



The Business of Yoga

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Getting Started.....	2
Assignment 1.....	6
Starting Your Own Yoga Teaching Business.....	7
How Students Pay.....	13
Choosing a Business Structure.....	16
Business Licenses and Forms.....	19
Fictitious Business Name (DBA).....	19
Business Licenses and Permits.....	19
Sales Tax.....	19
Liability Insurance.....	19
Procedures Manual/Client Forms.....	20
Outside Help for Your Business.....	22
Finding Your Niche.....	24
Promoting Yourself and Your Business.....	26
Working Smarter Not Harder.....	29
Setting Goals.....	32
Creating the Mindset for Business Success.....	34
Yoga Teacher Ethics.....	41
Resources.....	42
References.....	42
Sample Client Intake Forms.....	43

Yoga Business Success

Introduction

There has never been a better time to be a yoga teacher than right now. About 18 million Americans practiced yoga in 2008, and more than 14% of residents in the United States are “very interested” in yoga, according to the Yoga Journal. In other countries, such as in Europe, this percentage is often even higher than in the U.S. People now realize the benefit of low impact activities and the need to keep an active lifestyle.

This manual is focused on new teachers, but also contains information for more experienced teachers who want to grow their yoga business. The business information within these pages is based on research that explains how you can have a yoga business success that is both financially rewarding and personally satisfying.

Getting Started

This section will describe various teaching venues and their advantages or disadvantages. We’ll then discuss the different options you have for starting your own yoga teaching business – including options with little or no start up costs.

Should You Start Teaching Full-Time or Part-Time

One of the things to consider when you start a career as a yoga teacher is whether you want to teach full-time or part time. Often it’s beneficial to start teaching yoga part-time while you keep your current job. This allows you to test it out and see if teaching yoga is right for you without having the stress of needed to support yourself with your yoga teacher income.

Places to Teach Yoga

1) Substitute Teaching

A good way to get started in your teaching is to be a substitute teacher. Every yoga teacher needs a substitute at times. Contact the yoga teachers in your area who teach in your style of yoga (i.e. hatha, ashtanga, etc) and let them know you are available to substitute teach for them. You can usually find a list of yoga teachers in your area by checking the yoga journal’s online listing or by simply checking your local yellow pages.

2) Community Centers

Community centers are a good place to start teaching yoga for a number of reasons. First, you are usually free to teach your style of yoga and are not bound to the style determined by the studio or health club. Also, you are often paid based on the number of students in a class, and this percentage is often higher than at other location. So, if you are effective at marketing your class, it can become a profitable option. For example, a studio may pay you \$40 for one

class, while a community center may pay you 70% of the revenue brought in for a class in which each student pays \$10 per class. If you have 10 students in your class, you will make \$70 per class teaching at the community center. With 20 students, you make \$140 per class. The drawback to community centers is that you don't often have the ideal environment for yoga classes. You may have a kids' tumbling class or an aerobics class in the room next to you. But, if you talk with the staff of the community center, they can often help reduce the distractions and noise through thoughtful room placement. While many community centers may pay you a percentage of the profits, it's important to note that YMCAs do not. YMCAs typically pay their instructors a flat rate, and it is usually less than most studios. However, the Y almost always gives their instructors free membership.

3) Health Clubs

Health clubs typically don't pay much for teaching yoga classes, but they often give you a free membership, so you can use their facilities when you're not teaching. The environment in many health clubs is not always conducive to yoga classes – you may be next to a noisy aerobics class or have bright fluorescent lights that you can't dim.

4) Yoga Studios

Yoga studios can be a wonderful place to teach, as long as you and the director practice similar styles of yoga and have compatible teaching philosophies. Many yoga studios have a definite form of yoga they are teaching, whether it's the flow style of vinyasa yoga, hot yoga, or a more gentle and restorative approach to yoga. You are going to be expected to teach in the style promoted by the studio, so make sure to understand their style of yoga before agreeing to teach at a studio.

The advantage of teaching at a yoga studio is that they put you on their regular schedule and all you have to do is show up and teach. Like most health clubs and community centers, they provide the mats, props, music and students. It can also be useful to teach at a yoga studio to learn more about how to run a studio and to learn more about the business of yoga. If you teach at a studio, it is often best to teach two classes in a row. When you figure in travel time, it is usually most financially advantageous to teach multiple classes back to back.

5) Community College or College Outreach Programs

Many community colleges and universities offer extension programs or non-credit programs to the community and may be looking to offer a yoga class. Colleges will usually hire you to teach a yoga course for a semester with breaks in between that follow the regular college schedule. Colleges are usually more open than yoga studios or health clubs to allowing you to promote yourself and your classes at other locations. They provide the location and the students, but you usually need to supply the music and any props. The settings available can

vary tremendously from ideal to poor, so take some time to check out exactly where you will be teaching before your first class begins.

6) In Your Home

There are many yoga teachers who have studios in or attached to their homes. One advantage is that you are able to have your own studio, but without the overhead costs of leasing a separate space. Also, you don't have to travel from one place to the next or haul props with you.

There are some challenges. One can be parking. It's very important to keep your neighbors happy. The way to achieve this is to be sure all your students, especially new ones, know exactly where to park.

Another challenge of teaching out of your home is to maintain some separation between your work and personal time. One of the ways to do this is to make the yoga portion of your house as independent or self-contained as possible. Other things to consider for a home studio are where the students can go in the house and where they can't; which bathrooms to use and where to get water. Though it's not always possible, a separate entrance to the studio is ideal. Finally, when you have a home studio getting students is totally up to you. We'll cover more about marketing and finding students in some of the later sections.

7) Outdoors

If you live where weather permits, you could also try teaching outside. Parks and beaches are great spots for yoga. If you can't do it throughout the year, you can set up a seasonal schedule for your outdoor classes.

In Las Vegas, a yoga teacher friend of mine used to take groups of people up to Red Rock Canyon, which is only about 20 minutes west of town, every Sunday morning (weather permitting) for yoga. Her sessions would include both a yoga class and a hike through beautiful Red Rock Canyon, which is one of the most peaceful and relaxing spots I know.

Of course, with the weather, you can't always teach outside, but it can be a wonderful alternative on some occasions.

8) On-site for Private Groups

Many employers are looking for ways to help their employees stay healthy. Offering lunchtime or after work yoga classes to employees at a company can be a great way to teach classes. Some employers will pay for at least a portion of their employees' class fees. Others will not, but they will almost always give you space for the class for free. The space provided isn't always ideal. It's usually a conference room or other meeting room, and tables or chairs often must be moved out of the way. However, employers will usually advertise your class to all their employees and you get to keep all the money from student sign-ups. So, for example, if you have a lunchtime class in which you charge \$80 for an eight

week session (or \$10 per class), and you have 10 students, you would make \$100 per class.

9) Online

You can also create videos for an online audience. You can create your own website and offer free class videos on this site. To earn your money, you would sell advertising space or other products on this site. Some websites offer online classes for a monthly membership charge. You can charge your online viewers a small fee, say \$15/month, to have unlimited access to your online videos. The nice thing about providing classes online is that you are not restricted by room size or your student's schedules, since they can access the classes anywhere and anytime. However, the problem is that you don't get the opportunity to really interact with your students, which can really help you improve your teaching skills, as well as your understanding of yoga.

Assignment

List at least 10 places in your community where you could teach yoga. Research these places and find out who you contact regarding yoga teaching opportunities, how you are paid and the pay rate, whether you provide the students or the facility provides the students, if a certain style of yoga is taught at the facility and, if so, what that style is.

Location/Facility	Contact person	Pay Structure flat rate or per student	Pay per class or pay per student	Average # of students in current classes (if applicable)	Yoga style (if any)

Compare the information on the different facilities and locations. Determine which places you would like to contact and go for it.

Starting Your Own Yoga Teaching Business

You don't necessarily need to start your own permanent yoga studio to be your own boss in teaching yoga. We discussed teaching yoga in your home and outdoors, but there are many other ways to have your own teaching business without having your own formal studio space.

Becoming a Mobile Yoga Teacher

Many private groups and corporations are looking for add on program that will benefit their members or employees and keep them satisfied in the group or organization. They want activities that their employees or members can do on-site. Yoga is a perfect activity to add to an office or other organization.

In an office setting, you can teach yoga to employees on-site at lunchtime or after work (around 5:00 or 5:30). Most companies have conference room space large enough to hold a yoga class once a few tables and chairs are moved out of the way. Focus your teaching on the health benefits of yoga and keep away from the spiritual aspects. Many organizations are very traditional and the thought of yoga is strange enough for many of them. If you start asking your students to chant during a lunchtime yoga session, you may not be asked back. I've personally taught yoga in some very traditional settings, including a real estate office, a law firm and a laboratory. People there didn't want to go too deep into a yoga practice, they simply wanted to forget work for a period of time and stretch some muscles that were aching from sitting at a computer all day. Realize that your setting may not be ideal. You may be in a conference room that is close to a noisy outer office space, or you may have to deal with interruptions from an intercom system.

If you teach a lunchtime yoga class to employees, remember that they will have to go back to work and may not be able to change into sweat pants for class, so plan accordingly. Keep a lunchtime yoga class fairly relaxed and restorative, focusing on breathing and gentle stretching to relieve stress. For lunchtime yoga, it's important to keep the class fairly short (usually only 45 minutes). Most employees have about 1 hour for lunch, so a 45 minute class gives them a little time after class to eat something or to change their clothes.

Employers may wonder how yoga will help their bottom line. To help sell your services, mention some of the following benefits that yoga has for employers:

- Increases employee satisfaction, productivity and morale
- Reduces employee fatigue, stress and anxiety
- Improves employees' ability to concentrate and focus
- Strengthens the immune system and reduces employee sick days
- Promotes camaraderie between employees
- Yoga classes can be implemented at little or no cost to the employer

Some employers will be willing to pay for the yoga classes as a benefit to employees. Others will want their employees to pay for any classes they attend.

Set pricing separately for each scenario. If the employer is willing to pay for the classes, offer them a group rate, while if the employees are paying for the classes themselves, you'll need to charge each person an individual rate.

For other organizations, they may want to hire you for an on-going yoga class held at their facilities or simply for a special event for their members. I used to teach a class for a group of people who all volunteered at the local assistance league. We had class every Friday morning because it was the one time when none of them had volunteer duties. They had a beautiful open space that they used for fund raisers and other events, where we held class. And, since we had class on Friday mornings, it was always very quiet. So, look around, you never know what groups you will find who will be very appreciative to have the benefits of yoga in their lives.

It's helpful to find someone in the organization to make sure that emails are sent out about each series of classes before they begin. If your class is not the size you want it to be, offer one-time guest passes to other employees or members who have not yet been to a class.

Partner with an Existing Yoga Studio

If you have specific workshops to offer, you may be able to partner with an existing yoga studio. For example, if Weston Yoga has free studio time on certain Sunday afternoons and you would like to offer a two hour workshop on meditation, the studio may be open to either splitting the profits of the workshop with you, or simply renting the studio space to you for a set fee. If you are splitting the profits with a studio, they will usually let their regular students know about your workshop and possibly do some other simple marketing for the workshop. This can be a win-win situation for you and the existing studio, since you will be bringing in profits for the studio when it would otherwise be vacant, while at the same time you can incorporate your personal interests into the workshop and have some help marketing it, without having permanent overhead.

Use the chart below to determine the types of workshops you may like to offer at an existing studio.

Name of Workshop	Length of Workshop (in hours)	Price for students	What makes this a good workshop?

Your Own Space (Sort of)

Renting Space on an “As Needed” Basis

Many yoga teachers move around, teaching here and there, carrying their props with them and on the look out for good spaces to rent. Community centers, churches, schools, synagogues, dance studios, library conference rooms and martial arts studios are all places that often have large spaces and may rent that space to you on an hourly basis. Look around your community for large spaces that aren't used all the time and check to see if any would be appropriate for teaching yoga.

You may also want to team up with people who are in complementary businesses, such as massage therapists, pilates teachers, dance teachers, martial arts teachers and rent space that you can each use at certain times.

Yoga Days, Weekends and Retreats

Yoga Day

Before you plan your first week long yoga retreat, start with a simple Yoga Day. The first step is to secure a location. The easiest and least expensive way to do that is to find a friend or relative who has a house with a nice backyard or a location with a natural setting. If you need to rent space, simply determine the number of participants you need to cover the rent and any other costs.

Start the day off with a get-acquainted circle, giving each person a chance to talk about who they are, why they are there and what they want to get out of the event.

Next, lead a yoga class for one to one and half hours and after the class, comes a lecture by someone other than you. Think about somebody you like personally, who is good in a related health field and who would be willing to talk for 30 minutes to an hour on their field for free. Have lunch available. Many places that offer rental space can also cater the lunch.

After the lunch, you can have a demonstration from a health-related professional (i.e. recipes from a nutritionist, or proper posture techniques from a doctor, chiropractor or personal trainer, etc). The demonstration should be something that doesn't require too much activity from the participants, so they can digest their lunch, and should last about 45 minutes to an hour. After the demonstration, lead another yoga session, which is more relaxing and restorative than the first and lasts about one hour.

Yoga days don't have to last the whole day. Scheduling the day from 10:00 to 4:00 should give you enough time. The charge for a day like this is usually between \$90-\$160 per person, depending on the facility, where you live, the food you provide and how elaborate you get with the extras.

Yoga Weekend

Once you've tried a few yoga days, move on to providing a yoga weekend. You'll want to find a nice place where people can also spend the night. Look for hotels or resorts with large garden areas and the amenities you need. Make sure that the location isn't too far from your local students because they will be your most likely clients for the weekend and are much more likely to come if they can drive rather than fly.

Week Long Yoga Retreats

Once you have had some success with yoga days or yoga weekends, you can begin planning a week long yoga retreat.

A Place of Your Own: Starting Your Own Yoga Studio

Location, Location, Location

Where should you locate your yoga studio? Before you start shopping for space, you need to have a clear picture of what you must have, what you would like to have, what you absolutely want to avoid and how much you're able to pay. Figuring out the answers to these questions will help you avoid costly mistakes in the future.

Yoga studios are typically located in retail space, but you can also look at commercial space or mixed-use space. Retail space comes in a variety of shapes and sizes and may be located in free standing buildings, enclosed malls, strip shopping centers or downtown shopping districts. Commercial space includes commercial office buildings and business parks. Obviously commercial space typically has less foot traffic than retail, but it is usually cheaper and you may be able to find space in a small one-level medical or office park that is somewhat similar to a strip mall. A woman I know has her yoga studio in a medical office park. Her studio is placed between a chiropractor and a dermatologist and it has been beneficial to her studio, since the chiropractor and some of the other medical professionals have recommended her classes to their patients.

Mixed-use space can include homes in older areas of town that are now zoned for commercial use. Another yoga teacher I know set up her yoga studio in a charming older home that sat back from a higher traffic road. The high traffic road gave her lots of visibility, while the house was far enough back from the road to allow for plenty of parking and eliminate any noise problems. Many students found the house to be charming and inviting – just the atmosphere she wanted to create, and since it had been used for office space before she leased it, the house had already been renovated for business use with a reception area and a conference room, which then became the area she used for classes.

When you look at different properties, ask yourself the following questions: Is the facility large enough for a yoga studio? Each student will need about 30 square feet of space. So, if you have a class of 20 people, you will need 600 square feet of studio space, along with some space for a reception area and storage space. Most studios are somewhere between 1,000-2,000 square feet.

To determine how you want to run your yoga studio, start by visiting lots of yoga centers and writing down what you like and don't like about the entire operation. Include your thoughts about the yoga class space, reception area, parking, products for sale, the way the staff greets students, and, if possible, the kind of computer or input system being used. Also visit related businesses, such as massage studios, chiropractic offices, karate centers and other place that are health-related or offer group classes.

If you are leasing a space, insurance is important. You will need office insurance that covers fire and liability. Most building owners require a million dollar liability policy. When it comes to insurance, the difference between just an office and a studio with group classes is important. Depending on your location, you may also need hurricane, earthquake, flood, or other types of natural disaster insurance.

It is important to do an inspection of the premises with a contractor or handyman before signing a lease. First, make sure there is nothing obviously wrong. Then make sure you have sufficient utilities, such as water and electrical outlets to fit your needs and plan your space.

Figure out how much money you will need for start-up costs such as remodeling, decorating, flooring, office equipment purchases, computer software and any other initial expenses. Then make a list of your projected monthly fixed, variable and carrying costs, as well as your potential income (low and high estimate) for one to two years. Try not to get carried away with your initial expenses. You can always do more when you are established. For your first venture, choose a site that needs very little remodeling. The biggest initial expense is usually the flooring, so pay attention to the flooring when looking at spaces.

Remember, you will be paying rent for your studio for 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. Unless you are totally satisfied with the amount of activity and income from your center, consider renting your space out for compatible activities during downtimes (i.e. massage therapy).

You may also want to ask yourself the following questions before you get started:

- What is your schedule going to be?
- How many hours do you plan to work as a teacher and how many hours as an administrator?
- How long will each group class be?
- Will you offer private lessons? How long will they be?
- Are there any aspects of work at your center that you want to pay by barter?
- Will you pay all of your teachers' liability insurance or do you want them to contribute?
- Do you plan to have any full-time employees? If yes, do you plan to offer health care or other benefits?
- Do you plan to include a health plan for yourself?
- Do you plan to start a retirement plan for yourself (i.e. SEP IRA)?

Studio Scheduling Software

Most studios use scheduling software, such as MindBody Online, so they can keep track of the number of students who attend each class, as well as keep track of payments. Scheduling software also allows students to sign up for classes online, so they can reserve their space in a class.

Scheduling software is helpful in determining average class sizes, so you can easily figure out the average size of each class, and determine if a class is working or not, and if students are returning to the class. It also provides auto email reminders to students of their scheduled appointments and classes and saves credit card information, making it easy for students to pay. The other nice feature is that, as soon as you sign someone in for class, the program tells you if they have any medical issues, how long they've been coming and if any payments are due soon.

How Students Pay

Whether you have your own studio or provide classes and workshops at a variety of locations, there are a number of ways for students to pay.

Time-Limited Session

For bookkeeping purposes, this can be the easiest way to set up your classes. Students pay in advance for courses ranging from 6-8 weeks to three months with one or two classes given per week and no make-ups. This type of scheduling is most popular in community centers and in college outreach or community programs. In a time-limited course you can also include drop-ins, but drop-in prices should be higher than the per class rate for those who sign up for the entire course. For example, if the cost for an eight week session is \$80 (\$10 per class) then drop-in may cost \$14 per class. This way, if a student can make it to at least six of the eight classes, it would cost them less to pay for the entire session.

Since there are no make-up classes in a time-limited session, you may want to offer your regular students the option to make up classes by coming to a class held on a different day or time than the one they usually attend that are held during the same session. Also, if someone misses a class due to illness, let them make up the class at any time.

Series

A class series is a way to sell a group of classes which students pay for in advance and use when they want. The series include package of 5, 10, 20 or more classes and students typically have a year to use them. As a student buys a larger number of classes in a series, the rate per class goes down. For

example, if you charge \$70 for 5 classes (\$14/class), then you might charge \$180 for 20 classes (\$9/class).

This method requires some good bookkeeping on your part. Software programs, such as mindbody online, can help you track student purchases and attendance. If you don't use a software program, one easy way to keep track is to print out an excel spreadsheet with each student's name, phone number and number of classes purchased. Each time a student attends class, place a mark in the column next to their name. Another way to do this is to have a separate 3x5 card for each student that are kept together in one box. At the top of each index card is the student's name, phone number and number of classes purchased. Each time the student attends class the card is punched, stamped or marked, so you have a running total of the number of classes they have used so far. When a student has used up all their purchased classes, you simply remind them that they are due to pay again. Of course, if you have your own studio or private space, you can have a computer on-site and use mindbody online or a computer database program designed for yoga or dance studios to keep track of your students.

Monthly and Annual Passes

This is often the most profitable way to go for a studio owner and is the way most successful health clubs operate, since whether a person attends class or not, you are still paid. At many places, students can sign up for different monthly/annual programs (i.e. 1 class per week, 2 classes per week or an unlimited pass) and their credit card can be automatically charged each month. When people don't have to think about paying for something each month, they are much more likely to continue paying. Many studios offer a deal for people who are signing up for the first month. So, for example, you may offer people one month of yoga for first time students for \$49. That price would then increase to \$89 or \$99 in subsequent months.

How to Receive Payments

Setting Up a Merchant Account

Once you have your established your business and opened a business bank account, you will be able to set up a merchant account and begin accepting credit cards. Rates and charges vary significantly between merchant account providers, so make sure to get quotes from at least 5-10 companies to get the best deal. The service you choose will have be determined to a degree by the number of transactions and the average amount of each transaction you plan to process in a month. Some companies may have a higher monthly fee, but have a lower percentage they charge for each transaction. If you plan to process many large charges each month, this may be the better alternative.

Things to Sell Besides Classes

You can't teach classes all the time. You would quickly burn out if you taught 8 hours of yoga classes everyday. During your time not teaching, think of other yoga-related ways to gain income. There are many things related to your yoga classes that you can sell in addition to them. Some examples include: yoga music CDs, yoga class audio CDs, yoga class DVDs, yoga related books. During class, try different yoga music CDs and let people know that you have it available for sale if they're interested in the music. This is not a big money-maker, but can add a little to your teaching income, while also reminding people of your class (and to attend your class) when they play the music CD. You can sell your own CDs/DVDs. Creating your own class audio CD is fairly easy. You simply need to have someone professionally record a few of your classes to ensure good sound quality. Once the recording is done, you can get a graphic designer to create the CD cover. It is important to get a bar code for any products you create, so that you may sell them in regular stores or on online stores, such as Amazon. To obtain a bar code, contact GS1 US at www.gs1us.org. Creating a yoga DVD requires that you film at a time separate from a regular class, since you often must stop and re-film certain parts. If you are going to be alone in the video, it is best to do the instructions as a voice over. This way, you can demonstrate the full postures without needing to talk into the camera as you do so. If you are doing a video, in which you teach a small group of people (say 3-5 people), then you can speak and give instruction while filming, without having to do the voice-over later.

Choosing a Business Structure

The structure of your business will affect how much you pay in taxes, the amount of paperwork you are required to do, the personal liability you will face and your ability to raise money.

There are essentially five business forms that you can choose to form: sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, S corporation, and limited liability corporation (or LLC).

Sole Proprietorship:

The simplest structure is the sole proprietorship, which usually just involves you as the one individual who owns and operates the enterprise. If you intend to work alone and work mainly as an instructor (paid as a consultant) for multiple studios or community centers, this structure may be the way to go.

The tax aspects of a sole proprietorship are appealing because the expenses and your income from the business are included on your personal income tax return (form 1040). Your profits and expenses are a schedule C and the bottom line amount is then transferred to your personal tax return. Business losses can offset income you have earned from other sources.

There are some disadvantages to consider, however. Selecting the sole proprietor business structure means you are personally responsible for your company's liabilities. As a result, you are placing your assets at risk and they could be seized to satisfy a business debt or legal claim filed against you.

Raising money for a sole proprietorship can also be difficult. Banks and other financing sources are reluctant to make business loans to sole proprietorships. In most cases, you will have to depend on your own financing sources to expand your business (i.e. savings, family loans, home equity).

Partnership:

If you want to start and operate your yoga business with other people who will also own and operate the business, you may want to structure your business as a partnership. Partnerships can be general partnerships or limited partnerships. In general partnerships, the partners manage the company and assume responsibility for the partnership's debts and other obligations. A limited partnership has both general and limited partners. The general partners own and operate the business and assume liability for the partnership, while the limited partners serve as investors only – they have no control over the company and are not subject to the same liabilities as the general partners.

Unless you plan to have silent investors, limited partnership are not usually the best choice for a new business because of all the filings and administrative complexities.

Corporation:

The corporate structure is more complex and expensive than most other business structures. A corporation is an independent legal entity, separate from its owners, and as such, it requires complying with more regulations and tax requirements.

The biggest benefit for small business owners who decide to incorporate is the liability protection they receive. A corporation's debt is not considered the owner's debt, so you are not putting your personal assets at risk. A corporation can also retain some of its profits without the owner paying taxes on that money.

Another plus is the ability of a corporation to raise money. A corporation can sell stock, either common or preferred, to raise funds. Also, the corporation continues indefinitely, regardless if the owner dies, becomes disabled or sells all owned shares of stock.

However, the corporate structure does have its downsides. One of the downsides is the higher costs. Because a corporation must follow complex rules and regulations, it requires more accounting and tax preparation services and you may need to consult with an accountant or lawyer. Another drawback is that owners of a corporation pay a double tax on the business's earnings, since corporations are subject to corporate income taxes, while any earnings distributed to shareholders in the form of dividends are taxed at individual tax rates on their personal income tax returns. To avoid double taxation, you can pay business earnings out as salaries to you and other corporate shareholders. A corporation is not required to pay tax on earnings paid as reasonable compensation.

S Corporation:

The S corporation is more attractive to small-business owners than a standard (or C) corporation. An S corporation has some tax benefits, while still providing business owners with liability protection. With an S corporation, income and losses are passed through to shareholders and included on their individual tax returns. As a result, there's just one level of federal tax to pay.

In addition, owners of S corporations who don't have inventory can use the cash method of accounting, which is simpler than the accrual method. Under this method, income is taxable when received and expenses are deductible when paid.

Limited Liability Company

A limited liability company (or LLC) is a hybrid entity, bringing together some of the best features of partnerships and corporations. LLCs were created to provide business owners with the liability protection that corporations enjoy without the double taxation. Earnings and losses pass through to the owners and are included on their personal tax returns. Sound similar to an S corporation? It is,

except an LLC offers small business owners even more attractions than an S corporation. For example, there is no limitation on the number of shareholders an LLC can have, unlike an S corporation, which has a limit of 75 shareholders. It is also easier to establish an LLC than a corporation. To set up an LLC, you must file articles of organization with the secretary of state in the state where you intend to do business. If you plan to operate in several states, you must determine how a state will treat an LLC formed in another state.

I personally have a preference to the LLC structure for a new start-up yoga business or yoga teaching practice. This is how I have established my business and found it fairly simple to set up and keeps my taxes simple, while giving me the liability protection not found in sole proprietorships or partnerships.

Business Licenses and Forms

Fictitious Business Name (DBA)

If you are starting a sole proprietorship or a partnership, or if your clients may be making out checks to different names (i.e. to you personally or to your business name), you have the option of using a “DBA” “doing business as” or a fictitious firm name. Typically you register the fictitious firm name with the county in which you are doing business. In most states, all you have to do is go to the county offices and pay a registration fee with the county clerk. The cost of filing a fictitious name ranges from \$10 to \$100. So, for example, if you incorporated your yoga business under the name of “Yoga Flow,” and then were also doing business under the name of “Yoga for You,” as well as under your own name, you would want to file for a fictitious firm name for “Yoga Flow, doing business as Yoga for You.” Depending on how you incorporated and the state of incorporation, you may also need to file “Yoga Flow, doing business as (your name).” You then bring the stamped “doing business as” forms to your bank, so you may deposit checks made to “Yoga for You” or made out to you personally, into your “Yoga Flow” business bank account.

Business Licenses and Permits

Contact your city’s business license department to find out about how you get a business license, which gives you the right to operate in that city. In certain cases, such as opening a yoga studio in your home, you may need to obtain a zone variance or conditional use permit. In many cases, variances are easy to get, as long as you can show that your business will not disrupt the character of the neighborhood where you plan to locate. If your business is located outside any city limits, then you usually need to get a county license or permit. County regulations are usually not as strict as those of adjoining cities.

Sales Tax

Most states charge you sales tax on the products (not services) you sell within the state. Make sure to find out what sales tax is charged in your state and what types of products are included in the sales tax. In most states, you are required to complete your sales tax statement and pay any sales tax you owe each month. For products you sell over the internet to people in other states, you usually are not required to pay sales tax.

Reseller’s License

If you are reselling yoga products that you purchase wholesale and sell to your clients for retail price, you will need to obtain a reseller’s license from your state’s business office.

Liability Insurance

As a yoga teacher, or any kind of wellness or fitness professional, it’s a good idea to have liability insurance. You usually want to get about \$1,000,000 worth

of coverage. The cost for this level of coverage is usually around \$150-\$300 per year. Some good organizations that offer liability insurance to wellness or fitness professionals include: IDEA Fitness (www.ideafit.com), Namasta (www.namasta.com) and the Sports and Fitness Insurance Corporation (www.sportsfitness.com). Click on the “personal trainer insurance quote” link.

Along with having liability insurance, make sure you keep good records, especially if you are teaching private students. Also, have every student you teach sign a liability waiver (see appendix). These waivers won't protect you 100% from a lawsuit, but they will help your case if you are ever sued or asked to appear in court.

Procedures Manual

A procedures manual should be written prior to opening a studio. In your procedures manual, you have clear, written instructions for all office procedures. Whether or not you have your own studio or center, you may reach the level where you have part-time or full-time employees. What often happens with part-time positions is that the people stay for only a short time and then move on. If you must train someone new, it often takes a lot of time and energy. A procedures manual can make things much simpler for your new help or for substitutes.

Listed below is some information you may want to include in a procedures manual:

- Answers to frequently asked questions about the nature of your business, such as the services you offer, the styles of any classes, the hours of operation, directions to your location, information about the staff, how much you charge for different services and classes, prices for products (including any sales tax)
- Tracking accounts receivable and accounts payable
- Procedures for making bank deposits.
- How to change the toner in the copy machine or printer.
- How to enter people into the computer for each category.
- The primary daily responsibilities of your office help.
- How to back up the computer and other computer procedures.
- Procedures for ordering products.
- The procedures for any forms that need to be completed by clients.
- Outline of your filing system
- Procedures for paying other staff
- Phone procedures
- Dispersing mail
- What to do in case of injury or emergency

Client Forms

It's important to have students complete both an initial intake form to learn more about their experience and health issues, and to have them complete a liability waiver form.

In the appendix, you will find a sample intake form and a sample liability waiver form.

Outside Help for Your Business

SCORE

Mentors can be valuable sources of information at any stage of your company's growth. One of the best resources I found for information on starting a business in your area is your local SCORE chapter. SCORE stands for the Service Corps of Retired Executives. It is a partner of the Small Business Association (SBA) and has nearly 400 chapters throughout the United States. The volunteer mentors from SCORE can help you through the business licensing process in your area, as well as recommend reputable attorneys, accountants or other professional services you may need. The SCORE mentors can often give you a fresh perspective on problems or challenges you are having with your business, because, although they have business experience, they are not directly involved with your business and may be more objective.

To get matched with a mentor, first contact your local SCORE chapter. To find a chapter near you, call 1-800-634-0245 or visit their website at: www.score.org. If there is not a chapter near you, SCORE also offers e-mail counseling provided by nearly 800 volunteers with a 48-hour or less turnaround time for quick questions.

Office of Women's Business Ownership

Another mentor resource is offered by the Office of Women's Business Ownership. The Women's Network for Entrepreneurial Training Mentoring Program matches protégés with experienced women mentors. For more information, contact the Office of Women's Business Ownership at: (202) 205-6673 or visit: www.sba.gov/womeninbusiness.wnet.html.

Consultants and Contract Workers

Accountants

Big companies aren't the only ones who need accountants. A good accountant can help you set up a bookkeeping system – whether you want to maintain the bookkeeping or you want your accountant to do it. I had an accountant help me set up Quick Books for my bookkeeping, which saved me an enormous amount of time and only costs me less than \$100. Accountants are also useful for tax advice, payroll advice, auditing help, as well as basic accounting and record keeping. When looking for an accountant, ask the following questions:

- Are you a CPA?
- Are you licensed to practice in your state?
- Where did you go to school and what degrees did you earn?
- How big or small are your clients? What size were they when you began working with them?
- How accessible are you? What hours are you available?
- What are your fees?

Attorneys

When do you need a lawyer? Although the answer depends on your business and particular circumstances, it's generally worthwhile to consult a lawyer before making any decisions that could have legal ramifications. These include setting up a partnership or corporation, preparing buy-sell agreements or preparing liability forms or waivers. When selecting a lawyer, look for the following qualities:

- Experience
- Interest in the goals you have for your business
- Availability
- Ability to communicate without using too much legal terminology
- Reasonable fees
- References

Finding Your Niche

A few of the primary keys to building a great business include having a clear purpose and a targeted niche to serve. Before you actually start your yoga teaching business, your next step is figuring out exactly who your market is. No business, especially a small one, can be all things to all people. The more narrowly you can define your target market, the better. The process of creating a niche is a key to success for even some of the largest companies. Target and Tiffany's are both retailers, but they have very different niches. Target caters to budget-minded shoppers, while Tiffany's appeals to people interested in upscale jewelry.

Rather than creating a niche, many yoga teachers and studio owners make the mistake of falling into the "everything to everyone" trap, claiming they can do many things and be good at all of them. Depending on the market saturation level, that may not be the best idea. There is a saying that "smaller is bigger in business" and smaller is not all over the map, it's highly focused.

Process for Finding a Profitable Niche

So, how do you determine your niche. Try this seven step process:

- 1) Make a wish list. With whom do you want to do business? Who do you want in your yoga classes? Identify the geographical range and the types of clients you want to target. If you don't know who you want to serve, you can't efficiently make contact with them. You must recognize that you can't do business with everyone. If you try to do so, you will only exhaust yourself and confuse your potential clients. Examples of niches include teaching yoga to kids ages 5-12, teaching yoga to busy professional adults at their workplaces, teaching heated yoga, etc. Focus on who you want to teach and be specific.
- 2) Identify exactly what you plan to sell to your clients. Services you may want to sell could include yoga classes, yoga retreats, private yoga lessons, etc. Pick one or two things you want to sell to be your focus.
- 3) Describe your client's world view. Identify your clients' needs and their main concerns. The best way to do this is to talk with prospective clients and find out what they want.
- 4) Synthesize. Bring together the information you have developed regarding who your clients are, what they want and what you plan to sell. Create a couple of niches from this information.
- 5) Evaluate. From the niches you have created, check if any of your niches have the following five qualities: 1) It matches with your lifestyle, long-term goals and what you want to do; 2) It provides something that people want; 3) It can be carefully planned; 4) It's somewhat unique or different from

- what has already been done; 5) It can evolve and grow over time. You may find that a niche you had in mind won't fit with your lifestyle because it would require too much travel or maybe the niche is something that is already oversaturated and has already been done way too much.
- 6) Test. Once you find your niche test-market it. Give people a chance to try out your service. This can be done by offering a free workshop or class or by offering a sample copy of your newsletter and asking for feedback. The test shouldn't cost you much money.
 - 7) Go for it. It's time to implement your idea. This can be the most difficult stage. But fear not – if you did your homework, entering the market will be a calculated risk, not just a gamble.

Once you have found your niche and become established in the market, you must continue to re-niche to keep growing. This doesn't mean to drastically change your focus, but simply to further adapt to the environment around you. One way to do this is to ask yourself the following questions as you develop your niche and ask them every six months or so after that to make sure your niche is still on target.

- Who are your target clients?
- Who are not your target clients?
- Do you refuse certain types of business if it falls outside your niche?
- What do clients think you stand for?
- Is your niche in a constant state of evolution?
- Does your niche offer prospective clients what they want?
- Do you have a plan and delivery system that effectively conveys the need for your niche to the right market?
- How can your niche be expanded into a variety of products or services that act as profit centers?
- Do you have a sense of passion and focused energy with respect to your niche?
- Does your niche feel comfortable and natural?
- How will pursuing your niche contribute to achieving the goals you have set for business? For yourself?

According to Lynda Falkenstein, author of *Nichecraft: Using Your Specialness to Focus Your Business, Corner Your Market and Make Customers Seek You Out*, "creating a niche is the difference between being in business and not being in business. It's the difference between surviving and thriving, between simply liking what you do and the joy of success."

Write down a list of a few niches that interest you.

Promoting Yourself and Your Business

Everyone is in marketing and sales no matter what type of work you do. If you believe that sales and marketing are not respectable or somehow manipulative, you are setting yourself up for difficulties with your business. How can you successfully get the word out about your services if you believe that it's wrong to market yourself?

Sell Yourself

To sell yourself and your services you must develop a level of confidence and certainty in the value of those services. When you can confidently sell yourself to yourself, you can confidently sell yourself to others. To create that level of certainty, complete the following:

- 1) Write down your services
- 2) List the features that make them unique
- 3) Describe how they are of use to the public
- 4) List the advantages of your work or services compared to similar services offered by others – what is different about what you offer
- 5) Describe the specific benefits you offer to others and the value your services bring to the world in general

Keep answering these questions over and over until you feel a sense of increased worth, certainty and appreciation for the service you provide. Selling to yourself can be harder than selling to anyone else. When you believe in yourself and are certain of the value of your skills, everyone else will be easy to sell. Unless you value yourself, don't expect anybody else to value your services. Until you've sold yourself, you can't expect anyone else to buy.

Once you've sold yourself, the next step is to begin selling to others. Before you speak with anyone, write down a few of the common objections you may come across. For example, people might say your service is too expensive, they don't need it, takes too much time, etc. For each of these objections, write down a few simple replies. If someone believes your yoga classes are too expensive, show them that one class costs about the same as something they often spend money on, such as lunch from a deli. Prepare responses that allow you to play with the situation, so you won't fall into self doubt or judgment and use humor if you can.

To sell your services, it's best to stand out. Do what others don't consider doing. Try something different with your classes or other services to grab people's curiosity. You don't have to do something outlandish, just something a little different, so people decide to give it a try. Think of "yoga booty ballet." It's really just a mix of dance and yoga, but giving it the name "yoga booty ballet" grabbed people's interest and made it incredibly popular. Think of the names of your classes and services.

Discover Your Client's Needs

The aim of marketing is to truly understand and respect your clients so well that your service fits their needs perfectly and sells itself. Keep asking your students or clients what they want and then package your services to fit their needs and present your services to people in terms of their values.

The Six Stages of Selling

- 1) Initial meeting. Make sure that when you meet a prospective new client that you smile and look them in the eye. Stand up tall, speak clearly without an “ums” or little giggles and show your confidence. People form opinions of you in the first few seconds, so initial impressions are important.
- 2) Identify their needs. Ask the person questions about their lives and find out what seems to be missing or problematic in their lives.
- 3) Confirm their needs. Repeat back to them what they said they need. Make sure you understand what they need.
- 4) Offer value. Describe how your services can be a solution to their issue. Make an offer they can't refuse. If someone says they can't afford it, that only means that you haven't sufficiently communicated the value of your service in their terms.
- 5) Make the sale. Don't leave it undecided. Confirm their appointment or get their payment for their first session of classes.
- 6) Provide service. Over-deliver the services you promised. Give them even more than you sold to them.

Getting Publicity

Unlike traditional advertising, you do not usually pay for publicity. A reporter writes about or films you or your business for a story as a result of information that he or she has researched. Publicity is more effective than advertising. First, it is far more cost effective. Even if it's not free, it's usually fairly cheap or involves some type of trade. Second, publicity has greater longevity than advertising. An article about your business will be remembered longer than an ad. Third, publicity also tends to reach a wider audience than advertising. Sometimes a story might even be picked up by the national media, spreading word about your business across the country. Finally, publicity tends to have greater credibility with the public than advertising. People often feel that the story comes from an objective third party.

To get publicity, you can send press releases when you have something important to share. Make sure that you have a good reason for sending the press release, such as a grand opening, new product or special event. Next, make sure the press release is targeted to the publication you're sending it to. To ensure readability, make sure your press release is formatted in the way that the publication specifies. Limit your press releases to one page. It should be just long enough to answer the who, what, when, where, why and how. Finally, develop story angles. Think about current events and how the benefits of yoga

would tie into these events. Finally, make sure to follow up with the reporter or editor to whom you sent your press release or story idea. Of course, don't over do it, but do make sure to follow up and show your interest in working with them. You can also write your own yoga-related articles for magazines or online journals. At the end of the article, include your contact information.

Social Media Marketing

Now there are many opportunities to get your name or your business noticed through social media avenues. Whether it's on facebook, twitter, linked in, or through your own blog or vlog, there are many opportunities to speak directly to your audience. You can also answer questions on Yahoo answers or write articles for a number of different e-zines. One of the key components in successful social media marketing is building "social authority." Social authority is developed when you or your business establish yourself as an "expert" in the field (in this case in your niche within yoga). Providing your audience with valuable information that can help them in their yoga practice will encourage them to seek you out for classes or yoga products.

Strategic Partnerships

One of the best places to look for new customers is where people have already spent money on a similar product or service. This is true for two reasons: 1) These people have demonstrated they may have an interest in what you have to offer; 2) These people have also demonstrated that they have money and are willing to spend it on services or products similar to yours. So, make a point to introduce yourself to every group in your area that complements your services (i.e. massage therapists, nutritionists, chiropractors, physical therapists, weight loss programs, etc).

Strategic partnerships provide a cost effective way to promote your business. These businesses have spent a lot of time and effort to get their clients or patients. If they have your business cards in their office and are willing to recommend that their clients give your services, you have a new source of prospective students without spending money on advertising. Strategic partnerships also give your business an instant credibility boost. When your yoga business is in its early growth stage, an endorsement from an established physical therapist or chiropractor is more valuable than any amount of advertising you can buy.

Working Smarter Not Harder

Spend Your Time on High Return Activities

When you perform a service for less than you feel you deserve you lower your enthusiasm and slow your business. Even though you may be working hard, it's neither efficient nor effective. Any aspect of your work that pays less than you truly feel you deserve can become the weak link of your business. In addition to undermining your motivation, it reduces your profit margins. For example, if one yoga studio offers you \$40 per class to teach, regardless of the number of students, and another studio is willing to pay you \$8 per person and so far has 8 people interested, you would be better off with the private group. With the private group, you not only make more right away, but you have the potential for more growth and profit from the class, which will also increase your motivation. However, you must also look at your long term goals. If your goal is to open a yoga studio in a similar format to the one offering the flat rate, teaching there can provide you with a great education. Teaching classes at a flat rate for a studio may be a good idea if the studio is also willing to let you teach special workshops at a per person rate, or in other ways help you grow your teaching practice.

The 80/20 Rule, also known as the Pareto Principle, states that 20 percent of what you do gives you 80 percent of your results, while 80 percent of what you do gives you only 20 percent of your results. Give your greatest attention to your most inspiring students and colleagues or partners, because, even though they are fewer in number, they will return many times more profit.

Weed Out Unnecessary Activities

We all spend time each day on unnecessary activities. The trick is to reduce the number of these activities to make more room for productive activities that will bring more success to your yoga teaching practice.

Ask yourself what you can delegate. Let someone else do the tasks in your yoga business that take too much of your time for too little profit. For example, when I started my first website, I would spend time every day entering data from the website, such as adding information for new people who had requested our newsletter and charting out certain web statistics. It took time each night, but since I didn't like doing it, I tended to let it go for a week or two and then I would need to spend a few hours inputting all the new data. It wasn't a very profitable way to spend my time, considering the newsletter was free, but I did want to maintain this information. My solution – a friend of mine wanted to take yoga with me and offered to do the data entry for free in exchange for attending my classes for free. Also, she actually enjoys data entry (hard for me to believe, since I really don't) and ends up sorting out the data for me in new ways and having ideas that would have never crossed my mind.

Don't Be Run By Routine

You'd be surprised at how much of what you do in a day is just habit, or simply fills time, because you haven't figured out how to fill your day more productively. Don't be run by routine. When you discover things that aren't necessary for bringing you closer to your professional or personal goals, let them go. For example, I used to have a very silly habit. I would be working at my computer and when I got to a good stopping point, I would want to take a short break – no problem right. The problem was that for my break, I would start surfing the internet, usually just browsing through articles on Yahoo or some other random website – you know sites unrelated to yoga or to the things I want to bring into my life – and I would get so caught up in something silly – like the difference between mint green and sea foam green paint when you want to paint your bedroom – that I would not only end up wasting time, but also feel as though I didn't really get a mental break. So, the next time this situation came up, I did what any self-respecting yoga teacher would do, I took a few slow breaths to give myself a chance to think about what I really wanted from my break time. Right away I knew that what my body was telling me to do during this time was to take a simple stretching or meditation break. This helped clear my mind and recharge my energy. I knew all this all along, I just needed to stop for a few moments and breathe to better understand what to do next. When you find yourself about to jump into an unnecessary habit, stop and take a few slow deep breaths, listen to your body and do the activities that you know deep down are really right for you.

Standardize What You Can

We briefly discussed this earlier in terms of creating procedures manuals. Think of everything within your business that you can systematize, so that either someone else can do it or at least you no longer need to think through each step when you go to do it again. Activities that you can systematize include bookkeeping and accounting procedures, student check in and payment procedures, resolving payment disputes and procedures for following up with new students.

Create a Wonderful Experience

People are buying more than yoga classes from you, they are buying an experience. Think of Starbucks Coffee shops. They understand that they are not just selling coffee, they are selling an experience to their customers. Think about how you can create a lasting and uplifting experience for your students. One simple way to do this is to introduce your students to each other and help them get to know each other, so your class becomes a small community of friends. This way, when people come to class, they are not only coming for yoga, but also coming to see their friends.

Assignment

Complete the following table listing some of your routine activities each week (i.e. teaching class, planning lessons, filing, etc) and the return you get on these investments of time (how much of your revenue comes from each of these activities). Then write out some other activities that you may or may not do now that would generate more income for you. Delegate those activities that do not either directly or indirectly produce more income.

Current weekly activities	Income directly related to current activities	High income producing activities (current/future)

Setting Goals for Your Yoga Teaching Practice

Well formed goals are SMART goals. In other words, they are: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time relevant (i.e. limited in time and written in the present tense).

Specific

Goals must be specific to work. You can't write a goal of "I want to be a successful yoga teacher" and expect it to work. What does "success as a yoga teacher" mean to you? A specific goal would be: "By January 30th, I am teaching 10 yoga classes a week – 5 at a local community center and 5 classes for private groups – at an average rate of \$60 per class."

Measurable

Making a goal specific usually also makes it measurable. In the example above, you can easily measure how close you are to teaching the number of yoga classes you want and how close you are to receiving your goal rate of \$50 per class. To make goals measurable, you need to also write them in the positive, focusing on what you want. For example, you wouldn't write, "Two months from now, I don't want to still be teaching only 2 classes per week." It not only makes it hard to measure, since you don't know what you're working towards, it also forces you to focus on what you don't want, not what you want. And, what you focus on is what tends to expand and grow. So, if you are focusing on a lack of classes, that's what you'll most likely get – a greater lack of classes.

Actionable

While some goals are results-oriented (the outcome you want), you should also include some actionable goals that correlate with the outcome you want. For example, if your result-oriented goal is "By January 30th, I am teaching 10 yoga classes a week – 5 at a local community center and 5 classes for private groups – at an average rate of \$60 per class." Then your actionable goal might be something like, "By Friday I will have contacted all of the local community centers and yoga studios and completed any application materials to teach yoga at each place."

Relevant

All your goals should be relevant to your overall vision. If your overall vision is to have a profitable and rewarding mobile yoga teaching business, the goal listed above would be relevant towards that goal. If your vision is to offer extraordinary yoga vacations, teaching at the local community centers may not be as relevant. Look at your overall vision for your yoga teaching business and try to make each goal (large and small) as relevant as possible to that overall vision.

Time-Sensitive

What about the time limitations of your goals? It's useful to have different sets of goals that work on different levels and employ multiple deadlines. You might

have 30 day goals, weekly goals and daily goals. Also, goals should be written in the positive, present tense of time. Talk about your goals as if they are accomplished now. In our example, we say, “*I am teaching,*” not “*I will be teaching.*”

Assignment

Write at least three action goals for your yoga teaching practice this month this week and one results-oriented goal for the next six months.

Action Goals for this month:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Results Goals for the next six months:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Creating the Mindset for Business Success

Before you start a new yoga career or any business, it's important to develop the mindset for success. Your mental world will reflect your business success.

Some people think that success happens through luck, education or hard work. The truth is that these things can help, but they are only a small part of success. You probably know people who have worked hard, are well educated or have had luck in other areas of their lives, but who just don't have very successful careers.

However, there are some common threads among every successful entrepreneur, company or entertainer. They all have certain key ingredients that are critical for achieving at the highest level. If you look through some of the most enduring books on success you find that, although the books may state these characteristics in different ways, they all reach the same conclusions about the specific ways that successful people think and act.

The characteristics include the following:

- Persistence
- Attitude (towards situations, self and money)
- Appreciation
- Vision
- Focus
- Action

Let's look at each one and see how you can develop the mind-set to achieve whatever you want.

Persistence

You've probably heard of the popular and profitable Chicken Soup for the Soul series of books. When the first collection of stories was published, it was a near instant success, but there is a story of persistence behind this success. The creators of the series, Mark Victor Hansen and Jack Canfield, approached more than fifty publishers with their book idea before one agreed to give it a try. Fifty people told them "I don't want your book" before they found someone to give it a try. It was a costly mistake for the publishers who passed, since the series has now sold more than 75 million books. In this same idea, JK Rowlings, the author of Harry Potter, was also turned down by numerous publishers (all of whom are probably now kicking themselves) before finding someone who believed in the book. JK Rowlings was a single mother at the time, who could have just said to herself that it was time to let go of the dream and find a secure and regular job, but her persistence paid off and today she is one of the richest women in the world who has brought the joy of reading to millions of children and adults worldwide.

So, is there ever a time to give up. Yes, of course there is. If you invest in a company in the stock market that continues to fall, has poor management and shows no signs of ever making a profit, you might be better off cutting your losses. But if you are talking about your dream and your purpose in life, rather than giving up, look for new ways and new opportunities to realize your dream. Always ask yourself “how can I make this happen” rather than saying “I guess it’s not going to happen.”

Some people think that their success needs to happen quickly because of impatience or maybe because they feel they are getting too old. If you think you may be too old, think of Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken. At the age of 65, he wanted to start KFC. He began by driving from town to town offering to sell his “secret recipe” to restaurants. He had approach 1,009 people who all said “no thanks” to his recipe. Finally, the 1,010 said yes and the rest is fast food history. Author Laura Ingalls Wilder was in her 60s by the time her first “Little House on the Praire” book was published.

Attitude

Persistence and attitude go hand in hand. Thomas Edison, who failed 9,000 times before he perfected the light bulb is reputed to have said, “I’m glad to have found 8,999 ways to not invent the light bulb.” He didn’t see his previous attempts as failures, but simply as actions that brought his one step closer to his ultimate success.

Your attitude is the one thing you always have control over. The way you respond to any situation is your choice. You can give your circumstances total control over you and fall into negative thinking or depression, but how does this help you reach your end goal? It doesn’t. It’s better to focus on what you want, know that you can have whatever you want and ask yourself repeatedly what steps you can take that day to bring you closer to what you want. Often things don’t go exactly as we planned them, but in the long run, with the right attitude, some of the apparent difficulties can turn into the greatest opportunities when you look back on it. So, find the opportunity in every rejection or problem – maybe the problem is your wake up call to change direction and find a new approach to a situation. We are all blessed with the ability to wake up each day and decide our attitude – a positive attitude attracts people and opportunities to us like bees to honey, while a negative attitude turns people away from us. Think about it – when was the last time you really wanted to spend the day with a complaining grump? Probably not ever, so don’t become one.

It’s also important to look at your attitude towards money. Some yoga teachers feel that as yoga teachers we should be focusing on the spiritual experience of teaching and on helping others without concern or desire for money. However, the truth is that you can not really help other people if you are struggling to pay

your own bills and are stressed about covering your studio rent. You can not be of help to others until you can fully take care of yourself, including financially taking care of yourself and those who depend on you. Without an abundance of money, you can not properly give to others.

If you have any negative views about making money, write down those negative beliefs and then write an affirmation to counter that belief. For example, if you believe that you must struggle to make money, rewrite this as “Money comes easily to me.” If you believe that you can only make money at the expense of others, rewrite this as “As my life becomes more abundant, the lives of those around me also improve.” Write and say these affirmations every day, but don’t just say them by rote. Say them with true conviction and emotion until you actually change your beliefs about money and you feel comfortable about your intention to make money.

Finally, look at your attitude about yourself. Even when people know what they want and act upon it, sometimes they don’t get it because they don’t feel they deserve it. Many people let their dreams fall by the wayside or unintentionally do something to sabotage their efforts because of limiting thoughts, such as “I’m not smart enough,” or “I’ll probably fail anyway.” If you ever have these limiting thoughts, try this self-confidence formula. First, speak to yourself as you would speak to your best friend – imagine you are speaking to your best friend when you talk to yourself – would you still be so critical? Next, visualize yourself doing something in total confidence. You could visualize yourself teaching a class or giving a talk in front of hundreds of people. Notice how you stand – chest open, chin up. Visualize yourself speaking clearly and confidently, looking people straight in the eye. Feel yourself being relaxed and in control and having fun. As you visualize this scene, not only see the pictures of the scene, but hear the sounds, notice the feelings.

It’s hard to live your dreams and fully put your heart into your work if you’re worried about what others are thinking of you. The truth is – there’s nothing you can do about what other think. You only can control your own thinking and your reactions to actual comments of others. Criticism and praise tend to maintain an equal balance throughout life. However, you have the choice as to the form each takes. If you hide, unwilling to face external criticism, you’ll criticize yourself. I used to do this quite often. I would freeze up and not do the things I knew I should to move my work forward for fear of criticism. But, by not taking any action and going nowhere towards my goals, I would beat myself up – and believe me, I was much worse on myself than any other person would ever have been. When I finally decided to take some chances, I received praise and some criticism from others. But, I discovered that the criticism from others was much easier to deal with than the criticism I directed at myself. The important thing I learned about dealing with criticism is to take from it what you can – find if there is something helpful in the criticism that you can put to use – then let the rest of it go. No matter what you do, some people are going to criticize you. That’s really

their issue, not yours. Don't get caught up in defending yourself too much or waste too much time focusing on it – that only makes it your issue, and takes away your energy from the more important work of growing your business and reaching more people in a positive way with your services.

Remember, if you're not willing to step out of your box and receive some criticism, you won't ever receive the honor or praise and you won't ever be able to live to your full potential. If you fear failure, success will elude you. Finally remember to laugh at yourself once in a while. Sometimes you do your best and things still fail. You can decide to become upset and discouraged – further driving away any business, or you can decide to find something funny in the situation, learn from the situation and move on to create even greater things.

Appreciation

Can your feelings of appreciation affect your wealth? Of course. When you truly appreciate and value where you are and the services you have to offer, so will your students or clients. Whatever you think about and focus on is what you attract into your life. If you believe in yourself and your services, you'll attract more people to you who believe in your services. Likewise, keep your mind on your students, their concerns in life and how you can better serve them. The more you focus on your students, the better you can serve them and the more likely they will keep coming to your classes.

Grateful appreciation helps draw to you more of what you are grateful for. One of the qualities of truly wealthy people is that they appreciate their wealth. Until you learn to value and appreciate wealth, it won't be yours. Think about it – would you rather give money to someone who didn't know how to manage their money and was complaining about their lack of it, or to someone who valued money and had a greater vision of how to use that money in a way that would benefit both of you. Speaking of vision....

Vision

Having a vision that is greater than yourself will propel you towards greater success. The bigger and more inspiring your cause, the more people and money are drawn in to help you achieve it. The point of having a vision is to give you such a big "why" for your life that you are able to overcome any obstacles and allow the "how" to take care of itself. People who have a great vision have the courage and discipline to go beyond their fears and act with inspiration.

To the degree that you don't define your vision, something else will partly determine your destiny. Anything you don't decide for yourself is usually decided for you.

First think about and visualize your vision, then write down your goals and your vision. Why is it important to actually write it down? Because the act of writing is the first step in taking things from the world of imagination into the physical world – it's the first step in making your vision a reality.

To develop your own vision and bring it to fruition, follow these steps:

- 1) Create a picture in your mind of exactly what you want. For example, if your vision is to own a yoga studio, then clearly see that studio, what it looks like, where each place is located, how much revenue it generates. See the crowds of students coming and going and see them paying for their classes, etc.
- 2) Determine exactly what you will give in return. In our example, think about what you will give to your students, staff and the community in order to have this successful studio.
- 3) Establish a definite date to manifest the vision as a whole or to achieve the goals that are part of the vision.
- 4) Create a plan for carrying out your vision, and decide what action you can take today that will bring you closer to your vision.
- 5) Write out a clear and concise statement of your vision and why you want to achieve this particular vision – how will it benefit you and others? Write this statement in the present, positive tense.
- 6) Read your written statement out loud every day. As you read it, believe that you already have achieved your vision.

Along with creating a vision, it's important to always be thinking about your next idea or the next service you might want to offer. Most products and services have a life cycle that can't go on forever. Some life cycles are longer than others. Some things are fads, some are trends and some are classics. There have been a number of fads in the fitness industry – classes that are extremely popular, but only have a short life span before people want to try the next thing. I like to think of yoga as a classic – I mean it has been around for 5,000 years. But, even within yoga, it's important to constantly innovate and try some new things with your students, so they don't become bored and move on to the next thing.

Focus

Many people get discouraged when they look at what has happened so far in their lives, feeling that nothing has really worked so far, so why should it work now. Every successful person knows that the past does not dictate the future. If you look at your current results to define who you are and how successful you can be, you will limit your power and limit your future success.

Your current situation is the direct results of your past thoughts, decisions and actions. If you look at your current situation and make decisions about who you are and what you can have based on those results, then you are repeating the

same thoughts, decision and actions that go you where you are today. This will only get you more of the same. When you change your thoughts, you will change your results. Success only begins when you turn away from the things you don't want and focus on what you do want.

What you focus on and give your energy to is what tends to expand in your life. If you focus on the idea that you don't ever seem to have enough students, you'll usually wind up not having enough students. Be thankful for the students you have and focus on the abundance of students all around you. Focus on what you want and act as though it has already happened for you. Yes, this is a little like make believe at the beginning, but as you begin to see yourself as someone who already has this thing you want, it will be easier to actually bring it into your life.

Assignment

Write three limiting or negative beliefs you have about yourself or about your ability to have a successful yoga teaching career:

1)

2)

3)

Write the positive affirmations to counter those beliefs:

1)

2)

3)

Assignment

Develop your own vision, using the six step process listed under the section on vision.

Remember to email anything to me for which you would like some feedback.

Yoga Teacher Ethics

As a yoga teacher, it's important to abide by certain ethical standards when dealing with your students or colleagues. Below is a list of some of these standards. As always, use your best judgment.

Yoga Teacher Ethics Include:

- Conduct business in a manner that commands the respect of the public and remains true to the goals of providing safe and beneficial yoga classes.
- Respect the confidentiality of students and colleagues. Never disclose to anyone any personal information about a student or colleague unless authorized, in writing, by the student or colleague.
- Educate your students about the benefits of yoga and living a healthy lifestyle.
- Never discredit another yoga teacher or yoga studio or facility, unless the information can protect students from dangerous practices.
- Maintain your own yoga practice and healthy lifestyle. It's important to practice what you preach, which includes living a healthy lifestyle. Practice yoga, limit alcohol, limit junk food, get proper rest, etc.
- Maintain an open door policy to any of your classes. Make sure people are welcome to drop-in to any class and feel welcome.
- Ensure that all promotional material is truthful, accurate and clear. Do not use advertising or marketing procedures that mislead students or misrepresent pricing, staff abilities, class styles, or that produce sales based on fear or guilt.
- Maintain honesty in all business transactions through fair pricing for all and deliver what is promised through contract or otherwise.
- Provide a high value of service to enhance client confidence and loyalty.
- Remain current on theoretical and practical information in the field of yoga teaching through continuing education activities or through the reading/viewing of quality information.
- Never discriminate on the basis of gender, age, race, mental or physical disabilities or any other characteristics and provide fair and courteous treatment to all individuals.
- Comply with local and federal laws including, but not limited to, applicable business, employment, medical and copyright laws.

Resources

American Management Association: www.amanet.org

Center for Entrepreneurial Management: www.ceoclubs.org

National Association for the Self Employed: www.nase.org

NAMASTA (North American Studio Alliance): www.namasta.com

US Small Business Administration: www.sba.gov

Sports Fitness Insurance Corporation (liability insurance): www.sportsfitness.com

GS1 US (bar codes): www.gs1us.org

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