

When Opportunity Knocks...

7 Unconventional Ways to Prepare for Your Chance of a Lifetime

By Laura Koehne, MBA, CPCC

Usual advice to entrepreneurs focuses on practicalities like learning to evaluate the market, write a business plan or raise money. But this assumption that we've already found the perfect idea or business opportunity is just plain wrong!

As a kid I dreamed that someday I would have my own business. In my 20's I kept my eyes open, freelanced a bit and even had a little web start up with a friend that turned out to be more of a hobby than a sustainable venture. I completed an MBA and studied entrepreneurship, and along the way I wrote a number of appealing business plans. Unfortunately, none of those businesses were appealing to *me*.

Truth was I didn't know what my dream looked like. I was surrounded by great opportunity but I hadn't spent enough time honing my receptors to know which opportunity was right for me.

What was missing was the atypical business advice: To find my perfect business opportunity I had to find myself first. I needed to assess ME before I could even look at the market!

How will you recognize the idea or business opportunity that is the perfect fit for you? Do you know what gives you the passion and energy that you'll need to start a business? Steel your courage and get ready to dive in: knowing yourself objectively, good and bad, inside and out, is essential for recognizing your perfect opportunities.

Here are some unconventional ideas to help you prime your entrepreneurial pump:

1. Specialize – in Yourself

Take the time to inventory your most important values and goals. Evaluate your strengths as well as your blind spots. Remember that it's not easy to read the label when you're inside the bottle, so solicit help from friends you respect and who know you well. My friend Jim was stunned to realize that not everyone loved talking to people the way he does. He had discounted his talent for networking because for him it's as natural as breathing and he assumed everyone could do it. These overlooked gifts are often our easiest, most energizing and valuable skills.

2. Generalize – in the World

You're an expert in your field, no doubt, but don't forget that there is a whole world out there. Be curious and pay attention to different industries, trends and patterns. Many of the biggest breakthroughs come from making connections between previously unrelated needs. Visit the newsstand once a week to pick up a publication you would otherwise never read. Watch the ideas start flowing. Collect the ideas that are most intriguing to you. Are there any patterns?

3. Take a Vacation

Sometimes a break from your routine is needed to reconnect with your creativity, insights and passions. Have you ever been driving a car or daydreaming in the shower when suddenly an amazing revelation pops into your head? A relaxing vacation can have the same effect on a grander scale. Give yourself time to dream.

4. Prepare Your Financial Attitudes

You've heard all the advice about preparing your bank account for the big leap, but you must also tune up your money attitudes. An off-kilter relationship with money can derail your entrepreneurial dream. My client Lori, whose business was slipping, examined her beliefs and found she wanted to protect money, and thus failed to take needed risk. Now that she's more comfortable with money, and bolder, her business is thriving! Appreciate money as you would a business partner and create a good relationship with it, before you start the company.

5. Kick Butt at Work

While you develop your entrepreneurial dreams, redouble your commitment to your current job. Do great work for co-workers and clients. Develop relationships and a sterling reputation. So what if these people are not among your first customers, they can become your greatest advocates! Do your day job to the best of your ability and be someone that others are proud to refer.

6. Befriend Your Fears

We all have them – big, tummy-knotting fears or little nagging, "I'm not good enough" worries. Learn to recognize the limiting perceptions or attitudes that may become speed-bumps on your way to success. When acknowledged, these fears become allies that will actually make you more successful: Business owner, Lisa, is a creative visionary who shivers at the thought of implementation. For sure, she will want to hire a crackerjack implementer for her team. Seek opportunities that minimize the effects of your fears, or consciously prepare to accommodate them with additional training, specific people in your team or advantageous alliances.

7. Discover – and Live -- Your Personal Brand

When people's perception of you is in sync with the *real you*, life gets a whole lot easier. Act consistently on your values and beliefs, and people will recognize what you stand for, what you can be counted on to do, and how you will do it. This makes it easy for others to introduce you to the perfect people, the perfect companies, and perfect ideas. An authentic personal brand gives you a high likelihood of finding the perfect opportunity. After all, your unique dream comes from who you really are.

Laura Koehne, founder of **THRIVE Against the Grain**, coaches you to take the road less traveled with complete confidence. She holds an MBA in Entrepreneurship from University of Maryland and has realized her entrepreneurial dream by helping others find theirs. For coaching, guidance and additional exercises to help you prepare for your chance of a lifetime, visit her website at www.ThriveAgainstTheGrain.com and subscribe to Laura's [Do What!?](#) monthly eZine.

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