



GIVE YOUR DREAM A PLAN:

7 Questions
to Ignite
Extraordinary
Results in Your
Business

Barbara J Richards

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Introduction

*“What do you really want?
If you could design your business
exactly the way you want,
what would you create?”*

That’s what I recently asked Marie, a Personal Chef who came to me for advice on how to grow her business. We were sitting at a small table at the back of a crowded neighbourhood pub. The conversation was electric as she shared her dreams for her personal cheffing business. Suddenly, she became quiet. “You know, sometimes I wonder if I can make it with this business. I’m on fire with possibilities, but feel like I’m running in all directions at once. I’m swamped with urgent demands, and don’t know where to start with these ideas.” I could hear the sparks of her dream, but knew that if we didn’t breathe some life into them immediately they were at risk of being extinguished.

What is your dream for your business? Whether you are a seasoned veteran or a new entrepreneur, there’s always a sense of possibility aching to be expressed. But quite likely, just as with Marie, the sparks of your dream are in danger of fizzling out. Your days are spent doing busy work. You now have a 6–or even 7-day work week. You’re working

harder than ever, but much of your time is spent doing things you don't like. When you do get some free time, you're too burned out to enjoy it. This definitely wasn't the plan.

So where did the dream go? Is this just the hard reality of being self-employed? Are all the naysayers right when they say people can't make a successful business out of their dream?

They couldn't be more wrong! The most successful businesses are built on dreams and passion (just ask Steve Jobs and Anita Roddick). Your dream is still there. It just got stuck under a crushing pile of details, and without a plan for moving forward that's where it will stay. To make sure that doesn't happen, you have to re-awaken your vision, connect with the life you want to author, and devise a strategy that will allow you the time and freedom to turn your dream into reality.

Planning in a Radically New Way

Love it or hate it, a plan will make the difference between your business dream staying a fantasy, or becoming your new life. But for most of us creative entrepreneurs, just hearing the words "business plan" makes our eyes glaze over. Why is that? What makes planning such a struggle?

Think about it for a moment. When you hear the word "planning" what springs to mind? Tedious meetings? Stacks of paper written in businessese that only makes sense to an accountant? Something cast in concrete that just doesn't have anything to do with real life? Traditional planning tends to be heavy, complex and simply too constrictive for us creative entrepreneurs. Add to that the reality of a rapidly changing marketplace that means traditional plans are usually obsolete before they're finished. Even when we've taken the time to create a plan quite likely it ended up in a file drawer never to be used. No wonder we dread it.

What you need is something radically different. A living plan. One that focuses your ideas, ignites your intuition and motivates you to take immediate action with enthusiasm. One that's simple, that guides your actions and can be adjusted quickly in response to changing conditions in the market place.

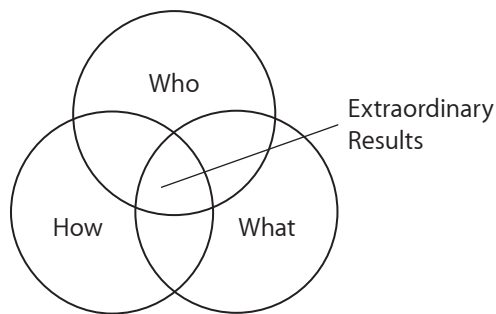
Over many years of coaching passion-business owners – small business owners, doing what they love for a living, and making a difference

that matters—I’ve developed a simple, flexible and integrated process for taking the deepest desires for a business and turning them into a roadmap to success. I wrote this book to teach readers the same steps my clients have taken with great success. As you go through these pages, you’re going to learn that process and create a framework that captures the essence of your business ideas.

7 Questions That Ignite Extraordinary Results

Most books about business planning miss out on what it really takes to succeed. Typical planning focuses on what we want (our vision and concrete goals) and how we’ll do it (our strategies and actions). But to accomplish our dream these alone aren’t enough, no matter how well they’re defined.

There is a third essential dimension that makes the difference between failure and extraordinary results: You. Achieving your deepest desires for your business depends on who you are. It means finding your essence, transforming resistance and building on who you are deep down inside. When you do, you tap into an energy that will take you where you’re meant to go.



The seven questions we’ll use in this book unlock the power of each of these essential dimensions. You’ll look in depth at what you want most for your life and your business. You’ll discover your natural and effective ways of how to accomplish this. And most importantly, you’ll

tap into who you are and harness ways to express your authentic self more fully as you grow a business you will love. Working with this three-pronged approach—What, How and Who—is the key to igniting extraordinary results.

Chapter by chapter you'll engage the power of each question and apply it to your business. Answering them will unlock your passion, harness your ideas, give shape to your vision and guide your actions every step of the way. Here's a quick preview:

1. What is my passion? Know and orient your business around your brilliance.

The primary question for fulfilling business success is, “What do you do best and love to do?” You're hard-wired to do something very well. It's where you shine, and how you naturally add value to others. You'll uncover your “something special” and make it the cornerstone of your business.

2. What kind of life do I want to author? Start first by developing your life vision.

Your business is meant to serve your life, but for this to happen it means you need to know what's most important to you. You'll pinpoint your life priorities, which will put your business in perspective and ensure you're going in the direction of happiness.

3. What do I really want in my business? Develop your business vision, based on the Real You.

This is your business. You get to design it exactly the way you want. You'll paint a picture of your business two to three years from now, when you're singing your song and your business is thriving. Tapping into your inspiring vision immediately energizes your present, and unlocks new creative thinking.

4. What is my True North? Unleash the power of purpose.

Your business is an extension of your self. It is totally unique. There has never been a business like this before in history and there never will be again. Your business purpose captures and communicates this

uniqueness. You'll develop a simple, inspiring statement that motivates you and speaks directly to your best clients, the people you are meant to serve, whose needs are a perfect fit for your brilliance and your company's mission.

5. What's my definition of success this year? Craft your top goals.

A year from now, what do you most want to be celebrating? New clients? New services? Higher revenues? You'll put legs under your business vision by pinpointing your most important goals that spell success now.

6. So...how's this going to happen? Map out your game plan.

Success is rarely an accident. It's the fruit of a compelling and doable game plan. You'll craft your core, passionate business-building strategies that give shape to how you'll accomplish your dream. Then you'll design 90-day action projects that launch you into doable actions and produce immediate results. Finally, you'll ground your dream in a financial plan that's a blueprint for a flourishing and profitable business.

7. Who is this calling me to become? Achieving your vision takes learning and growth.

The difference between success and failure is you, who you will be. An inspiring vision calls us to become more than we are right now. It means being who you are deep down inside and growing beyond your normal zone of comfort. Personal transformation is the most exciting part of being a passion-business owner. When we dare to dream, we dare ourselves to step up to a new level of our greatness.

These seven questions will guide you in creating a VisionPlan for your business dream and will empower you to step out boldly to make your dream a living reality.

How to Get the Most from This Book

If you're stalled out, stuck or struggling with your business dream, I'll bet it's not due to lack of information. There's an abundance of information on building successful businesses available on the internet or in bookstores. The trick is applying what you know, taking active

steps toward your goals. Action is the answer, and support is the key.

As you read through these pages, I'd like you to consider me your personal executive coach, here to support you in the business of your business. You've probably experienced the positive impact of working with a coach in some area of your life (sports, drama, sales). Growing your passion-business is another place where coaching can help you achieve extraordinary success.

Early in my career I experienced the power of coaching with one of my passions, acting. I worked with world-class acting coaches who helped me understand my talents (and limitations!), showed me how to bring out the best in my performances and overcome obstacles like stage fright. They challenged me to set high goals based on a clear knowledge of my abilities, and stood beside me celebrating my successes and urging me to stretch even further. In the same way, a business coach can help bring out your best and guide you to grow a fulfilling and successful business.

I've coached hundreds of people to move into action. As your coach, I'll be a blend of consultant, mentor, cheerleader, sounding board and support system all rolled into one. Often I'll remind you of the things you already know, but haven't yet integrated into your life. I'll motivate and challenge you to think differently, to take risks and try new things. I'll teach you simple, effective business skills. You'll learn how to constantly improve your game, even when that means going back to re-learn the basics, and re-design your plan.

Each step of the way, I'll be beside you cheering you on. I know first-hand what you may be going through. I love being an entrepreneur, but I also know how challenging it can be. I recognize what it's like to work in today's high-paced, competitive, ever-changing marketplace. I understand the stress a small business can put upon your personal life and relationships. I also know what it takes to create a profitable business that supports your life priorities. I have consistently earned a good livelihood doing my passion for over ten years. I've grown a business that is aligned with my deepest commitments, becomes more satisfying and prosperous each year, and provides my clients with high levels of satisfaction.

Each chapter will have many opportunities for you to apply the ideas and tools you'll be learning in own business. If you are willing to work

hard, invest some time and energy in this process and take a few acceptable risks, I guarantee your business—and your life—will change dramatically. You'll put yourself in charge of making your vision become your reality. You'll pull your dream out from where it's buried, shake off the critics (both inside and out) and make a living doing what you love.

I want you to have a business that achieves your dream. As I write this, I am championing your efforts and celebrating each new skill you master and every authentic risk you take.

I'd love to hear your success stories or questions as you develop and live your VisionPlan. Please feel free to send me an email at barbara@visionworkcoaching.com or share them with me on my blog at www.visionworkcoaching.com/blog. I'd love to post your successes (of course with your permission) to inspire others to follow their business dream and learn from your successes.



YOUR TURN—Starting Out

The first thing I want you to do is get a notebook for your VisionPlan work. This week, get a lined notebook or a binder specifically for our work together. Throughout the book you'll have questions and activities to help you reflect, gather ideas and map out your plan.

To get started, take out your pen and write your first entry on these questions. Write a page or two, letting your thoughts flow freely.

- What do you most want from reading this book?
- What's the current situation of your business? What challenges are you facing?
- Without taking long to think about it, what's your dream?
- When you think of creating a plan for your dream, what comes to mind?
- What do you want to change, resolve or accomplish that would make your dream come alive over the next few weeks?

If just thinking about boldly stating what you want in your business is a bit daunting, relax. We'll take this step-by-step. Your vision is just

under the surface waiting to come out. You have everything you need to get started and just by engaging in these questions you'll start to feel a new energy, inspiration and motivation very soon.

Now, let's get started with the first of the seven questions—What's your passion?

WHAT'S MY PASSION?



What Is My Passion?

*“What in your life are you brilliant at?
In your heart you know what you do best.”*
—Jennifer White

“I think I’m in the wrong business.” Jessica, a successful self-employed investment advisor for over seven years, was discouraged and frustrated. She went on to say, “I’m unhappy every day when I go to work. I’ve felt stuck for months. I’m really torn, because I’ve invested so much in building up my business, but I can’t keep going on like this. Something’s got to change.”

“Tell me more,” I said.

“I’m working harder than I ever have, but I’m not getting ahead. I’ve got ideas about ways to let people know about my services, but I struggle to do anything with them. I’ve been feeling like the odd-person out in this industry for a long time now. Maybe I’m just in the wrong business and need to make a change.”

While it was possible that Jessica did need to make a radical change, I had an inkling that something else was going on. I’d heard these symptoms many times before. Successful, but unhappy. Working more hours, but not making more money. Highly skilled, but feeling second best. Many ideas, but unmotivated. Busy chasing opportunities, but unfulfilled.

Whether I am speaking to a seasoned veteran who has hit the doldrums with her dream or a new entrepreneur who is just launching out, I've learned that these signals usually point to one cause. I followed my hunch and asked the question:

“Jessica, what is it you do best and love to do?”

I heard her take a breath. Then silence.

The question had hit the mark. I knew she had not yet answered the primary question for fulfilling business success. Who are you, really? What is your passion? Our number one job as business owners is to discover our passion and then organize our business so that we are doing that most of the time. Over the next few pages you'll see how Jessica took on this vitally important task, pinpointed her real passion and found the essential ingredient to creating a remarkable business.

What Is Passion?

Each one of us is born with the ability to be great at something (or several things). We are hard-wired from birth with unique gifts and they cry out for us to use them. We use many different words to describe this. Passion. Brilliance. Genius. Bliss. Joy. Our calling. What we are meant to do.

Whatever we call it, we recognize it when we feel it. It's that sense of being connected to the spark, the flame, our inner light of being, our authentic self. We were born to use this passion. When we do, life sparkles. Our inner flame burns brightly. We have a compelling sense of direction, boundless energy and unstoppable motivation.

The secret to a thriving and fulfilling business lies in identifying your passion and putting it to work at the heart of your business. Happy, successful, satisfied women business owners I meet know where their talents lie and build a business and life that expresses their passion best. To grow a business you love, one that's sustainable and has endless possibilities, you must

- 1) discover what you do best,
- 2) work increasingly at mastering it,
- 3) present it in a way that appeals to your audience, and
- 4) do more and more of it in your business.

Imagine, what would your business and your life would be like if you did what you do best and love doing 80 per cent of your day?

But, Isn't Passion a Luxury In Tough Economic Times?

Marie, who we met in the first chapter, had been an accomplished Human Resources professional before being 'downsized' in a major corporate merger. We were meeting to explore her options for the future, and when I asked her about her passion she stopped short. "You know, for the past few months, since the layoffs started, I've been daydreaming about what I might do if I were let go. I've had a fantasy for years to start my own business as a Personal Chef. But, I couldn't do that now. I couldn't become self-employed during this economic slowdown. I have to do something more practical, don't I?"

She'd put her finger on one of the biggest obstacles our passion has to face. During difficult economic times, popular wisdom tells us to take the safe, secure path. Do what others are doing. Follow what the experts say is the hottest, surest trend. We hear a constant barrage of messages from the media, colleagues, loved ones, consultants, and teachers, telling us to forget our unique ideas and get "practical." That thinking stops most of us from understanding, valuing and searching inside for our true potential.

The fact is, popular wisdom in this case is dead wrong. Knowing and leveraging your passion is especially important in the midst of uncertain economic times. Rather than being an indulgence or a luxury, it is your greatest personal resource for creating a solid, sustainable future. Understanding your real brilliance will give you a highly practical tool for developing a business that is remarkable.

It's when we don't orient around our passion that we put ourselves at risk. There can be a profound cost to not letting our passion lead. We become vulnerable to chasing the hottest trend even if it's a mismatch to our talents. We become swamped by the options because we don't have a trustworthy compass for decision-making. Our business becomes a pale imitation of what others say is the best way to succeed. We become increasingly unhappy, unsuccessful, uncertain and we earn below our potential.

It takes courage to fly in the face of conventional thinking and choose to put your passion first. But when you do, you'll tap into your true power.



YOUR TURN—What Could Stop You from Trusting Your Passion?

You have a unique passion within you. If you find it difficult to identify and own what you do best, you are not alone. As I've coached hundreds of women to orient around their brilliance, I've heard many common issues. We haven't been taught how to recognize what we do best and love to do. In fact, most of us have probably been taught not to be guided by our passion. We've been told to fit in, not rock the boat. When we've dared to say we have gifts, we've been told not to become "too big for our britches" or that pursuing our passions is childish and self-indulgent.

What messages could be keeping you from understanding and valuing your passion? What have you heard from parents, colleagues or the media that may be submerging your natural passions and causing self-doubt? List the most common reasons you've heard against following your passion.

As you read this chapter, continue to watch for messages that could prevent you from fully embracing your truest passion. Jot them down as a starting point to freeing yourself of their debilitating grip. You will find these reasons aren't yours, but someone else's assumptions.

Passion Pays Real Dividends

Knowing and orienting around your brilliance isn't childish, self-indulgent or a luxury. It's your number one job. When you do, the dividends will be substantial:

You will avoid chasing the hottest trends when they are a mismatch to your talent. Rather than being drawn into a hot fad, you'll have the clarity to make tough decisions. You'll know whether you are following a true urge that will lead to what you are meant to do, or getting swept up in someone else's desire.

You will be positioned to make the contribution you're meant to make. You'll have an unshakable knowledge of your best product—you—before you even approach your market. You'll know your best way to make a unique, positive, profound and lasting impact on the world. As you learn to harness your natural talents, new pathways to success will open up, and you'll become highly attractive to the people you want to service.

Knowing and deeply trusting your passion will give you courage and confidence. Of course, the challenges of business don't simply disappear once you let your passion lead. In fact, sometimes the opportunities you're drawn to when following your passion will be even scarier and stretch you further than anything you've done before. But when you're living your passion, you tap into a sustainable power that both energizes you with a sense of purpose and makes overcoming daunting challenges worthwhile.

Even during uncertain economic times, understanding your real brilliance gives you a highly practical tool for developing a business that is remarkable.

Which brings us to a practical question. How exactly do we discover what we do best and love to do?

GIVE YOUR DREAM A PLAN:

7 Questions to Ignite Extraordinary Results in Your Business

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GIVE YOUR DREAM A PLAN:

7 Questions to Ignite Extraordinary Results in Your Business



What do you really want for your business?

As a passionate woman business owner, you have a unique, valuable and needed contribution to make to the world. It's vitally important that you claim and live your dream for your business.

But, quite likely the sparks of your dream are at risk of being extinguished. Your days are spent doing busy work. You now have a 6- or even 7-day work week. You're working harder than ever, but much of your time is spent doing things you don't like. When you do get some free time, you're too burned out to enjoy it. This definitely wasn't the plan.

If you're ready to re-claim your dream and connect with the power that will give you the time and freedom to turn your vision into reality, *Give Your Dream a Plan* is the one book you need. It teaches you seven questions that will unlock your potential to live and work on your own terms. A proven simple, flexible process will take your deepest desires for your business and turn them into a roadmap for success.

You will learn how to:

- Uncover your "something special" and make it the cornerstone of your business
- Put the passion back into your life and business
- Tap into your greater vision, and become highly attractive to your best clients
- Discover your most natural, effortless business-building strategies
- Design an inspiring game plan that launches you into doable actions and immediate results
- Transform debilitating resistance, and access a wellspring of energy that will take you where you're meant to go.

Give Your Dream a Plan: 7 questions to ignite extraordinary results in your business will focus your ideas, ignite your motivation, unlock your potential to step out boldly and make your dream a living reality.

Barbara J Richards is a Master Certified Coach and founder of VisionWork Coaching Group, a firm that coaches self-employed professionals and busy executives to find success and fulfillment in business and life. A coach since 1994, Barbara is one of the pioneers in the coaching profession. She has empowered hundreds of professionals to find their passion and unlock their innate ability to produce the results they truly desire.

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