The Edge: Three steps you can take to unleash your potential

Jeannette Kraar
Women’s Business Center
January 25, 2015, 4:53 p.m. EST

Last week, I had the privilege of speaking to a large group of professionals and business owners who wanted to learn how to reach their potential. I told them it could be done in three simple steps based on my definition of potential.

To me, potential is not measured by how many awards you have won or how much money is in your bank account. I have found that people reach their greatest potential when they use the skills, knowledge and abilities they excel at, to do something they’re passionate about, to make contributions that improve the quality of their life and contribute positive outcomes to those around them.

I asked the group how many experts we had in the room and a few hands went up. When I asked these individuals about their area of expertise, they were very specific in their answers. No one did everything. Each expert had specific, well-defined skills and knowledge.

So, I asked the entire room to stand because everyone has some area of expertise. Yours might be a technical competency or perhaps you are proficient in marketing or house cleaning. It doesn’t matter. Everyone excels at something. And when you collaborate with others who have different or compatible expertise, you can reach your potential even faster.
Step one is about understanding your strengths and believing in yourself. That means you have to change the limiting beliefs in your head and step into your greatness.

Step two is about passion. Instead of asking people “What do you do?”, I love to ask, “What do you love to do?” It’s really hard to achieve your potential when you’re bored, dissatisfied or unhappy.

To achieve step two and do what you love, you must master step one and believe it’s possible. Then, you can move forward to step three.

We had fun with step three. I asked the group if they would like to turn $10 into $20. Is that possible? I asked if they had $10 or could get $10. In the meantime, I was standing in the front of the room waving a $20. Finally, after more questions, someone ran up to the front, snatched my $20 and gave me $10.

Step three is taking action. Nothing happens until you do something.

For example, there was an executive in the financial services industry who was extremely good at what he did, but was unhappy. He told me that golf was his passion but he had a family to feed and huge responsibilities. It did seem as though it would be a gigantic leap of faith to say he could transition from gold bullions to golf balls — especially if he wanted to maintain the same income and lifestyle, yet he did. He’s now with a high-end golf club manufacturer making sales calls on golf courses.

Remember, you must know your strengths, have passion for what you do, and take action to make it happen.

At the end of my presentation, I gave each attendee a parting gift — a rubber band. It isn’t the most sophisticated piece of equipment but it produces remarkable effects when worn. The band is basically worthless until it’s stretched to capacity. You’ve probably noticed that once it’s stretched, it never goes back to being quite as small as it was before. The same applies to you. It’s also a great tool if you get negative or lazy — just stretch and release. It will give you the whack you need to get back on track.