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Yvette Craddock offers straight talk on business success



Yvette Craddock knows business. As the owner of [Click Marketing Solutions](#), she started her career in Corporate America, and now devotes her time and knowledge into helping other women build successful businesses, in addition to running her own. Click Marketing Solutions was recognized as one of the Top 10 "Small Advertising Agencies" in Arizona Business Magazine's The Best of Arizona Business. Today, she shares her tell-it-like-it-is business advice and what it *really* takes to make it as an entrepreneur.

Talk about your professional background -- where you started and how you got to where you are today.

My marketing career began when I served as the Marketing Director for giorgio collection, a high-end home furnishing designer and manufacturer. Working with him was the most rewarding and phenomenally creative experience of my career. After we opened his new High Point, North Carolina showroom with wild success, I eventually was recruited by FOX, and then Univision. My position at FOX was akin to being a one-person internal advertising agency. I created campaigns for major advertising agencies that they seamlessly presented to their clients. Again, my success ratio was tremendous, with my ideas generating millions of dollars above and beyond budget. It didn't take long for me to realize that I could do this on my own. I did and am.

Why did you decide to start Click Marketing Solutions?

I was fed up working for other people who truly were not invested in my future. I realized that the only way that I could truly shine, accomplish my personal and professional goals and live the life I envisioned for myself was to start my own firm. Thus, the birth of Click.

What are the most challenging and most rewarding aspects of owning your own business?

The most challenging aspect for me is finding good people. Having the wrong people around you can and will cost you a lot of money. I calculated that the wrong people, whether they were employees, business consultants, vendors or client, cost my business six figures in one year's period plus the incalculable cost in stress and time. You need and deserve to be choosy. Business owners need to be just as comfortable firing employees, vendors, clients, etc. as hiring these individuals. It is imperative to enter business arrangements with eyes wide open. Do your homework, ask questions and put everything in writing!

The most rewarding aspect is to see my aspirations materialize. In this category I include my growth in business operations, sales, creativity and personal maturation. They have all added up to my creating a company from scratch that continues to prosper. The sense of pride and joy on some levels probably parallels being a parent. All of the blessings that have come from Click far outweigh the temporary periods of pain and agony.

What are some unique issues that African American women face in the business world and what advice do you have to overcome them?

Lack of business savvy. It is not us against the machine or the world. We need to take any chips off our shoulders and be open and willing to learn, accept and respectfully dispense criticism and work hard to move up the ladder. Sure, there are business environments that unfortunately undervalue women and African American women. We need to develop relationships with all types of people from all backgrounds. Sure, adversity will come in its many forms and through its many faces, but get over it. Do not hang onto negative situations or worse yet, perceptions.

My greatest mentors have been White males. If I had been closed off from the lessons they taught me, I would be in a very different place. When you shift your personal focus to only positive thoughts and behaviors, backed up with work that you are expected to deliver, you should go far.

You are taking part in the [Small Business Bootcamp](#). Tell us what this is and how it can help women entrepreneurs.

This event, in its fourth year, is about empowering, educating and motivating women to be smarter business people. It will help owners take the leap from working in their business to working on their business. Nine popular workshop presenters will offer information on customer service, organization skills, selling your business, publicity, web site strategy, government certification, selling, technology, and branding.

In addition to Click Marketing, you also write articles and have interviewed celebrities. Tell readers about that and how you balance all the aspects of your career.

I love to write and have had the good fortune of having numerous opportunities to do so for a variety of outlets throughout my career. I started writing newsletters and other communication when I worked for Corporate America. Then, I pursued and awarded the distinction of writing for some prominent local publications and then for a national audience.

I balance everything through stringent time management and the power of focus. I utilize the [Franklin Covey](#) time management system for my personal and professional schedules. By nature, I am incredibly organized and time cognizant, but having everything detailed in front of me by task and priority with deadlines helps me to keep my multidimensional, heavy-demand life in check. Additionally, I only surround myself with other competent people who honor their time and mine. So through the use of time management, the power of focus and only accepting a certain caliber of people around me, I do more in one day than most people accomplish in one week. I am task driven and thrive on getting the job done, preferably the first time!

Of all of your career and business accomplishments, which stands out in your mind the most?

At the moment, creating and sustaining a well-respected, financially solvent, debt-free business. It is such a privilege to have the opportunity to create and live a life that you imagine for yourself. I know that my accomplishments to date are microcosmic reflections of much grander endeavors coming in the next chapters of my life.

What can other women do to elevate their careers and/or business to the next level?

If you want to advance in your career, establish yourself as a credible talent. A person who knows her job and her business, who is tempered and trustworthy. Someone who plays on the team and who can serve as a leader. Someone who thinks strategically and innovatively. Someone who dresses and conducts herself in a manner that epitomizes her goal role or position. Take advantage of training, tuition reimbursement, mentoring programs, anything and everything at your disposal to help you achieve your goals.

If you are an entrepreneur or a soon-to-be one, it is time to get real. Raw real. Owning your own business is not something that everyone is cut out to do, and it certainly doesn't happen overnight. You need vision, tenacity, financial wherewithal, business savvy, experience, a network and a plan with short- and long-term goals. Do not be intoxicated by the glamour. The risks are great; yet so are the rewards. But in today's business environment you have to set your business up right from the get-go to protect yourself if you expect to be in business for the long-haul. Build a competent business team comprised of a CPA, banker, attorney, commercial insurance agent and marketing professional to assist you. Do not discount or skimp on these services. None of us can know everything and be everywhere.

Whether you are climbing the ladder or doing your own thing, please don't spread yourself too thin that you are not taking care of the most important asset which is you. Listen to and be thankful for constructive criticism. The most important thing I've learned is to be completely honest and confident with what I do not know and what are not my greatest strengths. This level of awareness has helped me to embrace the help I need to improve in these areas. Once I worked on those things, it seemed that my gifts or areas of strength, became more acute.

Don't settle nor accept second best from anyone, not even yourself. Be smarter than the situation. Know that times that test your endurance are temporary. Whatever you do, don't panic. Just step back and take a deep breathe. Tap into your business team's expertise, reach out to other trusted people and research similar business challenges. Arm yourself with wisdom, think strategically, trust your instinct and be silent. You will amaze yourself that the most incredible solutions will come your way to get you to the next stage in your development.

Lastly, create a vision board or journal with your goals, dreams and aspirations and create a plan to accomplish those items. You will be delightfully surprised at how you will attract everything that you need and want to you.

What else should women keep in mind?

There is abundance for everyone. We must learn to work together to obtain success and higher levels. When we leverage each others talents, tools, skills, etc., we all win.

My dear friend sent me an inspiration plaque that reads, "Faith makes things possible, not easy." Don't ever, ever give up. Watch who you share your dreams with because not everyone will support you. Listen to and act on your intuition. It is always right.

Lastly be accountable and responsible for your behavior in all things. Think bigger than big. You can make it happen.

What inspires you?

I wake up every day brimming with joy and looking forward to devising new ways to positively challenge my intellect and creativity. I love the fact that I have the ability to create and fulfill my heart's desires each and every day!