

“Great step-by-step advice for anyone looking to start their own business.”

—Andrew C. Taylor, Chairman and CEO, Enterprise Rent-A-Car

BECOME YOUR OWN BOSS IN 12 MONTHS



*Strategies
for Anyone,
Anywhere, in
Any Field*

A Month-by-Month Guide
to a Business That *Works*

MELINDA F. EMERSON

Foreword by Michael C. Critelli, Former CEO, Pitney Bowes

FOREWORD

If this was just another book on how to start a business, I would not be sufficiently excited to write this foreword, even though I have known Melinda Emerson as a colleague on the National Urban League Board of Trustees for a number of years. This is one of the most insightful books I have read on *any* subject.

This book can be read and enjoyed on many levels. It is certainly a very high quality guidebook on how to start a business. But what truly makes it stand out for me is the extent to which Melinda helps the reader to think through much deeper issues. She recognizes that starting a business is as much about defining the founder's core values and priorities as it is putting together a business plan to market the products and services. Although this book is uniformly excellent and each chapter could be the foundation for a separate, highly-insightful book, some of the profound insights come from the many points Melinda helps the reader understand about how tightly interwoven the business owner's *life* goals are with *business* goals.

She makes it clear that the most critical success factor for a business owner is the ability of that owner to decide on life-related goals and to align the business to the achievement of those goals. She also reminds the reader that, like any goal of consequence, sacrifices are needed, and she is more explicit than other books about the kinds of sacrifices that will be required. Beyond that, she makes it clear that there are several different approaches to running a small business, each of which springs from a particular set of life priorities for the owner.

What also impresses me about the book is the extent to which it raises basic questions that enthusiastic business owners fail to address until it is too late. Most owners start businesses because they believe that a product or service that excites them and a group of investors will also excite customers. Even if they are right, she points out the less glamorous details about selling and marketing the product or service, how to support it after the customer acquires it, and how to insure that the end-to-end value chain is profitable. I particularly liked her comments about the critical importance of customer support and service..

I also recall sharing a story with Melinda about a friend of mine who invested in a restaurant and came to the reluctant conclusion that the profitability depended more on decisions about napkins, water consumption, cash management, and electricity and health department compliance costs than the food, service, and décor that enamored the restaurant's critics. She does a great job throughout the book illustrating the importance of a wide range of seemingly mundane details which, if not attended to, can sink a business.

Although she is advising would-be small business owners, her advice applies equally to executives and professionals of large businesses. Having been on many sales calls at Pitney Bowes, I would underscore the importance of her comment in that "You must capture your target's attention in the first seven

seconds or you fail.” As a recipient of sales solicitations, I have also found myself losing patience with numerous sales people long before the person told me what they were selling.

Another broader lesson for business people from organizations of all sizes is that we must not overlook opportunities that can arise at taxi stands, on an Amtrak train, and in churches and alumni associations. Whether one is representing a small or large business, we are all brand ambassadors for our businesses 24/7, and can make those encounters with others either moments of success or missed opportunities.

Finally, she helps the prospective business owner think about the point in time when the founder will have to add employees or other helpers. To the degree that any of us want an organization to outlast us and to leave a legacy of success, we will need to think about those who will take on the work we have started. You need to hire people only when the business has reached a stage at which adding staff makes sense and is supportable by the business’ revenues. At the same time, you need to know when it is time to delegate work to someone else to free yourself up for higher value activity. The decision about when and how to add staff is challenging, and Melinda deals very effectively with both the conceptual and practical issues associated with hiring people.

In the course of preparing this forward, I have read and re-read many parts of this book and found new insights each time I have encountered it. This is a book to be savored and to remain at close reach for a very long time whether you are starting a business, running one, or simply interested in why some businesses succeed and others do not.

Michael J. Critelli
Former CEO, Pitney Bowes
September 2009

Advanced Praise for
Become Your Own Boss!

“Become Your Own Boss! is a great handbook that can guide you through every step as you start and grow your small business.”

Steve Mariotti
President and Founder
National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)

“Don’t even think about going into business without reading this book. A step-by-step roadmap for success, ***Become Your Own Boss!*** by Melinda Emerson presents time-tested wisdom, thoughtful development, and strategic marketing know-how to convert any dreamer into doer. The antidote to our current impulse-driven, needed-it-yesterday, get-rich-overnight epidemic, Melinda provides practical entrepreneurial Rx for anyone who has ever dreamed of working for themselves. A must for every entrepreneur’s business reference shelf.”

Christina Katz
Author of ***Get Known Before the Book Deal & Writer Mama***

“Melinda Emerson has written a remarkable book. It is essential reading for anyone seeking to make the transition from working girl to successfully working it, as an entrepreneur.”

Cynthia McClain-Hill
President, National Association of Women Business Owners

“The perfect companion for those planning to go out on their own. Melinda delivers first hand practical advice on how to be the successful entrepreneur. Read it, if you want to get it right the first time.”

Kenneth L. Shropshire
**David W. Hauck Professor at the Wharton School of Business
University of Pennsylvania**

“Now there are no more excuses. Melinda’s step-by-step approach has made it plain and simple. The only missing ingredient is you.”

Mel Gravely, Ph.D
Author
Making It Your Business: The Personal Transition from Employee to Entrepreneur

"Melinda Emerson's ***Become Your Own Boss*** touches every topic a successful entrepreneur needs to know. The book is written in clear and straightforward manner that you don't need an MBA to understand, although many MBAs can benefit from its comprehensive span of virtually every relevant issue in business ownership. This is a book that I will recommend to many who seek my advice about the life and choices of a budding entrepreneur."

Lucy Rueben, Ph.D
**Professor, Fuqua School of Business
Duke University**

"Melinda Emerson is one of America's pioneering and passionate entrepreneurs. Her efforts to share her experiences will no doubt inspire others to pursue their own entrepreneurial vision with the same determination, and vigor that has made her successful."

Marc H. Morial
President, National Urban League

"Great step-by-step advice for anyone looking to start their own business."

Andrew C. Taylor
Chairman & CEO, Enterprise Rent-A-Car

"This book is packed with practical information for starting and growing a business – including the tough realities that most guides skip over. What makes it powerful, however, is that it goes beyond how to start a business – it is about integrating personal and professional passions – and practical ways to achieve that. This is one of those books you will read and re-read – and give extra copies to special friends."

Sharon Hadary
Executive Director, Center for Women's Business Research

"In the movies, entrepreneurs dream up an idea, fling open their doors and are richer than Warren Buffett three scenes later. Melinda Emerson knows what works in reel life is far less likely to work in real life. That's why she gives you a detailed timeline to follow. She describes her 18-month planning system as "your personal GPS" and indeed it can keep you from getting lost."

Paul B. Brown,
Co-author of the international best-seller Customers for Life

"Melinda made me do this, see this and think this according to these steps for my business---so I know this is real stuff that folks need to hear and know that it works!"

Anisha Robinson
***Small Business Owner,
LanceLee Planning***

In ***Become Your Own Boss***, Melinda provides a witty and entertaining "how to" guide for entrepreneurs. It provides a step by step plan for developing a business model and building a dream. The book is a must have for anyone who is considering starting a new business.

Kathryn Y. Dove, Esquire
Professor of Business Law National American University

"***Become Your Own Boss*** offers a complete starters package for the budding entrepreneur, and serves as a professional development course for seasoned entrepreneurs with plans of business expansion."

Will Gist
Gist Enterprises