

Signposts on the Road to Success

By Patricia J. Moser-Stern

As business owners, one thing is a constant on our journey to success. We sometimes need others to provide us with signposts along the way. It was in this spirit that the book "1 Piece of Advice" was conceived. For the book, my co-author, Barbara Moser, and I sought out exceptional women from across the world to ask them for their signpost, their one piece of advice, which would point the way for other women to achieve both significance and success. So what did some of the most successful women entrepreneurs have to offer to others about their journey? What was their one piece of advice? And how can you apply this to your travels?

Follow your passion

Some of the most successful businesses are born out of passion, rather than



a business plan. What is passion? **Patty Wagstaff**, a six-time member of the U.S. Aerobatic Team, whose plane today hangs in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, and owner of **Patty Wagstaff Airshows**, suggests, "Passion means that you, before anyone else, have to be happy with your choices."

"People might tell you to follow another path—go to a certain school or college, take a certain job—and it might be easier to do what you are told, what has been prescribed for you, but if you are not happy or don't feel right about going in that direction, then you'll never find what passion truly means."

Yet, what happens when there is a fork in the road? The signposts each read success, and one is left struggling and trying to determine which route to take?

Genevieve Thiers believes you can take both. She is the founder and CEO of **Sittercity.com**, the internet's first online matching service dedicated to providing secure, reliable access to local childcare givers. The site, which has expanded since its founding in 2001 to include pet care, senior care, house sitting, housekeeping, and tutoring, now has a network of more than one million caregiver profiles nationwide.

Even with that success, there was still another passion Thiers wanted to pursue—opera. So, she co-founded her own opera production company, **OperaModa**. The Chicago-based opera production company's mission is to highlight American operas and bring modern masterworks of opera to the public.

"Don't believe anyone who tells you that you can't excel at two things at once," Thiers shares. "I've followed two passions in my life and have had twice the happiness."

Learn from Everything

How many times have you driven too fast, focused on large highway signs, and missed the desired off-ramp because you didn't see the smaller, less obvious arrow at the side of the road? Unfortunately, the road to success is often marked in the small print, not with a neon sign.

"The best way to make your dreams come true is to wake up."

That advice comes from astronaut, engineer, physician, dancer, and entrepreneur, **Dr. Mae Jemison**, who has found success in many different arenas. Her amazing journey from the south side of Chicago to becoming the first woman of color in space reveals that she created her path to significance and success by following the advice she now offers to others. She allowed herself to take advantage of every opportunity and found success in each along the way. "The lessons that happen while satisfying our curiosity...are particular important," she says.

Avoid the Naysayers

How often have we stopped before

we've even begun? "Chicken Littles" abound and warn of potential dire consequences. Others are quick to raise an eyebrow at an idea or concept. These individuals will tell you that there is only one way to success, so why would you consider taking an alternate route?

"Believe in yourself and your aspirations. Don't let doubts or naysayers stop you from reaching your dreams."

That advice comes from **Heather Reisman**, one of the most successful women entrepreneurs in Canada. She is often referred to as Canada's "Chief Booklover," which is an appropriate title, given her role as the founder and CEO of the nation's largest book retailer, **Indigo**. Yet, there is one word that is missing from Heather's vocabulary, and that is "can't." She knows about naysayers, yet at each turn in the road she demonstrated that she recognized her own best route to success. As she says, "The only difference between those who do, and those who

don't, is that those who do—do!"

So ask yourself, where is success for you? Are you following your passion(s)? Have you gained insight from both the big and small signposts along the way? Are you avoiding the naysayers so that you can chart your own personal path to success? Remember, you never fail unless you stop trying! ♦

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