

Small Business Insight

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Pick a Purpose. Pick a Passion. By Sandy Grecco

Have you at some point in your business development continuum wondered, "How in the world did I get to be here?" It happens. Small business owners get into business for themselves for any number of reasons but they all get to a point where they realize something has to change in order to move forward. Regardless of whether the business began as a tiresome family obligation, a desire to get out from under someone else's thumb, or as an enthusiastic idea that could change the world, at some point you need to ask yourself: "Why" am I still doing what I am doing right now? The answer to this question will help you get insight into your future growth.

Most business experts agree that in order to truly make an impact your work needs to connect with a genuine passion. Without passion the fuel supply upon which your business runs will be constantly exhausted, just like you. If, however, you are passionate about what you are doing there is an energy that is generated. This energy is what helps develop a business that ultimately has the ability to build itself. Translation: *Your opportunity for growth is as great as your reason for being.* For some business owners this means making minor adjustments to operations or marketing, for others like Carol Butler it could mean dramatic change.

Carol Butler has been in and around the business of title insurance and escrow most of her adult life. Following her graduation from Denbigh High School in Newport News she worked for a number of attorneys before taking a three year detour to play music up and down the east coast. Feeling the need to settle back down she returned as co-owner of "The Office," a temporary legal secretarial service. It was at this point her true passion began to emerge. For the next 13 years she was teaching seminars on the "Basics of the Real Estate Closing."



As often happens, the business completely took over the following ten years of her life. Victoria Escrow, Victoria Title & Escrow, Southern Title Insurance Corporation, Breen Title & Settlement, Inc., Norfolk Title LLC, and Lake James Title LLC are all products of Carol's direct involvement, either through co-ownership, management, or board membership. She has the background and the knowledge to be successful in title insurance, but as she eventually discovered, she did not have the passion to sustain it.

Carol loved helping families get into homes, pulling it all together and getting ready for the big game – the closing.

The process, however, was a struggle. It was paper and detail intensive, and Carol was more enamored with the concept and not the reality. Successful as each of her business involvements were, each took an exorbitant amount of energy to build and to manage, and in return she was exhausted. She constantly felt like a smaller

fish in the large pond of title companies, and just did not have the resources to fully compete.

A few years ago a light went off. She realized that the struggle was not within the businesses but within herself. What she had really loved about her businesses was helping other people get in. Carol rediscovered this quite by chance when she opened up The Butler Company, to assist title agents. A good friend and former partner, Liz Middleton, urged Carol to join The Virginia Land Title Association. She joined as a means of networking her business and to keep up with what was happening in the industry. Carol soon found herself a member of the education committee and began to teach pre-licensing classes to people looking to get into the title insurance business. Her expertise and ability to teach was quickly recognized. She was endorsed as an instructor by VLTA who in turn began advertising the licensing classes to their membership.

Every week for the next three years, Carol found herself traveling throughout the state teaching pre-licensing classes. She loved the work, but the travel was beginning to take its toll. As the only "independent" instructor in the state of Virginia, she was not exactly sure how to let go. A business associate made the suggestion she put the pre-licensing coursework on-line. Though it took a year to make happen, it has. Carol is now at the point where she literally is making money in her sleep.

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To get it off the ground she had gone back to everyone she knows. She zeroed in on musician friends, business associates, and fellow board members from the American Diabetes Association. Everyone she knows now knows what she is doing and is engaged by her excitement. But she is not stopping here. Already Carol has taken the basics of the Virginia classes and has started the process of wrapping the real estate laws of North Carolina around it. From there she plans to add one state at a time – eventually taking her on-line training seminars nationwide. Her passion for teaching has created a vision that is fueling a business that will take her well into her retirement.

Another lesson Carol learned along the way is the power of implementing now and perfecting later. "I went to work right out of High school," said Carol. "I missed out on a lot of valuable information that I'm now soaking up like a sponge from all the people around me." Like her friend and business associate, Arnel Tanyag who's mentorship helped her realize teaching was her passion. She's putting that information to the test every day, and learning that it is never too late to market your passion. The hardest part is often just realizing you have one.