

ENTREPRENEURIAL POWER OF PERSEVERANCE

By **Paige Arnof-Fenn**



I started a global branding and digital marketing firm. In the first few years before things had really taken off I did not know how much is too much for follow up, being persistent vs a stalker. I had pitched a CEO about a month before I ran into her at a networking event where she was the keynote speaker and her topic was about being a woman leader in a traditionally male-dominated business. I had followed up after sending my proposal several times via e-mail and voice mail but the CEO never returned any of my messages or even acknowledged receipt of the proposal requested so I assumed we were out of consideration. I thought I was being pleasantly persistent but I was nervous to see her at the event because I thought she might think I was stalking her.

You can imagine my shock when she announced at this event as part of her speech that she believes it is important to put your money where your mouth is and for women CEOs to support other respected & well-run women's businesses and that is why she has hired my firm to handle all her company's marketing & PR! Everyone congratulated me after, it was a better endorsement than the New York Times because she was very well known and had the reputation of being very tough with high standards so I got a LOT of business from people in the room that night because they thought if I was able to impress her I must be very good. I have also made it a priority to help women in business succeed.

To think I almost did not even show up maybe seeing me there is what prompted her to pull the trigger and hire us? I sold more business in the month that followed than I ever had since starting my company so we really began to scale quickly at that point and got a lot of referrals as a result! It was a big day in our history for sure. Wasn't it Woody Allen who said 80% of success is just showing up. It is a strategy that has worked for me and has been fun way to build my marketing business.

For the first 5 years of my business I was scared to go on vacation for fear all my hard work would unravel. Then my in-laws, father, mom and stepdad all started to get sick and I wanted to be there for them. They all lived thousands of miles away so I started to work less. After years of decline they each died about 8 months apart (7 people in 6 years). As a result of losing my loved ones my definition of success has changed a lot, instead of looking at finish lines like #\$/job titles/houses/cars/level of public profile I factor in things like whether I get to do work that at least sometimes lets me feel like I made a genuine difference in the lives of other people. Being helpful to my husband/friends/clients/nieces/nephews/godkids/mentees makes me happy. It is great knowing my experience and hard fought lessons learned can be put to good use as a wife/advisor/coach/consultant/friend/volunteer/aunt/godmother/Board member.

I am just trying to leave the world better than I found it and be remembered by the people whose lives I touched as a force for good in their lives. After losing my loved ones I learned firsthand no one on their deathbed wishes they worked more/made more money/won more awards. They just want to be with the ones they love most to tell them they mattered. I think of those people often and the roles they played in my life. I want to be remembered for passing along the very best in me to others so their lives are better and happier in some way because I was part of it. That's pretty much it. I try not to sweat the small stuff, it's just a distraction.

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