



Business Partners: Performance Under Pressure

By Nancy Capistran, PCC, CPC

Several years ago, two married couples combined their resources and their experience to purchase an established business. From the outset, all four of them put a great deal of effort into increasing revenue while also significantly improving the business processes and the quality of work life for their employees. They accomplished this by re-engineering many of the outdated and inefficient policies and procedures so that the business would be able to thrive. The investment paid off and the business flourished. Their dreams had come true. They were comfortable with their personal income, their business revenue, and the balance of personal and professional time in their lives. The well-known saying “all that glitters isn’t gold” could be applied to what happened next. While my clients were happy with the great strides that had been made, they learned in due course that they had been blindsided: the other couple had been working behind the scenes to bully my clients into leaving the business. This disheartening and devastating event erupted into a hostile situation.

The true test of leadership can undoubtedly be witnessed during times of crisis. Performance under pressure is critical. A crisis like this is devastating. Over a three-year period, I worked to help them to be able to “keep their wits about them” during a time when both their personal and professional lives were completely disrupted. I kept them focused on the necessity for smart, proactive, and rapid reactive decision-making. There were times when the situation went into emergency mode, and at those times I provided 24/7 support. I helped them to defuse their stress with intentionality. We concentrated on having clear goals and expectations in order to be able to make the wisest decisions based on the information that was available at that moment. Curveballs were consistently being thrown in their direction and I was their unswerving “rock of positive support,” advising them in a manner that created successful timely outcomes. The commitment to stay the course and to continue to push forward with a high degree of integrity and a positive attitude would be challenging for anyone in their situation. I remained in the trenches with them so that they could stay on track to rise above the conflict. I kept them fixated on strategic planning for the best possible future outcomes.

They felt that their entire world was falling apart. Their emotional and mental strain was at an all-time high – a state of being stretched beyond capacity. Their prior life challenges had prepared them to stretch themselves even through the most extreme of uncomfortable times. This situation was well beyond their emotional elasticity; they were about to break. Oftentimes when we are dealing with very intense situations, we narrow our attention and fold into ourselves with a gravitational pull towards inescapable doom.

I advised them to not let all of the negativity in their world give them a bad disposition. Instead, they should use that fuel to spark the fire of progress in a new direction. They needed to look at things through a different lens so that they could view the many positives in their situation. They had been stuck in a “comfortable rut” at their old company, and this antagonistic situation forced them to look for greener pastures – which they did. I asked them to visualize what they really wanted their lives to look like. They felt overwhelmed with that question, so we broke it down into more bite-size chunks. We then focused on the process of elimination. This helped us to gain a better understanding of what they didn’t want. Once we had a better handle on that, we focused on what they referred to as the most intimidating question: what they aspired to be. We had several emotional conversations to sort out what that might look like and what their next steps would need to be towards making their “intimidating” goal a reality. I cataloged what each of them aspired to be both personally and professionally. We established that their endgame was to create a state-of-the-art manufacturing business. Through innovative thinking, they were able to dissolve the original partnership, which created the opportunity for them to stretch themselves beyond their wildest dreams – an experience of a lifetime. They were energetic and optimistic about their plan for the future. However, they didn’t know what they didn’t know. This happens with all of us when we venture into a new experience. Starting a business can be very risky. Large numbers of new businesses fail during the first few years. Often there is not enough demand or sustainability for the products or services. Having a good grasp of the competition’s strengths and weaknesses, combined with having a clear view of your own business’s points of difference, is key. Strategic planning is critically important prior to launching the company, along with maintaining and updating the plan regularly throughout the company’s existence.

As ambassadors of their newly created business, my clients experienced an abundance of information overload. They found themselves overwhelmed by the many risks and challenges, along with the numerous decision-making obstacles that surfaced on a daily basis. Through our ongoing work together, I helped them to prioritize the issues that were the most pressing as well as the most significant. They took on each challenge and managed it to the best of their abilities even though they felt as if they were drinking from a fire hose. I consistently supported them in their efforts to make smart decisions with the best precision. All the while, my premeditated goal was to keep them from drowning.

They emerged stronger, more knowledgeable, more seasoned in many different aspects of business, and more calculated in their risk taking and decision-making strategies. The icing on the cake was uncovering what they valued most, which was the strength of their marriage and the joy from their family bond.

Today, their professional careers are thriving. Finding the balance between the day-to-day tactical operations and the strategic decisions is not easy. As their careers continue to grow, they are relentless in doing their very best with both. I was ecstatic to be an integral part of helping them to transform what could have been their worst business nightmare into their brightest possible future.

We unearth and evolve different facets of ourselves through experiences. When we blend our introspection with experimenting with our identities, it allows us to grow and find the right path forward. When we challenge ourselves to stretch beyond the zone where we sense comfort, we learn the utmost about our abilities, and it unleashes excitement for what is forthcoming.



About the Author: Nancy Capistran is a best-selling author, an award-winning, internationally certified executive coach, motivational speaker, and trusted advisor. She is Principal of [Capistran Leadership, LLC](#), and [Crisis Interception, LLC](#). Nancy's best-selling international leadership book: [Open Your Eyes and LEAD](#) shows readers how to become a positive force in the world and how to balance and manage omnipresent tensions while striving for leadership excellence. Capistran shares inspirational stories and advice from her 30+ year career to help both seasoned and emerging leaders develop intentionality while maintaining their core values and beliefs even when life's pressures dictate otherwise.