

October, 2015

The First 100 Days in Business....Now We're All-In!

Well, *The First 100 days in Business*, that was the title 42 days ago, but because things are so busy it's taken 42 days to write about the first 100 days in biz! I take that as a great sign.

Conceived on the beaches of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, [All-In Gaming & Hospitality Advisory Group Inc.](#) was established in June of this year. It has been an incredible journey. Earlier this year, as I contemplated my next career move, I consulted with a number of colleagues throughout the casino industry. All conversations went in the same direction and landed on the same conclusion: "the Canadian casino industry needs experts who understand the Canadian casino player, what 'RG' and 'positive play' really mean and the uniqueness of the gaming landscape in our country. We need someone who knows about player rewards programs, how the business results are connected with the customer experience, also what it really means being part of your community, and how operators and crown agencies need to "make nice" and work collectively for positive outcomes, and not be adversaries. It also became clear that some of our experience was relevant in American and other international markets where gaming is expanding or being introduced. "Hmmm - Hey Helen you've done all those things and very successfully. You need to start your own business." AND, also great and supportive comments like; "You'll be great, you'll do really well, and you'll rock it!" made me seriously consider the option.



So, like anyone contemplating starting their own business, you go through some soul searching, some sleepless nights pondering - how will I pay the bills? After the fear somewhat subsided, I set out to establish what I wanted the company to be and represent. With the wonderful help and insight from many supporters, especially, Kara Holm, I established "the offering" my company, All-In, could bring to the marketplace in order to add value. Marketing tools were produced, we put a plan together and got an amazing group of Advisors on the team. "That was easy".

<http://www.all-inadvisorygroup.com/experts.html>

I met with industry representatives, then honed All-In's specialization pretty quickly. When I began introducing the company and our specialized services to my network in the industry it was open door after open door. Then when I started to explore jurisdictions that were new to me, people continually offered to make introductions and recommendations. There was no 'hard sell' needed; which is a good thing because, that's totally not my style. "You know what you are doing - you have something to offer and there is a real need in the industry" - it takes hearing that from people - then you can believe it to be true.

I'm still on a gi-normous learning curve, but I wanted to share my top 10 learnings after 100 days (okay 142 days) of owning my own business. These are things I wish someone had told me, though perhaps I would not have been able to hear it at the time....

1. “Failure is your best teacher”; a very good friend told me this a while ago, but I know it now – I recognize that I have learned from many failures over my career and it makes me a stronger business owner, entrepreneur and Advisor.
2. “Treat people the way you want to be treated” - The old adage is bang on. Your reputation will make you successful, or you will have an upward battle if you’ve been an *ss your whole career. Just sayin’.
3. Honesty and integrity actually exist in the business world and it is broad-reaching. People who have it are wonderfully drawn together.
4. You get to choose the people you want to work with – as clients and colleagues. I LOVE that part.
5. Know how you differentiate yourself from your competitors and be true to that. Know who you are. Don’t get distracted. Course correct if you have to. Frequently re-read your business plan, mission and vision statement and the applications you made to financial institutions. (What did I say?)
6. If you are working in your home office for a change, instead of a hotel room somewhere in North America, it’s okay if you are still in your pj’s at 12noon local time.
7. Don’t worry about ‘the money’ – you are smart enough, you work hard enough and you are resourceful enough to figure that out. Seriously? Seriously!
8. Be a mentor for someone starting their own business. You’ll be reminded of the reasons you started your business and it revives your confidence and reminds you of your mission and what you originally set out to do. (And it’s a nice give-back).
9. You need a collaborator – someone who gets where you are going, someone who can help you see the forest, can tell you that you’re wrong (nicely) and you’re totally okay with it.....my colleague, , and bestie, Jayne Barnstead friend. Thank you so much.
10. You need a cheerleader – you need the unconditional support of a loved one, a friend, a family member that is going to tell you that you’re awesome – especially when you’re ‘not feeling it’, someone that supports your crazy work and travel schedule. Sylvain, you are amazing.
11. BONUS lesson - I love being Canadian!



So my advice to you....take a risk – you really have nothing to loose. Really? REALLY! Welcome to the “you might be crazy, love what you do, have no time for a manicure, life of a business owner”Now we’re in the game!