

The Power of Structure

by Roberta Ryan, CPCC

In 1980, a routine college assignment changed the course of my life.

At that time I was 28 years old, single, selling real estate in Southern California and taking classes at a nearby college.

While completing an assignment to describe what I wanted my life to be like in a few years, I was struck by how different my ideal scenario was from my current life.

It sounds obvious when I now say this, but at the time I had the startling realization that I could create a different and more fulfilling life.

Let me explain.

As the daughter of a highly creative woman who was an accomplished seamstress and crafts person, I learned to approach life from a project orientation. Following my mom's example, I routinely asked myself three questions: "What do I want to do?" "Why do I want to do it?" "How will I do it?"

Somewhere along the way, I had stopped asking these questions, and the college assignment prompted me to ask them again. When I did, I found that I had a glimpse of what I wanted to do: use my business sense to help like-minded business owners thrive, continue my education, and live in a less populated area. And, I knew why I wanted to do it: to live with more enjoyment and personal satisfaction.

This left me with the "how." It all seemed so simple! I moved into the process with tremendous trust, and what has transpired since then is nothing short of miraculous to me.

My journey has led me to help business owners create financially successful, fulfilling lives. The heart of my work is my understanding of the three dynamics of structure, flow, and balance.

Structure allows creative juices to flow; too much and you choke the life and fun from the process, too little and you will not turn what you envision into reality. The excitement, or dance, is in the continual process of finding balance between these energies.

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The Power of Structure (cont.)

For my mom, the structure of patterns, equipment and tools, procedures, discipline—and most importantly, her expertise—allowed her to create her inspirations.

I gravitate toward idealistic individuals who are strong on flow and light on structure: I love their brilliant insights and passionate natures, and admire their commitment to making an impact in their lives.

However, I have noticed that the difference between those who achieve what they envision and those who don't is the willingness to use structure to capture and channel their wisdom and enthusiasm.

I completely understand resistance to structure. When my inspiration is flowing, the last thing I want is to damp it down by imposing a discipline. Yet, I've learned that the right structure in measured amounts enhances my potential for success.

I have also learned that increased structure often leads to varying degrees of discomfort, which in turn creates the need to embrace the issues that arise with curiosity and patience. It is from the challenge of problem solving that we increase our expertise and confidence.

If your enthusiasm is not what you would like it to be, I suggest shaking things up a bit. Impose a new discipline, ride out the discomfort, and see if that changes your experience of your work. I suspect you will recapture the thrill of adventure.

Let me know how it goes.