



One Business Leader's 6 Tips for Long-Term Growth

Sometimes, the best business ideas can come at unexpected times. This was certainly the case for Felicia Shanken, who was sitting at a restaurant in 2018 when business inspiration struck and she first had the vision for the [Philadelphia Women's Network Connection](#) (PWNC), a networking organization designed to assist professional business women at every stage of their careers.

At the time, Felicia had two decades of experience in the corporate world and knew full well that there was no shortage of networking organizations in Philadelphia. But she also knew that something was missing. Felicia attended many networking events over the course of her career and came away feeling that the existing industry was not doing all that it could to support women like her. "I attended these events and collected business cards. Sometimes there was follow up, more often there was not," Felicia explains. "The music was too loud, the people were overly aggressive trying to push their products, and I just didn't feel comfortable in that scene." She felt that there

was no space for professional women in Philadelphia to genuinely connect in an environment designed specifically for them. Felicia had identified a clear need (and potentially an opportunity). She decided to start building the kind of networking organization that she would want, knowing that other professional women would likely be interested as well.

Over the past four years, Felicia's vision has become reality; she has built a thriving business—centered around collaboration—that provides women entrepreneurs in Philadelphia access to a unique network to support their professional goals. But despite her current success, the road hasn't always been easy. Felicia has long had an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to help other women in her community, but transitioning from the corporate world to the world of small business ownership was a big adjustment for her. She learned that the freedom of being your own boss also comes with a new level of responsibility and running your own business means that success or failure rests entirely on your shoulders.

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In making the transition to small business ownership, Felicia developed a roadmap that she has used to manage through challenges while continuing to provide value to her clients. Here are her six keys to lasting success that can help support business owners in any industry.

Be persistent and don't give up.

Growing up in New York, Felicia watched her grandmother go to work every day, rain or shine, in order to put food on the table and provide for her family. This is where Felicia first learned the importance of resilience and hard work, and she's applied this lesson in her own life when running her organization.

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As a business owner, Felicia is always on the go. "You won't find anyone who works harder than an entrepreneur," she explains. It would be easy for her to be worn down by all the demands, but whenever times get hard, she thinks back to what her grandmother taught her and tells herself one thing above all else to keep going: "This is your dream, and you need to be resilient."

Don't go it alone.

Felicia learned early on in her career that you can't run a successful business by yourself. She credits her support system—both personal and professional—with providing the encouragement she needs to manage through adversity, take advantage of new opportunities, and remain committed to her mission of serving other women entrepreneurs. Whether it is her husband, friends and family, or other entrepreneurs in her professional network, Felicia draws strength and support from the people who are important to her.

Use mentors to realize your full potential.

As Felicia worked to grow her business from the ground up, she found mentorship to be a crucial tool for approaching the day-to-day and big picture challenges she faced with PWNC. "A lot of times, mentors see in you what you don't see in yourself," she explains. "They know what

you're capable of and they'll work to push you out of your comfort zone." For Felicia, working with mentors unlocked new growth for her business by freeing her from the limitations that she unknowingly put on herself.

For business owners seeking a similar boost, her advice is simple: "It is extremely important to have mentors, and I think it's crucial to have more than one."

Find your tribe.

Relying on a broad network and diverse set of perspectives has always been central to Felicia's business philosophy, but she has also found that having a core group of people to fall back on who have the same values that you do and want to see you succeed can be just what you need when times get tough.

"I don't have people in my inner circle who say, 'I can't' or 'I won't.' My circle is always asking 'what can I do next?' and that attitude ultimately rubs off on me."

Look for opportunities to collaborate.

When it comes to new growth, one of the most important strategies that Felicia has utilized for her organization is business collaborations. By serving as an affiliate partner for an organization like the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), she has created new opportunities to reach a wider audience, connect with more entrepreneurs, and grow the PWNC brand. Forming relationships with large corporations like Google, ADP, and Oracle NetSuite has also provided Felicia with access to new resources and products that she can use to better serve her clients.

Pour from your overflow.

Felicia's commitment to "pouring from her overflow" refers to her belief that she can better take care of others—whether they be family, friends, peers in her network, or clients—when she first takes care of herself. As a business owner, Felicia is often being pulled in several directions at once, but she learned early on in her career that she functions most effectively—for herself and others—when she takes the time to "refill" her own cup.

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Felicia urges business leaders to make time for themselves and commit to their own well-being in the same way they commit to other's. In her experience, your clients and your business will be better off for it.

A Final Message to Business Owners

As Felicia looks back on the growth of her organization, she has one final insight for fellow entrepreneurs: "You can always change the plan, but don't change the goal."

"...if you don't give up...if you remain committed...you'll set yourself up for success."

No business journey is linear. There will inevitably be challenges as you build toward new heights and you may end up taking a route that you didn't expect, but Felicia advises business leaders to remain committed to their long-term vision, no matter what they may be going through today. "It's not going to be a straight path, but if you don't give up, if you stay true to yourself, and if you remain committed to your long-term goal, you'll set yourself up for success."

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