

Get a Life and Maximize Your Marketing

By Gail Martin

As business owners or managers, it is easy to become very task-oriented. When we own the business and are in the growth years, it's easy to fall into the trap of not allowing ourselves to "waste" precious time and energy on projects that don't seem to have an immediate, direct bottom-line impact. After all, there are only so many hours in a day and one person can only do so much—right?

Maybe not.

By rediscovering hobbies and activities that you enjoy and pursuing those passions, you can gain surprising benefits for your business—and yourself. Do you enjoy creative writing, painting, playing intramural sports, being part of a reading circle or a discussion group? Maybe you like to sing, play an instrument or go on hikes, bike rides or day trips with a group. Do you remember how good it felt to do that favorite activity? How relaxed, refreshed and creative it made you feel? How open to positive energy?

Now tell the truth—how long has it been since you have done any of the things you love to do?

Here are five reasons to help you give yourself permission to use your passion to improve your business.

Relieve Stress—Stress kills. People who can't relieve stress in a healthy way are more frequently ill and more likely to die young. Exploring your hobby or passion is a great way to release stress and relax. Not only can that help you miss less work due to illness and live longer to run your business, but when you are relaxed and less stressed you will make better decisions, see more creative solutions and have more positive interactions with employees and customers.

Unbox Your Creativity—Creativity can't be compartmentalized. When you nurture and free your creativity in one part of your life—with your hobby or passion—that energy spills over into the other parts of your life. You will see more opportunities, envision more creative ways to make something of your opportunities, feel more confident and see new approaches because you are using and growing your creativity through your passion.

Gain New Business Skills—In the course of pursuing your hobby or passion, you often gain new skills that can be directly applied to your business. For example, as a result of publishing my fantasy adventure novel, *The Summoner*, I learned new Internet skills in web site creation, blogging, Internet marketing, search engine optimization and multimedia creation because I needed those skills to market my book. I now use those and other new skills to better serve my clients. I also met new people, went to national conventions, discovered new media and found new suppliers—all of which also benefit my marketing consulting business. Your teammates,

fellow part-time musicians or other companion hobbyists also have a “day job”—the connections you make with your hobby can lead to referrals, new clients, new vendors and new partnerships!

Gain Recognition—When you’re good at your hobby or passion, you may win awards, be asked to serve on boards of directors or committees, lead organizations, give speeches or attend exclusive events. This recognition boosts your personal and professional credibility, gains positive public relations visibility for you and your business and can lead to referrals, win-win partnerships and new business.

Discover a New Business—What you originally think of as a hobby or a passion may blossom into another line of business, an alternative revenue stream or a whole new career. Some of the happiest people have found a way to make a “business” out of their “hobby”—and a good living, too! Bike lovers open bike shops. People who love whitewater rafting open companies that offer tour packages and excursions. My “hobby” of writing has not only brought me new consulting clients as other authors ask to learn from my marketing approaches, and has created an additional, long-term revenue stream through future books and royalties.

If you’re a task-oriented business person, you may feel guilty by taking time off to pursue a hobby or a passion that is not work-related. But that guilt may be robbing you of your company’s most valuable asset—your own creativity. By giving yourself permission to play, recharge, enjoy a hobby and indulge a passion, you may live longer and be in better health to lead your company, you will feel less stressed and enjoy better interpersonal relationships, and your heightened creativity will earn back for you the “cost” of the hours you invested many times over.

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