



Winning Ways

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Winning Ways

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Winning Ways is:

Joan Fletcher – President and Founder. Joan has over 20 years experience in business ownership and training. She is also a coveted and inspiring speaker. 703-273-9299

jfletcher@winningwaysinc.com

Terry Nicholetti – VP of Marketing and Client Relations. Terry is an educator, trainer, and businessperson. She is known for her dynamic seminars and presentations on networking. 202-302-2403

tnicholetti@winningwaysinc.com

Betsy Hudson – VP of Business Dev. and Education. Betsy is an experienced and inspirational trainer and manager in sales, marketing, and business development. 571-437-6192

bhudson@winningwaysinc.com

Winning Ways NewsBits

Increase your Home Sales for 2007... join Betsy in her next "Winning at Home Sales" course. New class begins on February 5, 2007.

Plan now to achieve your Sales Goals for 2007 by joining Joan in her Winning at Sales Class. Her next class begins on February 9, 2007. This class is specifically for business owners and sales professionals.

Joan Fletcher will be one of the speakers for The Mentor Protégé Night 2007 "How to get to the next level of leadership" at Tysons Corner on February 7th.

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Working Through Your Weaknesses

Many leaders and business owners sabotage themselves, usually unknowingly, by their fears of failing in particular areas. As a business leader, there is a wide range of roles you must play, and you will by nature be more comfortable in some roles than in others. In some of the tasks you must do, you will be right up your alley: these are your greatest strengths, the things that got you most excited about being a business owner in the first place. In others, though, you will feel completely out of your depth. It may be in the administrative side, or the financial side, or the people-management side... inevitably there will be some roles you need to play where you feel unequipped to deal with the tasks involved.

The temptation, for most people, is to avoid these areas as much as possible. Even those who recognize that they must be dealt with will often find themselves putting off tasks in their less comfortable roles, and when they must finally attend to them, getting them over with as quickly as possible. This is partly because they just find such tasks less pleasant, and partly because they are secretly convinced they will fail in this area. They will miss something—they will offend someone. It feels much safer to focus your time and energy on areas where you know you're strong, you know you can excel.

This avoidance of tasks we feel we're less strong at often happens almost unconsciously. Many of us develop the habit, without ever realizing it, of spending less and less time doing the things we're weakest at. This has two negative consequences: first, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If we do the task in a rush, naturally we will do it less well. We usually need more time, not less, to do things we're not as strong at. Unfortunately, we usually give them less time, and thereby perform even less well than we're really capable of. Second, we never get stronger. If we think of different skill areas as different muscles, it makes sense to exercise the weaker ones more; however, we're naturally inclined to do the opposite.

This is not to say that running a business should be a punishing activity. It's important to give lots of time to the areas where you're strong, because

this is where your best creativity and energy will come from. And ultimately, you want to grow to the point where you can work with people who are strong where you are weak, so that you and your partners or employees can each focus on doing what you do best. But most business owners, starting out, don't have that luxury. So it's important to find a balance between working out of your strengths and exercising your weaknesses.

This is where detailed planning can help. Without a plan, you are likely to fall into the trap of doing what comes naturally—avoiding the tasks you're weak in. Having a plan, both for the short term and for the long term, will help you see clearly what needs to be done at what time. It will also help you see how all of your different roles interrelate. Each area of your business depends on all the others, and weakness in one area can hamper the others. A good strategic plan will remind you of not only what you need to be doing, but why each task is so important to achieving your vision. Knowing that the less agreeable tasks are integral to achieving your dreams can motivate you more than anything else.

Your personal growth will largely determine your business's capacity to grow. Shoring up your weak points, learning to *do*—even if you don't learn to enjoy—the tasks that come the least naturally, will greatly expand your possibilities and opportunities. It may help to view them as exercise: instead of thinking, "I have to do X, and I'm not very good at that," think, "I have to do X, and I'm going to learn from this activity so that next time I will do it better." Not only will this motivate you to do tasks you'd otherwise avoid, but you will find that it, too, is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

ASKing for success

The acronym ASK sums up a great formula for growth: Ask, Seek, Knock.

Ask questions- don't be afraid to admit to not knowing something. Nobody expects you to know everything. The mark of a wise and intelligent person is eagerness to learn.

Seek help- There are many resources available in every area of business development. Instead of avoiding the areas you're less comfortable in, try seeking out books or seminars that can help you grow in your ability. Remember, the faster you grow, the faster your business will grow!

Knock on the door of every opportunity- If you're not afraid of exercising your weaknesses, you will find many opportunities appearing that you might otherwise have ignored. Seizing these may yield great and unexpected developments for you.