Have You Fallen Out of Love With Your Business? Here’s How to Rekindle the Passion

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Do you remember your first love? You were giddy about spending time together, talked for hours and were excited about the future. There was nothing more important than that person. When I first started my business, I was in love with it. I connected with the work and could spend hours developing new ideas. Talk forever with other business owners about issues or share stories. I was focused on the future and excited about the possibilities.

Let’s face it: My business and yours can be as intoxicating as a first (or even second) or third love. But just like any serious relationship, it is naïve to think the honeymoon can last forever. Enthusiasm can wane, and the hard work involved in running a business day to day often wears on even the most committed, loving business owner.

Have you fallen out of love with your business? Is the romance and excitement gone? Has it been replaced by fatigue and even a little bit of apathy? There are a few signs that might signal your “relationship” with your business has changed.

Instead of enjoying the work, you are irritated or annoyed with customers or employees. You avoid or procrastinate doing important tasks to move the business forward. You are less concerned about the quality of the product or service and more interested in getting it delivered.

Sound familiar? It is not uncommon to have emotional ups and downs in business. In fact, it is not realistic to believe that you will have the same intensity and drive for your business from year to year. If you have fallen out of love with your business, it takes more than flowers, candy and a romantic dinner to repair the situation. The good news is that with a little tender loving care and thoughtful planning, you can get that giddy feeling back. Here are five things you can do to feel the love again.

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Go back in time

One of the best ways to rekindle passion is to try to remember why you started the business in the first place. For many of us, it was a desire to do something we love and have more control over our lives. As we get busy, it is easy to forget all the good things about owning a business.

What do you still love about the work? I love the interaction with customers. I love the challenge of solving a tough problem and seeing the results. I love the feeling of more control over my life. Yes, there are things out of my control, but far fewer than if I worked for someone else. Pull out some of your initial documents or photos of you and your business operations. Take some time to get nostalgic. Remember how you felt when you opened the doors and probably looked a lot different than you do today.

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Get your hands dirty

Do you feel like all you do is paperwork, managing people and dealing with crises? If you want to find that spark, get out and do some work. In a recent article, I wrote about the

importance of mixing strategy with hands-on involvement. At one time, you wore lots of hats and did everything from sweeping the floor to building the product. Maybe it is time to sit in on a planning session for an exciting initiative. Go on a customer visit with your sales staff. Jump back in and feel the pulse of the business. Get your hands dirty. There are tangible benefits to stepping back into the business, which include greater visibility with customers, improving employee morale and seeing firsthand what you have built. There is also just the simple pride of looking at what you have built.

Break the routine and get away

When you start any endeavor, there is not much routine. It is all hands on deck, and things are always changing. That can be scary but also exhilarating. As your business matures, you start to fall into a routine. It is like having the same dinner date every week at the same restaurant. It gets boring. Try to break the pattern.

If you tend to work straight through lunch, go meet a friend and take an extra-long lunch. If you are the first one in and the last one to leave the office, take Friday afternoon off or come in late on Monday morning. You might feel like a kid that gets a snow day. It is a little “me time” that can help you get back that feeling of contentment and make “the heart your grow fonder.”

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Change the scenery

Another way to reignite your entrepreneurial spirit is to reconfigure or create a new workspace. Is your office frumpy? Old looking? Think about what happens when you put a fresh

coat of paint on your walls at home. It feels better. It feels new. It makes you smile. Small changes, such as hanging new pictures or moving things around, can make a big difference. Two years ago, I moved my office from a building in a downtown area to a more convenient location. We bought new ergonomic desks, added colorful screen dividers between workstations, built a galley kitchen and added a small comfortable seating area. I love the space and love coming to work. There are lots of studies that confirm the impact of the physical environment on mood, but you don’t need a study to feel the difference.

Celebrate

When you celebrate Valentine’s Day, you do something special. You buy flowers, prepare a terrific dinner or send your loved one a note or text telling them all the things you love about them. If you want to get back that warm, mushy feeling about your business, celebrate with your people and celebrate them. It doesn’t need to be anything big. It can be a happy hour or going to a movie – regardless, give employees a treat.

If you have ambivalent feelings about your business or have fallen out of love with the work. Don’t despair. Admit it and try a few of the tips provided. And if you are full of love for what you do, as I am, celebrate!

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