth (even when it hurts)
6. They have good personal relationships
7. They celebrate the success of others

When the Ziglar team chose me to be their exclusive business coach, there were 7 additional points of criteria including owning a successful small business *and* a successful coaching business. Of all the people the Ziglar family and team know around the world, I got the call.

### **Step 6: Implement!**

Once you know **where you want to go (and where you are based on your assessment)**, you can begin the journey.

But you have to start. You *must* implement.

One of my favorite quotes is this Japanese proverb...

*Vision without action is a daydream.  
Action without vision is a nightmare.*

In order to implement the things you need to implement, you'll need a dream team. Leadership expert Dave Anderson says "if you have a dream, but no team, you have to give up the dream or build up the team.

You won't reach your biggest goals in life without a team, and you won't become the person you were created to be without a community around you to support you, encourage you and hold you accountable to becoming that person.

Your community includes your family, your team, your vendors, mentors, and coaches. The only thing better than a coach is a team of coaches. And the only thing better than that is a coaching *community*.

That's what the Howard Partridge Inner Circle is all about. Our slogan in the Inner Circle is *Inspiration to Implementation*. It starts with inspiration and continues with accountability.

Let's start with the value of inspiration...

- People who are inspired, implement.
- People who have a vision for the future, implement.
- People who are excited about the *possibilities*, implement.

And people who implement are those that achieve phenomenal success. Success stories inspire you to implement, and a coaching community keeps you on track, which brings me to the final step...

### **Step 7: Track your progress.**

You've determined where you are, where you want to go, you've created the plan and the systems, and you've engaged a coach. Now you'll want to diligently track your progress.

Do both assessments every 90 days and update your plan based on what you see. Use the Ziglar Planner every day to track how you're doing in the seven core areas of life. Track your numbers in your business daily, weekly, quarterly and annually.

You'll only know how you're doing if you track your progress. Going by "feel" isn't good enough. All the tools you need are available in The Howard Partridge Inner Circle Coaching Program.

Now, let's move on to some phenomenal success stories that demonstrate these seven steps.

I'll start with the latest telling of my story...

## Chapter Three

### “From a Welfare-Throw-Away-Kid to International Business Coach”

If you’ve read any of my previous books, you may already know the first part of my story, so I’ll keep it brief...

I’m originally from L.A. (Lower Alabama.) Don’t worry, my wife doesn’t laugh at my jokes either! I grew up on welfare in Mobile, Alabama. There were seven kids crammed into a six hundred square foot shack. The roof on that house was so bad that every time it rained, we had to get out all the pots and pans to catch the leaks.

My mother fed us on a hundred dollars a month from the welfare department. I still remember getting Christmas presents from the social workers.

As a rebellious 18 year old, I got in a fight with my step-dad and got kicked out of the house. I deserved it. Before our fight, I had recently quit my job to go to a Rolling Stones concert at the Superdome in New Orleans. Just before that, I had been arrested on Spring Break. And just after that, I wrecked my car, which was a pretty nice car for our circumstances. After getting it fixed, my step-dad put it up for sale.

My response? Illegally purchase, because I was 17, I bought a “bomb” for 250 bucks that didn’t even have a muffler. I worked the night shift at a grocery store, so I woke up the *entire* neighborhood at midnight. *Every* night.

There was a hole in the floorboard, which allowed the awful choking white smoke from the missing muffler to seep inside the vehicle. In order not to die, I had to keep the windows down, rain or shine. And to top it off, the gas gauge didn’t work. My buddy and I would *rock* the car back and forth and *listen* for gas sloshing around in the tank to determine how far we could go.

After my high school graduation ceremony, four of us took off in that car on our way to Florida. We ran out of gas in the middle of the night on some dark back roads of lower Alabama. There were four of us in the car, so two stayed with the car while my buddy and I started walking. Eventually, we saw headlights in the distance.

We flagged down the car, which was filled to capacity with people. Not wanting to risk that the only car we had seen all night wouldn't come back, we agreed to ride in the trunk. With feet dangling out the back and the trunk lid banging us in the head, we watched the asphalt go by.

Further along the line when I got kicked out of the house, my friend Mitch Larson helped me scrape up \$39.95 for a Greyhound bus ticket to Houston. My real father, who left when I was a year old, lived there. I had met him twice in my life at this point. The only two things I knew about my dad were that he was a bad guy and I was just like him. Now, that'll help your self-image!

The only image I had of Francis Earl Partridge, outside of photographs, was when I was about five years old at my grandfather's funeral. I was with my family members, standing on the sidewalk when someone said, "There's your father." A long black limousine was passing by and the rear window was down about halfway. There was my father looking at us. He covered his face with a handkerchief and dropped his head forward. He must have felt so ashamed for leaving five children and a wife behind.

By the time I was eighteen, I had met him twice – once when I was fifteen and once right before I got kicked out of the house. And I liked him! Not only had he become very successful but he had an amazing wife who was a high-end interior designer. I didn't even know what an interior designer *was* at eighteen!

My sisters went to visit him and his new wife in Houston and reports came flowing back to Mobile of shopping sprees and big time Texas success. My closest sister, Gayle, was still there, so I climbed on the overnight bus to Houston not really knowing for sure if anyone would be there to pick me up. That's how bold, or dumb, I was.

When I arrived, I had 25 cents in my pocket. That was *all* the money I had to my name and nothing in my suitcase of any real value. But my dad *was* there to pick me up.

After a few odd jobs, I became a professional waiter, and I worked in Houston's top restaurants, donning a tuxedo, and cooking fine dishes like *Steak Dianne*, *Banana's Foster*, and *Cherries Jubilee* at the table. Setting stuff on fire *inside* at that age was pretty cool.

I always wanted to have my own business, but I only made enough money to pay the rent. Then I met my future wife.

Denise, Concette, Antoinette Pennella. Now *that's* Italian! She's from New Jersey and I'm from where? *Lower Alabama*. This is going to be a good match! My dad bought me a pinstriped suit and Denise told me to keep my mouth shut because *I* had an accent.

Well, you know Zig had something to say about that too.

He said, "If you take an ol' boy from the South, up North and he stays too long, he's gonna come back with an accent! But if you bring an ol' boy from the North down South, and he stays laaawng enuuuf, he'll be tawlkin' naaurmal!"

As it turns out, when you marry into an Italian family, you don't get wedding presents. You get cash. Envelopes with money inside. We got \$3,000.00 in wedding money. That was the most money we had ever had at one time.

There was a friend of my wife's family, the same age as me, 23 at the time, who was tooling around in a little red Mercedes convertible. I wanted to know what *that* guy did and if it was *legal!* As it turns out, he was a business owner.

As soon as Denise and I got back to Houston, I spent the entire three thousand dollars starting my first business out of the trunk of my car. Denise was not too thrilled about that, let me tell you.

Over the next 13 years, I worked day and night. I felt like a slave to my business. I loved to travel, but much of the "supposed vacation" was consumed on the cell phone talking to customers and employees back home. Can you relate to that?

Then, in 1997, I learned two secrets that changed my life forever...

In 1997, my mentor Bill Beckham, the wisest, kindest, most humble man I know, came to my office every week to mentor me. At the time I had a very small business, but even though it was tiny, it was running *me* instead of me running *it*. I worked 24/7, and if anything needed to get done, I had to do it (or at least be involved in it.)

One day, as Bill observed the chaos around me, he said, "Howard, you



need *The E-Myth*.” It’s a book by Michael E. Gerber - a man that *Inc.* magazine calls “the World’s #1 Small Business Expert.” *The E-Myth Revisited – Why Most Small Businesses Don’t Work and What to Do About It*, sounded like a book I needed.

The book said I could have a turnkey business and that it could run without me. Michael Gerber said I needed “systems” in my business, so after reading the book, I took a trip to Destin, Florida, my favorite place in the entire world. I bought a stack of spiral notebooks and took them down to the beach, next to the crystal clear, emerald green water and dug my toes into the sand.

I began to dream about what my business and my life might look like. I filled those spiral notebooks up with a new vision and ideas. I came back to Houston and began working on my business, and I *did* build a turnkey business that *does* run without my daily involvement.

But it was only possible because I had someone in my corner of the rough and tumble ring of small business life. I had someone in my corner that cared enough about me to mentor me. Someone that was willing to support my vision and me.

The support I received from Bill was life changing. In fact, because I pursued the path of *The E-Myth*, I found myself sharing the stage with Michael Gerber. I invited him to speak at our conferences and we became great friends. Just this past June, I had the honor of introducing him at his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

Building that turnkey business wasn’t easy. In fact, I experienced a great deal of frustration building that first business. Once, when an employee didn’t show up for work, I went to his house and banged on his door for thirty minutes. It’s a wonder he didn’t call the police on me. Another time, I remember getting so angry that I ripped my shirt open and buttons flew everywhere. Don’t worry; I got over my anger issues a *long* time ago. The problem was it was a brand new shirt... that my wife gave me... for my birthday.

When I got the vision for a turnkey business, I felt like I needed a partner, so I began a conversation with one of my friendly competitors about joining me. We had been supporting one another for a couple of years, and when my schedule got overloaded, I would call Scott Zack to assist. He would call me for advice. As we spent time together, we dreamt about the

ultimate company. We were two people that had the same vision and values. Please remember the importance of that.

Although we had (and still have) the same vision and values, I recognized that Scott had gifts I didn't have. I'm the outgoing, glad-handing - and sometimes outspoken type. Scott was the preppy, rimmed glasses, quiet type. He was much more reserved than me, and was the perfect guy for office work, while I was the guy for sales and marketing.

We met at my office and began discussing the details of our new partnership. As we were talking, my phone rang. It was Dennis, a mutual colleague. Even though Scott and I were in a meeting, I thought Dennis might have an emergency, so I picked up the phone. "Hey Dennis, what's up?"

"Howard, I've been thinking that I need a partner. I'm really getting tired of bangin' my head against the wall out here." Dennis announced.

Dennis was a large Canadian guy that often wore dark green slacks with black work shoes. The steel-toed kind with big tread soles. Oh, and white socks. The timing of the call was interesting, since Scott and I were just sitting down to talk about partnering. Considering Dennis had no knowledge of it, I said to Dennis "Well, isn't that interesting. Scott and I just sat down to discuss a partnership."

"Mind if I sit in?" Dennis asked.

"I don't see why not. Come on down." I replied.

As Scott and I dug into the details of our new venture, I began to realize that we had only two legs of the three-legged stool needed. I'm the outside sales and marketing guy, he's the office guy, but who's going to build the technical side? Who would run the field operations? It began to dawn on me that Dennis could be that guy. Bring in a *third* partner? Scott was very hesitant about the idea. I would later learn that's his nature – it's his gift. My gift of being the outgoing never-met-a-challenge-I-couldn't-overcome guy was unpolished and reckless at the time, and I pushed Scott to bring Dennis on. He reluctantly agreed. Dennis was there in less than an hour and we formed a three-way partnership and began building the business.

Altogether, our combined revenue started around \$550K per year. We

grew it to over \$2 million per year in a very short time. We expanded our offices, hired employees, and bought equipment. I was out marketing and selling, Dennis was running the field crew, and Scott was handling the office.

We began to feel overwhelmed with all the moving parts. The debt was piling up and all three of us began to form different opinions of how things should be. Meanwhile, I decided to start my coaching business that put me on the road most of the time. Needless to say, my new partners weren't very happy about that.

When the three of us worked together, it was like magic. When we fought against one another, it was ugly and it greatly affected our team. Our employees were confused. They weren't exactly sure *who* was in charge. When they had a question, they got a different answer from each of us and we began to resent one another.

As we drifted apart and began to bicker and complain, I began to worry about our future. I was confused, overwhelmed, and feeling depressed that we had put together something that could be so good, but was now in danger of disintegrating. To top it off, I couldn't let go of my "other" business. I was too involved now.

Confused, overwhelmed, and depressed, I went to see my mentor. For a solid 60 minutes he carefully listened to my woes, interrupted only by an occasional compassionate nod. When I had exhausted all the frustrating details, he continued in his silence for another moment, obviously thinking about what he would say and how he would say it. When he finally spoke, he said, "Howard, I'm sorry to tell you this, but I think you're suffering from the fear of rejection."

What?! That was the *last* thing I expected to hear him say. I was expecting him to tell me how to *fix* my problem – not what was wrong with *me!* I was stunned. I was the most confident person I knew. I didn't *fear anything*. When I finally regained my composure, I responded. "What do you mean?"

"Howard, you're not being honest with those guys. You're afraid that if you face the reality of the situation they will reject you. They won't see you as the person with all the answers. You're trying to be their provider. You can't handle that. No one can. That's God's job. You're playing God, and that's a sin!"

Wow, I was reeling at this point. My mentor went on to encourage me be myself – to speak to them honestly and respectfully – to band together to solve the problems. He also encouraged me to recognize their unique gifts and to work toward helping them exercise their gifts.

Before this meeting, instead of encouraging my partners or being cooperative, I danced around issues, made excuses, and on top of it, let them know what *they* were doing wrong. My attitude was, “Hey, my stuff is covered. Yes, I travel a lot, but I know how to do *my* job.” The only problem is that it wasn’t true. Yes, my marketing systems added over \$2 million in a very short time, but I was failing as a leader, because I didn’t understand the power of encouragement. I didn’t understand how to build people up and leverage their gifts.

Although I learned a powerful lesson from my mentor that day, it was a little too late to keep the partnership together. We had all been hurt a little too much and the debt load was too much for Scott to stomach, so he nervously turned in his resignation letter with an offer for me to buy his shares.

I was actually relieved as I took the papers from his trembling hand. I immediately accepted all of the terms because I could see the way out. I felt that I could pull us out of our cultural tailspin. But I also knew that I needed full reign to pull the company out of the mess it was in. I would now have to go head to head with Dennis. It wasn’t long before he followed Scott’s lead.

I accepted his terms as willingly as I had Scott’s.

I got my company back, but I just added a LOT more debt. I began to understand how to leverage the strength of the team. One of the team members we had that was completely overlooked and unappreciated was Santiago Arango. He started with us when he was barely 18 and has now become my right-hand man.

Over the next six years, I paid my former partners every month until they were completely paid off. Dennis ended up becoming a technical instructor – something he absolutely loves, and after a few years of working for someone else and buying another business, Scott came back to run my office. Because we both now recognize, promote, and encourage one another’s gifts, we work together beautifully and the company is debt-free except for a few pieces of equipment that is financed only because it makes more sense to take the tax deduction and use newer equipment.

Over time we got the systems and the team in place, and that company is now a turnkey business that I don't have to be involved in on a daily basis. In order to get there I had a number of coaches and consultants. For example, my friend Ellen Rohr had financial systems she helped me install to become more profitable.

I came to realize that the ONE Thing that makes all the difference is the right coach. When you look at my history, you'll see that mentors, coaches and consultants were the key to growth and implementation.

My coaching company, Phenomenal Products went through the same growing pains. My company was originally named that because we sold informational products. Although we do mostly coaching and training today, naming it Phenomenal *Products* wasn't a mistake, because the people we help, YOU, are the phenomenal products. Created to be phenomenal, to do phenomenal things, to have a phenomenal life, and to help others do the same.

Several years ago, Phenomenal Products was stuck. In fact, I entertained the thought of quitting. I had a turnkey business, but I had replaced it with a new "job" called Phenomenal Products. I was a slave to *another business!*

Then, a gift from the sea dropped onto the beach one day. I was in Florida for a convention and had about an hour before putting on a suit for the grueling daylight to midnight, three-day convention. I was walking along the beach and the sky was a brilliant blue. Not a cloud to be seen. The sound of seagulls and the gentle lapping of the water would create serenity for most people. But that day I was frustrated because I felt stuck in the business.

Although we had some big wins, like having Michael Gerber and Zig Ziglar on my stage, I hadn't been able to leverage those events to gain momentum. I knew I could have a thriving coaching business that could benefit a lot of people. Those that were involved with us were getting results. There just weren't enough of them to build a business. I had seen other people build large coaching businesses, but I wasn't sure how to do it.

People liked my programs, and they seemed to like what I had to say. I just hadn't been able to turn it into the business I really dreamed of. That business had become *another* "job." I knew I needed systems like the first business I built, but I couldn't seem to get traction. I couldn't seem to grow the sales to the level needed to hire a team.

I came to the seashore searching for a gift - a gift from the sea that I had received many times in the past. The beauty of the seashore always seemed to give me the gift of inspiration and creativity I needed to sooth whatever was ailing me. But not today. Today, I found myself pacing rather than strolling. I was even talking out loud to myself. “I’ve *got* to find *someone* that has been where I want to go, or at least *witnessed* someone else who has done it.”

I only had about 45 minutes to walk the beach before the convention began. I wasn’t looking forward to the show because I knew what was going to happen. I would spin my wheels once again.

I challenged myself out loud “WHO CAN HELP ME?” Even though I knew Michael and Zig at the time, I didn’t know them very well, and I felt like they were out of reach (oh, ye of little faith). I scanned my mind for names. “No, I’m not sure I can trust that person ... No, that one doesn’t have the values I have... no, no, no.” Then my cell phone rang. Should I answer it? I only have a half an hour to be outside. I don’t want to waste precious time. I *need* a breakthrough, and I need it *now*.

It's Mark Ehrlich. I met him through Michael Gerber when Michael spoke at my conference in Houston a few months before. When he and Michael arrived at Bush airport in Houston, it was a cold January day and they were both wearing long black coats. And Michael wore a black hat.

As Mark introduced himself with a serious look, he handed me his business card. “CHIEF NEGOTIATOR FOR MICHAEL E. GERBER.” With a title like that, I figured just being *around* him would cost me money! Mark was someone I didn’t want to even get *near*. I answered the phone. “This is Howard Partridge...”

“Howard, it’s Mark. I’m here representing a speaker at the convention...”

“Hey Mark,” I answered.

“Howard, I would like to get together with you to see how you’re doing...”

“Mark, the convention is about to start, and I’m trying to get some beach time in before I have to go in and get dressed.”

“Well, okay, but I would really like to talk to you. I think we could do some cool things together. Why don’t you come up to the restaurant so we can chat?”

“Mark, you don’t understand, this is the *only* time I have to be on the beach this entire convention...”

As I was stating these words, it began to dawn on me that Mark might be my “gift from the sea.” I had no idea how true that would become. “Okay Mark, why don’t you come out to the beach? We’ll grab some beach chairs and sit and talk.”

“I’m not dressed for the beach” Mark quipped. “I’m wearing black dress shoes, black pants, and a black shirt. Not exactly beach attire.” I’m thinking to myself, “Who comes to the beach dressed like *that*?”

“Okay Mark, tell you what, there’s a little tiki bar near the building and they have some chairs and umbrellas. I’ll meet you up there. That way, I can still have my toes in the sand and you can be in the shade. And, by the way, *take your shoes off!* You’re at the BEACH for crying out loud!”

“Okay, okay, Howard” he chuckled.

We talked for a while and he agreed to attend one of my sessions to see how I performed. Time to leave the beach and say goodbye to the man in black.

The next day, I welcomed the scattered group of attendees into the breakout session and began to teach. Mark was still wearing black (I’m sure it was a new, clean set) and he sat in the corner at the back of the room. He rarely looked up during the presentations. He was writing the whole time. Working on something, I supposed. No affirmations. No nods. Head down, writing. The entire time.

At the end of the session, he closed his black book and started heading for the door. *Not* toward me. I caught up with him right outside the door. “How was it?” I asked anxiously.

“I’ve got 4 pages of notes” he replied gruffly. “GREAT!” I said to myself. Then he finished his sentence “of things you *should* have done, but *didn’t* do!”

“Like what?” I answered, not believing what I was hearing.

“Tell you what,” he continued, “meet me for breakfast at my suite tomorrow and we’ll go over it.”

I was anxious to hear the strategies the mysterious man in black had for me. The suite had a big terrace overlooking the water where we could talk without interruptions. It was a brilliant morning. The sky was blue, and it was just warm enough without being hot and sticky, and the gentle breeze coming from the water was refreshing as it flowed across my warm skin. With a stack of pancakes and Eggs Benedict in front of me, I encouraged Mark to begin.

“Tell me about your dreams,” he said. I spent a little while sharing my vision with him and for the first time I saw him get excited. “Wow, that’s a great vision.” He said. He continued to ask me questions about my relationship with Zig Ziglar (which was limited at that time. Zig had spoken on my stage and I had failed to follow up on that relationship.) He asked me about my relationship with Michael Gerber. It was basically the same. No real relationship there. He asked me about my clients, and my other business, my family, and everything *other* than telling me what I could do differently to get my business growing.

But I sensed the man sitting across the table, wearing black again, of course, could help me. When we were done I mustered up the courage to ask him how much he would charge to help me. He shared the figure. After I swallowed the lump in my throat, I had a decision to make. I thought about how valuable my future *could* be if I reached my dream. I thought about how much was potentially on the line and the fact that I didn’t have other prospects to help me. My entire future might depend on this moment. What did I have to lose? I had wasted lots of money on many things in the past that didn’t work. I *had* to take the chance.

“Okay” I said.

Gary Keller says, “accountability is the breakfast of champions.” I had no idea that the breakfast I had with Mark Ehrlich that day would become *the* breakfast that launched major league, championship level accountability into my life.

The man in black began to sit in the back corner of my seminars and conferences with his little black notebook. After every event, he asked me *why* I didn’t do this or that. We agreed on certain things that should be done



and I met with him over the phone every week for an accountability call. Every week he berated me for not doing what I needed to do. Once I had done a program in Pennsylvania and I decided to drive through Princeton, New Jersey, on the way to see my in-laws who live in New Jersey. It was a crisp, sunny morning and I imagined myself stopping for a cappuccino and strolling along the little shops in Princeton, but instead I was on the phone with my “tormentor,” as I began to lovingly call Mark. He railed on me as the gorgeous views passed by. Instead of getting a cappuccino, I got a butt whipping by Mark.

Mark knew exactly what I needed. He knew how to hold me accountable. Because of accountability I got better. I established a strong relationship with Ziglar and became their exclusive small business coach. Michael Gerber became a personal friend. And my business grew exponentially. Not just in revenues and profits, but it became a rich, loving community that changed my life, and that is changing lives across the world.

So, what happened? I had someone to hold me accountable. Yes, I needed support. Yes, I needed encouragement, but what I needed and what I got from the “tormentor in black” was the gift of accountability. The gift from the sea was the gift of accountability.

With coach Mark’s encouragement, I followed up on my relationship with Ziglar and as a result was featured in the last chapter of Zig’s last book, became the exclusive small business coach for Ziglar, and the very first Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainer in the world.

Tom Ziglar and I began to travel the world sharing Zig’s wisdom along with my business systems. We even got to speak at Cambridge University together. Remember I didn’t even go to college.

The business owners that are in The Howard Partridge Inner Circle Coaching Program are from every kind of industry imaginable. Currently, there are over 100 different industries represented. This is my fifth published book, and I’ve got a whole bunch more in me.

My conferences have featured not only Zig Ziglar and Michael Gerber, but also John Maxwell, Darren Hardy and Rudy Ruettiger, and the business growth and life change that’s happening in our coaching community is what we affectionately call “Better than Phenomenal.”

My service company continues to grow, and I have a phenomenal

team that takes care of that business. The thing I love more than anything is watching my young leaders grow. Santiago, Johann, and Aliko are super smart, they work hard, and they love to win. Of course my former partner Scott looks after the finances and keeps us super profitable.

We're blessed to have a phenomenal, hard working team at Phenomenal Products, too. The wisdom of head coach Rick Jones, who was with Dale Carnegie for 33 years and owned the Houston franchise, is a master trainer. He has been serving us for about five years now. My assistant and Operations Manager, Michelle, gets me around the world without a hitch. The marketing NINJA, Victoria, keeps all my marketing stuff running smoothly. And Daena, our newest addition we call *The Grasshopper*, is the most promising 18-year-old I've ever seen.

Denise and I are closer than ever, and we're so blessed with so many beautiful relationships. We've been able to reach some of our biggest goals and dreams in life, but most important, we seek to be closer to God every day and to honor Him.

My goal is to be a phenomenal example in all seven areas of life and all five areas of business – to pave the way for others to stop being a slave to their business, so they can live in freedom every day.

I have a poster in my study with a quote from John Wesley that says “Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, for as long as you ever can.”

I believe that if I become the person God called me to be, I can do that. And the result is that I'll have the life God wants me to have.

The same is true for you.

I hope this story inspires you and that you learn the simple systems of success, and that you find the right coaching community that will help you become the person you were created to be so that you can do the things you are called to do, so that you will have the life you were created to have.

Now... on to the next phenomenal success story...

## Chapter Four

### Why Are You In Business? – John Michailidis

Business is hard.

As a small business owner you know that better than anyone else on the planet. At least as an employee you can leave the job behind when the whistle blows, but as a small business owner — chief cook, bottle washer, janitor, marketer, salesperson, bookkeeper, delivery boy, mail-opener, etc. — your responsibilities don't end when the clock hits five. Yours is a 24/7/365 existence — that is, unless you make a conscious effort to design your business to be an empowering complement to your life, rather than a drain on it.

And the toll small business ownership can take, if you allow it to, reaches far beyond you personally. It can have detrimental effects on your relationship with your wife, husband, or significant other. It can create a seemingly insurmountable barrier between you and your children. And, it can become such a dominant part of your life that outside friendships and social relationships can become all but nonexistent.

Yes, small business ownership is hard, but, thankfully, rather than being an all-consuming drain on your life, it can become the all-empowering fuel to a richer, expanded, more abundant existence — all you have to do is commit to making it so, and then follow through on your commitment. Oh, and there is one more thing — *you have to build a team* (more on that later).

#### *About John – by Howard Partridge*

*The first time that I can remember sitting down with John, was in the dining room of a Hilton Garden Inn in Sarasota, FL. We were talking about him joining my coaching program, and the more he talked, the more I told myself that we might not be the best fit for him. Property Management didn't seem like the right fit for us. But boy was I wrong!*

*Not only did I learn that he would be a great asset to our community, I learned that his heart is as big as his personality. When you get to know him personally, you'll know what I mean. He's this big, unreserved, outspoken guy that loves Jesus. Yes, this is a guy that I could get along with – and debate and argue with!*

*Only time would tell how close that relationship would be. I got a front row seat to the ministries John supports, and lo and behold, God sent him the sweetest woman in the world to be his wife. And I got to be the best man.*

*John is smart, kind, and once you get past his big personality, you'll find a great big teddy bear. He is a man I'm proud to call friend and brother in Christ.*

However, none of this is ever going to happen for you unless and until you choose to come to terms with the answers to these questions:

- Who am I?
- What do I stand for?
- What are my true priorities?
- Why am I in business?
- Why am I in this particular business?
- What is the legacy I wish to leave behind?

When you are able to sincerely answer these questions, not with the politically correct, pat answers that society and the media want you to buy into, but with the true answers that resonate in the core of your being, only then will you be on a path to fulfill your true life's mission, so that rather than being an all consuming burden, your business is transformed into the empowering vehicle for self-actualization that it can and should be.

Believe it or not, what I am talking about here is leadership. Effective, profitable, and empowering businesses are businesses that lead! They lead their employees and they lead their customers. They are leaders amongst their vendors and suppliers. They are leaders amongst their industry peers, and they are leaders in their community. That said, a business is nothing in and of itself and cannot do anything in and of itself. A business is nothing but a group of people, so for a business to lead, its people must lead, and for its people to lead, they must have a leader.

**Guess what, small business owner — that leader is you!**

In light of what I just said, and circling back to my opening comment, “Business is hard,” we can infer that the reason business is hard is that, *leadership is hard!* Have you been chasing business success when in fact you should be chasing *leadership success*? If you are at all like me, then the answer is clear — guilty as charged! So, what are you to do about it? And, what exactly do we mean by *leadership*, anyway? Before moving on, let's

define exactly what we mean by leadership.

At its core, leadership is nothing more than the ability to influence. You can exercise leadership over yourself — which is often called self-discipline — and you can exercise leadership over others — the more traditional view of leadership. Again, your ability to lead is nothing more than your ability to influence both yourself and others. Now, let's look at what it means to *influence*.

Influence implies *action*. To influence is to *precipitate a cause of action* — think of it as the spark that leads to something more. So, if leadership is your ability to influence, and if influence is the ability to cause actions, then — *Leadership is the ability to cause yourself and others to take action*.

But, wait! There's more!

A critical question to ask at this point is, “Exactly what actions are we talking about?” Intuitively you know that leadership is not about inspiring random acts — we are not seeking to influence ourselves and others to go out and engage in random chaos! Somehow, you already understand that leadership is about *directed action* — leadership is about influencing yourself and others to take *specific* actions in order to achieve *desired outcomes*.

Now we are getting somewhere! Let's recap:

- Leadership is about influence.
- Influence is about creating a ‘spark’ that causes yourself and/or others to take action(s).
- The specific actions taken are meant to lead to a desired outcome.

So, as a small business owner, YOU are responsible for influencing the actions of yourself and others, so as to achieve desired business goals. That said, only a fool stops there. You have a responsibility to *lead* within your family, community, church, and anywhere else you hope to have influence, and while we are going to focus primarily on business from here

on-out, don't forget that you have a responsibility to lead in ALL areas of your life — family, health, fitness, spiritual, social — and not just in business.

So, now that we know what leadership is, the next logical question is, “How do you do it?”

How do you get people to take action?” In truth, there are only three ways:

- By example — people watching what you do and emulating it.
- With words — clearly articulating a vision that gets buy-in from others.
- By force — threatening people into doing what they do not want to do.

Since we are coming at this from the mindset of enriching people's lives and lifting them up, not keeping them down, we will reject the use of force as a legitimate leadership tool and focus on leadership through words and deeds only. What I want you to realize is that positive, life-enriching leadership is really all about *effective communication* — through words and deeds.

So, why is leadership primarily about effective communication? Because, effective communication is the only way to influence anyone. Think about it — if you do nothing and say nothing, how are you going to influence anyone? Only by getting out there and mixing it up with people can you influence outcomes, change lives, and achieve your goals.

***Leadership, in a business context, is about effectively communicating your vision to others — employees, current and prospective customers, vendors, industry peers, community leaders (anyone from whom you will need buy-in and cooperation in order to achieve your vision) — through your example and words, in order to influence and achieve specific, desired outcomes.***

Remember the six questions I asked earlier? The six questions that you must honestly answer and come to terms with if you are to become an

effective leader in your business and your life:

- Who am I?
- What do I stand for?
- What are my true priorities?
- Why am I in business?
- Why am I in this particular business?
- What is the legacy I wish to leave behind?

How, you might ask, do these questions tie into our discussion of leadership? Truthfully, the tie-in is fundamental to your success as a leader, for without answering them with brutal honesty, you can never reach your full potential as a leader. Why is this? Well, if leadership is, “Effectively communicating your vision to others in order to influence and achieve specific, desired outcomes,” how can you possibly be a good leader unless you have worked out in advance exactly what it is that you stand for and hope to achieve? And, the answer to the first question — “Who am I?” — is the most fundamental of all. Let’s use myself as an example as we move through these questions, so you can get a thorough overview of the process.

### **1. Who am I?**

Lest you believe that this was an easy question for me to answer, let me tell you that it took me nearly FIFTY YEARS before I came up with an answer that truly satisfied. Now granted, you are probably a lot smarter than I am, so it probably won’t take you nearly as long, but I want to stress that the answer to this question is not something to be glossed over — take your time and really think it through. By the way, I’m not going to give you my one sentence answer, because I don’t want to influence you in coming up with your own, but I will walk you through the thinking process.

If you are anything like me, your list is likely to include such things as: Christian, entrepreneur, attorney, economist, paratrooper, writer, pilot, martial artist, husband, son, brother, family man, friend, employer, trainer, philanthropist — these types of answers relate to things you do, or things you've done. They relate to *roles* that you play, or have played.

Other answers may include: stubborn, intelligent, practical joker, emotional, boisterous, strategic, impatient, restless, generous, aggressive, imperfect — these types of answers relate more to your *personality* traits. They relate to ways you tend to *act*. In the context of leadership, it is very important that you understand who you are and who you are *not*.

For example, I am a thinker. I am a doer. I am a — *get it done and take names later* — kind of guy. I tend to bowl people over. I tend to give short, curt answers. I tend to be on task and critical of distractions (unless, of course, I am causing the distractions, in which case they are fine). I AM NOT THE IDEAL CUSTOMER SERVICE TYPE PERSON. I tend to get aggravated when I don't get what I want, and I tend to show my aggravation — not the best personality type for regularly dealing with tenant and owner problems. (I own a residential property management business in Sarasota, FL).

I am really good at thinking through processes and systems for running my business and setting the direction and tone of the business. I am good at visualizing the business operationally, and then putting the people and processes into place that make it happen, but I am NOT the guy who should be on the phone addressing customer service issues — it's NOT what I am good at. Sure, I can fake it really well from time to time, but to have me in a customer service role, day in and day out would be a disaster, which is why I hire people who are far better at it than I could ever be. I'm just not wired as a fuzzy-wuzzy kind of guy, so I hire fuzzy-wuzzy type people to fill in my gaps.

And therein lies a big clue to effective leadership, and the reason why it is so important for you to answer the question of who you are truthfully, warts and all. Let's reverse things and say that you are the best customer service type person that ever lived — you love to spend your days on the phone solving maintenance issues and answering questions.



On the other hand, let's say that you hate making sales calls, and making tough decisions with respect to day-to-day operations keeps you up at night. In that case, you had better hire a top-notch salesperson and a *nitty-gritty* type general manager to fill in the gaps left by your *fuzzy-wuzzy* type personality.

You can be a successful leader no matter who you are, but you must know exactly who you are before you can begin to surround yourself with the right types of people to lead. In case you hadn't guessed it, this is where effective *team-building* comes in.

## **2. What do I stand for?**

A leader has to stand for something. A leader has to have a rallying cry around which to rally his troops. These are your core values. These are your core beliefs. These are the lines that you absolutely will not cross, no matter what enticements you are offered. These are the things that you will do, even if it means cutting into profits, or losing a key account. These are the things that you teach your people to be and do. These are the things you reward.

They should not be kept secret. These are the things that should be etched on the hearts and minds of the people you work with. These are the things you should talk about regularly and often. These are the things that should be emblazoned on your walls for everyone to see. These are the things that should be *acted upon everyday, by everyone on your team — especially you.*

To be clear, it's not about clever slogans — it's about *living* it every day. By word and deed, for all to see and hear. There should be no doubt about what you, and by extension your company, stand for.

The easiest way for me to show you what I mean is to point you to a page on my company website, which pretty much says it all for us:  
[www.rpmSaraMana.com/our-big-why](http://www.rpmSaraMana.com/our-big-why)

## **3. What are my true priorities?**

This is an area in life where people really get off track. So much so that it has become cliché — nobody’s last words were ever, “I wish I’d have spent more time at the office.” I hate to break it to you, but my business is NOT the most important thing in my life.

My business is a vehicle to enhance my life, not a master to enslave it. Everything that my business does for me, it does so that I can do *something else*. That *something else* is what is really important to me. I suggest that if you have not done so already, that you find your *something else*.

#### **4. Why am I in business?**

Which leads us to our next question, which is very much related to the last one. Do you know why you are in business for yourself? Why not a nice, cushy, corporate job with full “bennies,” paid vacation, sick-days, and a matching 401k? Is working for yourself something you really want to do, or have you somehow just fallen into it, so that’s the way it is? This is something you’ll have to think through for yourself — my role here is simply to get you thinking.

#### **5. Why am I in this particular business?**

As we continue the drill-down, and assuming you have worked through the general question of why you are in business, this is the next logical question. Are you in your current field because it is a great business that is a great match for you, or might you be better at running an answering service, or restaurant?

There is much truth to the saying, “Business is business.” Every business on the planet, no matter its size, and no matter the industry, all deal with the same issues: leadership, marketing, sales, operations, and administration. Once you understand the interconnectedness of these five areas of business, it’s a skill that can be transferred to any business. So ask yourself, “Are you really meant to be a widget manufacturer, or might something in the arts be a better fit?” Think it through, because your life is not set in stone. You can change course whenever you like.

Whatever business you choose, it is important for you to think through your “why” with respect to that particular business. “My daddy did it, and my daddy’s daddy did it,” may not be the best answer. Until you really know

exactly why you are in the particular business you are in, and are able to articulate it well to others, you won't be able to attract the best — “Mercedes Benz” — customers and employees, because you won't radiate the certainty and confidence that a true leader gains from having a crystal clear vision for their business.

## 6. What is the legacy I want to leave behind?

Legacy — *a thing handed down to generations to come*. When was the last time you put some real thought into building your legacy? Have you ever sat down and *mapped* out the legacy you wish to leave behind for your family, community, and the world? Why not?

Notice that I assumed you are like most small business entrepreneurs (and my apologies and kudos to you if thinking about and planning for your legacy is something that you have put serious time into) and assumed that legacy, if it's there at all, is but a distant whisper in the back of your mind.

The more likely response from harried small business owners is something like, “Legacy? You want me to think about legacy! I've got payroll to make . . . my key employee just quit . . . my truck just broke down . . . my sub-contractor didn't show up . . . the bank just called . . . my wife is mad at me . . . and my computer was just hacked! Are you crazy? You want me to think about LEGACY?!?!”

Yes, my friend, legacy is exactly what I want you to think about. Want to fire up your business — start thinking about your legacy. Want to rekindle your marriage — start thinking about your legacy. Want to make a meaningful contribution to your community — start thinking about your legacy.

Not only do they have a crystal clear vision of who they are, what they stand for, and why they stand for it, but effective leaders know exactly what it is that they wish to leave behind, which is what drives them to build, and grow, and improve their lives and the lives of the people around them. Not only do they, “know, that they know, what they know,” but effective leaders clearly articulate their vision to those around them, which in turn inspires those others to consider their own legacies, which in turn inspires even more others, and on it goes, which is what leadership is all about!

So, what does it all mean? In Shakespeare's, *Hamlet*, Polonius gives us the first essential building block to becoming an effective leader. As he famously says, "To thine own self be true." To be an effective leader you must be true to yourself, because only then can you be true to others. There is only one *you*. A great and wonderful *you*, made wholly in the image of God, with a great and wonderful *purpose* awaiting you — ***never, ever forget that***. Your job is to discover that purpose, nurture it, and then share it with others.

Don't try to act like anyone but yourself. Know who you are, which means that you must accept the fact that you are imperfect, and have weaknesses. Embrace this truth. Accept it. Your followers will respect you for it, because they know it whether you care to admit it or not. Be humble, be honest, be human.

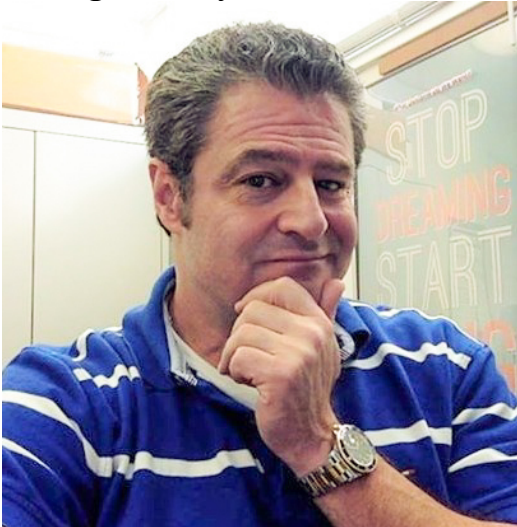
Also know that this same thing is true for everyone else — each and every one of your employees, family members, peers, and neighbors has both strengths and flaws. The key to effective leadership is to knit together a group of people whose strengths and weaknesses offset and bolster one another's and, when combined, forms just the right mix to carry out the vision you lay out before them. Johnny is an outgoing and aggressive type with a strategic-thinking side, and Cherie is a compassionate nurturer who wants to take care of people.

Roxanne is a polite and reserved analytical who likes to dot all of the i's and cross all of the t's. That's not a bad mix for, let's say, a property management company. Use these differences to your advantage. Base your hiring decisions on this reality. It is much easier to put a square peg into a square hole and a round peg into a round hole than it is to try to reshape either the peg, or the hole.

Once you have the right mix of people in place it is your job as leader to inspire, coach, support, and *love* them. Yes, I used the "L" word! No matter how many times it is said, it is always worth saying again, "People don't care what you know until they know that you care about *them*." In the end, it's all about the things you've shared and the people you touch.

Nothing, and I mean *nothing*, else matters.

*John Michailidis, GRI, JD is the Managing Member of Real Property Management of Sarasota and Manatee, a residential leasing and property*



*management company based in beautiful Sarasota, FL. Mr. Michailidis is a licensed attorney, and graduate of the Northwestern University School of Law in Chicago. He has counseled, mentored, taught, and represented countless real estate professionals and investors throughout his career and is a recognized speaker, educator, and author on the subjects of real estate and personal development. Besides spending*

*time with his wife and engaging in various philanthropic activities, he is passionate about encouraging fellow business owners to view their businesses as an opportunity to build a lasting legacy within their communities that both uplifts and inspires others. He firmly believes that “giving back” should be a line item on every legacy business’ P&L. He can be reached at (941)225-8183*

## Chapter Five

### What Are YOU Willing to DO for Your Dream? – Jeremy and Stefanie Overturf

What are you willing to do to reach your goals? Do you know where you want to go? What are you willing to change to get there?

Everyone in this book has had to overcome some major obstacles, get out of their comfort zone, and make big changes. I can write that with complete confidence, without even having read the rest of this book yet. How do I know? Because it's a book about leadership, success, and transformation, and you won't have much of any of those if you're not willing to change.

My leadership journey starts when I attended my first business development conference in Nashville back in 2012 when I was 33 years old. A man named Howard Partridge, a man who I didn't know at all at the time except for the many ads I received and a few videos I had watched online, held the event. I came in very skeptical. That event would come to change my life. How? What led me to that room at that time of my life?

I didn't know much about leadership at the time, I hadn't had many good role models up to that point. My father's example of solving problems involved anger and berating me. Our arguments often ended in his becoming violent. Many of the companies I had worked for in the small town I grew up in had bosses that were poor leaders with short tempers.

#### *About Jeremy and Stephanie – by Howard Partridge*

*My hero, the late Zig Ziglar, always wished he could personally get to know every person he met. I watched as people had to be pulled away from Zig because Zig wanted to keep talking to them. But the fact is that when you have hundreds or thousands of people following you, sadly, you just can't get to know them all on a personal level.*

*Jeremy and Stefanie have been quietly participating in our community for several years. I know them and I've always liked them. But they kind of hung quietly in the background, from my perspective.*

*Little by little, step-by-step, they began to implement my systems. Stefanie became a phenomenal networker and referral marketer in her community, and I learned that Jeremy was a voracious reader and had an entrepreneur's heart. They continued to grow and get better.*

*But I had no idea about their personal story. Like Zig, I wish I could sit down and learn about each and every person that follows us. As you read their story, you might want to reach for a box of tissues.*

Topping all this off by living out in the country in rural Southern Illinois, being very poor, and being part of a strict, high-control religion didn't exactly make me one of the popular kids. The religion taught me that leadership was by position and was not to be questioned. They instructed my parents that my sister and I were not to even consider going to a university.

They told them and the rest of their followers not to pursue any kind of career or build retirement savings because the end was coming any day now, and all resources including time and money, should go towards the church. Many hours were required each week to be spent going door to door to stranger's homes and many more hours were spent at religious meetings. We were not to have close friends or even be close with relatives that were not members of the religion. I was totally indoctrinated from birth and was baptized at age 9. At a young age I had developed very low self-esteem, depression, and a short fuse.

Not surprisingly, by age 22 I was still living at home, very depressed and without much of a future to look forward to. One night after an argument my dad told me I had to leave, so while him and my mother were at Bible study, I threw some clothes in my car, my uncashed check from my job for about \$150, two \$10 rolls of quarters to buy gas, and a box of cereal because I didn't know where my next meal would be coming from.

I did have a car and a cell phone thankfully, so I called one of my friends in town to see if I could stay there. No answer. At that point I made one of those life-altering decisions. An acquaintance of mine had just moved into an apartment in St. Louis, Missouri with a roommate, about 2 hours away. It would mean leaving the small town I grew up in and everything I knew to go to the city. I called him and asked if I could crash there.

Little did I know I would be sleeping on the living room floor of that tiny apartment in a sleeping bag for the next year. People would come in and out, staying up all hours of the night watching TV and stepping over me. I still paid 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the rent and expenses, even though all I had was a little 3x8 spot on the floor. Everything I owned was either in my car or the bottom drawer that my acquaintance let me use.

The low wage job that I was able to get fixing cash registers barely left me enough to buy any groceries. I'm very grateful that some of the stores I worked in would let us grab a free snack while we were working; otherwise, there were many meals I had to go without. (I have since made up for the meals I missed, maybe a little too much.) That year was a rough one,

but the freedom was worth it. The city was exciting and everything was new to me.

I'll never forget the feeling of joy I had the following year when I was able to get my very own bed. My self-taught computer skills had helped me land a job as a data analyst with more money than I had ever made before, so my roommates and I got a bigger apartment, and I got my very own room and my very own bed.

Life got much better those next few years. I bought a house and in 2003 got married to my amazing wife, Stefanie. Life brought us to the West Coast of Florida where Stefanie is from. We bought a beautiful house, we lived near the beach, and we even got a dog. Stefanie attained a job in marketing for the local newspaper; I was working from home for the same company I had been working at in St. Louis. We were still a part of the religion of my childhood, so we were able to quickly make friends of the same religion in this new state. Life was good.

As you may remember, around 2008, the country faced a great recession, and Florida was hit especially hard. Stefanie was laid off from her job, and I too was out of work. The housing bubble burst around this same time, and our home value dropped in half. We suddenly had this big mortgage with no income and a house we couldn't sell.

We decided to start a small service business in late 2008, just the two of us, because we desperately needed the income. We battled through, coming very close to losing our home during that time, so we were happy to squeak by, barely paying the bills each month. This was very disheartening to me, since I had vowed to myself not to be broke again after those days in that small apartment.

Although being an entrepreneur was something I had done off and on in the past and loved, this particular business didn't get me excited to get up and go to work every morning. We worked hard what seemed like all hours, we fought, and we were still broke. It was just something to get us by.

That was the frame of mind I was in when I stepped foot into that conference. When they say live events can change your life, I never bought into that. I probably wouldn't have even gone if Stefanie hadn't won tickets to the event. Plus it was in Nashville; a few hours from where my parents lived so at least I could visit them while we were in the Midwest.



Now I was and still am a huge student of personal development. A friend loaned me a set of Zig Ziglar cassette tapes when I was 18 and I haven't stopped listening to Zig and others like him since. Frankly, those tapes helped me keep going through a lot of those hard times. He helped me see that life could be better. I've always been a voracious reader, especially when it comes to business and personal development. But I never saw the need for live events until that day.

Howard had us do a few exercises that day that I will never forget. One was to describe your perfect day. Now my dream day wasn't anything crazy, it involved spending time with my wife, going to Disney World, having some crab legs for dinner. The thing that got me was, I hadn't taken the time to dream in a long time. I was so caught up in a day-to-day struggle for survival that I didn't dare think about better possibilities. Before I had thought: Why dream just to be disappointed?

Dreaming that day had awoken something inside of me. I've been dreaming ever since, and my dreams keep getting bigger. What "could be" now inspires me to do what I need to do today. Dreaming can open up a lot of new possibilities for someone who has been under the influence of a high control group their whole life.

Exercise two was to write your sales goal for that year. I had never done that before. My only sales goal prior to that was to buy groceries for that week! So I went big...I wrote down \$100,000. Then Howard encouraged us to really stretch it and think bigger, so I thought, "What the heck", scratched it out and wrote \$150,000. Remember, Stefanie and I were indoctrinated that money was evil, so was having a real career, and that the end would be here any day. \$150,000 was more money than I could even conceive having, so writing it down I might as well have written \$1 billion down.

Howard has these coaches going around the room to help you with the worksheets if you have any questions. Mark Ehrlich, this brilliant consultant whom I have come to admire very much, walks up to our table to look at our goals.

"What's that?" Mark says.

"That's my goal for 2012."

"It's supposed to be your sales goal, not your personal income goal."

“That *is* my sales goal.”

“That’s not even enough to pay yourself. It needs to be way bigger.”

“Wow,” I thought. “I don’t know if I’m supposed to be here. I don’t know if I could do that.”

Stefanie and I started meeting all these successful business owners there, with businesses very much like ours, except they were making money. I started having my usual feelings of insecurity but now they started to battle with feelings of “if they can do it, so can we.”

I left that conference a different person. A person with dreams who was determined to succeed.

Inspired, I was still skeptical and left without taking it any further. Plus, there was a moral dilemma, since the religion and the people we knew in it would look down on this. But a burning voice in my head told me I needed to do more. So after much discussion, Stefanie and I dove in, charged up our credit cards, and bought a coaching package from Howard a month later.

We immediately started implementing as much as we could as fast as we could. I have always been driven; I had just lost hope for a while. Now my passion was in full force.

About eight months after that first conference we hired our first employee. We were running our company out of our house at the time, so there were some challenges with that. Our first employee was a young guy, a fellow church member, very immature, and as much as I tried, I wasn’t a very patient teacher. A few months later we hired a second employee, replacing the first. This pattern continued for about a year, as we had a carousel of employees that didn’t work out. My leadership as a trainer wasn’t the only issue, my leadership in choosing the right people was lacking as well.

We decided to try a staffing service, since we hadn’t developed the skills to find people at this point. We ended up getting a great guy that stayed with us over the next year and helped us build a solid foundation we could grow on. Now we were in an office, and as we got some stability out

of that first position, we were able to add more people. We were able to write out procedures for what that first guy did every day so we could duplicate him.

This is when it started to be more apparent to me that I needed to work on my leadership skills. I was getting better at dealing with employees, but I was just dealing with them, we weren't quite a team yet.

Howard introduced me to the teachings of John Maxwell, who is considered one of the top leadership experts in the world. I started reading as many of his books as I could get ahold of, and was even able to meet him and hear him speak live. I learned how having a title and bossing people around isn't real leadership, but real leadership is having influence with others.

Some things we implemented include having a weekly team breakfast. Eating a meal together really bonds people. We've learned (and are still learning) how to use personality profiles, like DISC, to communicate better with each other and with our clients.

Now, I'm by no means a perfect leader. I'm still learning that my way is not always best and that my driven style isn't a match with everyone else's personality. However, I'm happy to say that my way of working with others has greatly improved. I've done a lot of work on myself to be more patient, to listen better, and not to react right away until I've heard all sides of the story.

I'm very proud of the great team we have. We all enjoy working together. We've developed some wonderful systems to keep a close group and to find the right people that fit with our work culture. I've learned to find people that are strong in skills I am weak in, and to butt out of their strong areas, which isn't always easy.

We've experienced tremendous growth in our company due to this wonderful team, and from creating systems to make sure our clients are all treated like VIPs. Our local Chamber of Commerce awarded us the Small Business of the Year in 2015, and Stefanie and I have been blessed to win many individual awards as well as company awards as we grow. We've been able to mastermind and network with thought leaders and leaders in business, meet and learn in person from people like Howard Partridge, John Maxwell, Darren Hardy, Kyle Wilson, Mark Victor Hansen, Tom Ziglar,

Michael Gerber, and so many more. I have a list of others I can't wait to meet.

Our company performs work for celebrities, CEOs of major companies, and politicians. We spend quality time with the caliber of people I wouldn't have felt worthy of being in the same room with before. Being involved in helping those less fortunate has been a big part of our growth as well, and has helped us to think bigger, beyond our own personal needs. It hits home to us, since we were once there ourselves.

The point of this is not to brag, because I'm not any smarter and didn't have any more advantages than you. We still have challenges. In early 2015 Stefanie and I decided to formally leave that high control religion we were both raised in, and that has meant being completely shunned by most of our immediate family and all of our former friends. We even had two of our four employees at the time quit because they were in that religion. The heartache and pain of not being able to speak with or even be acknowledged by your parents or your sister is indescribable. It hasn't stopped us from moving towards our freedom and happiness though.

When I said I didn't have any more advantages than you, here are what my tremendous advantages consist of 1. Being born in America where I can work hard and start a small business and see the fruits of my labor. 2. I didn't have anything to lose, so I had no fear of failure. The more times you fail, the closer you get to success. 3. Stubbornly refusing to ever give up, no matter how bad things got. Sometimes my biggest trials came right before my biggest breakthroughs. 4. I realized the places that personal development like books, audios, coaches, and live conferences can take you. You can have anyone you want as a mentor, alive or dead, by reading and listening to what they left behind. The dreaming and goal setting that I learned at that first conference has been a big contributor to all 4 of those areas. I mean it when I say "if I can do it, you can too." So back to my first question: What are you willing to do to reach your goals?

Our chapter wouldn't be complete without hearing my lovely wife Stefanie's side of the story. Her skills in marketing and with people have taken our business to places I could have never done alone.

### **Stefanie, what shaped your early years?**

"I remember pedaling my bike like crazy down the long road back to my grandparents' home. I had spent the last three hours at my best friend's

house listening to music. I realized it was just about five in the afternoon and I probably should get back. There was no one around, not even any cars were going by, which was strange for that time of day. Have you ever felt like time stopped? You kind of glance up and look at the sky and don't really remember how you got where you were going?

“During those few minutes I remember thinking ‘I don't think there is a person in the world right now that cares where I am or what I am doing.’ I was 14 years old and living with my paternal grandparents. I had moved in with them about 3 months earlier after realizing that my mom would continue to choose men, drugs, and partying over her own children. I came home after school and packed up all my belongings and waited for my grandmother to come and pick me up. That was an extremely hard time in my life. I was so torn. I loved my mom and I didn't want to be different from my friends who lived with their parents. But what choice did I have? She was in no place to be taking care of kids.

“So there I was heading to my grandparents home. My grandma is a very caring person. She is always taking care of someone and doing something for others, putting her own needs last. I am grateful that she and my grandfather were there to take us in when we had no one else. But even as caring and concerned as they were, living with them wasn't perfect either. Under their religion, every aspect of your life is impacted by a rule or tradition that influences your decisions like marriage, higher education, your employment, and even your choice in friends.

“With my family history, being abandoned by my mother and father it was no surprise that I felt that way riding back that day. Sure my grandma would eventually wonder where I was but did I feel like someone really cared?”

### **How did this feeling impact your decisions in life?**

“My whole life I've always felt a need to make others happy and have looked for a sense of acceptance. At work, with friends, and even in relationships, I was always looking for someone to say ‘good job Stefanie’ or ‘we're so proud of you’. I missed hearing that from my parents. The good news is you can overcome it. I am here to tell you that in life you are going

to have bad things happen to you, people will leave, people will disappoint, but you can't let that affect how you feel about yourself.”

### **How were you able to overcome that?**

“Meeting Howard Partridge and his team back in 2012 was a turning point. I was in a low place. My business was not a business; it was a job that we had created for ourselves. We were doing all the work and not really making any money. Self-esteem was low and there was no energy infused in the business. At that first conference we learned the importance of implementing systems and marketing, but one of the biggest things we needed at that time was to learn to set goals. I had really never done that. Especially never written them down. This was a pivot point in my life.

We now had a choice to make...do we make this job a business or do we just keep doing what we were doing? Something to understand about Jeremy and I is that in the religion we were raised in; you don't pursue dreams or set goals for a higher income or really try to make yourself better in any way. You are encouraged to just maintain a life now and get by because your real future is in a world that hasn't yet come to exist. Anything else is being materialistic and looked down on. You can imagine that we had a big choice to make. If we decided to change our income, turn our jobs into a successful business, basically change our whole lifestyle we would have to think about the backlash from our community at church, friends and family. This would be a new Jeremy and Stefanie...completely different from them. We would be stepping out of that comfort zone that we were used to.”

### **How did you decide to move forward?**

“Have you had a moment like that in your life? I've heard it referred to as a pivot point...you know you need to make a choice, but it's going to be uncomfortable, so you make excuses not to do it until it creates a fire deep down inside of you and you can't not do it anymore?

“That's kind of what happened. We joined Howard's Inner Circle and started really implementing his systems. We saw changes right away. We had to become different people. But that was a good thing. As we grew, the business grew.”

### **What did you change in your business?**

“One of the main things that I had to implement was the Referral Source Marketing. Now, I am a very social person. I have no problem walking into a room full of people and making friends and joining conversations. But, the idea of walking into a potential referral source like a flooring store where I knew no one scared me half to death. I’m not really sure why but for some reason I was terrified.

“Every week on our POD (accountability and training phone call) our coach Santiago would ask me how many of those visits I had made. Every week the same answers, ‘I’m working on creating my list of places to visit’ or ‘I’ve gotta get labels with our name printed’ or ‘I have to get the right kind of cookies.’ Well, that is *not* what Santi wanted to hear and he didn’t let me get away with it. He kept encouraging me, and finally I got out there and I can tell you now that it’s the best thing we ever did for our business.”

### **Did it work?**

“We have built so many great relationships with our referral partners. In fact in the last four years we are proud to say that we are referred by 80% of the Flooring Retailers in our market for Floor & Fabric Cleaning! We have won numerous awards and been involved with some great local organizations and charities.”

### **What would you tell someone going through a rough time right now?**

“Thinking back now to that day riding my bike feeling like no one cared, I still get a little teary eyed...not for the me now, but the me back then. I wish I could talk to that Stefanie and tell her that everything is going to be okay. To not focus on those tough times and those things will get better.

“My husband Jeremy is amazing; he is my best friend and the best thing that could’ve ever happened to me. What I love about him is that he never lets me settle for ‘ok.’ He doesn’t let me just be mediocre. He introduced me to Zig Ziglar who has become one of my favorite people of all time. His Born to Win series literally changed my life. Jeremy has always been into self-improvement, and I feel like that is an important part of life that a lot of people miss out on. Whether you’ve had a crappy childhood like me or had a perfect white picket fence childhood you need the help of ‘the good, the clean, the pure, the powerful and the positive,’ to quote Zig.

“The bottom line is, *everyone has self-doubt*, limiting beliefs that stem from somewhere...being bullied at school or even one unintentional comment from someone in passing that, whether you know it or not has affected you.”

### **What are you working on now, and what are you most proud of?**

“Our business is always a work in progress. Even after eight years we still get questions where we look at each other and say, ‘Well that’s a new one.’ But thankfully we have built a great team and I feel like we’ve created a community. Our employees are the absolute best! We get feedback from our clients on how much they love them and our company, and that feels fantastic.

“Like the business, our lives are always changing. We will continue to have challenges or face new situations. One of my favorite quotes is by Frank Outlaw: ‘When you change your thinking, you change your beliefs. When you change your beliefs, you change your expectations. When you change your expectations, you change your attitude. When you change your attitude you change your behavior. When you change your behavior, you change your performance. When you change your performance, you change your life!’ I challenge everyone to change the way they think and just see what happens!”



*Jeremy and Stefanie Overturf own one of the largest independently owned cleaning companies in West Central Florida. They dominate the local high-end homeowner market for floor and fabric*

*cleaning out of their Bradenton headquarters. Among their various community involvements and awards, their company was recognized as the Small Business of the Year from the Manatee Chamber of Commerce in 2015.*

*Stefanie has a chapter in an upcoming book Passionistas: Tips, Tales and Tweetables from Women Pursuing Their Dreams.”*

Contact info:

Website: [www.JeremyOverturf.com](http://www.JeremyOverturf.com) Email: [info@jeremyoverturf.com](mailto:info@jeremyoverturf.com)

Website: [www.StefanieOverturf.com](http://www.StefanieOverturf.com) Email: [info@stefanieoverturf.com](mailto:info@stefanieoverturf.com)



## Chapter Six

### Completing the Circle of Business Life– Cheri Perry

*In the movie Lion King, Rafiki stood high atop Pride Rock and lifted up the newly born son of King Mufasa, to introduce him to the world. As he held Simba up for all of the animals to see, his parents beamed with pride while they imagined the young king's future... In that moment, I'm pretty sure they did not envision the many messes that Simba would encounter on his leadership journey.*

A new business owner is much like that baby lion: filled with promise and riddled with awkwardness that only time and experience can bring forth and smooth out!

#### **Our Business Circle Begins**

When my husband, Dean, and I started our first business, we only had a couple of things in mind.

- 1- BEING THE BOSS
- 2- MAKING LOTS OF MONEY

This is where the circle of business life typically starts. Making a difference, touching people's lives and legacies are usually not on the agenda; at least not right out of the gate! Our initial goals were very self-centered and they had to be! We needed the extravagant things that life had to offer: Food, clothing and shelter! We needed the cash!

We began our business journey being over confident and feeling very assured of success. Everything seemed possible and nothing appeared to be out of reach. We gave very little thought to the challenges that all business owners face. (Sound familiar?) We just got busy and then something happened; time FLEW. While we were in the middle of the journey, we didn't give much thought to the things that helped us have the strength to step out on our own and stay the course.

*About Cheri – Howard Partridge*

*Sometimes people come into your life that bring unexpected blessings. I wouldn't have guessed that Cheri Perry would become one of our most avid supporters, a phenomenal coach, and a wonderful leader in our community-based on our first in-person consultation day with Cheri and her husband, Dean.*

*The atmosphere in that meeting was thick with emotion. I would quickly learn that you could describe Cheri Perry with one word: Passionate. And that's what I love about her.*

*She is passionate about helping others. She is passionate about small business. She is passionate about your success.*

*Her Circle of Life message is a brilliant message that will inspire passion in you.*

Our parents had blessed us with examples (good and bad) and laid a strong foundation that we would build our business success on. When they began their business journey, it is safe to say that they were a bit self-centered as well, but over time they developed the wisdom necessary to leave a legacy for their children. As children, we did not always seem to HEAR what our parents had to say, but the old adage about children WATCHING what you do holds true. The wisdom of our parents, mentors, and coaches helped us to develop a much stronger and rewarding business circle!

Here are four critical elements we learned by watching our parents build their business and live their lives...

**Work Ethic-** there is no substitute for good, old-fashioned, hard work! Both of our families taught by example in this area. My parents were always the hardest working people I knew and they never complained about it. They considered it an honor to have something they enjoyed doing so much that it was worth the additional effort they put in. Dean's parents were also incredibly hard workers. While they did not own a business, they treated their positions with these same work ethic expectations that I grew up with and they expected their three boys to do the same. A person who will work full out will always find a certain sense of satisfaction, and they typically meet with success sooner than their lazier counterparts.

**Integrity-** being a man or woman of your word is very important. People need to be able to count on you to deliver what you say, in the manner in which you said you would deliver it, *and* for the price you quoted. Since integrity is often spoken of and referred to, but employed less and less in today's world, I find this character trait to be one of the most important I learned from my parents.

**Strong Service Mindset-** watching my father deliver Above and Beyond service wired me for the future. Fifteen years after my parents' business had closed, and several years into our second business, I was referred to a gentleman who actually remembered working with my dad 20 years prior. Guess what he remembered? My dad crawling under a house to assist him with figuring out a plumbing issue, even though my dad was not the plumber-but the guy he bought the parts from. A strong service mindset leaves a lasting impression on your customers AND your kids.

**Enthusiasm and Energy-** with so many people working in jobs they do not love, understanding the importance of attitude can make or break your

business circle. Having an enthusiastic and energetic attitude is a game-changing decision. Watching our parents deal with their lives and their business told a specific story- your attitude makes all the difference.

No matter how hard you work, and how well you perform your chosen line of work, there are going to be times when you feel as if you are unworthy or not up to the task of business ownership. The daily tasks and stress of business ownership take a toll on even the strongest of business partnerships. And, if we are not careful, we can end up in the place that so many businesses end up; in a place where we stop loving what we are doing and we just go through the motions. We were there and we did not like the way it felt.

Some of the areas where we struggled are listed below- maybe you can relate?

- ✓ Staffing
- ✓ Taxes
- ✓ Competition/Technology
- ✓ Accounts Receivable and PAYABLE
- ✓ Weak Leadership (OUCH!!)

The realization that WE needed to be intentional about the direction of our company was perhaps the biggest eye opener of all. All of those long lasting and legacy-clad businesses didn't just "*get there*" they were crafted-intentionally!

### **Taking a Lesson From the King**

*After Simba disobeyed his father and put his friends in danger, King Mufasa imparted some of his wisdom; "I'm only brave when I have to be. Being brave doesn't mean you go looking for trouble."*

Trying to figure out all of the life lessons in business on your own is like looking for trouble! Dean and I were fortunate to have had such a strong business background, and were able to quickly recover from many of our missteps. Over time, we settled into a place where many business owners settle - we were doing "pretty good." We were making a good living and we had a great group of team members; however, we did not have a clear path to help make *their* goals and dreams come true and to continue growing the business- we were stuck.

Dean and I wanted more out of our business and we finally arrived at a time in our life where fulfilling our needs was not our only focus: we were making the move to the meaningful part of being business owners. Each time I looked into the eyes of a staff member and realized they had dreams that had not been realized, I felt compelled to find a way to increase our business so that it was big enough to take care of the dreams of our team. If you do not want to end up living a life ‘less than’ you had imagined, part of building a legacy and crafting a dream that is big enough to involve those you love and care for is stepping well outside of your comfort zone and getting out of your own way.

### **Call In For Back Up!**

Once we decided that our dream needed to be bigger, we knew we needed some help. That help came in a variety of ways and the more we looked, the more we found (funny how that works!!). We LOVED our team and our business enough to know we needed to get out of our own way to lead our business to where it needed to grow. The leadership changes and growth in our business began with a long look in the mirror. I imagined that I had Disney’s magic mirror and it said:

Mirror, Mirror, on the wall  
Who’s the best leader of them all?  
Not me, you say? But, I’m the boss!  
I say when, I bear the cost  
Of every staff mistake and blunder;  
I keep us afloat, or we go under.  
Leadership is not position, or telling others what to do.  
The very best leader will be found HERE  
When you learn to work on you!

Leadership is funny that way- once you begin focusing on yourself, as if by magic, things begin to change all around you! Challenges and troubles do not vanish. Staffing issues do not disappear into the night. Competition and all of the other things that happen in business, will still happen and YES- you still GET to pay your taxes.

When we addressed our personal leadership, we opened the door to being able to really make a difference. That “person in the mirror” thing really does work!

## **Rolling Up Our Sleeves**

Finding the tools we needed was pretty easy, and they can be accessed by anyone who wants to invest in their personal development.

**BOOKS:** There are so many voices from the past and present that can help us overcome any obstacle or improve any area in our lives and in our businesses! Digging into these treasures and pulling out the jewels of wisdom can set us on a path to increased revenue, increased growth, and most important, increased leadership!

**CD/DVD/MP3:** Not a reader? Most of those books I mentioned can be found in different formats and technologies, so you can put the wisdom of the ages to work in your business.

**EVENTS:** Being around people who are striving for the same things you are, and working towards some of the same goals will add energy and ideas to everyone! The synergy you create when you work with likeminded people is POWERFUL... Moving both you and your business to the next level is not only possible, but also likely in the right environment.

**COACHES:** When Rafiki encourages Simba to “look again” into the pool of water, he is finally able to see who he is; his father’s son. With great coaching, we can accomplish so much more than we can on our own. Finding coaches in all areas where you desire growth is a sure-fire way to speed up the growth process. Dean and I have grown so much since we aligned ourselves with the Inner Circle. Howard, Rick Jones, Santiago, and our POD members have not only become friends, but they have helped us to enhance and grow in every area of our lives.

Today, Dean and I are enjoying the business building process. We have expanded our dreams to include as many people as we can. Whether we sell Merchant Services, Gift Cards, Training and Development tools, or whatever business owners need to thrive, we are LOVING the journey and are excited to be leaving a foundation for others to follow. In the beginning, we were looking out for Dean and Cheri, and at the start of every journey-that’s pretty normal.

*Near the end of The Lion King, we see Simba step into his greatness, forgive himself for his past mistakes, and take the necessary action to take back the Legacy his father had left for him.*

Every new business owner will find their own journey, and if they are lucky, it will be very close to Simba's.

- ✓ A bright and promising beginning
- ✓ Lessons learned and hurdles overcome
- ✓ The blessings of having friends and mentors shine a light on your true potential
- ✓ Finally taking charge and establishing your own Legacy!

Thank you for spending some time sharing a bit of our business leadership journey- completing the Circle of *Business* Life is as simple as taking all of the 'stuff' we have learned and paying it forward.

Now... *GO MAKE YOUR MARK!*

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### **TMC MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission at TMC is to provide integrity-based solutions for our clients that reduce frustration, increase their bottom line and enhance their passion for being in business.



Cheri Perry lives in Battle Ground, Wash., with Dean Perry, her husband of 26 years. Their son, Tyler Perry, is pursuing a career in aviation and is a student at Montana State University. Cheri grew up in a family business and has owned several businesses with her husband. Their current business, Total Merchant Concepts is a national credit-card processing company that provides a variety of business services to merchants and credit unions and celebrated its 20th year in

2016. The success of the Perry family business and Cheri's love of public speaking have

provided many opportunities for her to present on topics ranging from "Small Business Success" to "Passionate Partnerships." Her personal passion for excellence in service, business development, heartfelt leadership, and relationships is something she lives and loves to share. Cheri is a Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainer, John Maxwell Certified Trainer, Certified Behavioral Consultant with Jim Rohn and a Distinguished Toastmaster.

CHERI PERRY  
PO Box 821082  
Vancouver WA 98682  
Cheri@TotalMerchantConcepts.com  
www.TotalMerchantConcepts.com  
888-249-9919

## Chapter Seven

### You Can Have Everything in Life You Want - Evan Desjardins

*“You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help enough other people get what they want.”*

Few things have captivated my mind as completely as this timeless quote from one of my earliest mentors, Zig Ziglar. At a young age, my dad (an even earlier mentor) started having the family listen to Zig’s tapes in the car. I was blessed to hear this timeless wisdom over and over again so early in my life, and it helped shape who I would become in the future.

In every job or role that I’ve had, I have looked for ways to incorporate this quote into the work that I was doing. I was always looking for opportunities around me to “help other people get what they want.” It’s a beautiful blend of goals, dreams, and desire (of which I have an abundance!), and the requirement to enrich the lives of others if you want to grow to your fullest potential.

What started to both fascinate and frustrate me as I started on my path in the working world, was that I saw unlimited potential in free enterprise, but kept hitting limits to what I could achieve in any organization that I worked for. Having lived in the state of Maine my entire life, most of the opportunities for employment were with small businesses that didn’t have a lot of upward mobility. When you have big dreams and goals, you have to help a

#### *About Evan – by Howard Partridge*

*I was blessed to be the first Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainer in the world and Evan was in that first class with me. Being part of a first group of something as life changing as “ZLC” creates a special bond that I enjoy with Evan.*

*There was a role-play exercise in the class where Evan played the part of the “problem” employee that was goofing off all the time. My role was one of the co-workers that was annoyed by his constant obsession with Candy Crush. As we argued in the role-play, I continued to talk over his excuses, starting every sentence with “Dude!” “Dude! Just stop it!” “Dude, you’re annoying everyone around you!” “Dude, Dude, Dude!” So, Evan forever will be known as the “Dude” in the Inner Circle.*

*Well, Dude left that meeting and began to implement in his business and personal life like no one I’ve ever seen. He grew his business by \$500K in the first year and increased his profits. He began using what I call The Daily Time Capsule (learn about that in my book Think and Be Phenomenal), the Ziglar Planner, and began to work on not just his business, but also his personal life.*

*The result? He does 200 push-ups per day. He just had a two-week vacation without a single e-mail from his team, the result of building systems and building his team. If I were you, I would pay close attention to what Evan has to say.*



lot of people get what they want to achieve them! I'm someone that has a very decisive personality, and have spent my entire career solving computer problems in a customer service role. So, when I run into roadblocks, I look for ways to go around them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

All of these things led me to leave my full-time job with benefits to join a small technology consulting firm as a 1099 contractor. For the first time, I really felt like I had the ability to grow without limits. I was promised the world, and eventually became a critical employee in the company, helping it grow into a real business. Unfortunately, I ended up right back where I started, except the limiting factor now was the company's leadership and not growth potential. Things came to a head and my boss tried to put me in a place where the only thing that was growing was his bank account. Eventually, we had a painful parting of ways, and I decided then and there that I was never going to subject my future to the whims of a madman ever again. This is where my small business journey begins.

I knew my trade, and I knew how to hustle, but I knew nothing about owning and running a business. After my cumulative work experiences, I was at a point where I wasn't interested in working for someone else, and I had a very urgent need to put food on the table to feed my incredibly supportive wife and amazing children. I also knew that I had put in a massive amount of work and sacrifice over the past five years, and all I had to show for it was having made a dishonest person rich and the threat of legal action looming over my head. The fear, uncertainty, doubt, and anger coalesced into a force of nature inside of me - a total burning desire to channel those things and do what I felt I'd been called to do my whole life - achieve my dreams by helping as many people as possible. I've certainly learned a lot since then!

## **Lessons in Small Business**

Since starting my business in September 2010, one of the most important things I've learned is that small business is the truest and most exciting way for someone to have a big impact, lead the life they want, and help as many people as possible. In other words, it's the most successful

way that I've found to live and enact Zig's quote. The only limit is your imagination and willingness to work on your goals, and more important, to work on yourself. Small business is the ultimate expression of how you want to spend your life. By providing value to the marketplace with your own enterprise, you face the ultimate test of character and faith.

As I started out, I had all of the struggles that we have come to know and expect. Most of the clichés and movie montages that you can picture about the difficulties of bootstrapping a business from the ground up are true, so I won't bore you with them. The hardest thing to do at that stage is to just keep going, even when nothing is happening and you feel like you want to quit. This isn't the time for deep thought and lots of second-guessing. This is the time to grind out as much work as possible, as quickly as you can. In my experience, there are just certain things that you have to endure and survive to prove to the universe that you're simply not going to quit. Once you cross that threshold, interesting things start to happen. That's not to say that adjustments shouldn't be made, but more on that later.

In 2013, a lot of things happened all at once. I acquired an amazing book of business and gained the opportunity to work with some of the most incredible people in the world; both on my team, and the clients we serve every day. As part of that, I also took on an enormous amount of responsibility and my business grew far beyond my humble beginnings. I also became part of the first ever class of Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainers, which is where I first met Howard Partridge, and he said something else that completely captivated me, "Your business exists for one reason and one reason alone, to be a vehicle for your life goals." That's an idea that I could really get behind, but as I thought about it, my vehicle really needed some work.

When I was at Ziglar Headquarters (a dream come true for me!) being trained by and with some of the best people in the world, I would work all day in the sessions, and then go back to my hotel room to catch up on all of the emails that needed my attention, work on support tickets that needed my expertise, and then, to top it all off, process and send over 100 invoices because it was the beginning of the month! I had never thought of myself as

a slave to my business; after all, I was in Texas in the middle of a dream come true and I thought things were going well. Nothing had changed with my business, but something had changed in my mind and I was looking at what I was doing with fresh eyes and a new perspective. I suddenly realized that there was a better way - not just for me, but for my family, my employees, and our clients.

As the week went on and I started thinking more and more about the possibilities of what a “turn-key business” would mean in the world, I had to know more. I cornered Howard every chance I got and asked him question after question. I took furious notes in every session, hoping to capture every valuable piece of information and wisdom I could get from the speakers and teachers. What struck me by the end of the week was a theme that I heard from every one of the most successful people doing the things that I wanted to do with my life. They all said the same thing: They all had and have mentors, coaches, and elders speaking wisdom into their lives and holding them accountable to the goals that they want to achieve.

Huh.

Well, as I mentioned earlier, I’m all for getting things done as quickly and efficiently as possible, so I figure - “If the people that I expect to have all of these answers and are at the top of their game are all saying that THEY have mentors and coaches, and suggest that maybe I should get one, too,” then I tend to just listen to what they say and do what I’m told. I signed up for Howard’s small business coaching program through Ziglar, joined a community, and then the real work began.

While money is incredibly important (and “on par with oxygen for what it does,” according to Zig), freedom is what I would say is the greatest value that any business can provide. If you’re always responding to the needs of your business and constantly “having” to work day and night, feel like “only I can do XYZ,” and any other excuse you tell yourself to keep one more thing on your plate, then you are as much a slave as I was. You’re no longer the master of your time, because you’re always doing things that “you have to do” IN the business.

In the early days, I didn't think about any of these things, because it didn't really matter. I was by myself, just trying to work hard and make enough money to pay my bills. Then I started getting more clients, and then I started adding employees. When my employee count started reaching double digits and I was thinking of my business in terms of a vehicle for my life goals, suddenly a whole new expanded vision and way of thinking opened up before me. Paired with it, though, was a whole new expanded level of work to get done.

As I got started with this new philosophy of working ON my business instead of IN my business, the first idea that I bought into was the need for systems. Until that point, I just ran under the assumption that if I hired people that I knew were smart and did good work, that everything would just keep getting better. As a leader, you quickly realize (after the fact) that this isn't the case at all. Time and time again, I was reminded that people don't think exactly the way I do in every situation. Imagine my annoyance at realizing that my employees can't read my mind!

I want to share the very first system that I consciously implemented in my business, because it shows that systems don't have to be complicated to make a difference, and also illustrates that even the simplest systems can be really hard to put in place.

After a difficult string of projects ran over budget and cost me more than they made (not my recommended way to make a profit!), I decided that this would be the place to start implementing some systems. The policy that I implemented was that every single proposal that was to be sent to a client would go through my Business Manager to make sure that the math worked BEFORE we shipped the proposal. Here's the thing - if you're going to do a \$30,000 project and not make money, wouldn't it be better to just lie on the couch and watch baseball and not make money? At least then you don't have to do \$30,000 worth of work and can take it easy!

To me, the policy made total sense. If we don't know what's included in the project, what it's going to cost us internally, and what the client is

going to pay, then we shouldn't ship the proposal. Simple and easy, blue sky and sunshine for everyone, right? WRONG! My team was up in arms the first time we held a proposal and sent it back for revisions.

“We're going to upset the client!”

“You're slowing us down and keeping us from selling!”

“How are we supposed to know what it's going to cost?”

“How do we track this in our systems?”

“How do I know if these estimates are accurate when I don't have technical expertise?”

“How do I write a scope of work?”

You name it, I've heard it. I remember pacing around the office and walking around the parking lot on the phone with my headset for hours going back and forth on what we needed to do, rebuffing every reason and excuse to remove this obstacle I had put in the workflow and let things proceed as they did before. I stood my ground, and looking back, nobody on my team can even imagine doing things the “old way.”

Here's the thing. Implementing systems, processes, policies, procedures - whatever you want to call it - in a business that's already running is very hard to do. It takes determination, focus, thick skin, and time (more time than I would have ever believed) to make these things happen. However, I can also say with certainty that you are not alone. There are people that have wisdom and experience that can guide you and help you through this process. The systems don't have to be complex, nor do they have to be carved into a stone tablet. Implement, measure, iterate, repeat. As I tell my team (and myself), incremental progress is still progress, so don't be discouraged if it takes time. It WILL take time, so make sure you're learning as much as you possibly can while you wait for the harvest of your labors.

As time went on, systems became a part of our culture. I was determined to avoid falling victim to what Howard Partridge describes as “FTI - Failure To Implement.” I was “bought-in” with my time, my

thinking, and my money, which made me even more motivated to make things happen. Here's where I learned a few more lessons.

## **Beware of DRIFT**

Drift in business is your mortal enemy.

Drift is so brutal, so destructive, so *evil* that I came up with an acronym for it so I wouldn't lose sight of it as I have in the past. DRIFT is "Default Results Instead of Focused Tracking." When you think about it like that, it doesn't sound so bad. "Default results" doesn't sound like the soul-sucking terror that I'm making it out to be, but that's the trap. ***While you're drifting, you are not aware that it is happening!*** You don't know that you've been drifting until it's too late, and sometimes you find out FAR too late to make an easy correction.

Here's the real question - what is your "default result?" Let me give you a personal example. In 2013, I started a healthy eating program to lose weight and feel better. In 2014, I added a simple regime of pushups and crunches to my healthy eating program and after a year I had done almost 50,000 pushups (48,487 to be exact) - a number that even I couldn't believe.

But then, something happened. I got a little bored, I stopped writing down my numbers in my Ziglar Planner, and I stopped tracking my food and exercise totals. I came up with other "wellness" related goals that were harder to measure, like "I'll only eat unprocessed foods," or "I'll stay active during the day." Fast forward six months later and I had gained almost 20 pounds without even realizing it. Apparently, my "default result" was to eat more and move less! Here's when I began to realize just how powerful this monster is to your life and business, with this single question... If someone who had worked so hard and was so disciplined to achieve these health goals could gain almost 20 pounds while still thinking he was "fit," then what's happening in your business RIGHT NOW without you even knowing it?

DRIFT - Default Results Instead of Focused Tracking. Know your enemy, name it, and fight it every single day. But how?

The only way to combat DRIFT, and more specifically, Default Results, is with Focused Tracking. Focused Tracking means that you “Fully Understand the Numbers” (FUN, right??)! It’s time to know your revenue, your expenses, and most important, your profit (bonus lesson - record profits mean record taxes - prepare!). If you just assume that everything is A-OK without having the maturity to take on the responsibility of digging into your numbers and getting real about them, then DRIFT owns you, and you’ll be crashing on the rocks before you know what hit you.

The reason that Focused Tracking is so important is because that’s how you know that you need to make adjustments. Adjustments are the responsibility of the leadership to measure the data, identify where you are compared to where you want to be, and then to adjust as necessary. Sometimes it’s easy, and sometimes it feels like the hardest thing you’ve ever had to do in your life. One of my mentors, Ron Smith, told me that “every good business owner and every good entrepreneur comes to the point where they need to make adjustments in order to grow. Don’t fear them, embrace them as what will help you move beyond where you are now.” Let me put it to you like this - if your destination is Mexico, how soon do you want to know that you’re actually going to Alaska? And, now that you know, what are you willing to do to get back on track (notice those words - “on track?”)? Focused Tracking means knowing where you want to go, and measuring every single day to make sure that you get to your destination.

Finally, I want to close with the importance of leadership. Leadership is an area where the lessons never stop coming, typically whether you like it or not. For a long time, I believed that I was being a good leader. I was focused, hitting goals and targets, and driving major change and improvements in the organization. I was completely and totally focused on what we were doing, how we were going to be doing it, where we needed to improve, when we needed to make the changes (NOW, NOW, NOW!), and I even had a pretty compelling reason why we were doing it. The problem was that even with all of this going on, I had lost sight of a key aspect of what leadership really is. It’s not just WHAT you do, it’s WHO you do it for - and whether you’re worthy enough to be followed!

I received a phone call from one of my key managers one day, and I could tell that something was on his mind. After a brief period of small talk, he got to the point.

“How you’re treating another one of our leadership team members in meetings is making some of us uncomfortable. You’re being really harsh and it’s having an impact on all of us, not just him.”

I was quiet for a minute, as so many thoughts entered my mind. The sad truth of the matter was that I knew deep down that I was doing it, but had somehow gotten stuck in a mindset of focusing on what was being done in a way that perhaps I wouldn’t do it, instead of focusing on all of the value, loyalty, and results that this key employee was providing. I made excuses for why my terseness was justified, and was about to let a few fly, when I got the follow-up gut-punch.

“More than anything, I think he just wants his friend back.”

WOW.

It was at that very moment that I realized I had been a boss, and not a leader. I let the boss die that day, and made a vow to work on my leadership skills and bring my intensity of focus to the WHO part of the business, and not just the functional aspects of what we were trying to accomplish. I called that key employee and apologized for how he had been treated, and have worked ever since then to take steps every day to improve my leadership.

While we may never fully grow into the perfect leader, we can have a very good idea as to how our leadership is coming by thinking of John Maxwell’s famous quote on the importance of leadership. He says that “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” Not just some things, but **EVERYTHING!**



As you think about your own unique journey in business, whether it's ongoing or just an idea in your mind, remember the importance of leadership as you evaluate your life. If you're not satisfied with the performance of your team or your own financial success, then the place to look is in the mirror. How high you rise or fall is directly related to your leadership.

I believe that there has never been a better time in all of human history to start a business and live your dreams. The tools, resources, and potential customers are global, and the only limit is your imagination and willingness to put these things to work for you. Get out there and help a whole lot of people get everything in life that they want, and I guarantee that you'll be opened up to possibilities beyond what you could ever have imagined. If I can do it, then anyone can do it.

And if anyone can do it...

YOU can do it!

Always remember though, that you don't have to do it alone!

*Evan Desjardins is an entrepreneur, CEO, speaker, trainer, licensed Pastor, husband of 17 years, and father of three incredible children. He started listening to Zig Ziglar in his Dad's car at age 12, and has been fascinated by personal achievement and goal setting ever since.*

*Since 2010, Evan has owned and operated RoundTable Technology, a high-end technology consultancy that specializes in providing unsurpassed strategic advice and customer service for hundreds of clients around the country. In 2013 Evan became one of the first ever Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainers and joined the Howard Partridge Inner Circle. He has since become among the first Leadership Trainers and Coaches trained and certified by the rigorous standards set forward by the Zig Ziglar Corporation. In addition to being certified in these various programs, he is a voracious student of motivation, personal development, daily disciplines, and leadership. He also receives ongoing coaching himself from renowned mentors such as Tom Ziglar, Howard Partridge, Rick Jones, and Michael Ray Newman.*



*Evan is an expert in systematic goal achievement, and has the passion, tools, and experience to help you and your organization be, do, and have more of the positive things that life has to offer.*

## Chapter Eight

### Designing a Successful Business “The Architect” Way - Alyse Makarewicz

My leadership development journey began when I graduated from college in 1997 with my Bachelors of Architecture from the University of Houston. I was selected from my graduating class to receive the Alpha Rho Chi Medal. Since 1931, the Alpha Rho Chi Medal has recognized graduating architecture students for their leadership and service and what they offer the future of the profession. Alpha Rho Chi believes strong leaders are just as essential as strong designers.

Two weeks after graduation, I joined a local medium-sized architectural firm where I learned as much as I could as fast as I could. I became a team leader for a division of the Interior Architecture body of work. Meanwhile, I completed the three year Intern Development Program to qualify to sit for nine architectural licensing exams totaling 40 hours of testing. I studied and took all the exams over the course of one year. I passed them all the first time I took them. I became a registered Architect in the State of Texas in October of 2002. Not too long later, I was promoted to vice president. I am an Architect and I did the classic act that Michael Gerber talks about in *The E-Myth*. I was a technician who had an entrepreneurial seizure and started my own firm.

After 8 1/2 years of practice in another firm, I left. I did recognize that my strengths were leadership, codes, the technical aspects of architecture, finance, and the desire to run my own business. I didn't have all the strengths needed for my firm to be successful. I needed

#### *About Alyse – by Howard Partridge*

*I've lived in Houston since I was 18 years old; 1978 to be exact. Hopefully, by the time you read this I'll be living in Destin, but that's another story. This story is about an incredibly intelligent architect who attended a lunch-and-learn, hosted by a local networking organization in Houston.*

*Over the years, I've built my companies by speaking to local groups, and, of course, as my career grew, I did less of that and more on international stages. But I was invited by a friend to speak at the luncheon.*

*I offered my home study course at this small event, which Alyse purchased. The kit came with tickets to my Houston conference and since she lives in Houston, it was easy for her to attend. Alyse already had a great business, but she's smart enough to know that every business can go to the next level.*

*It has been amazing to watch her grow as a leader and put the pieces together to have an awesome team. But the most meaningful part of knowing Alyse was having a small part in helping her family grow stronger. She often brings her daughter, who was only five when she started with us, to our events. It is always a great joy to see a young one grow and be encouraged.*

*Alyse has become a leader in our community and is greatly respected as she implements like crazy. Her chapter in this book is written like an architect. It is very structured and precise, but don't let that keep you from recognizing the importance of her great accomplishments.*

marketing, sales, and design to round out my skill set, so I found a business partner whose strengths could balance out the business, Michael Boykin. AMB Architects was founded in November of 2005.

I want to share my experience with you and the tools I found that helped me along the way. I wish I had been introduced to these ideas earlier in the life of my company. I spent the first seven years doing my undirected best to learn and run my company. I have now spent the past 4 years on an exponential growth path for my business and myself. I hope you can find some ideas that will help your business too.

## **Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Business**

After running my business for about 7 years with my good, but undeveloped business skills, I was presented with an opportunity. We had made it through the 2008 economic downturn leaner and with fewer employees. I wanted to focus on growing my business again in a tougher business environment.

In 2011, I was recommended to apply for the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program. This program was designed specifically for small business owners that wanted to grow their business. It was set up in 11 modules, each an eight-hour class with homework. It felt like they distilled a complete college semester into those 8 hours. The module topics were accessing your Business, Leadership, Operations, Marketing, Sales and negotiations, Money and Metrics, People, Being Bankable, Growth and Opportunities, and Strategic Growth. The modules built upon each other, so that at the end of the program you would have a growth plan. This plan is a look 5 years into the future and also includes a five-year look into your companies. I did learn about growing a company during the two and a half months I was in this intensive program. In addition to the educational information and experts provided by the program, I learned that being together with other small business owners, and hearing about their unique struggles and successes, helped me just as much if not more than the program material. This was my first experience with a peer learning system with a facilitator.

After graduation, a group of us decided to create a CEO round table and meet for one day out of the month and continue implementing what we had learned. This started my business leadership community and gave me access to like-minded intelligent people who were trying to apply the same information I had learned. We take time out of our busy schedules to meet

on a monthly basis and talk about the challenges we are facing, new ideas, opportunities to grow, and hold each other accountable. We have been meeting for four years now, and it has been an invaluable experience to be a part of this group.

We are all in different industries but still have all the same challenges. The round table becomes that confidential sounding board when we need insight. One of my challenges after graduation was to maintain a structure of learning and implementation. Another was filtering through all the potential information out there to learn, so I could keep growing. It was a slow process, and a good portion of what I spent time on was not very useful. I did get some recommendations from my round table that was great, but we were all in the same boat looking for good information.

## **Coaching: The Inner Circle**

Since graduating from the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program, I learned that there is a difference between working in your business and on your business. I started evaluating the activities that I did on a daily basis and asked myself “Are those activities working on your business or in the business?” I needed to find a way to spend more of my time growing the business. After evaluating my daily activities, I realized that I needed to stop managing the architectural projects in my business. When I completed my current projects, I did not take on any more projects. Now I support my projects managers as needed and mentored them along the way. I didn't see or understand this at the time, but when I stepped out of the way; my employees were able to grow into the rolls I vacated. I had started the next phase of my leadership journey. I was a leader developing other leaders instead of just managing employees.

It still took me a while to realize that there were still activities I participated in that I thought were working on my business that were not; such as networking, sales, billing and bookkeeping. If I was going to spend time working in my business, I needed to select areas that would move the business forward. I reevaluated where I was spending my time. I selected a few organizations to participate in. I determined marketing and sales were important areas for my business's growth. I was not getting the return on my time invested in the organizations I was participating in and I started looking for new options. I was invited to visit a BNI chapter meeting by a referral partner. I liked the structure and the businesses that were in the chapter. I decided to commit to participating in this organization for a year and see if it would be a good investment of my time. This became my weekly marketing

and sales meeting. Since this was an area of business I lacked experience, I took advantage of the educational events that they provided to improve my skills and knowledge.

At these events, I learned to network efficiently, execute a 60 second commercial/elevator speech, ask for referrals for other people, and explain my business in a way so that other people could help find referrals for me. One event was aligned with my business growth goal. Howard Partridge with Phenomenal Products talked about how to grow your business and not be a slave to it anymore. I really liked his message. One of the things he talked about that was profound to me was the idea of up-selling. As an Architectural firm, we sell service and not products, so I had to wrap my brain around his concept. What is up-selling for my company? It would be selling additional hours of your time on a project that you already have, so what kind of items could we up-sell? I did the exercise. I took just one additional hour per week per employee. 10 employees equals 10 hours, so 10 hours x \$100 per hour = \$1,000 a week or \$4,000 a month or \$50,000 year. That started making me think “Okay, so how can I do this?”

This was one of those serendipitous events when you are looking for an opportunity and it presents itself. I was so impressed with his ideas and how he shared them that I purchased his home study course. The program went through his systems for Leadership, Marketing, Sales, Operations and Administration. I was able to listen to his stories and systems. I devoured that material in a week and was looking to become more involved in his coaching program.

I had looked into different type’s coaches in the past. One to one coaching was the typical format. This felt more like therapy to me then coaching. I also didn't find a coach that I felt knew more than I did, so I was not sure how they would be able to help me. What I didn't understand at the time was that you needed to find a coach that had knowledge in the specific area you wanted to grow. One coach would not be able to advise you in all areas.

I learned that this was a peer learning environment with coaching. I was super excited. I started with an assessment coaching call with Santiago. I then participated in the weekly educational webinar and a weekly POD call with my coach and other businesses. I learn and receive advice from the other business and my coach on the weekly POD. This experience gives me ideas for my business, how to improve it and/or new ideas to try. The amount of information available was overwhelming. In between the two

meetings, I looked at and listened to the resources on the website. I pulled down spreadsheet and forms to see if they would work for my business.

My coach holds me accountable each week for progress. I am excited to get on those calls and report my success. It's also great to get help when I'm not focused or just lost. At the end of last year, I was excited that my company's gross revenue had increase, but disappointed that there weren't any profits. After some discussion and ideas from my coach, we came up with a plan of action to increase profits. I will share my plan and results with you in the profit section of this chapter. Being the leader, it is your job to get the help you need to hold yourself accountable. A coach is a great way to achieve accountability.

Six months after joining, I went to my first conference. The conference continued the same peer learning experience that I crave, a facilitated event with a theme that I was able to experience with other business owners trying to better their business. My first conference was very inspirational and I started to see some of the people that were on my POD calls. Finding this community has had a huge impact on me and my business. The community is positive with an attitude of learning and a shared goal of working on moving their business forward.

When everyone else in your business has an urgent problem for you to work on, there does not seem to be enough time for other activities that are not urgent, but are very important for the business to move forward and be successful. I eventually learned how to focus on the top 3 most important projects in my business that will move it forward right now instead of being overwhelmed by everything I thought needed to be done. John Maxwell in his book *Developing the Leader Within You* said "A feeling of being overwhelmed is the result of too many projects clamoring for your attention." Learning to focus on a few top projects and see them through to completion has had a tremendous impact on my business. I had to learn to implement the idea that "Done is better than perfect."

## **Leadership Training**

When I joined the coaching program, I had no idea how much and fast I would grow as a leader in and outside my business. I spend less time trying to find the right resources to focus my time on. Because I respect my coaches' experience and believe whole-heartedly that they have my best interest in mind, I follow their recommendations. I have spent a lot of time learning, probably as much time as I have implementing. A great coach

guides you in the direction you need to grow as a leader. I was committed and enjoying a higher level of learning in the coaching program. About 7 months into the coaching program, I had an opportunity to join the Ultimate Leadership Mastermind (ULM) program within the coaching program. I had decided that to improve and grow my company I needed to improve as a leader. I hoped being a part of this program would accelerate my leadership growth.

The first area of study in the ULM program was Michael Gerber's E-myth series of books and philosophies. Michael Gerber was the Keynote speaker at our conference and the ULM was able to spend an afternoon with him and ask questions that we had. I had access to one of the most well-known small business gurus. I would not have had this opportunity without being a part of this collective community in coaching group. I learned from Michael Gerber that your goal as a business owner should be to have your office down the street from your business. Your business needs to run on a day-to-day basis without you working in it. You have to get over the need to be the most important person in your business or you don't really own a business, you own a job. My main take away from the afternoon was that my focus needed to be on leading my company. I had always split leadership in my company with my business partner. I now understood that there is one leader and I needed to step up and fill that role completely. This analogy helped me to understand the difference between working on your business and in your business. Are you the flight attendant or the pilot? You can't be both. If you are working in your business, the flight attendant, you are not leading your company, the Pilot. If there is not a pilot in your company, your company has no direction. Was my company missing the pilot? This gave me the focus and permission I need to step up into the leadership role my company needed and was missing.

We also had the same opportunity to meet with John Maxwell when he was the key note speaker. He is a wealth of knowledge on leadership. He has a rule of 5 on leading yourself. What are the 5 things that you need to do every day that move you forward using your strengths. His are read, write, think, ask questions and file. I am still test driving my 5 things. Right now mine are learn, think, lead, analyze and document. They are a work in progress. When we had a small group session, the question I asked him was "How do you lead your children?" He gave me 4 ways and explained each. They are Show them unconditional love, Teach them responsibility, Help them develop a positive self image, and Teach them the importance of relationships. I really appreciated this advice and have used this with my daughter. We had a situation come up in school. My daughter is in 1<sup>st</sup> grade

and the teacher told her she was a bully and made her write a note home saying she was a bully. After here about the situation, I thought this was an extreme and incorrect label for a mistake she made, felt sorry, and apologized for. I didn't want her to have the label of bully impacting her self image. We talked to our daughter about the situation and what she could do differently next time. We assured her she was not a bully and then we took the issue up with the school. I'm not sure I would have been so deliberate in my message to my daughter if I had not had this advice from John Maxwell. Back at the office, we watched John Maxwell's keynote at lunch and spent time talking about our strengths. We used Birkman and Strength Finders to kick start the strengths discovery process. We learned through this discovery process that by understanding our team members' strengths, we can ask each other for help. This helps us be my productive and deliver a better product to our clients.

When Darren Hardy, editor of Success magazine, came, he shared the compound effect. His talk motivated me to read his book The Compound Effect and also subscribed to Success Magazine. Each quarter after hearing the different keynotes, I took the information back to my staff. We watched them over lunch. Darren Hardy resonated more with my team. I learned that I may be focused on leadership for myself, but they need or are interested in other development areas. My goal is to bring what I learn back to the office to help them grow. Some of them were not interested, and/or thought they didn't have the time, but Darren Hardy's message was simple and something most of them felt they could apply to their life. Several of them read The Compound Effect after watching the keynote. For Christmas last year I gave them all Living Your Best Year Ever, a Darren Hardy Program. We have had success and breakthroughs using this program in conjunction with the quarterly goal setting and review meetings.

## **Development of My Team**

On your leadership journey the day comes when you recognize that if you keep doing everything thing yourself, your business and your employees will never grow. You have to give them the opportunity to help you. I learned that it feels good to be needed or indispensable, but it comes at a price. I can't grow, they can't grow, and my business can't grow. When I let go of certain areas of my business and turned the responsibility over to my employees, my company changed. I changed. I am able to focus more on the business, innovation, growth and profitability. They are empowered to think through solutions. They have more confidence, they learn more, they



practice making decisions and seeing the results. I learned there is always more than one way to do everything. My way was not the only way. In my business, I was the bottle-neck for improvement and change.

We started a company project system. My employees help brainstorm ideas to improve the company and create the projects. They are the ones that were most important to my team not me. They decide on about 3 projects per quarter. I learned this technique from my coaching program. They break the projects down into tasks and then each person gets to pick the tasks they want to work on. They each get 1 hour per week to focus on the company project tasks. We review the progress in our monthly company meetings. I have learned through this process that they can come up with better solutions than I can and get them implemented. With this system, there is more buy in to change. When I get excited and want to move forward quickly, I tend to make too many changes at once and none of the changes really stick. It takes time to implement a change. I had to learn to slow down and make fewer changes. If you make too many changes at once, the likelihood of going back to the old way of doing things (habit) is much greater. You are more successful when you only change one habit at a time.

You need to provide your team with many opportunities to learn different types of skill sets and methods for learning those skills. Options include taking a class, reading a book, ebook, or summary, listening to a webinar or audio book, sitting together in a group and watching a replay of a keynote or attending a conference with me. These all provide flexibility for my team to find a way to grow that works for them. You don't have to be able to afford a name brand training course to start developing your team. There are affordable solutions. Buying a book, audio book or a subscription to Success magazine is not an expensive investment. It costs as much as a lunch. Through the Inner Circle coaching program, I have access the recorded keynotes after the conferences. This is an affordable way for me to be able to share what I have learned from some really brilliant people. In the process of trying to help them grow, I learned that I may be moving at record speed and that is normal for me, but not for everyone. I need to have patience and help them to grow at their own pace.

I struggled motivating myself to do yearly reviews. I asked myself, what could I do differently. I address performance concerns as they happen. I never wait until review time anyway, so how can I add value to this old expected process. I implemented a quarterly goal setting/review session. This created time for me to sit down each quarter with each employee and find out what their career and personal goals are. We use the Ziglar Goal

Setting system and the Daren Hardy Living Your Best Year Ever journal. We have been doing this for three years now. Some employees jumped on board quickly, but others need more time to think about their big goals. Some really struggle to find big goals for the future. They may have never thought about them before and it may take a while for them develop the right ones for them.

As each quarter went by, I would review the goals from the previous session and see what progress was made and the challenges they were having. I became their accountability partner. Goals could be changed or added. The ones who were slow to get started would eventually add some goals and decide what they wanted to accomplish. It was a slow process and took patience on my part. Everybody didn't start at the same place but they're all learning to set goals. With this information, I now know how to help them with their goals and career. I have become better at helping them break down their goals into smaller pieces that can be achieved in a quarter. We also reevaluate strategies when the ones that are chosen are not working to achieve the goal. I can look for opportunities for them and I can share what I have learned with them as it relates to their goals. I am a better goal setter by repetition of this process with my employees. I look forward to the time I spend with my employees each quarter.

When I ask them for feedback on how my leadership has impacted them, the feedback focuses mostly on their opportunity for personal growth and accountability. Surprisingly, it's not about being a better designer or architect; understanding building codes better, or being more proficient in CAD. These were all the training areas I focused on in the beginning of my career as a manager and business owner.

## **Inner Circle- DISC**

I was introduced to the DISC personality assessment through The Inner Circle Coaching Program. Understanding yourself and understanding others is a key component to leadership and personal growth. I learned that I'm a D, Dominant. This system compared to the others I have used to learn about myself through the years not only helps you to understand yourself, but is simple enough to apply to others in your life. Because I saw the potential this system had for me in my life, when the opportunity was presented I choose to go through a training program to become a certified trainer. This opportunity exponentially increased my understanding of the personality types. I learned that I was actually a D/C, Dominant and

Analytical. This felt more like me. I knew my husband was a D/I, Dominant and Influencing.

Halfway through the training I called my husband to apologize for something I had talked him out of doing. We were in Michigan on a family vacation and were visiting Pyramid Point. This trail leads to a high, panoramic view of Lake Michigan with a very steep downward slope that ends in Lake Michigan. There are huge signs that say DON'T GO DOWN; 2 HOURS TO WALK BACK UP. HELICOPTER RESCUE ONLY. Needless to say this D/C thought that trying to go down that slope was a really bad idea. We follow the rules. My husband, on the other hand, is a D/I and thought that this looked like a really fun thing to do. "Hey look, there are other people doing it," he said. I said, "they look like they are in really good shape and are still breathing heavily and struggling to get back to the top. Do you have your inhaler?" I proceeded to talk my husband out of going down the slope. My epiphany from this experience is that my behavioral style view is to follow the rules and his style is to have fun. We see the same situations in life differently. Neither one of us is right or wrong. I need to stop expecting everyone to see the world as I do. We interact with the world differently.

I'm trying to learn how I can apply this to myself, my family and my business. I did the assessment with my six-year-old daughter, she is in an S/I, Steady and Influencing. She is very much a family oriented people person that also loves to have fun. One of the things that I learned was that when I ask her to do something I need to make it fun or a game. When it's time to get ready for bed, I don't tell her it's time to get ready for bed which creates a big fight. I say let's see who can get ready for bed first and make it into a game. Getting ready for bed has never been easier, same end result different approach.

In my business, I did the assessment with my business partner and employees. I learned that most of them have S in their style. One example of how I used this information was when we were evaluating our office location. My broker told me that most business owners don't discuss this process with their employees and was surprised to learn I was. I knew that with the S –steady and supportive- if we did move and make a change, it would be easier for them if they were part of the decision process. We had a very successful move with happy employees because I used strategies I learned from DISC training instead of following conventional advice.

This training helped me to understand and relate to others better. If my personality represents only 10% of the population, the other 90% of the population does not see things the way I see them. What motivates me does not motivate them. That was a huge lesson that I learned. I'm always looking for ideas and listening to other business owners and their ideas. One of the strategies that was shared with me had to do with motivating sales staff or in my case, staff in general. My friend Amy is a D like me and she put together a compensation plan for her sales team for the year. When she presented it, she didn't get the response that she was expecting. So she asked them if they felt it was fair. They told her yes, but then one of her sales staff spoke up and said that he used to have competitions at his old company. The sales team was excited about this idea, so she implemented prizes based on focus areas she had for growing her business. At the end of the meeting, the sales team was excited to get working towards the competition goals, one of which was who could land the first new customer. It gave them something specific to try to achieve other than just the quarterly goals for the commission.

I took this idea back to my company. I wanted to create prizes to motivate specific goals I had for the company. One of our metrics is total billings per person per month. If you reach your monthly goal, you get a reward and if the company meets the total quarterly goal everyone gets a reward. Example: rewards I use for individuals are two hours of personal time off, a gift card, a Fitbit, or a Starbucks Verismo coffee maker and for the company reward we celebrate with a nice company lunch or healthy snacks in the break room for a month. Motivating and inspiring employees is an important part of being a leader.

## **Marketing Focus**

My first step to improve my marketing plan was to understand that the leader has the vision for the company and needs to communicate that vision. After about two years of coaching and eight years in business, I was able to clarify our mission statement. My team wordsmithed my vision and our new mission statement became “Creating Positive Change Through Design.” This embodies my values and the reason why I started the company in the first place. I believe that an architectural firm can be profitable and the team members can have their version of a balanced life. Family, friends and our health are just as important as the creative work that we love to engage in. We create environments for our clients, their employees, and customers that have a positive impact of their day-to-day work life. We strive to create a positive experience going through the complex and stressful design and implementation of a project.

Because I've spent time learning and being coached, when it comes time to lead and implement, I am much more efficient, for example, with a marketing calendar. I had heard about it, learned about it, learned about the components it is made up of, and attempted a marketing calendar draft. When I decided it was time to create one for AMB Architects for 2016, I sat down with my business partner and my marketing director. We were able to complete it in two hours using what I had learned over two years. Part of our marketing calendar development was to line up all 12 monthly newsletters with topics and photo content. Being an architectural firm, we are lucky to present our work in pictures. The first time I heard about a marketing calendar, I didn't know how I was going to apply it to my business. I didn't even know what some of the elements were. I didn't want to send out emails. I hate emails. Why do I want to send them to my clients? After spending the time listening to the strategy and how and why, I decided to try an email newsletter. We have had a very small amount of opt-outs, less than 1%. I learned that when you send something fun and interesting that you are not bothering your clients and followers. They may even look forward to receiving your monthly newsletter. I had learned to embrace new ideas and try them. If they work, great; if not, then we will try another strategy. You can't move forward if you don't try.

Another example of my growth in the area of marketing is embracing the referral-marketing concept. Our referral partners are mostly brokers. We currently were taking them out to lunch and had been for seven years. The problem with this system was that there are a finite amount of lunches available in a year. If the average is seven touches to receive a referral, after seven years we were barely at that amount. We were using a very slow marketing system. At first I said to myself like I often did "Architecture is different. This won't work for me and my business." I wanted more referral business to help grow my business. I listened and learned to how others were implementing this system. I kept hearing the success other businesses were having on my weekly POD. Finally, I decided to try and wrap my brain around this referral marketing concept and figure out how I could apply this system to my business. The idea is to deliver something, usually food, to a referral source location on a consistent and regular basis. So, instead of taking one broker out to lunch, we would take something to the brokers' offices where there are many brokers. I could not see us delivering donuts, so I wanted to create something that would be unique and stand out.

I had an idea and worked with a small business from my CEO round table and created decorated cut-out sugar cookies that were in the shape of

some of Houston's iconic office buildings (picture below). We created these really cool cookie trays, which cost less than a lunch, to take to brokerage houses. It took me three months after deciding that my company was going to try this, to deliver the first cookie tray. After our first delivery, it took my business partner, who was the one that delivered the cookies, about six months to get the most out of this system. He figured out ways to not just drop off the cookies, but to be able to talk to the brokers. One strategy he uses is to call ahead to a broker that is a friend and coordinate dropping off the cookies with getting introductions to new brokers in the company.

It took us about a year to start seeing the benefit of our referral marketing program. This system helped us to be top-of-mind when they had a client with a project that we could help them with. We even had a call from the "name on the door" broker from a very large firm. He said, "I haven't worked with you before, but wanted to see if you could help me with a project." He had seen our cookies. This is another system I have successfully implemented since joining the Inner Circle coaching program.



## Profit Focus

My company's revenue growth was stagnant. My financial goal was to grow the top line revenue. When I was finally able to see the revenue number move in a positive direction, I was not financially any better off. I had very little profit left at the end of the year. My focus became understanding profits. I didn't want profits to just be the leftovers in my business. My first strategy was creating a very detailed, all-inclusive budget that would include and control all of our expenses. I was using a general budget based on what was spent in previous years. I spent months on the detailed budget. I didn't find much profit and there were some areas like unexpected expenses or opportunities I didn't have any money budgeted for yet. I didn't feel like this was the answer to my problem. I followed Darren Hardy's advice; when you find something that is holding you back and that you want to improve you need to read two books, listen to an audio program and attend a seminar. My coach helped me with some recommendations. Two of the resources I found really helpful were *Profit First* by Mike Mikalowicz and Ellen Rohr's 2 day Financial Seminar. I'm now implementing some of the strategies from each source that I studied.

My coaches are Howard Partridge, and Rick Jones. They help to hold me accountable and challenge me to think differently and consider options as I'm testing and implementing strategies. When you are doing things the way you always have done them, they help brainstorm with you. Because they have both owned their own business, they can bring their experiences into your situation so you can have a breakthrough to move forward. When your coach says over and over again, "There has to be an easier way," you start believing there is and you go find it. I wanted to calculate profitability on projects. The only way I knew how to do it was to export the data from my accounting software and then combine the information from three reports. This was very time consuming and a deterrent to doing it for every project on a regular basis. This process also was a snapshot in time, not dynamic. I was stuck on the only solution being the next level of accounting software for my industry, costing \$40,000. Way out of my twelve person firm budget and my employees would not have access to the information without me running a report for them.

After being challenged and given multiple ideas from my coaches, I went to my time tracking software that I was already paying for. I found out that I could put in the total fee for the project and it would calculate the profitability of the project.

This was not a perfect solution, but it is so much better than not doing anything. Now my employees have access to check the profitability of their projects without me. Yay! With this on-demand project profitability solution, I have been able to make more informed decisions. For example, when dealing with a challenging client that wanted a discount, we were able to pull up the report to see where we stood and how much of a discount we could give to still be profitable. It took me a couple of minutes instead of hours.

Another metric I wanted to calculate was total billings per person per month (BPPPM). There is an industry standard average, but I wanted to know what each person actually completed in billable work each month. Part of the struggle is figuring out what kind of reports you need from your accounting system and the time-tracking system to be able to calculate this. How are you going to calculate it, what are the starting assumptions, what is the report going to look like, and after I figure this all out, who is going to produce it for me each month? With the help of my coaches over several months, I was able to come up with a plan to get this accomplished. It actually ended up being very straight-forward. Since we have had this report, my company's BPPPM has increase. There is accountability and support when everyone sees where everyone stands. It also helps us to spot problems with an employee or projects. Maybe a project had additional services that were never communicated so they could be billed. I am able to make better business decisions now that I have these reports on a regular basis. I continue to look for other matrixes that can improve the profitability of my company.

I was at my daughter's gymnastics class one Saturday morning and I had a brainstorm on how to grow my company and make the income I wanted to reach my dream goals. Because I had been profit focused, learning and implementing for about four months, the ideas and information jut flowed out of me. I sat and calculated different scenarios using 10%, 15% and 20% profit at different gross revenues. Using BPPPM, I calculated the number of each level of employee I would need to hire to meet my goal. I also created the monthly sales goal, so each employee would have enough project work to meet his or her BPPPM goal. All of this happened in about an hour. I went back to the office on Monday and shared my ideas with my business partner, and we developed a plan to implement this over time. This has been the best financial plan we have created since we started our business.



## Results

I invested time and money over the past three years and I can clearly see the benefits. I have a better work life balance now because when you're growing as a leader you are growing as a person, which overlaps all areas of your life. When you are learning strategies for motivating, training and growing your employees, it overlaps to you, your family, and your friends. I was introduced to Zig Ziglar's body of work in the coaching program. After reading *Born To Win*, my epiphany was that there are seven focus areas to your life for it to be in balance not just two areas (work and life). I was trying to balance one area (career) against six areas (family, physical, mental, spiritual, financial and personal) in the past. No wonder I was still struggling. Giving myself permission to focus on all seven areas was a huge growth step for me. We give ourselves the permission to always put work first at the expense of everything else. Our society openly supports this belief. We don't know there is another way until we are exposed to other ideas. I am always open to new ideas now. I look beyond my industry to see what others are doing and how their ideas could help us improve.

My employees look up to me and come to me for advice. They want to spend time with me. They introduce me to their family. We have created a happy, healthy, and productive working environment. We have high employee retention. I have even had employees leave to work in a different area of architecture or construction and come back. I have a team that can function on a day-to-day basis without me. This has allowed me to take my first two-week vacation with my family and friends since I started my business.

The new profit, marketing, and leadership strategies I have put into place are pay-off. We have more consistent referrals for projects. After some research, I found that while others in my industry have had a decline in the revenue, we had a 20% increase in revenue for the year. We are currently maintaining a 10% profit working towards a 20% profit. There are leadership opportunities within my company, which helps with employee retention.

My hope is that you find an idea or resource in my story to help you move forward in your own journey to be the best you can be.

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*Alyse Makarewicz, AIA, has been practicing architecture for 20 years in Houston, Texas. She owns and runs two small businesses, AMB Architects and Houston Custom Wallcoverings. Alyse is married to David Brashear and has a seven-year-old daughter, Ariana. Her life philosophy is, "Be better today than you were yesterday." This has led*



*her to become a Certified DISC Consultant and a graduate of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program. She has been involved in leadership activities with the American Institute of Architects and currently sits on the Houston Chapter and State Boards. She is a current member and Former President of the BNI Heights of Professionalism Chapter.*

## Chapter Nine

### From Disabled to Handicapped – Matt McKinley

“Wait, what is it that you do? A *trailer dealership*? You work at a trailer dealership?”

Yes, that’s right! I sell trailers, and horse trailers are my specialty. In fact, my team and I operate one of the largest and longest, running horse trailer dealerships in the country. We clock in each day to sell and service trailers, but there’s more to it than meets the eye. You asked me what I do and I’ve given you the simple answer, but now I’d love an opportunity to share what I *really* do.

I make it a priority to provide an environment that promotes growth for all of those around me. I lead the dealership in a way reminiscent of those actions set forth by my dad, who began the company in 1981. He applied a work ethic in the business that is second to none. He never failed to demonstrate to all, top level customer respect and service. I knew early on what it meant to work, and work hard. I'm grateful to my dad for this, but you know I had to put my own spin on it.

I had to broaden that foundation to satisfy my own desire and drive to accomplish goals and to attempt to stay on pace with the constant image and shape-shifting puzzle of what success looks like to me. (I'm grateful to my mom for showing me the path for how to make hard work fun [or at least, tolerable], and to take the task at hand and apply a game-like approach in order to keep it compelling, personally challenging, and rewarding.) I had adopted my own self-motto of "Work Hard, Play Hard." I lived by that motto for

*About Matt – by Howard Partridge*

*I liked Matt from the moment I met him. The kindness and positivity that came from the man sitting in the big wheelchair was heartwarming. Here’s a man that obviously hasn’t allowed life’s challenges to affect his attitude.*

*The more time I’ve spent with Matt the more impressed I have been. He not only runs a great business, but he is so open and honest about where he is. He is very aware of what’s working and what’s not.*

*In my book Think and Be Phenomenal, I share the 5 Levels of Being Phenomenal. First is awareness, then you have to be willing to change. Once that happens, you move into intense focus on what you want and who you want to become. After that comes commitment, and character, which is who you really are.*

*As I share in this book, success is BEcoming who you were created to be. Matt is a person who is always moving through those levels. With every new awareness comes an immediate willingness to change. He carefully works through each level to develop himself, his business and his team.*

*It has been a great joy to watch him grow as well. I’m sure his chapter title intrigues you as much as it did me. You’ll be blessed by it.*

about fifteen years of working in the family dealership.

During that period of time of working hard and seeing the rewards of hard effort, there came a time that I felt a paradigm shift. This shift took me from an inward strategy to an outward one, and it positioned me to find new ways to dream and achieve goals. It allowed me to discover truths that are crucial for any business to reap the benefits from momentum- visiting during the highs of business and to employ systems that help govern how deep the unavoidable lows in business will be. This shift aided me in discovering purpose, insight, and inspiration to lead the business from a successful first generation entity to a significant multi-generational one that promotes growth for ALL involved.

The event that took place in my life, which led to the paradigm shift, involved myself and my Big Dog Chopper, colliding with a little old half-ton truck. In an instant, I demonstrated proof of the universal law that two vehicles can't occupy the same space at the same time. You see, I was on my way to eat tacos with "my girl" and her family, when a truck pulled out in front of me. I sustained a few injuries, least of which included fractured wrists, a broken neck, a crushed eye socket, lacerations to my head and neck, collapsed lungs, fractured ribs, broken pelvis, broken femur, and shattered ankle. Oh yeah, I also received third degree burns to my calf and thigh, and lost blood to my spinal cord in an emergency neck fusion. The injuries from the accident left me an "incomplete quadriplegic."

Currently, I am confined to a wheelchair and have been since 2004. I experience ongoing challenges with mobility and control of my body and how it functions. There are hurdles in dealing with issues ranging from internal infection and the 'backfiring' of nerve endings, to joint issues and Autonomic Dysreflexia. I must say that life with a spinal cord injury can be uncomfortable and a bit frustrating at times, but HEY! I'm here. I'm alive.

And I can tell you this; I have a TON to be thankful for! With all of the injuries sustained, pain and discomfort felt, and illness experienced, I recognize the fact that it could be, or could have been, worse than what I rolled away with. Heck, not only did I survive a wreck that totaled a pickup truck, but I also got to keep "the girl" that I was on my way to eat tacos with. I got to see my oldest son grow up and become a father, and I got to experience fathering another son with "the girl" whom I now call my wife. Thankfully, I avoided a head injury and was able to "feel" the familiar love from mom, dad, brother, and other family and friends while being in a medically induced coma. I've witnessed firsthand the power of what it's like

to be lifted up and loved on by a praying community and the overwhelming support that pours over you like a comforting blanket when friends, family, and even strangers aim prayer and thoughts of healing in your direction.

Am I a glass half-full kind of person? Not really. As I reflect on where I am now compared to where I was before, I'm more of a cup-runneth-over type person. It truly is all in how you look at things that will absolutely make key differences in your life. I'll prove this to you in a bit, but first, settle in the saddle and let's look closer at the second shift that occurred and how it has transformed not only my life, but our 35-year-old family business as well.

As the dust was settling in from my spinal cord injury, there was also realization that our family operated dealership was beginning to face the inevitable “must-do” for succession planning. I began searching for answers on systemizing our business. The vision that my dad had cast years ago was obviously right on, but for the dealership to continue on another 35 years, we needed systems that could stand the test of time. I also recognized that I had to simultaneously develop the leadership skills necessary to continue ahead with what my dad began over 30 years prior as well.

My desire to grow quickly led me to a workshop by Howard Partridge and Tom Ziglar based on Zig Ziglar's book, *Born to Win*. I'm convinced that the Born to Win philosophy was designed specifically for me. It speaks my language. It is a never-ending puzzle, or game. There are rules to the game, but they don't restrict you, they grow you. There's a way to measure growth and as you improve your growth score, you're rewarded with fulfillment and gratitude. And it's all backed by the guarantee of Scriptural truths! It was absolutely a monumental shift to how I viewed my future and the future of the business.

Who and what I was up to that point was doing okay, but I was not living to win. In a split second though, the switch flipped, the “A-HA” moments happened, and the business leader in me was awakened. It's absolutely incredible how after you draw the line in the sand and proclaim “*NEVER AGAIN!*” that your subconscious mind teams up with the universe and your eyes become wide open with possibility. When your soul, heart, and mind are lined up, seize those moments and proclaim your breakthrough. I clearly remember the night in my kitchen after dinner (tacos, oddly enough), that I was going to do whatever it took to lead our business through hard times and through the succession process, no matter what. No matter what the Crisis News Network was saying, no matter what our

competition was doing, and no matter how many times I might have to change our approach to get things systematized, our business was going to transform. I decided right then and there that for my family's sake, and every employee and their family's sake, that we would create a recipe for our business that would become the foundation that would be strong enough to sustain the harsh storms caused by a down economy, to begin the process of a successful business to a significant entity.

Our business is breaking through the barrier that separates us from being successful to significant by coupling our four policies that were established in our business years ago with the systems laid out from Phenomenal Products and the concepts and ideology from four significant quotes. We are operating in a specific order, and we repeat the order over and over. As we build upon our policies and use systems to keep us consistent, we are creating layer upon layer of a foundation built on continual growth, opportunity, and improvement. The systems act as a way for us to keep score, our policies keep us consistently improving, and the lessons behind the quotes act as the compass for insuring that we are always pointed "to the top."

Here are the specific ingredients to our recipe for a systemized business:

**Our four policies:**

1. KNOW YOUR PRODUCT
2. RETAIL READY
3. EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE
4. MONEY TO THE BANK

**Phenomenal Products:**

- M.V.P.
- Business Wheel of Life

**Secret-Sauce Quotes:**

1. "Your business exists for one reason, to help you reach your L.I.F.E. Goals." -Howard Partridge

2. "You don't build a business. You build people, and then people build the business." -Zig Ziglar

3. "You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help enough other people get what they want." -Zig Ziglar

4. "You are what you are and where you are by what has gone in to your mind, and you can change what you are and where you are by simply changing what goes into your mind." -Zig Ziglar

Now that you know the ingredients that we use, here is how we apply them.

Step 1: *Knowing your product* is not simply product knowledge. It is the pursuit of being THE expert with your product. It is also knowing how to operate the machinery. How to schedule bills. How to interpret profits and losses. It is knowing who you are as an individual, as a team, as a team member, and as a business entity. It is knowing where you are on the wheel of life. How to communicate. You get the picture, right? We understand that we can always learn something new. This is what our dealership uses as a first step, and it is always where we look first to solve any issues that arise in the course of business. Do we know our product?

Howard's coaching on his systems, and how they are designed to help you become turnkey (when implemented effectively) is amazing. Knowing your product is not only knowing your purpose. It is knowing what you want. It is knowing where you are in business so you can plan the path to get you from where you are to where you want to be. He calls it G.P.S., I call it the bridge between *Knowing your Product* and our second policy of being *Retail Ready*.

Step 2: *Retail Ready* is being to work on time. It is having the right inventory mix, the right amount of supplies for the job, and the right tool for the job. It is being clean and ready for the first customer of the day. Retail ready is having the right people in the right seats of the bus. It is training them to build the business, based on the first policy of knowing your product and identifying what the purpose of the business is.

As I studied Zig's quote about not building the business, but rather building the people first and then *the team of people* building the business,

the absolute awesomeness of this truth really started taking shape. I have improved tremendously as a leader from this quote. It has humbled me, kept me in the lines, and I cannot express the gratitude I feel because of the team that we have because of this being implemented into our recipe. Our secret sauce in this business is no doubt our people.

Step 3: EXTRA-ordinary Service. It is so cool how this works. You take ordinary service and slightly elevate it to the point where it gains “extra.” Whatever is ordinary, add the effort of “...and then some.”

Now that you are serving your team and building them, they are naturally developing and growing and getting a good taste of fulfillment in their personal lives. The by-product is gratitude. As their cup runs over, it can't help but to spill out onto the customer. How does the customer show appreciation? By selecting you as the business that they WANT to do business with and want to make sure that their friends do as well. You truly can have everything in life you want, if you simply help enough others get what they want.

Step 4: Money to the Bank is wasted productivity and lost materials. It is profit. It is loss. It is your closing ratios. It is converting suspects to prospects. It is safety. It is being responsible. It is contribution to community efforts. In our business, it is the last step because we have not earned money, raises, or profits until we do the first three steps properly.

This is where you evaluate your results and make the necessary shifts before starting the cycle over again. Before we go back to policy one (know your product), we make shifts. The best shift I EVER made in this step of the business- I turned off the news! Business improved within a month. Stress lowered. Fear got shut down and Faith started shining. Creativity kicked in. Inspiration started sprouting up. All because of the truth that is embedded in the quote below.

*"You are what you are and where you are by what has gone in to your mind, and you can change what you are and where you are simply by changing what goes in to your mind." -Zig Ziglar*

Money to the bank is surrounding myself with like-minded people. It is investing in the team. It is having the right input to help me keep my eye on the bullseye. It is making the necessary corrections to stay on target. It is



having input that serves me, to be the leader I need to be, to deserve a team that gets money to the bank. As I reevaluate where I am in this step, I am setting my team and myself up for going back to step one and laying down another layer to our foundation.

I want to end my chapter with this last shift I had in my thinking. Leadership systems, training, support, encouragement, and accountability are so necessary to sustain a significant business and personal life. It all begins with the right mindset, though. Let me share my personal mindset and offer you a challenge.

### *Become handicapped!*

That's right. Handicapped. Not to be confused with disabled. I'm not suggesting you seek out a spinal cord injury. In fact, I don't recommend it. Other than front-row parking and great seating, there aren't a whole lot of upsides. I am suggesting that as I mentioned earlier, it's all in how you look at something. You need to discover your personal and business handicap. Your secret sauce. You see, the dictionary defines Disability as "a consequence of an impairment that results in restrictions on an individual's ability to participate in what is considered 'normal' in their everyday society." But it defines Handicapped as, "The practice of assigning advantage to a contestant to equalize the chances of winning." Geez, do I want to be DIS-abled and limit myself to participate in the world and be in a state of restriction that will surely lead DOWN the road to DIS-ease? Heck no!

I want to play full out and obtain as many advantages as a contestant in the game of business and life can that will surely lead UP the road to being the winner I was deigned to be! That is your challenge too! Are you disabled or handicapped? You may think neither, but embrace this as a paradigm shift. Make a conscious choice to pick one. Right now! Pick impairment and restrictions (aka employing excuses and complaining about what's not fair in business or what's wrong in the world), or choose advantages that equalize your chances of winning (aka being responsible for the filter in your mind and implementing effective systems in your business and life). The choice is yours. It's all in how you look at it. I challenge you to discover the best systems (as advantages) for your business and allow them to aid as a handicap for your business scorecard just like a handicap does to a scorecard in a game of golf. I urge you to discover your *personal*

*handicap, your God-given advantage in life, and go full-out with developing it as a tool to transform your life. Polish it up and let it shine!*



*Matt McKinley is a second-generation owner of their family trailer dealership, Triple M Trailers of Texas. His mission in business is to have a phenomenal culture, that attracts industry experts, who deliver the most EXTRAordinary service experience that one could have at a trailer dealership, resulting in a stellar reputation.*

*In addition to being a business owner, Matt has studied and been coached by Dr. Robert Rohm, the Zig Ziglar Family, and Howard Partridge to teach and share transformational messages through the following certifications:*

- *Certified DISC Human Behavior Consultant*
- *Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainer\**
- *Certified Phenomenal Products Coach*

*Matt serves on the Board of Directors for HorseFeathers Therapeutic Equestrian Center, has recently served as a Touch Points Council Member for General Electric's Commercial Distribution Division, and has served over a decade on the Advisory Board for the NADA RV Association.*

*Matt lives east of Dallas in Canton, Texas with his amazing wife and is a father to two awesome boys.*

*Matt can be reached via the following:*

*Triple M Trailers of Texas*

*Attn: Matt McKinley*

*PO Box 686*

*Canton, Texas 75103*

*903-865-1516*

*matt@tripletrailers.com*

*\*Additional Resources at: [ZiglarCertified.com/Matt](http://ZiglarCertified.com/Matt)*

## Chapter Ten

### Perseverance: The Art of Getting Back Up - Shaneh Woods

#### Intro

Persistent and consistent- two words that the legendary Zig Ziglar used to talk about often. Zig told stories about getting in shape by running, and each day adding a mailbox to the distance he ran. Running each day – that’s consistent. Adding the extra distance each time? That’s persistent consistency. It’s a wonderful example of always giving a little extra effort, in order to get where you want to go. I love it, live it, and hope you do too.

In being asked to collaborate in this book, I contemplated, “What do I have to share?” After much consideration, I decided if there is anything that I can convey in just a few pages I hope it is this; *Consistent Persistency* is what will carry you over the seemingly impossible hurdles that we all face.

#### The Early Years

Something most people don’t know about me is that I’m a “middle child.” I had a twin brother named Shad, born four minutes after me, who died after a mere three and a half months of life. My mother, diagnosed as schizophrenic at the age of 16, did illegal drugs in an attempt to silence her demons. Those drugs caused my brother to be born missing bones and his epiglottis, the small flap that keeps air from going into the stomach. After numerous surgeries he was brought home and died of SIDS shortly thereafter. My family tells a story of what a cranky, belligerent baby I was, constantly crying and demanding attention, the exact opposite of my brother Shad. As the story goes, the day my brother died all that changed. I became quiet, rarely cried, and never needed to be “entertained.”

*About Shaneh – by Howard Partridge*

*When I first became the exclusive small business coach for Zig Ziglar’s company, Tom Ziglar and I travelled all over the world delivering a one-day Born To Win workshop. One of our first supporters, and now an integral part of Ziglar, was David Wright.*

*David hosted the workshop at a church in Dayton, OH. One of the participants was a young lady named Shaneh. I immediately recognized that Shaneh was no ordinary person. Tenacious, thoughtful, and determined. This girl had some real grit.*

*Throughout the time she has been part of our community, she has endured some major challenges. But, in the midst of the challenges, she somehow bought her dream home and her dream office – and continued to pour into other people.*

*I would only find out where that grit came from by reading her story. New goal Get a story from every one of our coaching members. Prepare yourself for a true survival story.*

I also have an older sister, and I can remember being six or seven, pulling out her baby book and flipping through pages of her childhood in pictures. I, on the other hand, had maybe a dozen photos capturing mine. The day my brother died, the part of my mother that should have been mine, died too. That's not to say she didn't love me, but she hated the reminder I was of the son she had lost.

If she was still doing drugs, I didn't know, but I do know she liked to drink. Thanks to the popularity of movies depicting multiple personalities like "Sybil" and "The Three Faces of Eve", my mother, who was already a paranoid schizophrenic, became convinced that "Carol, Tammy, Johnny, etc." were responsible for all the things she would do that terrorized me and my sister. We never knew from one day to the next what we should call her, and God forbid we got it wrong.

I can't recall how old I was the first time my mother held a loaded gun to my head to play Russian roulette, or when I learned to lock the dog kennel from the inside as a place to hide. Hugs were a thing to be terrified of. Sometimes they were just hugs, other times she would put her cigarette out on my back. It took years for me not to flinch when anyone would come within touching distance.

Some of you may be wondering where my father was in all this. My biological father left shortly after Shad's death, and I've never seen or heard from him since. My mother did remarry a man who is the only dad I've ever known. He never treated us as anything less than his "real" children. He did what he could to protect us, but as a "step" parent he had little power. When he and my mother divorced, she refused him all visitations, and I lost my hero.

To escape the reality of my life I became an avid reader. I rarely read age appropriate books; rather, I read anything I could get my hands on, from magazines to cereal boxes. Reading was my lifeline. From books I learned what family should be like and that it has nothing to do with blood (*Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo). I learned that teachers could change the course of one's life (*Heaven* by VC Andrews). I learned that loyalty would see you through the harshest of storms (*Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls), and I learned that you always, ALWAYS have to pick yourself up (*Palomino* by Danielle Steele). Not a reading list I would recommend for a seven-year-old, but it saved my life and helped shape the person I've become.

The first time I begged to be removed from my mother's custody, I was nine years old. I knew that if I didn't get out soon, I would be dead. I knew the signs – I knew what was coming, and with an instinct born deep within I knew I'd be dead soon if I didn't find a way to save myself. That night my mother threw my sister out of a two-story window when she couldn't find me, and my sister wouldn't tell her where I was. My sister and I have irreconcilable issues and haven't spoken in almost 15 years, but I will always be thankful for all she did to try and protect me.

I wish that had been the end to that chapter of my life, but the State of Colorado was in the reunification business and it took years to finally get one of the worst beatings of my life. It took telling court appointed therapists everything that had ever happened and then sitting with my mother and my social worker, watching her read every word I had said in confidence, fearing what would happen the next time she got me alone. It took being thrown out of a moving vehicle in front of my grandparents' house and being told I was nothing but garbage. It took becoming an emotionless robot, not daring to believe that those lives I read about could ever be mine.

I started school early and skipped the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. By the time I reached high school, I was two years younger than my peers. I am NOT one of those that reminisce about their glory days in high school. I couldn't wait to get out of there. Kids are cruel, and the nerd that I was had very few friends. I was angry at the world. I had such rage toward those that didn't save me, and the God I blamed for letting it all happen. I got into fights, I had rotten food thrown on me, I had a terrible reputation, and I got out of there as fast as I legally could. On the bright side, I did meet the boy who I would marry... Twice! But that's a whole other story...

When I was 12, I was allowed to visit with my stepfather in Alaska, and after six months I was permanently placed in his home. After being moved 13 times during my last two years of foster care, he promised me that we wouldn't move until I graduated high school. He kept his promise.

My first summer back in Alaska I rarely spoke or left my room. I remember being so scared of making any decision for myself that it would take me an hour to decide what type of juice I wanted. My dad had the patience of a saint; he stood in that grocery aisle and never berated me. He just told me we weren't leaving until I picked.

Unless I went to the local college, my dad wouldn't pay for my continuing education. But since I wanted to get as far away from my high school tormentors as possible I joined the Air Force. Turns out those drugs my mother did – they caused a large portion of my joints to not fully form. As soon as I started PT and marching, my right hip dislocated and kept dislocating. After three weeks in basic training and full body x-rays revealing the extent of my own birth defects, I was honorably discharged on medical grounds. I was going into the finance division, but an airman who can't march is considered useless. So I did the next best thing... I went to the local college my father wanted me to go to in the first place. Ironic, right?

## **Becoming a Business Owner**

Purchasing a business at 19 is one way to become a business owner, but I don't recommend it. I was good with numbers. I got the logic behind doing the books, and I understood the importance of knowing how much money came in and where it went back out. According to family lore, I came out of the womb counting. I was told as far back as I can remember that I would be an accountant. Big surprise, I grew up to be an accountant. It wasn't something I was particularly passionate about, but I was good at it and it put a roof over my head so I didn't complain.

After college I couldn't get a job in my field to save my life. No one wanted to hire the 19-year-old girl with a chip on her shoulder. It didn't matter that I was capable. It only mattered that I didn't know how to present myself as a professional and that you'd have to be crazy to trust a kid with your financials. I was fortunate enough that my dad had a friend who needed help toward the end of the year and that she was willing to take me on.

My first day she told me she didn't want me to think – she just wanted me to hit the keys she told me to hit and when she told me to hit them. So that's what I did, day in and day out. I watched and absorbed everything she did and I thought, "I can do this!"

After working for her for several weeks and after the umpteenth time I heard her say, "I wish I was home in Tennessee," I came to her and said, "If you really want to go home, I have cash." Within two weeks I owned a small bookkeeping firm in Fairbanks, Alaska with 17 clients.

I knew the work. I could get the debits and credits to balance. I was organized. I could make the software sit up and sing. What I wasn't, was mature enough to run a business. At 19, even with the life I had lived, I didn't have the life experience to realize that just because I was the "boss" I couldn't do whatever I wanted... I promptly ran the business into the ground.

Thankfully, I wised up quickly. I still knew nothing about running a business but I was a damn fine technician. I got a reputation for being the "Clean-up Queen." Give me five years' worth of receipts and I could and would give you back a financial statement you could take to the bank. The day I got my first client on my own, not one I purchased, was such a high. Finally someone was taking a chance on ME. That client is still *my* client today, 21 years later, and I think out of everything I've accomplished it is the one thing I'm most proud of.

Fast-forward a couple of years and I had tripled the number of clients, had a staff of two to manage, plus a mortgage on my very own office building. I knew nothing about being an employer. I fouled it up at every turn. I hired friends, didn't pay my payroll taxes, and I didn't know how to charge once I wasn't the one doing the work.

Being a keen reader and still utterly convinced there isn't anything you can't learn from a book, I did what I always do – I went to my library and read book after book about business. Business how-to's, leadership dos and don'ts, legal this, legal that... Once again I managed to pull myself out of the nosedive. My business scraped by another year.

At this point I was still just a technician. I had no idea that I had anything to offer besides the balancing of a checkbook. I KNEW I had no other talents. I was a walking calculator and that was all I would ever be. I had been told repeatedly that I wasn't creative. I remember once receiving a "C" on an interior design assignment in college that said, "While technically correct, lacks creativity." For years I let that be a part of the story I would tell myself. If anyone dared to call me creative, I would just roll my eyes and laugh it off.

It's easy to just be and not to expect more of yourself – there are no growing pains. You just rinse and repeat, going through the motions. This is where most of us stay – it's simple and it takes something momentous or catastrophic to shake you out of the groove of just surviving. Can you guess which one it was for me? I'll give you a hint; I never do things the easy way.

Catastrophe struck at the age of 28. I was working 80 to 100 hours a week and suddenly I had days I literally couldn't get out of bed. I had lost all feeling in my hands and feet. I was sleeping one night out of every 3 or 4. The sack around my heart kept filling up with fluid. The doctors had no clue what to make of me. I was told I had Aplastic Anemia, Early Onset Parkinson's or ALS. I was told it was all in my head and given a referral to a psychiatrist. I was told I was a drama queen and just trying to get attention. I was told I was dying. I was told, "We just don't know." But I was never told *how to make it stop*.

Within two years my thriving business, making high six figures, was barely bringing in \$35K. I couldn't keep up with the work and the clients had to move on. I was \$300K in medical debt, and this was after insurance. It finally got to the point that I truly believed that by the time we got an answer it would be too late. It would be a case of, "If we had just figured it out six months earlier..."

My husband and I made the very difficult decision to move me to Ohio where he had family that was willing to take care of me while he stayed in Alaska working so we'd continue to have medical insurance. Thankfully, I'm married to a techno-geek. Long before "virtual assistants" were a trendy thing to have or be, he figured out all the virtual technologies I would need to have in place to keep servicing the clients that were sticking with me.

You haven't truly been lonely until you are in a state with more people on the Interstate at rush hour than there are in your entire home state and you only know one of them. My father-in-law took excellent care of me and I am profoundly grateful, but it just isn't the same. In spite of everything, I kept working 80+ hours a week. I didn't and don't know how to quit, sometimes to my own detriment.

I had been in Ohio for just a couple of months when I had my first minor heart attack. I laugh as I write minor, as if there is such a thing. I was alone and I woke up feeling like a 600-pound man was sitting on my chest. I knew something was wrong, and I suspected it was my heart based on an article I had recently read. I took two aspirin and called my father-in-law to take me to the ER. Those two aspirin probably saved my life, but by this point I barely cared. I would never kill myself but I thought, repeatedly, that it would be easier to die than to continue the struggle.



After calling 911 time and again when my mother had attempted suicide, I knew that thinking that way would lead to damnation. I had to make a conscious decision to live. If I had to be alone while seeing doctor after doctor I was determined to find something to fill that hole in my life. On my worst days, music was the only thing that could get through the depression. While never clinically diagnosed with depression, I don't know what else to call that absence of hope. After about nine months, the doctors determined that I have a relapsing remitting form of Multiple Sclerosis. I'm one of the "lucky" ones. My brain lesions are at the base of my brain, near the brain stem, and I have symptoms bi-laterally. To top it off I had a severe allergic reaction to the MS drugs. Like I said, I never do anything the easy way...

Music became a lifeline. On my good days I would find a live show where I could get caught up in the power of the music and the energy of the crowd. On my bad days there would be music playing in the background of whatever room I was in. I started to notice that the more music in my life, the more good days I would have. It became a hunt for the next concert, the next show, and the next spark of hope. Then came the day I was at a charity concert for the Columbus Children's Hospital, watching my favorite pianist perform when a special guest changed my life with a simple note.

When Mark Masri hit that note that evening – everything stopped. The pain, the fear, the hopelessness, the doubt, the anger, the regret. EVERYTHING. Being me, and being imminently practical, I put music to the test. For weeks I listened to song after song by artist after artist. I read books about the science of music and the effect it has on your brain. I found that there are particular pieces of music, certain notes that literally heal me. This discovery, and who I had to become to survive the uncertainty and the distance from my husband, once again changed my life.

During my time on this earth, door after door being closed on me, music became the proverbial window and awakened something extraordinary in me. I started to understand that I am so much more than a technician or an MS patient. I started to believe I had creative gifts inside me. I started to believe I had something more to offer the world. Suddenly I wanted to be *more* than just a *survivor*.

At that same time, my husband gave up his job in Alaska so we could be together again. It was good and bad. I needed his support desperately, but it took months for him to find work. Barry and I only fight when money is tight, and I wasn't making enough to support us. From everything I've

read, we're not unique in that. We were apart only nine months but I had changed and he noticed. He wasn't in Ohio two weeks when he jokingly said, "What happened to the woman I married?" I am so thankful that while I had changed, his love for me hadn't. If tribulations reveal a person's true colors, my husband revealed that he is the whole flippin' rainbow.

BOOM! Life strikes again.

I received a judgment from the court saying that the hospital has the right to garnish my wages, empty my bank accounts and basically ruin me.

We had already lost our home and business real estate in Alaska. I didn't feel like I could lose anything else. I spoke to an attorney and took his advice; I made the decision to file bankruptcy. I had to protect what I could, and this was the only way I could think to do it. I know the stigma – I have hidden this decision from my clients and my family. After all, who wants an accountant who managed their finances so poorly that they had to file bankruptcy?

I still sometimes think there should have been another way out, but I have to let it go. I have to believe that I did the right thing at that time. I have to remember that I was trying to pay my debt and would have made payments every month for the rest of my life, if that is what it would take... They took those options from me, and life may have taken those options from you. If you have found yourself in this position, let go of any shame. Put your energy toward making a better life and not in soul sapping regret.

Back to the music... I can't produce music. I can't play an instrument. I can't carry a tune. I CAN, however, help those that create music. After discovering the importance of music in my life and knowing that I can't put it out in the universe for it to help others the way it did me, I did the next best thing. I found the artist who had impacted my life so deeply and offered him my help. I'm sure he thought I was a crazy fan, but with a little persistence he finally let me set him up with a YouTube channel and help sell his merchandise at any concert I could get to. My help has evolved since then, as has our friendship. I started a second business and it has allowed me to help several musicians whose music has made my life, and the lives of many others, better.

We're all broken. I know it's not something that people usually state so baldly, but it's true. Please find something that heals what is broken in you. I believe there is something special in each of us that when we connect

with it and give ourselves up to it, we find a purpose in life that is as healing to ourselves as it is to others. For me it started with music but I don't think the process ever ends. I can't wait to see who I will become next and how I will use my gifts to make my small part of the world a better place.

During the same time I started working with musicians one of my bookkeeping clients invited me to a "Born to Win" workshop with Tom Ziglar and Howard Partridge. Let me be completely honest; I've always held a pretty negative view of business coaches. I've seen client after client taken in and have nothing to show for the thousands of dollars they have invested. The difference that day was the Ziglar name. I recalled road trips with my dad where I would fall asleep in the cab of the truck listening to Zig's tapes. So I went. Worst-case scenario, I was out an afternoon. Best case, I would find something that would help me take my businesses to the next level.

I was inspired by Howard and Tom's presentation and made the decision to join Howard's Inner Circle program. I learned that day that live workshops and conferences get me excited to work on my business. I'll be honest - I have not followed the program exactly and I've been a poor student - not taking all the opportunities that have been presented to me. HOWEVER, the inspiration I have found in the community, the decision I made to spend my last dime on a program, saying to the world and myself; I am ALL IN – that has changed me and my business for the better.

When I chart my life, I find the biggest paradigm shifts have happened when I have decided I'm ALL IN, when I stop making excuses and take responsibility for my choices, good and bad. That day I decided something had to change. I needed to be more than the smallest version of myself. I had to stop letting the stories in my head inform the life I was living. I joined in September, went to my first conference in Dallas in October, and was on fire! I started implementing all that I learned and made change after change to my business. I immediately saw improvements in my bottom line and was excited for the future.

Then came my next "minor" heart attack. This one sent me back to bed for three months. I think the strides I made with the Inner Circle program are why my business survived at all, but it was still a huge blow. I lost 30% of my clients totaling more than 50% of my income. Once again, I was just scraping by. Once again, I had to pick myself up and dust myself off. THIS time I was determined to build something that could run without me, and that I would be inspired to work on. I had never felt that with my bookkeeping business before. It had always just been a J.O.B.

Inspiration for my most significant change struck in the middle of listening to Simon Sinek's "Start with Why" for the second time in a row. Since I live in the country, I have an hour commute to just about anywhere. Thanks to smart phones and smarter apps, I listen to my business books instead of reading them before I drift off to sleep. In the middle of Simon explaining to me (yes, he was speaking just to me) why Apple Computers dropped the Computer from their name a light bulb went off. The reason I was always dealing with price shoppers was because I had "price" in my business name. If I wanted to attract the type of customers I enjoyed working with, who appreciated and valued what I had to offer, I needed to change my name.

But what should my new business name be? I knew it needed to be related to why I do what I do, but I didn't know what that was. Simon Sinek has an amazing tool on his website to help you discover your "why." He believes your why of things is a thread that runs through your entire life, through every relationship. Using his tool I discovered that what I do on an instinctual level is Encourage and Educate. I was flabbergasted. Do you know what I wanted to be when I grew up? In the secret corners of my heart I always wanted to be a teacher. I had the same teacher for Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, and she was my hero. I looked her up when I was in high school and told her how she had saved my life by nurturing my love of reading. Ms. Gordon was everything I ever wanted to be, and suddenly a test was telling me that even though I was an accountant, I was really a teacher at heart.

I didn't think for a second that I should switch careers. Instead, I realized that I had a platform to teach from. I could teach small business owners to love their financials. You laugh, but most small business owners HATE their financials. They feel a sense of shame that they aren't as up to date or organized as they should be. They feel stupid because they should be able to do it all, make the widgets AND track the money. Once an entrepreneur falls in love with their financials they discover a powerful tool to help them get where they want to go. How could I not be excited to share that secret with the world?

Sadly, E Squared was taken. So I needed another "E." Well, I thought, if you are encouraging and educating people, then you are EMPOWERING them to go further, to think bigger, and reach dreams that previously seemed impossible. E3 was born and I completely rebranded myself and my business in August of 2013. In 2014 I made my smartest

hiring decision and hired someone who would help me communicate the 3E's to the world.

Funnily enough I almost didn't hire Miranda because she was barely 19. We had an amazing interview and she understood the 3E's on an instinctual level. She wanted a job where she could grow and give back. After hiring her, but before her first day I started doubting my decision. I had to give myself a mental slap and remember all the doors closed on me when I was 19. I resolved to have a little faith and she has proven time and again that it was the right thing to do. I'm utterly convinced that one day Miranda will be running my company or the world – whichever comes first.

Together we started communicating our why with the rest of the staff and my clients. By filtering every communication through the 3E's we changed how others perceived us and how we perceived ourselves. The effect was immediate. We were attracting the clients we wanted and I personally enjoyed the work more when I came at it from my "Why" instead of from the technician perspective.

Part of living by my 3E's is finding a way to give back. There are so many worthy causes but the ones that inspire me are the organizations that take care of our soldiers. My dad and best friend were Navy, my step-brother was Army, my husband was Air Force. I love and honor those who serve, and if I could take the music I love and use it as a vehicle to help an organization like The Wounded Warrior Project why wouldn't I? In 2014 I hosted my first home concert with Mark Masri performing and all proceeds going to my favorite charity. The night was a huge success and has become an annual event.

My business continued to grow and evolve. I started teaching small business owners the value of getting away from their offices and spending a day on strategic thinking. I created an entire workshop around my own quarterly methodology and started leading small groups. I loved being at the front of the room, watching light bulbs go off. I started dreaming about personally moving away from actual bookkeeping work and teaching other small business owners to stop thinking of themselves as just technicians.

Growing pains are exactly that, painful! I grew too fast and relied too heavily on staff that I hired when I was just hiring technicians. Not all of them were the right people for the new direction of my company. Good people mind you, just not the right people. I needed people who were as excited to grow and teach as I was. I burned them out. It was unintentional,

and it's only nine months after my office imploded in early 2015 that I can see it for what it was. I did this to myself. I burned them out. Hindsight really is 20/20.

Right as tax season 2015 was coming to a close a long time employee had what appeared to be a sudden and complete breakdown. I was devastated. This employee had been with me for 10 years and had actually moved from Alaska to Ohio to continue working with me. She had become family. If it hadn't been for her my business wouldn't have survived during that period I was undiagnosed. I owe her more than I can ever repay.

After she just didn't show up one day, I discovered months of work not done and hidden in boxes and drawers. I found error after costly error. I had to apologize to clients and staff so often that it felt like I was going back to the girl who would apologize for the sky being too blue. I started to lose hope and I struggled with not hating her.

Hate is such a strong word and something I don't believe in. I think hate eats your souls and you become the thing you hate. Somedays, though, as I was struggling to rebuild yet again, I came close. What I realize now is that I was trying to grow something that no longer fit her vision of her job and her future. Because of her loyalty, to me she tried her best and rather than disappointment me she hid that she was overwhelmed. As the leader, I should have seen what was going on and taken steps to rectify the issues before they snowballed, but I failed.

It's okay to admit to failing. It doesn't make you a failure. Only quitting can do that. Let me be clear, changing gears is not quitting. We need to stop doing the things that aren't working or aren't good for us. I didn't quit hiring because I had made poor leadership decisions, but I changed how I hired.

2016 has started with a bang. We've held our first all day strategic thinking workshop and have taken 32 professionals through a process of thinking bigger about who they are and their place in the world. We developed a planner that is helping them refocus each week on the goals they need to meet to take them to their next level. We are now working with clients in 20 states and have two offices. I have a staff that I admire and trust. I work with several incredible women who believe in the E3 mission and are excited to encourage, educate, and empower.

2015 is in the rearview mirror and I am moving forward.

## **Lessons Learned**

It has taken many years, lessons, books and mentors to get to this place in my life. I'd love to take the time to share with you a few of the things I've learned in the hope that you can get to this place faster than I did.

**Gratitude is necessary for a happy life. Be thankful often. Schedule it if necessary.**

Every single day I write down a least one thing I am grateful for. I actually have an app on my phone that asks me every four hours what I am grateful for today. Taking a page out of Darren Hardy's playbook; when I am particularly frustrated with someone I start writing down all the things about them I am grateful for. The shift in perspective helps me move beyond a knee-jerk reaction and into a place where I can deal with whatever drama is occurring without saying something I'll regret.

**When you feel unloved, unappreciated, lonely, or discouraged reach out to someone and tell them how much you care.**

You would be surprised at how often the response you get is, "You don't know how badly I needed to hear that!" Your heart is immediately lifted and the good you have just put out into the universe multiplies exponentially as the person you just encouraged is inspired to reach out and encourage others.

**"What gets measured gets managed."**

I'm not sure whose quote this is but it most often gets attributed to Peter Drucker. I read in a *Harvard Review* that just the act of writing down my goals makes me 70% more likely to reach them. That's a significant enough number that I gave it a shot. When I actually write them down with pen and paper – I make an emotional connection to the goal that I don't feel when I use a productivity app.

**Vision Boards aren't arts and crafts – they are one of your most powerful tools.**

You have a dream but it's nebulous. You can't actually see how it could possibly come to be or what your life would be like once you got there. If you can't see, taste and feel your dream then what's going to inspire you on those days where all you'd rather do is curl up on the sofa and

zone out to some really terrible reality television? Create a vision board of your own and make sure to place it where you see it every single day.

**It's better than okay to ask for help. It's necessary for success.**

We aren't built to do it alone. Even introverts like me do better when we have the support of a community of like-minded people. I'm not looking for a bunch of people to agree with me. I am looking for people who share my values and who will inspire me on a daily basis to be the best version of myself. It is said that we become the average of the five people we spend the most time with. Choose wisely.

**How I perceive stress is more important to my well being than living a "Stress-Free" life.**

First of all, stress-free is a myth. It's not attainable, and the act of trying to avoid stress to that degree created some of the biggest stressors of my adult life. In 2015 when my office imploded, my MS became almost unbearable. For years my doctor had told me that I had to control my stress or I would have more episodes. Immediately my facial twitches became more pronounced and I could barely sleep due to the pain I was in. I read a book about stress that changed everything. *The Upside of Stress* by Kelly McGonigal taught me that how I think of stress would determine how my body responds to it. So today, I prefer to recognize that the adrenaline flowing through my veins when I think about you reading this is the same adrenaline that a football team has coursing through their veins before they take the field at the championship game. I can allow it to hold me back or I can use it to help me win the game.

**Apologize the right way** - We're all going to screw up, repeatedly. The only way to move forward is to admit your mistake. Don't hide the error. Instead, figure out how you're going to keep it from happening again, and above all, DON'T make excuses! Making excuses just dooms you to repeating the mistake... over and over and over again. You may still lose the client or the friend, but if you know you've done everything you can to make it right, and you've taken full responsibility for your action or inaction then you'll be able to look back without regret.

**Apologize for the right things** – I actually got this one from a Facebook post featuring a comic by illustrator Yao Xiao. Apologize for a mistake. Apologize for losing your temper. Apologize when you inadvertently hurt someone's feelings. Don't apologize when what you



really want to do is show your appreciation. Don't say, "Sorry, I'm just rambling." Instead say "Thank you for listening." *"An apology is a show of humility by one, but a well-placed "thank you" uplifts everyone."* Tod Perry

**Find a Mentor – BE a mentor** We're not the first to walk this path, and those that have been here before us have a world of knowledge that they will generously share if we just ask. After joining the Inner Circle I knew I needed to find a local coach. I now work and collaborate with David Wright the Executive Director of Coaching for Ziglar International. He has helped me change my internal dialog and holds me accountable for the goals I have set for myself. He has shown me the joy in discomfort and the beauty in growing pains.

Conversely, I have learned more about my business and myself by being a mentor. I have learned as I sought to teach. I have grown as I have helped others grow. Encouraging others has encouraged me.

I am currently working with an amazing woman. In her fear of being wrong she has a tendency to ask questions that she already knows the answers to. What she is really asking for is validation and not help. I realized when talking to her that I do the same thing when talking to David. I ask, "What should I do?" Rather than "This is what I think the right thing is, do you agree?" See the difference? Hopefully by flipping the question we will both find the validation and confidence we need.

**Don't confuse happiness and joy** – If your goal is to have a happy life, you are going to fail at least 50% of the time. I find it hard to be happy when I'm struggling to make payroll or doing the work that I consider drudgery. However I can do both those things with joy in my heart because I know that it will get me one step closer to my goals. If I can find the joy I am less likely to procrastinate doing what needs to be done.

**We create our own reality** - When I was 18 and newly married, I got into an argument with my husband. I don't even remember what it was about, but I know neither of us was willing to budge. I got so frustrated that I literally stamped my foot (picture a five year old) and yelled at Barry, "That's not the way things work in Shaneh's world!" Fight over – we couldn't remember why we were angry after we quit laughing. It's a funny tale and has taken on a life of its own.

Through the music I have made friends across this country and once or twice a year they descend on Shaneh's world. Some of them find it an

oasis, others find it exciting, all of them find it a haven because I won't allow the negative things in life to intrude. My friend with Fibro always gets a special massage – no pain allowed. My adopted little sister always leaves with more faith in herself than when she arrives – no negative self-talk allowed. Everyone leaves with the best coffee ever roasted and a fantastic meal.

Shaneh's World isn't a place, even though you can check in that you've arrived on Facebook. It is a feeling, and it is a feeling they can return to anytime by making the decision not to accept less from life than what they take away from being here. Yes, it's got its own soundtrack and menu but those are superficial things. It's the feeling that matters and we are each responsible for creating that special space in our own life.

I believe we shape our reality. We decide what is acceptable in our lives. We are treated poorly? It's because we are letting someone treat us poorly. One of my favorite lines in Stephen Chbosky's book, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, is, "We accept the love we think we deserve." Exchange the word "love" with any number of nouns and the statement still holds true.

We accept the health we think we deserve.

We accept the friendships we think we deserve.

We accept the successes we think we deserve.

We accept the LIFE we think we deserve.

Every time I've been knocked down I have picked myself back up. I have consistently persisted in the face of overwhelming setbacks. This is just who I am. I can't give up. I won't give up. I haven't done it on my own and there are too many people to thank than I can list here, but it was still my choice to get back up.

When I was nine I refused to accept a life where being beaten was the norm. At twelve, I refused to accept familial relationships where censure and disdain were the norm. At twenty-nine, I refused to accept a diagnosis where insomnia and depression were the norm. In 2015, I refused to accept a business where dreading my work was the norm.

Now, in 2016, I choose to live fully in Shaneh's World.

In Shaneh's World, I REFUSE to accept a life where I don't matter.

I refuse to ACCEPT a life where I don't make a difference.

I refuse to accept a LIFE that is less than what I alone was created to achieve.

Look at your life and the setbacks you have gone through – where have you picked yourself up and where have you given in? Is that something you can or should change? I don't presume to know the pain you have gone through. I don't believe my way is the only right way. But for those of you that have been inspired by my words, I hope you will take this opportunity to implement just one thing you've learned in this chapter. You are worth the effort, and the difference you can make in this world will be magnified exponentially with just a little persistence.

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*Shaneh is the owner and big-picture person at E3 Services. She works with clients to understand their business and personal goals. Then, she helps them develop plans to make those dreams come true. Shaneh works mostly from the E3 offices in Kettering, Ohio, but also travels all over the US to train staff and help businesses get organized. According to her family, Shaneh was born counting. That may very well be—she was drawing up spreadsheets by age 12 and owned her first business at 19. She's learned plenty since then about what it takes to help a business succeed. Shaneh hails from the city of North Pole, Alaska (yes, it's a real place, and no, she doesn't want to hear another Santa joke). She and her husband moved to Ohio in 2007 and now consider the state to be home. But that doesn't mean Shaneh stays put, she's constantly traveling the country in search of great live music.*

*"Gratitude is necessary for a happy life. Be thankful often. Schedule it if necessary."  
~Shaneh Woods*

## Chapter Eleven

### Landing the Plane – Howard Partridge

Captain Chesley Sullenberger (Sully) landed U.S. flight 1549 on the Hudson River after a bird strike took out both engines of the aircraft. Notice that I said he *landed on* the Hudson, not *crashed in* it. Sully was quick to point this out as the National Transportation Safety Board grilled him. He was an experienced, seasoned pilot who became an instant, but reluctant, hero, because of the “miracle on the Hudson.”

Sully reminds me of the business owners in this book. They landed the plane time after time in difficult, distressed situations. John Maxwell says, “You gotta land the plane.” In other words, you have to finish well.

It’s good to take off and it’s good to be in the air. But how will your flight be? How high can you go? How far can you go? And will you land the plane at your dream destination? Or will it crash and burn prematurely?

This chapter happens to be Chapter 11, which is appropriate since many businesses end in “Chapter 11,” bankruptcy. As a small business owner, you may not crash and burn and end up in Chapter 11; but if you’re like most, you’ll have a difficult flight, attempting to gain altitude without the thrust that comes from powerful engines (systems) like Sully experienced after the bird strike.

If you’re like most, you probably won’t build a phenomenal dream team. If you’re like most small business owners, you probably won’t get to the dream destination you really want, and you won’t have the extraordinary experiences you could have during your time in business.

But it doesn’t have to be that way. If you follow the simple, but proven steps of building a phenomenal business, you’ll be more likely to reach your life goals, and you’ll be more likely to have a positive impact on others as you go.

#### **How your flight goes, all depends on three things:**

**1. Your plane (systems).** Your business is a vehicle to help you achieve your L.I.F.E. Goals. I use airplanes to describe our membership

levels in The Howard Partridge Inner Circle because an airplane is the fastest way to get where you want to go on this earth.

Our first membership level is Inner Circle 747. Why a 747? Because in a 747, you can go a long way and take a lot of people with you, which brings me to the second thing a phenomenally successful business has to have...

**2. Your crew (team).** If you don't hire people, you'll always stay small, you won't fly very high, and you won't go very far. If you don't hire the *right* people, and get them in the right seat, you'll have a difficult flight. All of business and all of life is about relationships. Love your team and they will love you back. Help them get what they want out of life and they will help you get what you want out of life.

Leadership expert Dave Anderson says "if you have a dream, but no team, you have to give up the dream or build up the team." I don't know about you, but I'm not giving up the dream. And I'll add this... building a team has been the most gratifying part of the entire journey. Seeing young people blossom as phenomenal leaders themselves is incomparable to any level of personal success.

**3. The captain (you).** You are the leader. Like Sully, when bad things happen, your phenomenal leadership can save the day. John Maxwell says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." *Everything*. Sully's number one concern after landing on the Hudson was that all 155 souls were safe. As Simon Sinek shared in his phenomenal book in *Leaders Eat Last*, you must create a Circle of Safety for your team. When you do that, your team will fight the dangers on the outside of the circle for you, and with you.

John also says the most important thing a leader can do is think. Sully didn't panic. He thought through his many years of training and experience and took action. Not only did he not panic, he didn't freeze either.

*As the leader, you must know when to act and when to hold.*

Another way to say this is that you need 3 things to have a phenomenally SUCCESSful business...

**1. Phenomenal Leadership.** Without phenomenal leadership, you won't attract phenomenal people).

**2. Phenomenal People.** Without phenomenal people, you won't have anyone to run the many systems that are required for your phenomenal aircraft.

**3. Phenomenal Systems.** This brings me back to where we started. I'm about to land this plane called *Phenomenal Success Stories*...

I'm not a pilot, at least for an airplane, but I do know this – Every airplane has a checklist.

Here's a reminder of your checklist for a smooth, successful, significant flight...

**Step 1: Determine where you are (Assessments).**

**Step 2: Determine where you want to go (Life Goals).**

**Step 3: Create your flight plan (Business Plan).**

**Step 4: Build the plane (Systems).**

**Step 5: Assemble the passengers and flight crew (Dream Team)**

This will include your clients (passengers), employees (co-pilots, flight attendants, mechanics that fix the systems) and your coaching community (air traffic controllers).

**Step 6: Implement (Action)**

**Step 7: Track your progress (Go back to Step 1 and Assess)**

Finally, as I land this plane called *Phenomenal SUCCESS Stories*, let me share one of Zig Ziglar's favorite quotes...

**“Your attitude determines your altitude”**

In the movie *Sully*, I felt the most meaningful statement came toward the end of the movie during the disputed and controversial National Transportation Safety Board hearing. As the review board finally realized how extraordinarily he led during that difficult situation, one of the board members proclaimed to Sully that he was *indeed a hero*. “No,” Sully shot

back. “The heroes were the crew, the passengers, and all of the rescue workers that came to our aid.”

Sully’s attitude was right. Here’s a man who never sought the national spotlight, but was thrust into it unwillingly. Instead of taking the credit, he gave the credit to others. May we all have the attitude Sully had. May we give credit to those that helped us build the plane, to those that help us fly the plane every day, and to those that buy airline tickets from us. When we all do that, I’m convinced that we will soar higher than ever before.

And each day as you land your plane, whether it’s a good landing or not, whether it’s to refuel or pick up some more passengers, remember that there are many more phenomenal flights in your future.

May *all* of your future flights be smooth, successful, and most of all, significant.

*-Howard Partridge*

## **What Business Owners Have to Say About The Howard Partridge Inner Circle Coaching Program**

### **“Saved My Business” – Carol Alexander**

“In late 2011, I was desperate to save my English education business located in the New Territories in Hong Kong. Although I worked seven days a week, I was barely able to pay myself a decent salary. To keep the business running, I had maxed out all my credit cards and taken out two high interest loans. The stress and worry of being deeply in debt led to sleepless nights, irritability and strained relationships.

When notified that Howard’s conference in Nashville, Tennessee was scheduled for January 2012, I was determined to make the 8,000-mile trip. It was a huge gamble but my company was failing. If Howard and his team couldn’t help me, my business was headed for closure.

The wealth of information and assistance provided at the conference far exceeded my expectations. I returned to Hong Kong with a set of Howard’s training DVD’s and a clear plan for becoming profitable. As I began to implement what Howard taught, things quickly began to turn around. In less than twelve months, business had improved by nearly 300%!

I am grateful that Howard Partridge appreciates the struggles, fears and aspirations of small business owners. He took the mystery out of how to become profitable and developed a remarkable process that is easy to follow, even if one doesn’t live in the USA.”

### **“400% Growth” -Laura Fetrow, *Urban Design+Remodel***

“I joined the Inner Circle four years ago. When I joined, my business was in transition from real estate development (flipping houses) to a remodeling construction company. Since most of my career was spent in a non-construction industry, I was looking for help in all areas of my business as it related to Michael Gerber's book, *The E-Myth*. I needed to become more intentional in all that I was doing. I have found all kind of solutions while being in the Inner Circle; most significantly in the financial arena as it related to understanding my pricing models and accounting practices and in all areas of my marketing. The results have been great, as my company has grown over 400%!”



**“Worth. Every. Dollar.” -Pat Tessaro, Centex Pressure Washing Service**

“We joined this program to solve various problems we were having in our business. I was not prepared for the impact it would have on my personal life- growing as a person, learning to dream BIG, and being part of a caring community. Worth. Every. Dollar.”

**“Priceless” -Azure Grillo, Azure Skin Spa & Clinic**

“Since joining the Inner Circle, I've had character development, built trust, and gained respect for knowledge. My favorite benefits are the community, phone calls, website information, Tuesday webinars, and getting around others who are where I want to be. The Inner Circle membership is the easiest payment I make every month. Community, support, and encouragement are priceless.”

**“103% Increase” -James Daugette, Peppers Moving Co.**

“I have been a member for eight months. We are up 103% financially over last year. The Inner Circle has given me the tools and inspiration to grow my business. My favorite benefits of the Inner Circle are the community with the staff and other members. Joining the Inner Circle and 777 has had an impact that is beyond belief. The investment sounds high but it is miniscule when you look at the return on investment. I recouped my investment in the first three months.”

**“Freedom from Our Business” -Stephen & Natalie Merritt**

“We have been members for four to five years. In that time, we have seen a dramatic increase in our revenues. The Inner Circle has changed the way we view life and business. It has given us freedom from the business. Our favorite benefit of the Inner Circle is that everything is laid out. All you have to do is copy and implement. If you want a business that is turnkey and profitable, this is the way to go.”

## **About Howard Partridge**

Howard Partridge is an international business coach with coaching members in over 100 industries in seven countries. He is a best-selling author of four books that reached #1 on Amazon in at least one category, the exclusive business coach for Ziglar, Inc., the first Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainer in the world, the first founding member of The John Maxwell Team, and a DISC Certified Human Behavior Expert.

Howard grew up on welfare in Mobile, Alabama and left home at age eighteen. He arrived in Houston, Texas on a Greyhound bus with only 25 cents in his pocket. He started his first business out of the trunk of his car 32 years ago and built it into a multi-million-dollar enterprise. He has owned 9 small businesses altogether and owns four companies at the time of this printing.

He is President of Phenomenal Products, Inc., which helps small business owners stop being a slave to their business by transforming it into a predictable, profitable, turnkey operation. For the past two decades, Howard has helped small business owners around the world dramatically improve their businesses.

He has led hundreds of seminars, webinars, workshops, and holds his own live multi-day events which have featured some of America's top business trainers including John Maxwell, Michael Gerber, Bob Burg, Dr. Joseph A. Michelli, Darren Hardy, Dr. Robert Rohm, and American legend Zig Ziglar.

Howard has been married to Denise for 32 years, and they have one beautiful son, Christian.

Get free videos, webinars, and resources for growing a phenomenal business and living a phenomenal L.I.F.E. at [www.HowardPartridge.com](http://www.HowardPartridge.com).