

# Honoring Popeye

A Business-Building Perspective

By Jana Panter



Have your own insights or inspiration to share? Email [editor@abmp.com](mailto:editor@abmp.com).

*I think back to when my teenage son was trying to teach our dog, Popeye, to bite me. (I said he was a teenager). My son knelt and enthusiastically bit my jeans while I was doing the dishes or, his favorite, on the phone. Again and again he chomped down, saying "See, Popeye—like this." Popeye, being the best dog in the world, wanted to please him. She understood something was expected of her; she just didn't understand what it was.*

I thought, “This is your chance to experiment. Try things and analyze the results. Whatever you learn will help you be more successful in your new location.”



Sometimes, late at night, when I am working on business development, I can relate (to the dog, that is, not the teenager). Between the social network lunches, Small Business Association webinars, the self-help study groups, and the voices in my head, I am not sure what is expected of me. Am I supposed to focus on making my website more search-engine friendly; update my Twitter account; donate my services or never donate my services; charge more or less; buy a better phone; get customer-tracking software; speak at a conference; work the health fair; or join the alumni association, the professional organization, or the chamber of commerce? I understand something is expected of me, I just don't understand what it is!

So, I turned to cartoon Popeye for counsel. After all, we all know Popeye's motto: “I yam what I yam.” So what does this little aphorism mean?

### HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE?

Start slow: Take time to reflect on what you love about your work. What do you do well—with passion, joy, and creativity? What business-building ideas do you diligently work on, and what have you simply not been able to bring butt to chair to work on? What do you drop everything and find time for?

Be analytical and honest with yourself: If you have woken up every Monday for the last 12 years intending to write that grant proposal and still haven't started it, what are the chances it will happen this Monday? And is it every step of the grant proposal that you dread, or only one step that a business-savvy friend would be happy to help you with in exchange for, I don't know, some bodywork? Keep in mind that an idea may be great, but not if it's not great

for you. Lastly, what idea did you love but people discouraged you from pursuing?

Follow your inspirations and make your own decisions: This is vital to being a small business owner. What is special about the way you do what you do? If you seek out people who want your approach, you will have more fun and a better success rate.

Everyone is talking about branding these days. The way you reach out to people is the first step in expressing your brand. By doing things your way, you are telling the world who you are and who will be there to greet them when they walk in your door (or call, text, or email). Collect the ideas that come your way—but you don't have to, and can't, act on all of them. As you assess your likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses, keep your mission statement and business plan prominent. They will help set boundaries and priorities, and guide you. Does this sound a little risky? Don't look now, but as a small business owner, risk is the stock in your business soup pot.

### MAKE THE RESULTS TRULY YOURS

Recently, I was talking with a fellow small business owner who said, “Since I am moving away soon, it isn't worthwhile to try new things to build my business.” Silently, I disagreed. I thought, “This is your chance to experiment. Try things and analyze the

results. Whatever you learn will help you be more successful in your new location.”

As I continued talking with her, I felt those words myself. So, now I try to focus on the tactics that excite me, or at least the things I can actually bring myself to do. I take classes and read articles, but with a much clearer focus. If it feels important and I don't have the skills or interest, I seek expert guidance. No guarantees it will work for you, but at least the results you get will be truly yours. You'll learn the lessons and choose to stay or alter the course as you see fit.

Of course, this is true anyhow. Since the consequences are yours, you might as well own the path you took to get there. And in my own business-building practice, maybe demonstrating better strength of my convictions would have had a positive effect on my jeans-biting son. Even better, when I am true to myself, I can look our dog, Popeye, in the eye and say, “Yeah, me too. I yam what I yam.” **m&b**

 Jana Panter, ND, CCST, loves practicing craniosacral therapy, feels honored by her clients' trust, and is happy to be making progress on her book about craniosacral therapy, *What If You Could?* She welcomes your comments about all things cranial via her website ([www.oceanabodyworks.com](http://www.oceanabodyworks.com)) or blog ([whatifyoucould.life](http://whatifyoucould.life)). Panter would like you to know that the teenager mentioned here is now 26 years old and about to go to Paraguay with the Peace Corp.