

Life Planning Helps You Start Your Business Off Right

Going into 2003, I was expecting my first son. As the New Year approached, I found myself thinking about life in a whole new way. Before this, my thoughts were of my corporate life and of leisure activities. What I thought were resolutions at the time were much bigger and more life changing than I had realized and the primary reasons that The Entrepreneur Café, LLC, exists today. Back then, I was working a corporate job but found no joy in it. I was spending more hours at my desk than I cared to and wishing all the while that I could be at home hanging out with my son. Looking back, what I truly desired was more time to spend with those I loved most, greater control over my schedule, more joy and fulfillment in my days, and the opportunity to impact the world. I knew that I wouldn't get to where I wanted to be without facing some tough questions. In doing so, I would uncover answers that would alter the rest of my life.

Developing a life plan is a process to help you better identify your personal and professional priorities. A decade ago owners started businesses with a success-at-all-cost approach, which leaves little time for much else. Today many entrepreneurs are starting businesses and running them in a manner that fits their lifestyle and provides

them with an improved quality of life. If you are just starting out in business, a life plan can help guide you through the developmental stages so that you build a company that makes you happy and is in step with how you live. If you happen to be well established, then a life plan could be your reality check.

When I sat down to do my life plan, I was looking to better define myself as an entrepreneur and build a structure for how I would run The Entrepreneur Café, LLC. One of the first things that came to mind centered on my core values. My *core values* included hard work, valuing people, and having an impact on my community. My great-grandmother raised me and taught me many of the great lessons that I was able to lean on later in life when building a foundation for my business.

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I'm also a firm believer that a dream and determination can take you a long way. At this stage in life, what is it that you *dream* about? Has your day-to-day become mundane or routine? Thankfully, I still dream with the same anything-is-possible attitude that I had when I was a kid. One of the toughest things I face in business these days is when I encounter someone who, because of life's circumstances, has stopped dreaming or simply forgotten how.

The next question is an important litmus test of where you might be in life right now. Are you currently having *fun*? Or put another way ... are you *happy*? If you are a business proprietor, the answer to this question might change by the second according to the way the economy goes. But I urge you to ask the question and then be patient

enough to wait for an honest answer.

When I started working on my life plan, my list of personal questions was pretty exhaustive as I pondered the type of employees and work environment I wanted to have, what my financial goals were, and how my small efforts would impact the world around me. As a result of this process, I now live a life centered around my faith, my family, and my impact on other people's lives. And, oh yeah, I happen to run a company that gives me the freedom to be actively involved in all of those things.

Whether you are already in business and planning your company's next steps or just setting out, I encourage you to set the resolutions aside and try developing a life plan. Earlier I asked if you were happy in your current occupation, business, or the manner in which you run your business. If not, what questions do you need to ask and what changes do you need to make so that things turn out amazingly different in the upcoming year?



Developing Your Life Plan

Not sure where to begin in building your business? Start by developing a life plan. Download the complete Life Planning Questionnaire from The Entrepreneur Café, LLC, website at www.ecafellc.com/resources.

Take some time to thoroughly go through and give some honest thought to these questions. My hope is that it will provide you with the insight you need to move your business dreams forward.

