



How Did We Get Here?

Four Lessons Learned after 10 Years in Business

By Cindy Peterson

Maximizing Excellence celebrates ten years on July 15, 2020. TEN YEARS! Life sure looks a bit different than it did ten years ago. On July 15, 2010, I had yet to be married ... or have kids ... or live in Salem, South Dakota ... or lose a parent ... or try sushi ... or meet hundreds of incredible people doing amazing work all across South Dakota and the Midwest.

I also had some very valuable lessons to learn. Ten years later, this is what I know to be true:

Let Others Shine

For a very long time it was important to me that people saw what I was doing and told me I was doing a good job. Now, not so much. Not because I no longer like being complimented, but because it feels SO much better to tell others *they* are doing a good job. Whether it is one of my amazing team members, a volunteer, or a client ... I learned being part of elevating their abilities and celebrating their achievements brings me great joy. It is fun and rewarding to watch others enjoy the accolades of their good work. Seeing them shine comes with a multiplier effect that cannot be matched in any other way.

The Show Must Go On

People have expectations. And when people have invested in a specific outcome, they deserve to have their expectations met – if not amazingly exceeded. As someone who has battled depression for 25 years, there have been days where meeting expectations is hard. I learned that deep. I learned to find energy and mental toughness. I also learned to ask for help and let others step in. I learned being vulnerable is okay.

Reward Outweighs Risk

Depending on what outlet you look at, the percentage of businesses that make it ten years is cited anywhere from 4-15%. Why would anyone willingly choose to start a business knowing those odds? While I have definitely done some pretty ding-dong things along the way, when faced with a fork in the road I chose the road less travelled. When asked if I knew how to do something that I certainly did not know how to do (yet!) my answer was often, “I can figure it out.

Let's try it!" I learned that it was in this mindset I was most creative, most energized, most engaged, and most successful. The rewards from those risks are the only reason why I even get to write this reflection today.

Caring Counts

Why did I start a business? Because when I discovered the intersection of where my talents align with changing peoples' lives I could not turn away. What we do at Maximizing Excellence strengthens the effectiveness of mission-driven organizations. This journey has reminded me time and time again that caring about the outcome and the people is the motivation needed to endure the pace, stress, mistakes, disappointments, and many balls in the air. I also learned how many others care, too. When I look back, I see so many incredible people who I will be bonded to forever because of a shared commitment to making the "world" around us stronger, safer, noisier, and all around better.

Today my cup runs over with gratitude toward my family, my team, my mentors, my clients, and to everyone who believed me when I said, "I can figure it out. Let's try it!"