



Top **7** Tips of the Week for Business Owners

*Find Inspiration and
Take Action in
Your Business and Life*



Coach **Andrea**

Success-discovery for business owners & executives



Introduction: Tips That Rise Above

I've been writing my "Tip of the Week" since 2001, collecting over 700 Tips along the way.

As I have worked with my business owner clients over the years, I've noticed that there are certain Tips that I refer back to again and again. **These Tips rise above the others because they speak to the very heart of what it takes to own a business.** They address the challenges that *every* business owner faces, the questions asked most often, and they highlight some of the less obvious paths to successful business ownership.

In this eBook, you will find seven of those Tips. I hope that they will help you uncover and leverage new opportunities as they have so many times for my own clients. *May they reveal to you a path to even greater success for your business!*

In addition to my own writing, many of these tips are sourced from prolific and powerful writers who have been generous in their willingness to let me share their work with you. Special thanks go out to Loretta A. Malandro, Michael Neill, Kenneth Cloke, Joan Goldsmith, and the OSU Leadership Center at Ohio State University.

Thank you, also, to my many readers who take the time to respond to weekly Tips and let me know how they have resonated with you. Your stories inspire me as a coach and a business owner! It is to you that I dedicate this eBook.

Andrea Novakowski
[Coach Andrea](#)
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1

10 Blind Spots that Derail Leaders

By Loretta A. Malandro

As a business owner, every day offers you opportunities to improve your leadership skills. One way to do that is by addressing your blind spots – your own behaviors that you don't see, that work against you and your ability to lead effectively. In order to change the behavior, you must first become aware of it.

Below is a list of some of the most common blind spots that cause problems for leaders. Which of these resonate for you?

10 Blind Spots that Derail Leaders

1. Going it alone
2. Being insensitive to your impact on others
3. Having an "I know" attitude
4. Avoiding difficult conversations
5. Blaming others or circumstances
6. Treating commitments casually
7. Conspiring against others
8. Withholding emotional commitment
9. Not taking a stand
10. Tolerating "good enough" ¹

*Once you have identified what you suspect are your own blind spots, **your next step is to confirm whether they actually exist.** Try to observe yourself for a day, and if you notice anything be sure to write it down so that you can look back and reflect on it later. Consider also asking a trusted colleague for their observations, and then comparing their answers to your own.*



If this idea of identifying your own strengths and areas of development by conducting a self-assessment really resonates with you, here are some additional ideas and resources that can help you do this effectively:

- Consider [*The 20 Bad Habits*](#) offered by Marshall Goldsmith, author of the highly regarded book, [*What Got You Here Won't Get You There*](#).
- Engage in an internal 360-degree assessment through [*The PaperRoom System*](#), which is designed to reveal both opportunities and barriers to your own success.

¹Malandro, L.A., (2009). *Fearless leadership: how to overcome behavioral blind spots and transform your organization*. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.

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Your Coaching Call To Action

Set a goal to observe yourself and identify any blind spots that may be causing you to be a less effective leader.

When you do find them, ask yourself: **What is the impact?**



If you liked this Tip, you might also like:

- [How to Receive Feedback Effectively](#)
- [Eight Reasons Why You Need a Business Coach](#)
- [Six Good Reasons to Call a Meeting](#)

*Let us not look back in anger, or forward in fear,
but around us in awareness.*

- James Thurber



2

How to Have a Successful Business Partnership

By Andrea Novakowski

You and your friend have a great idea for a business. Your business plan is already half done. You can't wait to get started: what could be better than working with a friend every day?

To launch a successful business with another person, you need more than a business plan. You have to plan your approach to working together, too.

Here are some questions to ask yourselves before you rush headlong into a business partnership with your friend - or with anyone else, for that matter!

- 1. Why is a partnership right for this business?** Are you getting into business together for the right reasons or the wrong ones? A right reason might be that you're compatible and have the same vision for the business. A wrong reason might be your fear that you can't do it alone.
- 2. Do you share the same goals, objectives and values?** Make sure the two of you are in complete alignment. Be open and clear and have lots of honest discussions. This is your chance to find out how well you two communicate.
- 3. What has your past experience with partners been like?** Think about the kinds of people you work best with. Everyone has a different style. Some people are workaholics and others are more laid back. Some people love a good fight, while others appreciate calm and peacefulness. Are you and the other person a good fit? If not, don't force it.
- 4. What are the strengths and positive qualities each of you bring to the partnership?**
- 5. Who will assume which roles and responsibilities?** Who will do sales, manage employees, handle the accounting? Is this a fair division of labor? It may help to list each person's preferred tasks (independent of each other). Identify where there will be sole control and where there is overlap. Ask yourselves what's missing and still needed to run the organization.
- 6. When and how will you communicate with each other?** Will you meet daily? Weekly? How will decisions be made if you disagree?
- 7. How will you share start-up costs, expenses, profit?** How much income do each of you need?
- 8. What are your short-term goals?** What do you each think the company will look like in three years when it's humming along?



9. **What are your long-term goals?** Envision the conclusion and timing of the end of your business. Are you looking to make it a lifestyle business with a finite income goal, or do you want to be the next Facebook? What is your exit strategy?

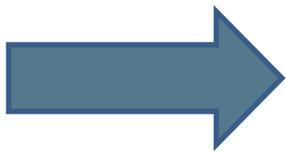
10. **Are both of you 100% committed to the partnership?**

Even if you have known a person for years, a business partnership is very different than a friendship. Try collaborating on a few projects to get a feel for how you work together.

A great book I often recommend to my clients is [Partnership: Small Business Start-Up Kit by Daniel Sitarz](#). This book provides a pre-partnership worksheet, a partnership agreement, and other forms you'll need to start a business together.

Your Coaching Call To Action

Thinking about a partnership? Do you really know the other person? **What will you do to increase your knowledge of the other person and move closer to making the right decision for you and your business?**



If you liked this Tip, you might also like:

- [7 Ways to Make it Easy for People to Work with You](#)
- [The 8 Steps in a Best Choice](#)
- [How Do You Know You've Made the Right Decision?](#)

Successful people in this world are those who get up and look for circumstances they want. If they can't find them, they make them.
- George Bernard Shaw



3

A Question of Standards

By Michael Neill

I had a particularly interesting conversation with a coaching client this week. We were speaking about his ongoing sense that no matter how much progress he was making, it was still with a sense of six steps forward, five steps back. As he launched into another example of losing his bearings and getting stressed and wound up at work for the umpteenth time, it suddenly dawned on me that **the problem wasn't to do with a lack of knowledge or some inherent inability to fully grasp the import of what we were talking about - it was a question of standards.**

A "standard", as I am using the word, is an arbitrary line in the sand that determines what we consider to be acceptable and unacceptable in our world. When our thoughts, feelings, behaviors, or circumstances drop below a certain standard, it automatically triggers compensatory action on our part. As long as we remain at or above our current standard for something, it receives no further attention.

In this particular client's case, **it was very clear that he had a very high standard around work ethic.** Days blended into evenings and weeks into weekends if there were still things to do on his list, and no amount of coaxing would convince him that it was OK to just not do the work if it was there to be done.

Similarly, he had an extremely high standard around customer care, which is one of the things that had always impressed me about him. Whereas someone with a lower standard might consider that if a customer wasn't complaining, they were happy, in his world the duty of the company is to look out for the best interests of the customer no matter what. While he stopped short of trying to force the customer's hand in a particular direction, it would simply be unacceptable that that same customer might suffer when they had their eye off the ball, even if every court in the land would place the blame and responsibility firmly in that customer's lap.

But, I pointed out to him, **he had an extremely low standard for well-being.** That is, he was perfectly willing to push himself beyond the pale for weeks at a time before it would even occur to him that maybe feelings of stress and pressure followed swiftly on by bouts of overeating and drinking might be subtle or even blatant indications of a drop in his overall level of peace, contentment, and well-being.



He quickly acknowledged the point, and immediately set about looking for ways to apply his high-level work ethic to the "problem" of raising his level of well-being. Yet after some further discussion, it became apparent to both of us that **standards are not the same as goals** - once set, there is absolutely nothing to be done willfully in order to bring them about.

In the same way as water seeks its level, **standards act as a kind of invisible magnet**, automatically filtering our attention and directing our actions in their direction. If we are trying too hard to meet our own standards, it's simply an indication that they're not yet set - they're more aspirational than actual.

While this is very much an ongoing exploration, what I've seen so far is that our **standards set and reset themselves as we grow in awareness and consciousness**. In other words, once I truly see the cost of a low standard for well-being, it automatically goes up and in time, my behavior will change accordingly. Whereas once it seemed perfectly normal for me to feel stressed for weeks at a time, my stress tolerance has reduced to the point where I can't go much more than a few minutes before I'm pulling back to let my thinking settle before moving forward with whatever it is that I'm doing.

That reduced tolerance for stress is a sign of a higher standard for well-being. And since all standards are internal and arbitrary - that is, we make up our standards for ourselves, consciously or unconsciously and independent of any external authority or measure - our standard for well-being as individuals and as a society can continue to rise over time.

Michael Neill, Author of "The Inside-Out Revolution." Supercoach.com

Your Coaching Call To Action

Where do you want to raise your standards? What first step will you take to start raising the bar?



If you liked this Tip, you might also like:

- [Slowing Down: A Smart Strategy in a Fast-Paced World](#)
- [The Art of Purposeful Imbalance](#)
- [You Want To vs You Should](#)

My own prescription for health is less paperwork and more running barefoot through the grass.
– Terri Guillemets



4

4 Things That Can Get in the Way of Your Professional Success

By Andrea Novakowski

Do you ever feel like something is keeping you from moving ahead in your business, but you can't pinpoint exactly what it is? As I look back at conversations I've had with clients over the years, **I see four common obstacles that tend to hold people back.** Do any of these ring true for you?

- 1. You don't move from theory to action.** It may feel like you have to know it all before you can make your plans happen. I'm a mentor coach, someone who helps people start coaching businesses of their own. *I've noticed that the people who make it in this business are the ones who jump right in while they're still in the middle of their coursework.* They don't wait until they're experts. They recognize that in order to become an expert, they need to start working. That way they can bring their experiences back to the classroom for feedback. You, too, will gain insight as you go along – so don't put it off.
- 2. You do everything at the last minute.** Sam was the kind of leader who created the agenda in his head as he walked into the meeting. As president of his company, he had a full plate and many business goals, and he'd surrounded himself with smart, competent people whom he liked to bring together for frequent discussions. But his crack team was constantly frustrated because Sam would call meetings on the spur of the moment without giving anyone time to prepare. As Sam's coach, I helped show him *how his team could be an even better resource to him if he gave them an agenda.*
- 3. You react instead of responding.** Carl is a night owl who likes to stay late in the office after everyone goes home – he does his best work during the quiet hours. But lately, Carl's manager, Sally, has started poking her head into Carl's office before she heads home. Then she sits down and starts talking, sometimes about work, sometimes not. She might stay for 10 minutes. She might stay for an hour. Arrgh! Needless to say, Carl is starting to get upset. What used to be his time isn't any longer. I helped Carl by pointing out that he had options when Sally showed up for her nightly conversations. Instead of feeling like a hostage, he started using the talks as opportunities for one-on-one time with his manager. He became privy to information he didn't have access to previously.



4. You blame everyone else. Lee's projects kept getting delayed through no fault of her own. Meanwhile, at home, her kids were acting up and making her crazy. It seemed as though no one was pulling their weight but her. Lee had reached the point where she couldn't see any way out of her situation except to quit her job and start all over again. Luckily, before that happened, I was able to sit down with her and examine what part she might have been playing in the project delays. *We discussed ways for her to start building relationships and to overcome the feeling the deck was stacked against her.* As things improved at her job, life at home got easier, too. Her family had been responding to the negative attitude she was bringing home. (Don't you love how your kids pick up so easily on your feelings?)

We all spend a lot of time in our heads, analyzing our situations, traveling the same paths over and over. **We make our stories so powerful that we can't see the situation any other way.**

If you're feeling stuck, consider having a conversation with a coach, mentor, or trusted advisor. She may be able to offer new insights, expand your awareness, and help you overcome obstacles getting in the way of your success.

Your Coaching Call To Action

Where are you not making progress on your goals? Take some time to share what's happening with someone you trust. Ask for their perspective on the situation and ideas for moving forward.



If you liked this Tip, you might also like:

- [Opportunity](#)
- [How to Transform Your Business Problems into Opportunities](#)
- [Your Attitude: You Choose!](#)

It still holds true that man is most uniquely human when he turns obstacles into opportunities

- Eric Hoffer



5

15 Steps for Effective Communication

By Kenneth Cloke & Joan Goldsmith

One of the most difficult times to communicate with others is when the situation is stressful. It's easy to get lost in the midst of frustration and angst and lose the point of the overall conversation. It doesn't help that every situation is different, so having some specific tactics that you can employ every time to help manage the stressful communication can serve you well and get you through the stress and back on point.

The list of tactics below, offered by Cloke & Goldsmith, offers some great strategies to keep in mind. Though all 15 work together in concert, employing just one or two can get your stressful conversation headed in a better direction.

15 Steps for Effective Communication

1. **Let go** of your own ideas, role, and agenda and try to understand what the other person is saying.
2. **Become** curious about what makes them tick.
3. Before you speak, **draw out** the other person's ideas.
4. **Search** behind the words for the other person's meaning. Especially if he or she disagrees with you.
5. **Discover** and manage your listener's unspoken expectations.
6. **Respond** respectfully and nondefensively acknowledging and addressing the other person's concerns first.
7. **Choose** an appropriate form of communicating.
8. **Speak** respectfully, empathically, and responsively.
9. **Demonstrate** that you heard the other person's deeper needs and feelings.
10. **Anticipate** objections and address them before they are raised.
11. **Clarify** and emphasize your agreements.
12. **Acknowledge** differences and restate issues positively.



13. **State** your interests instead of your positions.
14. **Ask** for feedback.
15. **Compliment** the other person for listening.

Cloke, K. & Goldsmith, J. (2011). *Resolving conflicts at work: ten strategies for everyone on the job* (3rd Ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Your Coaching Call To Action

When you feel your blood pressure rising and want to raise your voice to go along with it, **what do you do to minimize conflict and regain your cool?**



If you liked this Tip, you might also like:

- [While Conversing, Are You Unconsciously Incompetent?](#)
- [How to Break or Change a Conversational Habit](#)
- [Add Flavor to Conversation with Spicy Ingredients](#)

*Heat and animosity, contest and conflict, may sharpen the wits
although they rarely do; they never strengthen the understanding, clear
the perspicacity,
guide the judgment, or improve the heart.
- Walter Savage Landor*



6

6 Secrets to Business Success (Plus 1!)

By Andrea Novakowski

Have you noticed that no one talks much about perfectionism anymore?

My business coaching clients used to tell me their compulsion to do everything perfectly was getting in the way of their success. But these days, with the fast pace of life, the constant stream of information, and the increased workload on everyone's desks, our struggle for perfectionism seems to have largely disappeared. It's not that people are feeling guilty or making excuses about not being perfect. It's just gone from the conversation.

As [Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg](#) famously puts it: "Done is better than perfect."

So if we're no longer chasing perfection, what should we strive for in its place? Here are six alternative ideals to which my clients are now turning their attention. You can, too.

- 1. PERSISTENCE.** Successful people don't get that way overnight. Instead, they create a plan and continually chip away at it. They break their goals into annual, monthly, weekly, and daily actions. Even if each day's activities aren't completed, these folks get back in the saddle the next day, ready to keep moving forward. ***What do you do to maintain your persistence?***
- 2. PACING.** Sam, a hard-charging manager at a small company in New Hampshire, planned on retiring in five years. But when he met with a financial planner, he found out he was going to have to work eight more years in order to meet his goals. Sam realized there was no way he'd last eight years at his breakneck pace. Now we're discussing how he can adjust his work habits so he can continue at his job enjoyably and healthfully. ***Do a double-check: does your pace match your goals?***
- 3. POSSIBILITY.** We're all creatures of habit. We eat the same breakfast, take the same route to work, do the same things day in and day out. Today, make a point of trying something new and different. What gets your energy up? What has you thinking new thoughts? Coffee? Brain teasers? Collaboration with your colleagues? ***Where in your life are you taking time to think about what's possible?***



4. **PLAY.** Successful people take breaks during their day. Even if it's only for a stretch or a short walk, they stop working for a few minutes and move their bodies. Increased circulation in your body means better blood flow to your brain, which produces clearer thinking. If you tend to sit glued to your desk for hours at a time, ***think about how you can build play into your day.***
5. **POWER.** We're all naturally more skilled at certain activities than others. Are you a born communicator? A numbers whiz? As much as possible, do the type of work that plays to your strengths. While no one can (or should) elect to do only what comes easily, you'll achieve more and go farther if you ***pursue the things you're good at.***
6. **POSITIVITY.** You know the old saying: you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. People are attracted to people who are positive. ***Put a mirror on your desk*** so that when you pick up the phone, you're reminded to smile. It sounds corny, but that attitude really does translate over the phone.

Need one more goal to replace perfectionism? How about **PLEASURE**? Think about what part of your job you really enjoy, and try to spend more time doing it. When your work aligns with your interests and values, it makes you feel good. And **there's no better definition of success than truly loving what you do!**

Your Coaching Call To Action

Which ideals from the above list will you focus on to increase the likelihood of successfully completing your goals?

Take a moment to revisit your goals – or even set clear goals for the very first time: [Download Your Goal-Setting Kit](#) and get started now!



If you liked this Tip, you might also like:

- [Every Word Matters When You're Building a Business](#)
- [Find the Fear and Delete It Anyway](#)
- [Adversity: The Greatness Challenge](#)

Eighty percent of success is showing up.
- Woody Allen



7

What Are Your Priorities for your Business?

By Andrea Novakowski

Molly wanted to take her business to the next level, but she knew she couldn't reach her sales goals with her present staff. It was time to build her sales force.

So she invested time in hiring and training a promising new salesperson. Then, at the last minute, he received a better offer from a competitor. Molly was back to square one.

If you're trying to grow your business, like Molly, you're probably all too familiar with her time crunch problem. Her plate was overflowing. She was desperate for a way to accomplish everything she needed to do. So she came to me for coaching.

The first thing I asked her was, "What's your number-one priority?"

"To find a salesperson, of course!" she replied.

"How many hours a day are you spending on that effort?"

Molly's eyes grew wide, and she burst out laughing. **She hadn't set aside daily time to work on her number-one priority!**

Think about your everyday life for a moment. Many of us wish for more hours in the day, whether to exercise, read, pursue a hobby, or spend time with our families. Have you ever noticed that if something is truly important to you, it has a way of getting done? You cancel non-essential appointments. Get up a bit earlier. Forgo your favorite TV shows.

Your business operates no differently than your everyday life. The trick is to recognize your priorities. If you know what's essential to the future of your business and what's not, you can plan your day to make sure the important things get done.

Here are some ways to do just that.

- 1. Take a hard look at each item on your schedule.** Do you really have to do it yourself – or can you delegate the task? Or even dump it?
- 2. Not sure which responsibility to tackle first? Create a checklist to decide if a given action will bring you closer to your goals.** Sample questions to ask: Does this move my business forward in a positive way? Does it have a big enough impact? Can I afford it? Can I accomplish it in the next three months?



3. **Long-range business goals – like hiring new staff or updating a web site – often get pushed aside by daily emergencies. The only way to prevent this is to set aside time each day to work on that long-term project.** Build it into your schedule. It won't get done all at once, but if you devote a small block of time to it every day, soon you'll see progress.
4. **Work on your priorities when your brain is fresh.** If you're a morning person, schedule this work at the beginning of the day. If your peak energy occurs from 10 to 2, use that window. By heeding your natural energy rhythms, you'll get more done in less time.
5. **Maximize your efficiency by grouping similar jobs together.** Instead of answering each email as it comes up, or avoiding email until it becomes unmanageable, set aside a half hour each morning and/or afternoon to deal with email. Likewise, schedule a regular time to make and return phone calls. Otherwise, an unscheduled phone call can easily eat up half your morning!

Your Coaching Call To Action

As you set your priorities, what do you discover? Have you been working according to this set of priorities all along? What do you need to keep doing, and what do you need to change?

MAKE TIME FOR
WHAT MATTERS



If you liked this Tip, you might also like:

- [You've Come a Long Way – Even if You Don't Think So](#)
- [Write it Down!](#)
- [Can You Make Things Easier?](#)

Set priorities for your goals. A major part of successful living lies in the ability to put first things first. Indeed, the reason most major goals are not achieved is that we spend our time doing second things first.

- Robert J. McKain



8

Final Thoughts: Common Challenges for Business Owners

By Andrea Novakowski

The Tips selected for this eBook speak to some of the most common challenges that arise when you own a business.

And that's the key: **Every business is unique, but every business owner faces similar challenges.** Each issue may look different when you give it a cursory glance, but there are central roots – common themes – that every challenge emerges from.

Some of the most common themes that rise to the surface during my work with business owners include:

Goal-setting: When you know clearly what you are aiming for, you have a much better chance of getting there.

Prioritize: When the goal is big, manage it by setting priorities to help you get there one step at a time.

Stay focused: Being *single-minded* in your approach (i.e. concentrating on accomplishing *just a few* tasks) will get you farther faster than trying to do too many things at once.

Communicate well: As stated in Tip #5 in this eBook, *“One of the most difficult times to communicate with others is when the situation is stressful.”* This is true for every single person so when the stakes get high, paying more attention to communicating effectively can serve you well.

Don't go solo: Whether you are part of a business team or the sole owner, don't isolate yourself. Connect with other business owners and networking communities to create a support system that you can turn to for advice, ideas, feedback and direction. Find an experienced, certified coach who can help you address your unique business concerns and find the best answers for you.

Take care of yourself: Don't leave yourself out of the equation! You are the center of all you do. If you falter, everything else will suffer. Conversely, when you are strong, all that you impact will be stronger, too.

One more thing you may have noticed:

There is no one simple answer for each challenge you face. Ideas and new solutions emerge when you explore new perspectives, try on different strategies, attempt a different tactic and, ultimately, grow both personally and professionally.



Now What? Next Steps...

1. Find inspiration and take action in your business and life.

[Get the Tip of the Week](#)
every Friday in your inbox.

Click Here to Get the
Tip of the Week

2. Set business goals with intention.

To make constant progress, it's important to set goals for your business – and then revisit them to see how things are going. Whether you need to review your goals or set them for the very first time, [click here to download your Goal-Setting Kit and get started now!](#)



3. Are you ready to boost your business?

Coaching can help you:

- Develop your ability to make better business decisions
- Balance working on today while planning for tomorrow
- Get ahead of the competition
- Advance your leadership skills

Complimentary
Coaching
Session

The best way to understand coaching is to experience it firsthand. [Sign up now for a complimentary coaching session.](#)





Coach Andrea

Success-discovery for business owners & executives

About the Author:



Andrea Novakowski, MBA, MCC is an executive coach who has helped clients align professional goals with personal values since 1997. She guides CEOs, industry leaders, and business owners from strategic vision to measurable action plans, and works with high-potential employees who want to optimize their careers. By tapping into Andrea's knowledge, tools and skill set, her clients are able to blend career development with personal growth to reach higher productivity and deeper levels of job and personal satisfaction.

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