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Dear Friend,

### *What's Passion Got to Do with It?*

Tina Turner had a hit song in the '80s titled, "What's Love Got to Do with It?" Well, I've had a number of conversations lately that, if they were a song, could be titled, "What's **Passion** Got to Do with It?"

You see, I've been meeting with a lot of people who are living passionless lives, or they are noticing that their organizations are existing without passion. They feel as if they're just going through the motions. They're frustrated (and, whether they realize it or not, they're making those around them frustrated too). They lack a sense of personal or organizational purpose. In other words, they're just stuck.

How did this happen? For some, it's that they never took the time, or allowed themselves the liberty, to determine what drives or invigorates them -- as a person, as a professional, or as an organization. For others, the spark once existed but, somewhere along the way, it was extinguished by a flood of *shoulds*, *oughts*, and other opinions -- self-imposed or pressed upon them by outside forces.

However, when you are in touch with, and involved in living out, your passion(s), it's evident. In *passionate organizations*, the vision is clear; people understand and embrace the roles they play in creating that end result; and they work collaboratively to accomplish their collective goals. Customers see it; stockholders appreciate it; managers and staff embrace it; and competitors want it. (Need I say more?) *Passionate people* don't dread getting out of bed each day. (They find that the thought of conquering what lies ahead that day gives them more of a rush than their first cup of coffee.) They know where their strengths are, are thankful for them, and continue to hone them; they know where their challenges are, acknowledge them, and work to overcome them and/or surround themselves with others who complement them. They identify roles or organizations that will enable them to live out that passion...and, they thrive.

So, what's **passion** got to do with it? If you ask me, everything!

If you would like help to find or re-ignite your passion, contact me (301-280-5950 or [inquiries@execadvantagellc.com](mailto:inquiries@execadvantagellc.com)). Executive Advantage supports people and organizations that are serious about tapping into their potential in greater ways.

Enjoy this month's newsletter, and thank you for your readership!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, President & CEO

## The Faster YOU Grow, the Faster YOUR BUSINESS Will Grow

What do you want for your business during the next twelve to twenty-four months? Increased Revenues...Greater Customer Retention...Better Margins? Common objectives, but where do you start? Savvy business owners develop highly effective strategy, people, and processes. The savviest also recognize the impact their own personal and professional achievement has on business results.



**Why?** It's been said that the only sustainable competitive advantage is the ability to learn faster than your competition. It's also true that the leader sets the tone for the team. That means it's critical to stay at the top of your game. Successful leaders regularly take a high-level look at their business. A similar personal assessment is also good business practice.

Think of it as a holistic approach to great results. Evaluate, develop, and balance organizational, professional, and personal capabilities to get the competitive edge you need.

Leading others and your business is only part of the picture. As a leader, the most important person you lead is YOU. Mastering SELF LEADERSHIP enables you to most effectively lead others.

How much of your personal wealth is tied up in your business? If the answer is much, most, or all, it's even more critical to incorporate personal development into your strategy. YOU are the most critical ingredient in your personal and business success formula, and you can't afford to skimp on your own development.

*"The goals you set for yourself and the strategies you choose become your blueprint or plan. Strategies are like recipes: choose the right ingredients, mix them in the correct proportions, and you will always produce the same predictable results."*  
~ Charles J. Givens

*"When you set goals, something inside of you starts saying, 'Let's go, let's go,' and ceilings start to move up."*  
~ Zig Ziglar

*"Watch, listen, and learn. You can't know it all yourself ... anyone who thinks they do is destined for mediocrity."*  
~ Donald Trump



### Strategy -- The Power of Thinking Big

A smart guy once told me that, if I wanted to be successful, the first thing I had to do was hang out with the most successful people I could find. That was good advice twenty five years ago and it's still good advice today. If you have a small business that you want to grow, you need to watch other companies and other people who have paved the way for you to follow.

Many people have great ideas for their business, yet few have a means of turning those blockbuster ideas into cash. If you're going to be successful, you have to find a way to put some feet under that creativity, and that's where strategy becomes important. A good strategic plan puts everyone to work on your goals; employees, suppliers, clients, and even your banker know what their role is in building your business.

**How to Begin** - How do you become a better entrepreneur, salesperson, manager, or leader? The answer is...Become a Better YOU.

Define your ideal. You might include traits such as visionary, influential, tough decision-maker, great delegator, etc. While these characteristics are important, you might also include balanced lifestyle, well-read, works hard and plays hard, makes time for what's important, and other behaviors. Although not specifically business related, these traits characterize the individuals we most admire.

Next, look at your leadership performance in the following categories: ability to influence, time management, people management, selling skills, personal productivity, and ability to delegate.

**Finally**, look at where you stand personally. Consider the following areas: financial, business/career, mental, social, physical, beliefs & values/spiritual, and family.

What are your results compared to your capabilities? Do you like what you see? Are there gaps? What if you improved only one or two areas by 10 to 20%? How would that impact your business? Studies show that it can be significant.

**What Next?** To HAVE, you must first BECOME. For instance, to have a seven-figure income, you must first become a person with the skills and capabilities worth someone paying you that amount. To have a great relationship with your spouse and children, you must become someone they see as worthy of the relationship. To have a single-digit golf handicap, you must become a golfer with the skills, discipline, and mental attitude required for that level of play.

When setting goals, people focus most of their attention on what they want to have. They want to earn more money, lose weight, have greater respect from their staff, develop a new product, etc. Rarely do they think about what they have to change about themselves, or become, to meet their goals. However, once people change their focus to achieving goals, they more easily attain what they want to have.

Start with the end in mind...what personal improvements would make you more successful? What positive behavior change is necessary for you to get the results you desire? What is your process for setting and achieving your objectives? What specific knowledge and skills must you develop? What do you need to become? Finally, what new and different perspectives might help you accomplish more of your goals?

**The Last Word** - Succeeding in business requires a vision, combined with the passion and commitment to pursue that vision. It also requires a willingness to change, to learn, to become, and to take calculated risks. Your belief in yourself, and your ability to achieve, influences how you deal with others and ultimately your business results. Speed is of the essence. The faster YOU grow, the faster YOUR BUSINESS will grow.

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## Marketing Your Company ... in This Economy

Unfortunately, there are some who believe that there's no need to market their companies in economic times such as these. After all, with the unemployment rate as high as it is and open positions as scarce as they are, there should be no problem getting candidates to want to work for your company. Right?



That philosophy might apply to the majority of candidates. However, when it comes to wooing the best of the best and the cream of the crop, basing a recruiting strategy on that philosophy won't produce the kind of hiring results that will separate you from the competition. In fact, it could actually hurt your efforts in that area.

### **A sensible investment in the future**

Even if you don't have any open positions at the moment, every company would benefit from having the best talent in the industry on its team. And, if the best talent is not currently on your team, then it's somewhere else, on somebody else's team. According to a well-used business adage, a recession is the perfect time to take market share away from your competition, and making sure that the best talent available is part of your company is the perfect way to do that.

If you do have open positions at the moment, there's a good chance that you're swimming in applications. But do they represent the type of candidates you want to attract?

Is the sheer number of applications slowing down the hiring process? Despite all of the interest shown in your open position, do you feel like you're still at "square one" in terms of finding viable candidates?

Marketing your company for the purpose of finding the very best talent in the industry should not be considered a cost, despite current economic conditions. Quite the contrary -- it's a sensible investment in the future. After all, the economy will rebound eventually, and when it does, top talent will be seeking better opportunities to advance their career. You want those candidates to see your company as an attractive option.

Those companies that are positioned correctly, once the rebound begins, will also be better able to take the most advantage of it. Marketing yourself not only ensures that the best candidates will want to work for you now, it also ensures that they'll feel the same way once they have more options at their disposal.

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I have a Pleasanton-based client who came to me several years ago and asked me to find a buyer for his company. He told me he was tired and his business wasn't going anywhere. It wasn't fun for him and, at 42, he was already burned out. Profits were way down and the revenue had been flat for several years. In talking with his staff, I found they were lacking direction, quite lethargic, and very content with the status quo. The strange part was that this was a young group who should have had more energy than a pack of puppies.

I dragged them kicking and screaming to our learning center in San Ramon for a two-day planning session. When we began to look for key opportunities, the lights started to come on, and when we formulated an achievement plan, the excitement started, and when we turned our ideas into action plans, the whole room erupted. The energy and passion were back and driven by a solid plan where everyone understood the goals and what role they played in the process.

Now into their third year of building and following their strategic plan, the company is working on a multi-million dollar growth plane and has enjoyed double-digit profits for the third straight year. The owner talks about playing at the top of his game and, if you wanted to buy his company today, you'd have to come with a whole wheelbarrow full of cash.

Good business strategy is not just about thinking big, it's about getting big. What are you waiting for?

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## About Executive Advantage

At Executive Advantage, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about Executive Advantage, contact us at [inquiries@execadvantagellc.com](mailto:inquiries@execadvantagellc.com).