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## 25 Small Business Development Lessons:

*What I've learned  
from my network of  
coaches, mentors,  
and biz owners!*

By Clovia Hamilton



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PDF version published by Lemongrass Consulting, Inc.

## About the Author

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Clovia founded Lemongrass Consulting in 2005 with 25 years of government work experience and serves as a procurement counselor in the Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center (GTPAC). Lemongrass Consulting provides strategic planning solutions including intellectual property strategic plans and government contracting strategic marketing plans.

Clovia has a multi-disciplined background in law, engineering and community development with many years of experience in government at the federal, state and local levels. Clovia has worked as a civil engineer, urban planner, and technology transfer specialist. Clovia is a registered patent attorney and has practiced intellectual property law and real property zoning. She has worked in government civil service at the local, state and federal levels for the Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration, and the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office. Over the course of her career, Clovia has managed projects and programs; negotiated grants and contracts; and served on vendor selection committees. Clovia also operated her own consulting firm for several years and won a Sam Walton Emerging Entrepreneur Award in 2008.

Clovia has participated in the Georgia Governor's Mentor Protégé Program, the City of Atlanta's Small Business Development Program, UGA SBDC Boot camps, the SBA's 8(a) certification program, GDOT's and MARTA's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs, DeKalb County's LS/W/MBE programs, Fulton County's M/FBE programs, Atlanta A/FBE programs, Atlanta Public Schools M/FBE programs, Augusta's B/W/SBE programs, Athens' MBE program, Savannah's M/WBE programs, the City of Roswell's M/W/SBE programs, California Utilities' Clearinghouse F/MBE programs, and Maryland's SBE program.

## Foreword

I have been procrastinating on writing a book for years. I have cited every excuse there is.

Well, what motivated me to go ahead and type this is I posted a bit of a protest in the Women for Hire group on LinkedIn. The discussion thread was called "No Business from LinkedIn? Here's What May Be Wrong". I protested the fact that out of 80 posts, only 2 women business owners shared that they made money on LinkedIn (found prospects and closed deals). Neither of them said how. My protest was that it is important for us to share what works.

Well, the woman that led the discussion, Victoria Ipri, sent me a gift – her ebook entitled "Social Media for the Clueless". Well, I did not print and read it immediately. Instead, I went out and picked up a fabulous takeout dinner, went to bed, and I got up at 2am.

I believe that the first thought of each day is God talking to me. I really do think it is a Divine charge – so I always tune in, pay attention, and take note. My first thought was to go to my laptop and printed Victoria's ebook. I then went online to greet twitter followers. I began surfing the web, going from one intriguing post and page to the next ...and I came across a book publisher. I then took a look at a number of ebooks I have been sent lately by various business owners. I decided, you know – you need to share what you have learned. Instead of protesting about folks not sharing, I decided to join the ebook authors and share what I've learned.

I founded Lemongrass Consulting in 2005. I participated in several small business development training programs:

- Georgia State University Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- University of Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center (GTPAC)
- Clean Water Atlanta Small Business Development Program
- Georgia Governor's Mentor Protégé Program
  - Including the Turner Broadcasting Leadership Institute
- Count Me In (CMI) Program for Women's Economic Independence Make Mine a Million (M3) Program
  - Including the CMI Leadership Institute at Office Depot
- Small Business Administration (SBA) 8(a) Business Development Program
- Georgia Department of Transportation Support Services Program for DBEs

I still work on developing business for Lemongrass Consulting and I also serve as a procurement counselor at the GTPAC. I teach government contracting classes. I also teach business law part-time at Strayer University online.

Over the past 5 years I compiled a list of sage advice I have been given. I compiled them here and I hope you enjoy!

*With Love,*

*Clovia Hamilton*

## 1. Lift as you Climb and Stay Uplifted!

Developing a small business can be frustrating. Folks can hear the frustration in your voice. They can see you pout. I participated in the Clean Water Atlanta Small Business Development Program and another business owner emailed me about an upcoming event for women owned businesses. She sensed in my response that I was feeling down. It was in 2008 when the land development market was at a downturn. At the time, 70% of my work was related to assisting land developers with getting community buy-in for their projects. Well, my associate emailed me: “Clovia, we have to Stay Uplifted!”



I typed and printed “Lift as you Climb and Stay Uplifted!” and I keep the saying at my desk as a reminder. No matter what, small business owners have to be optimistic and uplifted – or we will not survive the ebb in the ebbs and flow.

### Do you Lift others Up? Do you manage to Stay Uplifted?

## 2. “The more you reason, the less you create” – Raymond Chandler

One of the folks I follow on Twitter posted this. This lesson is particularly true for analytical people like engineers, architects, and lawyers. Well, I have a triple dose. I am an engineer, city planner, and lawyer. I have learned from business coaches to stop over analyzing, seeking why this or that, and wanting things to line up in perfect alignment - and just get the jobs done!



Business leaders have to know themselves. We have to do that dreaded self-SWOT and take a close look at our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Here is another great quote by George S. Patton that is related to this:

“A mediocre plan executed is better than a perfect plan never executed”.

Business owners cannot afford to be TOO cautious and overly analytical. It may not ever be perfect. You have to be flexible and be able to take action... execute!

### Are you getting in the way of your own creativity and productivity?

### 3. You need to have Gumption!

One of my academic colleagues got on me about getting down in energy. She is several years older than me. She said, "Girl, you young folks need to have gumption!"

Well, I have heard my parents use that term. But, to be honest with you, I had to look it up in the dictionary. Here is the definition:

**gumption (gump'shen)** n. Colloq.

- 1 Ready perception; quick-wittedness; initiative.
- 2 Shrewd common sense. Alert, ready, clever.

Awhile back, another older colleague complimented a woman business owner. He said he was impressed with her because she was shrewd and had accomplished a great deal in the real estate arena!



I read about another business woman Karen Edwards of Milestone Consulting/McPadnet in Thomas Heath's February 22, 2010 Wall Street Journal article entitled "McPadnet owner reveals secrets to her sales success".

Here are some traits attributed to Karen Edwards:

- A sales executive
- Speaks in quick, light sentences
- Sounds organized
- Driven
- Direct
- Reliable
- Creates close, trusting relationships that her client cannot live without

Well, I get on my two kids (ages 9 and 19) about getting after things. I am always telling them to get with it! ...make yourself useful!

I did not realize that I need to just plain ole do more. I needed to get after things faster. I needed to be more prepared, ready, and quick.

**Be Quick-With IT! ...and it does not have to be Perfect!**

"Perfectionism is not a quest for the best. It is a pursuit of the worst in ourselves, the part that tells us that nothing we do will ever be good enough -- that we should try again." -**Julia Cameron, American teacher and writer** (in NFIB Smart Brief July 30, 2010)

To make improvements, I have worked on:

- **better managing my time and making better use of my gadgets** (e.g. the pda I have been reluctant to figure out);
- finding affordable assistants to delegate tasks to (e.g. student interns, retirees, family members, neighbors); and
- and just getting after all of those things I have saying I need to do (blogging, publishing short articles, monthly newsletter, developing a webstore ...and completing this ebook!)



“Some people make things happen, some people watch things happen, and some people wonder what happened. Which one are you?” – Ellen Reach, NY Health Coach

**Do you have gumption?**

**Are you getting after it and getting it all done?**

#### **4. Get away from dysfunctional people**

One quick way to get down in the dumps is to surround yourself with folks that do not believe in you as a business owner. If your so-called family and so-called friends are not supportive, you have to put them on a diet and distance yourself from any negative energy that is out there. You have to say uplifted.

For example, often women date or marry men that are like their dads because it is comfortable and familiar. But, if your dad is dysfunctional, watch out. Break the mold. Break away!

**Are you surrounded by supportive people?**

## 5. Don't go day by day, see the week, month, year, and years at a glance!

I am a single mom. I am a very organized single mom and I always plan ahead. My twitter posts @lemongrassplans are all about the importance of strategic planning and B2B tips. My firm is all about strategic planning and implementation.

Well, I am a planner. I strategize. I habitually make a to-do list each day – usually the night before – and I carry out my daily tasks. This is actually a great thing to do.

Unfortunately, it is short sighted. I was advised by a coach to do more and vision my future accomplishments.

Now, I line up the entire week. I make sure I have some key tasks lined up weekly:

- power lunches
- blocks of time to work on projects
- meetings
- my training classes
- achieving sales goals
- board exam prep

I roughly plan the entire year out – and spread activities over each of the 12 months to make sure I achieve my annual goals.

I also have a vision board which is comprised of magazine photo cut outs tacked onto a foam core board. Each cut out is a visual depiction of things I want to accomplish. I keep the board near my bed. At first it felt like a silly project, but it works. Those pictures sink into your subconscious and you move in that direction.

Years ago, I created a vision board after reading an Oprah magazine article about it. Back then I wanted a house and red SUV. I cut pictures out of a magazine and put it on a board. I looked at it daily. I worked to move toward getting my finances straight. I got both the house and red SUV in record time.

Today, my pictures are of growing a staff; being a speaker, author and coach; having fun; and getting in better shape!

I focus on my vision board each night before I go to sleep and each morning. Whatever you focus on, you will get!

**Have you created your vision board?**

**Do you have a daily plan?**

**Weekly plan?**

**Monthly plan?**

**Annual plan?**

## **6. It's show time!**

The guy I dated in high school and went to prom with sales insurance. The insurance man and the car dealers are your ultimate sales people.

Well, I know engineering, planning and law. But, I didn't know sales.

Trust me, no matter how great you are at what you do, if you cannot sale it, you can forget it! You will not be in business long!

So, last year, my prom date surfaced after nearly 30 years. We went to high school in Chicago. He was in Atlanta and met for lunch.

Well, the one thing we have in common is being entrepreneurs. I told him how I never liked sales people. I don't like getting those sales calls. I don't like getting the direct marketing mail. I don't answer the calls and I throw the marketing mail in the trash.

Well, the prom date told me it's "show time"! There is a 3:30 rule. It takes only 3 seconds for someone to make an impression on you. People are fast to judge. If a bad impression is made, it will take 30 minutes to change their mind and undo it.

Selling does not have to be in the form of the shady lemon car dealer or the pushy insurance guy who is trying to scare you into buying all of his products. Sales can be soft. But, you have to perform sincerely, authentically, transparently, and make a strong first impression – with your professionalism, appearance, preparedness, and expertise.



One of my coaches also called sales “show time”! She compared it to being on a stage and giving a performance; or being in a game and playing the game. Sales may not be your strength and if you absolutely hate it, you will have to hire someone to do it.

**Are you ready to put your sales top hat on and get on stage?**

## 7. No matter how hard you work, you can work harder!

In the Dec 2009 Businessweek slideshow entitled “Advice from Renowned Business Founders – Lessons from Women and Minority Entrepreneurs”, David Chang of the Momofuku restaurant was cited stating “you can work harder! You can push yourself to the limit. You have to if you want to succeed. I know you could put more hours in. Whatever you think you can do, you can do more. You can do more and you can do it better. Whatever standard you set, you can exceed your expectations and you can be your harshest critic.”

I absolutely love this! Only a business owner will get where David Chang is coming from.

I built a filing system, an accounting system, vendor registrations, vendor certifications, licenses, website, marketing materials, small business development programs, classes, trade meetings, awards programs, customer meetings, prospect meetings, presentations, ...and the list goes on.

But, no matter how hard, you have to just know that you can do more. You have to reflect and stay focused on your goals.

My current goal is to push Lemongrass Consulting to the 1Million sales mark. No matter how much I do, or how tired I get, if I do not reach that mark with my efforts – then I just have to know that I can do more. Others have reached that mark and much more – and so can I!

make **mine** a  
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**Do you realize that no matter what, if you have not reached your goal, you can do more?**

## 8. You are the brand!

I plaster my photo on everything: email signature, business card, twitter badge, facebook badge, linkedin profile, brochures, this ebook cover.

In particular, when we provide services, it is personal. The client wants to know the person providing it. So, you should put a face on it. Personal branding goes beyond a photo – it's about who the person in the photo really is (values, credentials, expertise).



In the Dec 2009 Businessweek slideshow entitled “Advice from Renowned Business Founders – Lessons from Women and Minority Entrepreneurs”, Lynda Resnick of Roll International/ POM/Fiji Water was cited for stating “think of yourself as a brand. It is important to gain a realistic view of who you are and what you offer the company. What do you offer that no one else or very few people can offer? How can you tailor those things so the company gets value from that?”

Lynda’s statement motivated me to reflect on what value I bring to the table.

A lawyer friend of mine told me that I really needed to tap into my legal network and play up my law background. Well, I never practiced law in a traditional sense. I was a patent examiner, I handled construction contracts, I selected consulting contracts, I taught law, I did transactional zoning work, and transactional patent work ... so I did not really think of myself as one of those lawyers.

Well, knowing the law is a real value added. Being multi-disciplined is a really big value added.

So, I began to share with folks the fact that my firm approaches strategic planning in a multi-disciplined way. We emphasize the importance of getting all disciplines involved and discovering their synergies – seeing how they are intertwined and work together. More importantly, when planning strategically our customers are encouraged to ensure that laws and regulations are complied with.

Know Thyself! Know what you are passionate about. Know why you have chosen the various paths you have taken. You are the image and brand for your company! Who you are is reflected in the company. Nowadays folks want to associate your firm with a real person. They want to get to know who they are dealing with.

After reflecting on my lengthy career which began in 1983, I realized that I needed to position myself as an author, speaker and coach. My firm is positioned for helping clients with strategy and strategic implementation.

Take a look in the mirror. Take a look at your resume. List your KSAs: knowledge, skills and abilities.

**Who are you?**

**What is your story?**

**Do you know your value?**

## **9. Stay Up! Always have a Bright, Positive Outlook!**

In the Dec 2009 Businessweek slideshow entitled “Advice from Renowned Business Founders – Lessons from Women and Minority Entrepreneurs”, Catherine Hughes of Radio One cited advice she received from the investor Herb Wilkins: “you’ve got to stop doing negative PR on yourself. When people ask you how you’re doing, you’ve got to say things are looking up. The first person who believes that is you. You have to give [people] a certain comfort level. If they don’t feel good about you, if they don’t trust you, they’re not going to fund you.”

We have to curtail the painfully honest admissions.

Here again, you have to Stay Uplifted!

One of the business owners in the Count Me In (CMI) program has pushed her firm to the multi million dollar level. She gave a presentation and talked about a new contract she had. It was a project that I felt my firm could sub-consult on. I asked for an appointment. I got it.

But, again, I was having one of those days. She asked me what was wrong. So, I told her all my drama. I figured, she was a sister girlfriend and I could tell her my stuff. Well, she did not take it well. She was quick to advise me – **“Clovia, you must ALWAYS be ON!”** You cannot turn the firm’s light off and begin to kick it with your business prospects as if you two go waaayyyy back and you can cry on their shoulder. You have to stay focused and focus on closing. Always be closing! Never let them see you sweat!



This CMI Sister said: “Help me to believe. **You have to sing an upbeat tune all the time.** You have to believe in what you are selling. **Have a quick, succinct elevator pitch.** Do a lot of networking and serve on boards. Get in front of prospects. Be very, very active!”

This mentor advised me that I would save time in the corporate sector by getting certified as a Woman-owned Business Enterprise (WBE) and Minority-owned Business Enterprise (MBE) through organizations such as WBENC and the NMSDC.

There are also certification programs for diverse suppliers at the city, county, state, and federal levels of government. I completed many of these registration and certification applications. But, you cannot rest on getting registered and certified. You have to network in these circles by attending meetings led by the certifying agencies.

TV Programs like MSNBC’s Your Business and the Shark Tank showcase real elevator pitches to potential investors.

- Do you cry on your prospects’ shoulders?**
- Do you let them see you sweat?**
- Are you ON all the time singing an upbeat tune?**
- Do you believe in what you are selling?**
- Do you have your act together?**



## 10. Your business will take off when you “have” to do it!



This is an observation shared with me by one of my coaches. He said that a lot of businesses take off and soar when the owner is under an incredible amount of financial pressure to bring in money in order to survive. The human survival instinct kicks in and like a prehistoric or pioneering hunter, ***the business owner begins to hunt for prospects***, go for the kill, and brings home the meat, calf skin, lamb skin, potatoes, and water.

In this economy, all business owners should be in hunt-mode. Unfortunately, many women are indoctrinated to believe that hunting is a man’s job and we are to wait back at the ranch or camp for them to bring it on home. Well, perhaps we need to study some of the great pioneering women – or better yet, ask about the women in our families generations back who knew how to tote that gun, go hunt, plant seeds, grow things, and survive.

### Do you know how to hunt?

## 11. Build a network of connections!

Your sales system needs to begin with your network. One of the first pieces of advice I received from a business counselor was to collect connections.

The coach advised me to collect as many friends as I could because you will never know where your need lead will come from. She advised me to always be enthusiastic and excited and ask folk how we can help each other out. Ask your connections what their needs are.

I was bidding for government contracts pretty ferociously a few years ago. One of my mentors advised me that that while it is fine to compete, you cannot rely on competition solely. Create your own activities by making friends and growing relationships and addressing their needs.

The other reason you do not want to rely solely on competitively bidding on government contracts is that payments may come slower than in the private sector; and the competition may be folks that get deals based on who they know rather than what they know.

There are a lot of firms that solely go after government contracts. ***I advocate that you not put all of your eggs in any basket.*** Have a diverse mix of private sector and public sector work.

**Do you know your connections' needs? If so, can you address any of them?**



## **12. Help a Reporter Out (HARO)**

I just learned about HARO (<http://helpareporter.com/>) which is an actual service for reporters and sources. It connects folks that can help reporters out with real the reporters. You can share your expertise with the prospect of possibly gaining a media opportunity.

Well, before knowing about HARO, my mentor firm in the Georgia Governor's Mentor Protégé Program advised me to help out reporters by:

- Gifting editors
- Inviting reporters out to lunch or for coffee to find out what their needs are
- Getting editorial calendars to find out when to target and send articles or when to buy advertisements

**Have you contacted any reporters about your expertise?**

### 13. Go Bottom Up and Top Down!

**Going bottom up** in government contracting involves bidding jobs, attending pre-bids, and networking to get on teams as a subcontractor to primes.

**Going top down** involves meeting mayors, city manager, county commissioners, department heads, undersecretaries, city council members, legislators – and addressing their needs in exchange for their influence.

You have to get to know ALL of the players. Yes, it can be time consuming. But, the winners are the ones that roll up their sleeves, pick up the shovel, and get to digging.

My mentors in the Georgia Governor’s Mentor Protégé Program advised me to go bottom up and top down; and I was told: **“you have some digging to do!”**

**Do you have a strategic list of targets to market to?**



## 14. Be Persistent and Consistent!

I loved this quote from Jess Jackson of Kendall Jackson Wines in the March 2010 Entrepreneur Magazine article “How to Be a Billionaire”:

“do something and repeat it until you do it well”

My mentor in the land development arena told me to put systems in place, and work the system over and over consistently every day no matter what. You have to have a consistent routine.

He and I are morning people. We are up at 2 or 3 am. By the time most people get up to begin their day, we have put in 4 hours. By noon, we have put in 8 hours.

This has always been my biorhythm. I inherited it from my parents. They were always up early doing home renovations, cooking, grocery shopping, etc.

I remember hearing Oprah state that she puts in long days but takes time out with retreats or vacations when her body tells her its time. You have to develop a consistent, persistent routine.

For example, my social media system for networking and lead generation has daily, weekly and monthly components:

- Daily microblogs – a few short email messages using ping fm which gets posted to Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn – and I greet my connections, respond to emails etc every morning;
- Weekly blog and articles– a Wordpress blog post which I convert to published short articles – I draft my blog every Sunday; and a
- Monthly newsletter – I use Constant Contact to send a monthly newsletter out to thousands in my network.
- Quarterly meetups – meet with folks in your network at least once quarterly in small groups



follow us on  
**twitter**



**LinkedIn**

**facebook**

Blogging and printing short articles will help drive traffic to your website. Once folks reach your website they should be able to see what services and/or products you sell. They may or may not buy – but you will never know where your next deal will come from. It is a numbers game. You need to reach as many folks in your target audience as possible.

I was reluctant at first and did not think it would be a good use of my time. But, I am meeting some great folks globally – all for free (well, with the exception of my nominal Constant Contact charges)!

It will also increase your visibility and outreach.

### **What are your daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly routines?**

#### **15. It is ok to desire Wealth!**

I was a civil servant, government employee from 1985 to 2005 when I founded Lemongrass Consulting. Twenty years in government. Civil servants work out of dedication. It is definitely not the pay – although my pay got up to \$90,000 in academia at one point...

...but, working out of dedication was a value my government-job-holding friends and family members had. There can be a “them versus us” mentality embedded in this class system. Although I am sure there are exceptions, in general, there are the government workers that work out of dedication versus the private sector workers that work for big money and big profits.

Well, if you grapple with which corner of the ring to support, just know that it is ok for anyone to desire wealth. Wealth can pay for the lifestyle you may want and deserve. Wealth can catapult you to independence so that you will not have to work for others.

Consider your children and grandchildren. It would be nice to leave a solid financial foothold to them. For me, it is not good enough to just get by. I am working my future life plan and getting rid of the false belief that it is better to have less, to get mine at the pearly gates, to do without ...don't get me wrong, I am glad I experienced poverty because I know how to survive down economies. But, I do not want to be poor. I want and I am worth more.



I have a saying: “want for me what you want for yourself”. Well, be careful with this. Ask yourself: what does the other person want for his or herself? If they are not striving for more, then they will likely not want more for you.

## Consider the Forbes list of Billionaires:

RANK	NAME	CITIZENSHIP	AGE	NET WORTH (\$BIL)
1	Carlos Slim Helu & family	Mexico	70	53.5
2	William Gates III	United States	54	53.0
3	Warren Buffett	United States	79	47.0
4	Mukesh Ambani	India	52	29.0
5	Lakshmi Mittal	India	59	28.7
6	Lawrence Ellison	United States	65	28.0
7	Bernard Arnault	France	61	27.5
8	Eike Batista	Brazil	53	27.0
9	Amancio Ortega	Spain	74	25.0
10	Karl Albrecht	Germany	90	23.5

***Why not reach for 1 Billion?  
If you achieve 1 Million, kudos for that!  
Reach High! Think Big!***

I personally work hard for financial freedom so that I can truly call myself free from having to answer to others. That would be good living for me.

Here's a great quote:

“When I do what I love. I am living a life well lived.” – Marie Kirkland @LivingAligned

### **Do you desire financial independence?**

#### **16. Ask for Referrals!**

Implement affordable referral systems. John Jantsch of Duct Tape Marketing and Bob Burg, author of Endless Referrals give great ideas on how to solicit referrals. You can offer coupons to give your connection a discount if they refer someone – and the referral will get a discount too. Alternatively, you can give something away for free to folks in your network in exchange for referrals.

### **Who are your raving fans? Who would be willing to help you?**

## 17. Don't let your education hold you back!

This is related to being overly analytical. But, even if you are not an analytical person, if you are credentialed, licensed, certified, or otherwise educated, your education can get in your way.



One of my coaches explained that our education prepares us for jobs and projects. We can carry out jobs and projects when we are trained to do so in our various educational systems.

But, when it comes to building a business, it is all about sales and closing deals.

Very few schools train students in sales. I have 3 degrees – so, I know. I also know that there are MBAs that struggle with sales.

In sales, the approach is not intellectual and logical, it is emotional. We have to get to know folks and find out where the needs lie and address the needs.

Don't get me wrong, often it solving the client's problems require our intellectual prowess, logic, organizational skills, and analytical abilities. But, getting the prospect to choose us over our competition is an emotional choice. It is Sales 101: they have to know, like and trust you.

**Do you let your intellect, logic and analytical skills get in the way of closing deals?**

## 18. Push out of your comfort zone!

Again, know thyself!

Business owners have to be painfully honest about who they really are in terms of their strengths and weaknesses!

This is analogous to a conversation I had with someone 20 years ago. Her style was contemporary. I was young and I wanted to fit into her crowd. I told her I liked her furnishings and her style. I really wasn't sure what I liked back then. Well, when she visited me, I had antique furniture and thrift store finds. I had a traditional vibe going on. She said in disdain, "your style is like my mom's – it is traditional". I replied: "oh no, uhn uhn, not me – I like contemporary."

Well, of course I really am a traditional person. I like the classics. I love classic clothes (Talbot, Brooks Brothers, Joseph Banks). Know your style. Know who you are.

I had to come to grips with the fact that I am a typical engineer – an introvert.

I either had to work pass it and push out of my comfort zone – or hire someone to network and serve as a business developer. Well, I could not afford to hire a business development representative. So, I had to do it myself.

I had to realize that I would go to trade meetings, sit in the rear, eat, talk to the two folks sitting beside me and bolt out of there.



I now work the room. I watched how others worked the room. I studied how to do it by reading a few books and articles. I enjoyed Susan Roanne's book "How to Work a Room". Now, it is no big deal.

I now routinely make the cold calls and ask for face to face meetings and teleconference calls.

With respect to time management, many start up business owners market the firm during the day and work on client tasks at night. If you cannot afford to hire business development help, you have to do it yourself. You can choose to sit back and make excuses or gripe – trust me, no one will care – or you can choose to get out there and do it yourself!

Do your self-SWOT and study your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Embrace who you really are. Own up to it and make improvements when necessary to grow as a person and to grow your business.

**Do you know your weaknesses? What do you need to work on?**

## **19. Get to Really Know your Connections**

One mentor asked me: “How many people in my contacts database do you really know? How many really know you?”

Well, I am A for Anal and Analytical!

So, I poured over the names and at the time I knew 200. I had a list of thousands.

Of course, I felt like I earned a D or F on that assignment.

I have since surfed folks websites, read their profiles, asked for meetings...building real relationships. You have to get out the shovel and do some digging! More importantly, you have to really want to get to know new people, find out their needs, and ask yourself if you can help them. If you cannot, then refer them to someone else who can!

**How many people in your network really know, like and trust you?**

## **20. Get in Shape! Have Fun!**

To implement Items 1 thru 19, you will need energy!

You need to get in shape. Eat right and exercise. It sounds simple because it is. What is not so simple is having discipline. I lack it. A lot of people lack discipline. But, it is one of those things we have to be honest with ourselves about and just get with it.

**Are you in shape?**

**Are you willing to eat right?**

**Are you willing to exercise?**



## **21. Say Daily Affirmations!**

There is power in proclaiming what you want and who you are with positive words. I post daily planning affirmations online using ping fm. I attribute the affirmations to Che Garman because I found them on her website. I ping them to Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. I have fans that absolutely love them.

Here are some examples to read out loud:

“ I am wealthy and healthy”

“I walk with and take time to thank God!”

This one is from Che Garman (@AffirmYourLife):

“A Planning Affirmation: I ensure that I spend time working on each goal every day.”

### **What are your positive Daily Affirmations?**

## **22. Have Teaming Partners**

When I started my firm it was just me. I was able to put my son on payroll and helped out part-time. I learned fast that when I bid government jobs, I needed to look larger. Teaming became extremely important. One of my mentors told me to show decision makers that I could manage a project by showing them a team of experts that are willing to work on the project.

I began to collect resumes of contacts in my network and organize them in a binder called “Teaming Partner Prospects”. When I came across jobs to bid on, I would ask my teaming partners if they would be willing to let me use their resumes in my bid proposals. There was little reluctance when the economy took a nose dive. We all realized that through collaboration we could have a better chance at getting work.

You can have an informal relationship with potential teaming partners; or you can enter into legal agreements. I attended a SBA 8a training course and learned about contingency hiring. You can hire folks on the contingency that they will get work and get paid if you get the job you bid on. If you do not have cash to carry payroll, you cannot hire them and put them on your payroll. But, you have to do something if you want to compete. You can also enter into formal joint ventures or teaming agreements with other firms.

### **Who are your Teaming Partners?**

## 23. Help Others

This is a simple concept. If you give, you'll get. If you want others to help you when you need them, you have to be willing to help them when they need you.

With respect to online social media, take time to interact. If someone is seeking a vote, a nomination, a survey participant, share events with others in your network, or share products and services that they are selling – help them out!

**When is the last time you helped someone in your network?**

## 24. Who are you following? Who is following you?

When I “finally” decided to roll up my sleeves and start the Lemongrassroots newsletter using Constant Contact for email distribution, I pondered who the heck was I following online and who was following me. Over time, there were thousands. But, I did not take the time to really get to know all of them.

I read an article that suggested that business owners take the time to study their followers and log them into a contacts database. The author stated that after you list them and figure out what line of business they are in, you'll discover target markets for future collaborations.

You can use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet or Access database; or buy a Contact Relationship Management (CRM) software package. I decided to do the digging and note each person's:

- Full name
- Company name
- Line of Business
- Birthday
- Email address
- Whether we were connected on LinkedIn
- Whether we were connected on Facebook
- Whether we were connected on Twitter

It was a painstaking but necessary task. I originally asked my son to do it. He gave up after the 200<sup>th</sup> person. I took over the project and I am glad I did. I learned more about each person, visited their website, and took a closer look into their worlds.

Well, I discovered that many of my followers were life and small business coaches or service providers like virtual assistants or website developers. When I first started my firm, my connections were members of land development teams – i.e. architects, engineers, surveyors, developers, builders, brokers. With the downturn in the real estate market, my connections have shifted along with my business model.

The next task is to ask these folks how we can collaborate, team and partner.

So, as you can guess, I am not a fan of these automatic traffic engine software packages that can increase your twitter followers instantly from 100 to 10,000. That makes no sense to me. I think you should be dealing in the real. Find real people and make real connections with them.

**Who are you following?**

**Who is following you?**

**What do you know about each person?**

## **25. PRAY!**

This really should be #1.

Like many folks, I believe in a Higher Power. This belief is important to me because I know I am not alone in this. No matter what man or woman comes or goes, I know there is a Higher Spirit and Energy that helps me and guides me! I walk with and take time to thank God!

**When was the last time you took time to pray?**

## Move Forward Strategically!

I own Lemongrass Consulting ([www.lemongrassplanning.com](http://www.lemongrassplanning.com)).

We are strategic planners!

We help our clients draft and implement strategic plans!

We can help you move forward strategically. Be sure to:

1. Plan to protect your **intellectual property** with trade secrets, trademarks, patents, and copyrights. We can help you move forward with an intellectual property strategy that is customized to suit your budget and intellectual assets.
2. Plan to have a diverse mix of customers in the private sector and public sector. We can help you move forward in **government contracting** with a strategic marketing plan.
3. Plan to reach out into your community for buy-in to what you plan to develop, products you sell, or services you offer. We can help you develop a **community outreach plan**.
4. Plan to develop your organizational vision, mission, goals and activities based on feedback from your leadership, staff, and customers. We can help you with your organizational assessment, business process improvements, and overall **strategic plan**.

***“These times are nothing but a brilliant opportunity to reinvent ourselves as business owners and make changes to what is no longer working”-  
Biela McMillan,  
Entrepreneur Magazine  
March 2009***

***- The End -***

