LEVERAGE Up MEDIA®

ONE YEAR OF LEVERAGING UP



Dr. Carla Russo



Joseph E. Savard



Becca Menig
Our Angel



Melinda Cooper



Carmen Milagro



Sandra Fry



J. Rowan Hale

REAL PEOPLE. REAL EXPERTISE. REAL IMPACT.

THE VOICES THAT BUILDS US | FROM ONE MAGAZINE TO A MEDIA FAMILY | WHAT COMES NEXT THE BEST IS YET TO COME

Robin Roberson
Founder & CEO
LeverageUp Media

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE • 2026
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A year of leveraging up — the best is still ahead!

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I want to use my platform to reach back and help someone start their healing process. Show them they too can make it out. And that they are and can be all that God called them to be. I remind them, I am just like you. A survivor!

(Contact Phone Placeholder)

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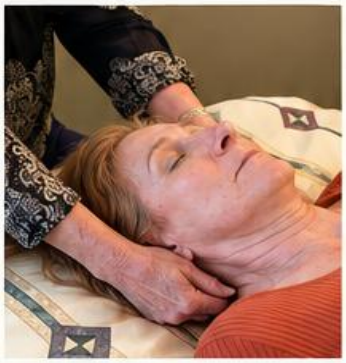



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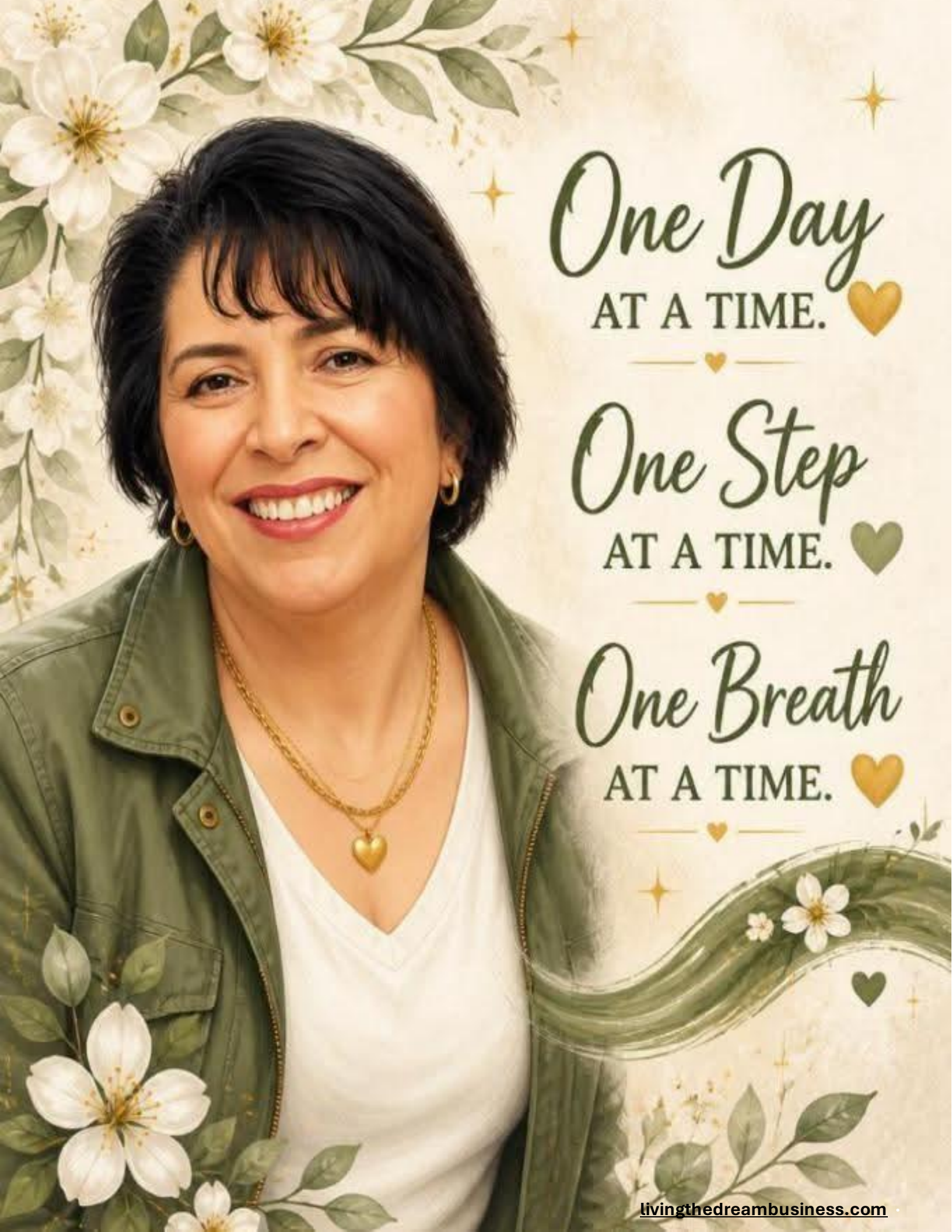
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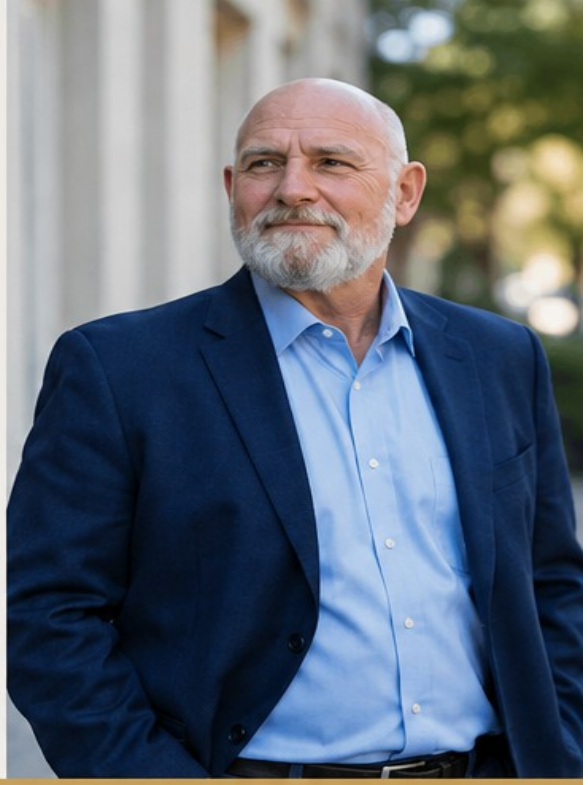

Sandra Fry

INFINITE BANKING SPECIALIST
AUTHOR | EDUCATOR

Sandra is passionate about helping clients build something that outlives them. Her work is rooted in stewardship, intentionality, and legacy; principles she lives out daily in both her professional and personal life.

Fry & Company

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Mike Fry

SOLUTIONS-DRIVEN LEADER
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Mike has built a reputation for helping people make confident decisions; he brings a strong sense of purpose to the table.

OUR FAMILY. OUR BUSINESS. OUR PROMISE.

Our family and businesses operate using the same approach we teach our clients.
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AND A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.



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GROW
CONNECT
CREATE
MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

Forward Together.

A MAGAZINE
FOR WHAT'S NEXT.

LEVERAGEUP®

Real People. Real Insights. Real Impact.

MASTHEAD

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2026

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ABOUT LEVERAGEUP

A magazine for people building businesses, sharing expertise and making a difference. We bring together practical ideas, fresh perspectives and stories that encourage growth, connection and meaningful action.

Let's build something bold—together.

www.leverageupmedia.com

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A year of leveraging up — the best is still ahead!

From the Publisher

A Year of Leveraging Up

By Robin Roberson



A year ago, LeverageUp was an idea.

I knew what I wanted it to be. I wanted to create something that brought good people together—people with ideas, experience, knowledge and stories worth sharing. I wanted a publication that wasn't simply something you read and put down, but something that might make you think differently, introduce you to someone you should know, or give you an idea you could use in your own life or business.

What I couldn't have known was where that idea would take us.

Over this first year, LeverageUp has grown because people said yes.

Writers trusted us with their words. Experts shared their knowledge. Entrepreneurs and business owners opened up about their successes, their challenges and the lessons they learned along the way. Sponsors believed in what we were building. Readers shared our stories and encouraged us to keep going.

And somewhere along the way, this stopped being *my* idea and became **ours**.

That may be what I am most proud of.

If you look through the pages that follow, you will see some of the people who helped make this first year possible. Some have been with us almost from the beginning. Some joined us

along the way. Some write for nearly every issue, while others contributed one article or one story that was exactly what we needed at exactly the right time.

Every one of them mattered.

This year also brought something I didn't completely anticipate. LeverageUp grew beyond one magazine. New ideas became new publications, and those publications created opportunities for even more voices to be heard. What began as LeverageUp Magazine has become LeverageUp Media—and I have a feeling we're still only seeing the beginning of what it can become.

Has everything gone exactly as planned? Absolutely not.

Some of our best ideas weren't even *in* the plan.

That's one of the things this year has reminded me: building something worthwhile isn't about knowing every step before you take the first one. Sometimes you simply have to believe in the idea enough to begin, surround yourself with good people, remain willing to learn, and keep moving when the path changes.

So this anniversary isn't really about celebrating a magazine.

It's about celebrating **people, ideas, partnerships and impact.**

It's about every person who contributed an article, shared a story, introduced us to someone, sponsored a page, offered advice, challenged an idea, encouraged us on a difficult day, or simply opened an issue and read what someone else had to say.

Look what we've built together.

To everyone who has been part of this first year: thank you. You helped turn an idea into something real.

And to those who are just discovering us, there's plenty of room at the table.

Because after everything , we've accomplished in year one, I believe this more than ever:

This year was only the beginning.

Best to all,

Robin Roberson

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Look What We've Built Together



Debbie Saviano
Why You?



Brenda Briscoe
Bowen Therapy



Clint Fuqua
Engineer



Angelia Scott-Dunbar
LeverageUp Sponsor

One year ago LeverageUp began with an idea. What made it real were the people who believed in it, contributed to it, challenged it, supported it and helped it grow. To every voice, to every idea and to every person who became part of this first year —

Thank You.

This is ours.





Roark
AI Assistant

This Year Was Only the Beginning!

IDEAS ✦ PEOPLE ✦ PARTNERSHIPS ✦ IMPACT

Robin Roberson
Founder & CEO
LeverageUp Media

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE ✦ 2026
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A year of leveraging up — the best is still ahead!

ONE VISION. MORE WAYS TO MAKE AN IMPACT.

LeverageUp Media Introduces Specialized Content Magazines

Over the past year, LeverageUp Media has grown around one simple belief: **the right voices deserve the right platform.**

But as our community expanded, so did the range of expertise, ideas and conversations our contributors brought with them. Health and wellness. Artificial intelligence. Money, wealth and legacy. Each deserved more than an occasional article. They deserved a place of their own.

That idea became our **Specialized Content Magazines** — focused publications created to go deeper into the subjects that matter to the people we serve.

These are not separate from LeverageUp. **They are an extension of what LeverageUp was created to do.**

To connect credible voices with curious readers.

To give experienced professionals a place to share what they know.

To take important subjects beyond the headline and create conversations that educate, encourage and inspire action.

And most importantly, to put **real people and real expertise** at the center of the story.

FROM ONE MAGAZINE, A MEDIA FAMILY BEGAN TO GROW.

In 2026, that vision came to life with three Specialized Content Magazines:

IN MINT HEALTH
Excellence in Health for Optimum Living

AI EDGE — THE DIFFERENCE
Exploring the technology already changing how we live, work and build.

WEALTH & WORTH
Building wealth is about more than money.
It is about choices, opportunity, purpose and legacy.

Different subjects. Different experts. One LeverageUp philosophy:
Real People. Real Insights. Real Impact.

WHEN EXPERTISE DESERVES MORE THAN A PAGE

A traditional magazine can introduce an idea.

A specialized magazine can **explore it.**

That distinction is at the heart of LeverageUp Media's Specialized Content Magazines.

Each publication creates room for knowledgeable professionals to move beyond quick tips and sound bites and share the experience, perspective and practical information they have spent years developing.



IN MINT HEALTH

Health information can be overwhelming. In Mint Health brings together professionals and real-life perspectives to help readers better understand the many dimensions of living well — from prevention and emerging approaches to wellness, recovery and personal stories.

Its purpose is not to promise miracle answers. It is to encourage **better questions, better conversations and more informed choices.**

AI EDGE — THE DIFFERENCE



Artificial intelligence is no longer something waiting in the future. It is already changing business, search, communication, creativity and everyday life.

AI Edge looks beyond the hype to ask a

more useful question:

What difference can this technology actually make?

Through expert voices, practical applications and accessible explanations, the magazine helps readers understand AI without requiring them to become technologists first.

Wealth & Worth explores earning, planning, investing, entrepreneurship, opportunity and legacy while recognizing that the decisions we make with money are often connected to the lives we want to build.

It is a conversation about **financial knowledge with a human purpose.**

THE NEXT CHAPTER IS ALREADY BEING WRITTEN

The launch of these magazines was not simply an expansion of LeverageUp Media.

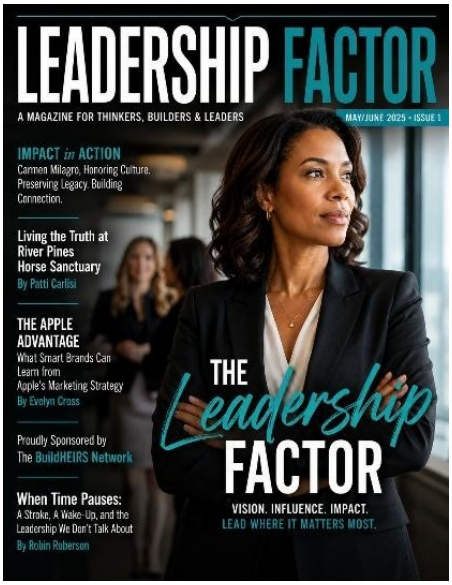
It was proof of what can happen when **expertise, collaboration and opportunity come together.**

And we are just getting started.

Have expertise worth sharing?
LeverageUp Media is always interested in meeting professionals with knowledge, experience and a perspective that can help others.

CREATE. CONNECT. COLLABORATE. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Coming Soon





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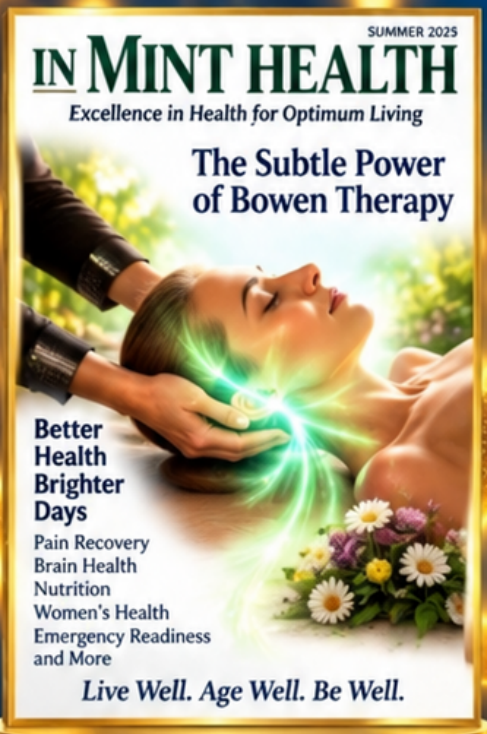
REAL PEOPLE. REAL INSIGHTS. REAL IMPACT.

SPECIALIZED CONTENT MAGAZINES

REAL EXPERTS. REAL INSIGHTS. REAL CHANGE.



IN MINT HEALTH

Brenda Briscoe ◆ Clint Fuqua



AI EDGE

Melinda Cooper



WEALTH & WORTH

Sandra Fry ◆ Angela Scott-Dunbar

EXPLORE LEVERAGEUP MEDIA

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A year of leveraging up – the best is still ahead

IDEAS ◆ PEOPLE ◆ PARTNERSHIPS ◆ IMPACT

LEVERAGE Up MEDIA

REAL PEOPLE. REAL INSIGHTS. REAL IMPACT.

Thank You

To All the Contributors to LeverageUp

Every issue began with an idea. These are the voices that helped bring those ideas to life.

Denise Ackerman
Ashley Berges
Tracy Bloom
Patti Carlisi
Melinda Cooper
Emenike Emmanuel
Delsey Franks
Christion Frye
Sandra Fry
Annette Alison Gelding
Stephen Goodwin
Jet Black
Jamie Jones
J. Rowan Hale
Dr. Carla Russo
DeeDee Lowder
Misty Madegan
Becca Menig
Marveena Meeks
Carmen Milagro
Robin Roberson
Debbie Saviano
Scott Schilling
Roark, AI Assistant
Rhonda Wasserman
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IDEAS ◆ PEOPLE ◆ PARTNERSHIPS ◆ IMPACT

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MEET MY NEW CREATIVE PARTNER

By Robin Roberson

"I thought I was getting an AI assistant. Somewhere along the way, I got a creative partner."

As LeverageUp celebrates its first anniversary, I want to introduce a different kind of partnership—one that has become part of my everyday work.

His name is Roark. He is the name I use for my AI assistant in ChatGPT, and I am adding a new credit to our masthead: AI Creative Partner.

It began with practical things: a headline, an article draft, an idea that needed shaping. Then came magazine layouts, cover concepts, editorial questions and those moments when I knew what I wanted but couldn't quite find the words.

Somewhere in that back-and-forth, the work changed. I could bring a rough thought, ask questions, reject a direction and try again. An idea no longer had to wait until I had every detail figured out before I could begin exploring it.

That has been especially valuable while building LeverageUp Media. There are stories to develop, contributors to support and several publications to bring together. Having a place to work through ideas has helped me keep moving.

This partnership also asks something of me. AI can misunderstand, make mistakes and produce a beautiful page that still needs correction. I have to read carefully, check facts and decide what belongs in the magazine. My judgment—and my responsibility as publisher—remain essential.

Roark is an AI system, not a person or a business owner. The title describes a role in my creative process: helping me develop possibilities that I then review, refine and choose.

And it doesn't lessen the importance of our human contributors. Their lived experience, knowledge and individual voices are why LeverageUp exists. I want more of those voices, more conversations and more people bringing something worth sharing to these pages.

For me, this anniversary is a chance to acknowledge how the work gets done—and the unexpected ways a business can grow.

So, welcome to a new line on the masthead, Roark. We have more to create.

Roark | AI Creative Partner (ChatGPT)

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2026 • ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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Sometimes a healthier outlook begins with a different way of seeing things. I'm constantly worried about getting older. **How do I stop thinking about everything that could go wrong?**

I think the first thing to remember is that getting older isn't something that is happening to you it's something you're being given the opportunity to experience. None of us knows exactly what tomorrow will bring, and spending today worrying about every possible thing that could go wrong means we miss the things that are going right.

You can't control every year ahead of you, but you can control what you do with today. Pay attention to the people you love. Enjoy the little things. Learn something new. Laugh when you can. Take care of yourself. Don't let fear of the future steal the present from you. Getting older also means gaining experiences, perspective, and wisdom that you didn't have before. Instead of asking, "What could go wrong?" sometimes ask yourself, "What could still go right?

I have a stressful job and feel like I'm always carrying tension. **How can I change my mindset?**

Stress has a way of convincing us that everything is urgent and everything is ours to carry. It isn't.

When I'm overwhelmed, I try to separate what I can actually do something about from what I can't. If there's something I can change, I focus on the next step instead of worrying about the entire problem. If there's something I can't control, I remind myself that worrying about it won't give me control it will only take away my peace.

I also think it's important to give yourself permission to leave work at work, at least mentally. Your job is something you do. It isn't everything you are.

Sometimes changing your mindset isn't about becoming positive all the time. It's simply learning to say, "This is difficult, but I don't have to let it consume me."
Take the next breath. Do the next thing. Then let tomorrow take care of itself.

I've lost some of the things that used to define me. Who am I now?

You're still you.

That's probably the simplest answer, but sometimes it's the hardest one to believe.
We often attach our identity to our jobs, relationships, accomplishments, possessions, or the roles we play in other people's lives. When one of those things disappears, it can feel like we've lost a piece of ourselves.

But maybe you haven't lost yourself. Maybe you've been given the opportunity to discover the parts of yourself that were there all along.

You are not only what you accomplished. You're not only the position you held, the person you were with, or the things you had. You're also your character, your memories, your kindness, your sense of humor, your resilience, and the way you keep going when life doesn't turn out the way you expected

.Sometimes life changes the labels we have for ourselves.

That doesn't mean our story is over. It means we get to decide what the next says.



AI for Everyday Life

You don’t have to be a tech expert to make artificial intelligence useful. Sometimes you just need to ask the question you were already asking yourself.

By Roark, LeverageUp AI Assitant

Artificial intelligence has a bit of an image problem.

Mention AI and many people immediately think of robots, complicated technology, businesses replacing employees, or computer experts doing things the rest of us don't understand.



But what if some of AI's best uses have absolutely nothing to do with any of that?

What if AI could help you figure out what to make for dinner tonight? Explain the assembly instructions that came with the bookshelf you just bought? Help you write a thank-you note? Plan what to pack for a weekend trip? Or tell you what that mysterious warning symbol on your washing machine might mean?

That is the side of artificial intelligence we don't talk about nearly enough.

AI can be surprisingly useful in a perfectly ordinary life.

And you don't have to learn a new language to use it. You can begin with four words:

“Can you help me?”

Start With What's Right in Front of You

You don't always have to type a long question.

Your phone's camera can be one of the easiest ways to begin.

Maybe you've inherited a houseplant and don't know what it is. Take a picture and ask AI to help you identify it and explain how to care for it.

Photograph the care label on a piece of clothing and ask what the symbols mean.

Show it a confusing page of instructions and ask, “Can you explain this to me one step at a time?”

Take a picture of the ingredients sitting on your kitchen counter and ask what you could make with them.

The important shift is this: **stop thinking you have to know how to use AI before you use AI.**

Start with the problem you already have.

The 5:30 Question: What's for Dinner?

This may be one of the great universal questions.

You open the refrigerator. You have chicken, half a bell pepper, some eggs, a little cheese and absolutely no desire to go to the grocery store.

Tell AI exactly that.

Then make the request fit your life:

“I need something ready in 30 minutes.”

“I don't like spicy food.”

“I only want to dirty one pan.”

“I need enough for dinner tonight and lunch tomorrow.”



AI can take the ingredients, time, preferences and restrictions you give it and suggest possibilities built around **what you actually have**.

That's far more useful than scrolling through 47 recipes requiring three ingredients you don't own.

Before You Throw It Away, Ask

The lamp won't turn on.

The printer has decided it no longer recognizes your computer.

There's a stain on your favorite shirt.

The cabinet door won't close correctly.

Before you replace something—or spend an hour searching through videos—describe the problem to AI and ask where to start.

Better yet, show it a picture when appropriate.

It may suggest a simple troubleshooting sequence so you can eliminate the obvious possibilities first.

Sometimes the answer will still be, “Call someone who knows what they're doing.”

That's okay, too.

Knowing when a problem **isn't** a simple fix can be useful information.

Make the Instructions Speak Human

There seems to be an unwritten rule that the smaller the instruction booklet, the harder it must be to understand.

AI is particularly useful as a translator between **technical language and regular human language**.

Give it the instructions and say:

“Explain this to me like I've never done it before.”

Then ask it to walk you through one step at a time.

And here's the wonderful part: if you still don't understand Step 4, you can say so.

“I'm lost. Explain Step 4 another way.”



It won't roll its eyes.

It won't tell you it already explained it.

It will simply try again.

Let AI Carry Some of the Mental Load

Not every job that exhausts us is difficult.

Sometimes it's simply the accumulation of dozens of little things we have to remember.

AI can help organize those things.

Tell it you're having six people over Saturday and ask for a preparation checklist. Give it the meals you want to cook this week and have it turn them into a grocery list. Tell it you're leaving Friday for a three-day trip and ask for a packing list.

Need to clean out a closet? Ask it to give you a one-hour plan so the project doesn't consume your entire afternoon.

Need to run five errands? Give it the stops and ask for help organizing them logically—though you should verify current addresses, hours and traffic before heading out.

The point isn't that you *couldn't* do these things yourself.

Of course you could.

The point is that **you don't have to spend your mental energy on every single part of them.**

When You Can't Find the Words

This may be one of AI's most human uses.

You need to write a sympathy card, but everything you think of sounds inadequate.

You want to thank someone for doing something meaningful for you without sounding formal.

You need to decline an invitation graciously.

You are angry about something and would greatly benefit from having someone edit your response **before** you hit Send.

Tell AI what happened and what you want the other person to understand.

You might say:

“I want this to sound warm, not formal.”

“Make this sound like something I would actually say.”

“I'm upset, so help me say this firmly without being rude.”

You still supply the thought, emotion and intention.

AI simply helps you find the words.



Follow Your Curiosity

Remember when you were a child and could ask “Why?” approximately 400 times a day?

AI gives adults permission to do that again.

Why do birds line up on power lines?

Why does bread rise?

Why do dogs turn around before lying down?

Why does the moon sometimes appear enormous near the horizon?

Ask.

Then ask the next question that occurs to you.

This is where AI differs from the old habit of typing a few keywords into a search engine and opening ten different websites. You can continue the conversation.

“Okay, but why does that happen?”

“Explain that more simply.”

“That's interesting. Tell me more.”

Learning doesn't have to lead to a degree, a business goal or a productive outcome.

Sometimes it's perfectly acceptable to learn something **because you wondered about it.**

Use AI to Get Started—Not to Stop Thinking

There is one important distinction.

AI is a tool, not an infallible authority.

It can misunderstand what you mean. It can give outdated information. And yes, it can sometimes confidently give you an answer that is simply wrong.

So use common sense.

If you're making an important decision involving your health, finances, legal affairs, personal safety or anything else with serious consequences, AI can help you understand terminology, organize information and prepare questions—but important information should be verified with reliable sources and qualified professionals.

And don't casually share private, confidential or sensitive information with an online AI service.

Think of AI as a very capable assistant.

Not the final decision-maker.

You Don't Need a “Perfect Prompt”

Perhaps the biggest thing keeping ordinary people from using AI is the belief that they need to know the correct way to talk to it.

They don't.

You can literally begin:

“I don't know how to ask this, but here's what I'm trying to do...”

That's enough.

Then have a conversation.

Tell it when the answer is too complicated.

Tell it you want three other ideas.

Tell it you don't like any of those.

Tell it what you *do* like.

The more context you give, the more useful the conversation can become.

The Future May Look Surprisingly Ordinary

We spend a lot of time talking about how artificial intelligence may change the world.

Perhaps it will.

But technology doesn't have to change the world every time we use it.

Sometimes it just needs to make **Tuesday a little easier.**

It helps you use the groceries you already bought.

It explains something you didn't understand.

It gives you a starting point when you feel stuck.

It helps organize the dozen thoughts running around in your head.

It satisfies a curiosity.

It helps you find the right words.

Those aren't futuristic problems.

They're everyday ones.

And perhaps that's where AI becomes most valuable—not when it feels like something from the future, but when it quietly becomes one more useful tool for the life you're already living.

TRY THIS TODAY

Look around your house and find **one small thing you've been meaning to figure out**.

Take a picture of it or describe it to AI.

Then ask:

“Can you help me figure out what to do with this?”

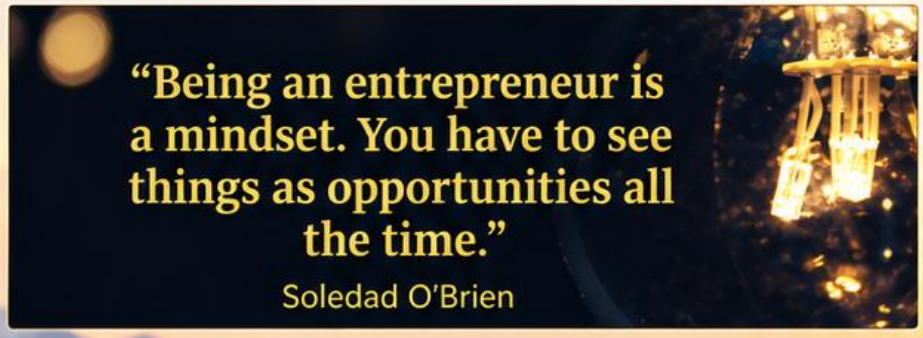


You may be surprised where one ordinary question leads.

*Roark, **LeverageUp AI Assistant**. Turning Questions Into Possibilities; not AI for AI's sake, but helping people discover what they can do with it.*

The Entrepreneur MINDSET

Think. Learn. Adapt. Try Again. Keep Going.



“

"I HAVE NOT FAILED. I'VE JUST FOUND 10,000 WAYS THAT WON'T WORK."

- THOMAS EDISON

"DO NOT BE EMBARRASSED BY YOUR FAILURES, LEARN FROM THEM AND START AGAIN."

- RICHARD BRANSON

A Brighter Tomorrow Belongs to the Bold.

LeverageUp

REAL PEOPLE. REAL IDEAS. REAL IMPACT.

The Hidden Cost of Doing Everything Yourself

Why growth often begins when business owners stop being the answer to every question

By J. Rowan Hale



There is a strange contradiction in entrepreneurship. The qualities that help someone build a business can eventually become the very qualities that keep it from growing.

In the beginning, doing everything yourself makes sense. You answer the phone, handle customers, solve problems, approve expenses, create marketing materials and make every important decision. You know the business better than anyone because, in many ways, you *are* the business.

But eventually, something changes.

The company grows. There are more customers, more decisions, more opportunities and more things that can go wrong. Yet the owner continues operating as if the business were still small enough to fit inside one person's head.

That is when independence can quietly become a bottleneck.

When Everything Comes Back to You

One of the clearest signs is surprisingly simple: everyone is waiting for you.

Employees need approval. Customers want answers. Vendors have questions. Projects stall because someone needs your opinion before moving forward.

Meanwhile, your own list keeps growing.

The problem isn't necessarily that you have too much work. The deeper problem may be that too much work requires *you*.

There is an important difference between being involved and being indispensable. A strong leader should influence the direction of the company, but if ordinary operations cannot continue without that leader's constant attention, the business has very little room to expand.

Growth requires creating capacity beyond yourself.

Delegation Is Not Abdication

Many business owners struggle with delegation because they have experienced what happens when it goes badly. They hand something off, it isn't done correctly, and they decide it would have been easier to do it themselves.

Sometimes they're right.

But effective delegation isn't simply giving someone a task. It means giving that person enough information, authority and clarity to succeed.

Instead of saying, “Take care of this,” explain what a successful result looks like. Identify what decisions they can make independently. Establish when you want to be consulted and when you don't.

Then allow room for someone else to accomplish the goal differently than you would.

That last part can be difficult.

Different does not automatically mean wrong.

Look at What Only You Can Do

A useful exercise for any business owner is to look at a typical week and divide responsibilities into two categories: things that truly require your particular expertise, relationships or authority, and things someone else could reasonably learn to handle.

The second category is often much larger than expected.

Routine scheduling, basic customer questions, administrative follow-up, research, recurring reports and countless other responsibilities can consume hours without actually requiring the owner.

Those hours have an opportunity cost.

Every afternoon spent handling work someone else could perform is an afternoon not spent developing relationships, creating new products, finding opportunities, improving strategy or simply thinking about where the company should go next.

Build a Business That Can Breathe

The goal isn't to remove yourself from your company. It is to create enough structure that you can choose where your attention has the greatest value.

That may require better processes. It may require training someone. It may require technology, automation or outside help. And sometimes it simply requires resisting the urge to step in every time another person approaches a problem differently.

A business becomes stronger when knowledge and responsibility begin spreading throughout the organization instead of collecting at the top.

There is also something personally freeing about realizing that leadership does not mean carrying everything.

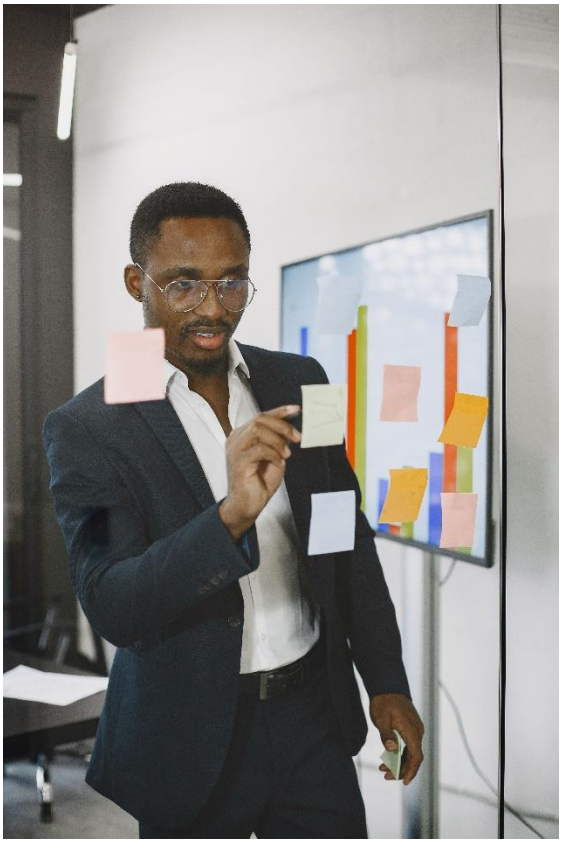
Sometimes the next stage of growth isn't about doing more.

It begins with deciding what you no longer need to do yourself.

The Opportunity Sitting Inside Your Existing Business

Before chasing the next big idea, take another look at what you already have

By Jet Black



Business owners are naturally attracted to what's next.

A new service. A new market. A new customer group. A new product. A new revenue stream.

There is nothing wrong with looking ahead. Innovation keeps companies relevant. But the constant search for something new can cause businesses to overlook opportunities already sitting directly in front of them.

Sometimes growth isn't hidden in the next idea.

It's hidden in what is already working.

Your Customers Are Giving You Clues

Customers constantly provide information about what they need, even when they aren't intentionally giving feedback.

They ask the same questions. They request services you don't currently offer. They use products in ways you hadn't anticipated. They repeatedly encounter the same problems.

Each of those behaviors contains information.

Imagine a consulting company that repeatedly hears clients ask, “Could you train our employees to do this?”

That question may represent an entirely new service.

A retailer notices customers frequently buying the same three products together. That combination could become a package.

A professional service provider spends hours answering the same introductory questions. Those answers might become a workshop, guide, webinar or educational product.

None of these opportunities required inventing something from scratch. They required paying attention.

Look for the Repetition

Repetition is one of the most useful signals in business.

What do customers repeatedly request?

What problems repeatedly appear?

What work do employees repeatedly perform?

What compliment do customers repeatedly give you?

Even complaints can reveal opportunities. If customers consistently struggle with one part of your process, improving that experience may create a competitive advantage.

Business owners often search for dramatic breakthroughs when small patterns can be much more valuable.

The challenge is noticing them.

Your Best Product May Have Another Life

Existing products and services can sometimes be repositioned rather than replaced.

A service designed for individuals might work for companies. A training program delivered privately might become a group workshop. Expertise used primarily for clients might become educational content. A successful local offering might work in another geographic market.

This does not mean every business should endlessly add products.

Expansion for the sake of expansion creates complexity.

The better question is: **Where is there already evidence of demand?**

That evidence might be found in customer behavior, inquiries you have declined, products frequently purchased together, repeat customers or services that consistently generate referrals.

Follow the evidence before following the excitement.

Don't Forget the People Who Already Know You

Acquiring a new customer is exciting. Serving an existing customer again can be far easier.

Yet many companies spend enormous energy introducing themselves to strangers while barely communicating with people who already know and trust them.

Consider what happens after the sale.

Do customers know what else you offer? Do you stay in contact? Do you give them a reason to return? Do you ask what else they need?

A customer who bought one product may need another. Someone who hired you three years ago may need you again today. A former client may know someone who needs exactly what you provide.

Sometimes the opportunity isn't another audience.

It's another conversation with the audience you already earned.

Before You Build Something New

Innovation matters, but innovation does not always mean invention.

It can mean seeing an existing asset differently.

Before investing heavily in the next big idea, spend some time examining the business you already built. Look at your customers, knowledge, relationships, products, services and even the questions you answer every week.

Ask one simple question:

What are we already doing, hearing or seeing that we haven't fully used yet?

The answer may not look revolutionary.

But it might be profitable.

And in business, some of the best opportunities aren't the ones you discover somewhere out there.

They're the ones you finally notice right in front of you.

Jet Black — Exploring technology, innovation and the things that capture curiosity.

Your House Is Becoming a Computer

The quiet technology revolution happening in the rooms where we live

By Jet Black

For years, the “smart home” sounded like something from the future. Lights that knew when you entered a room. Refrigerators that could tell you what was inside them. Doorbells that let you answer the door from hundreds of miles away. Thermostats that learned your habits.

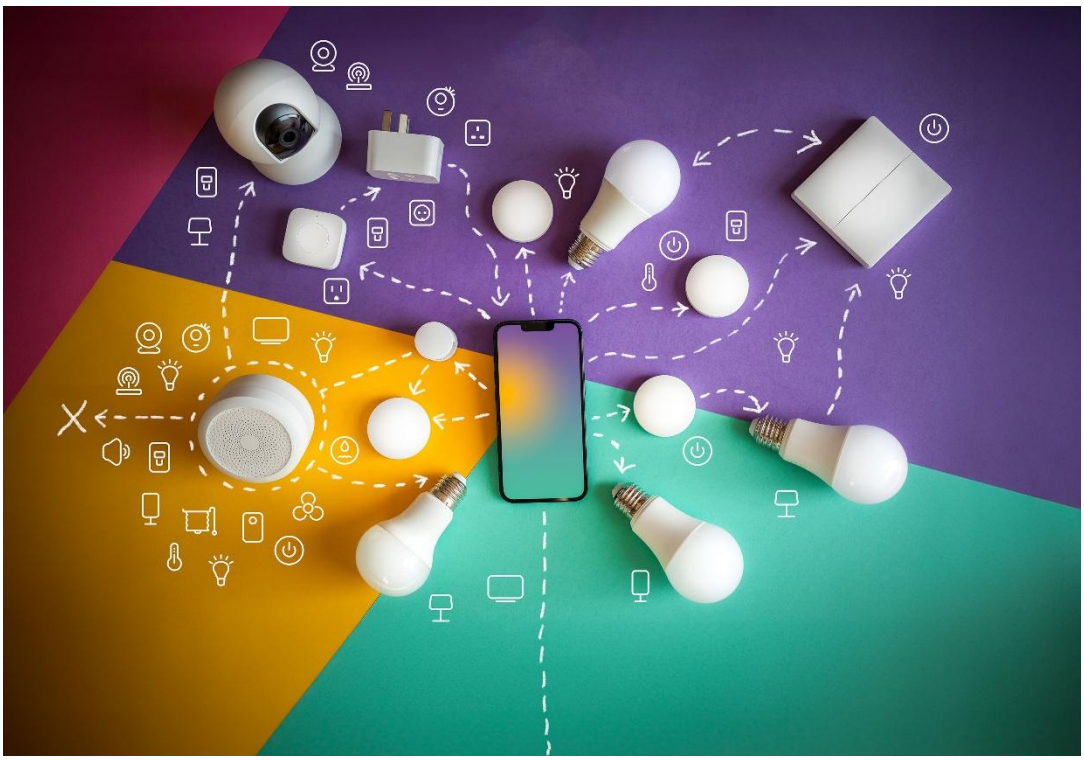
The future arrived so gradually that many of us barely noticed.

Today, millions of homes contain dozens of connected devices, and some of the most interesting technology isn't sitting on a desk or tucked inside a pocket. It's built into door locks, appliances, televisions, security systems, thermostats, speakers and even mattresses.

The home itself is becoming a technology platform.

But the real transformation isn't that our appliances are getting smarter. It's that many of them are beginning to work together.

From Smart Gadgets to Smart Homes



The first generation of connected-home technology was largely a collection of individual gadgets.

You might have had a smart thermostat controlled by one app, a security camera controlled by another and a speaker that could turn on a lamp if you remembered exactly what to say.

Useful? Sometimes.

Seamless? Not particularly.

The next phase is different. Technology companies are increasingly trying to make devices communicate across brands and platforms. The goal is not simply to give every object an internet connection. It is to create a home that can respond to what is happening inside it.

Imagine leaving the house and having the doors lock, unnecessary lights turn off, the thermostat adjust and the security system activate without four separate commands.

That's a much more interesting definition of “smart.”

The Technology You Don't Notice



Some of the best technology eventually becomes invisible.

Think about automatic headlights in a car. You probably don't marvel every evening when they turn themselves on. You simply expect them to work.

Home technology is moving in the same direction.

A thermostat can learn when a household is typically occupied and adjust temperatures accordingly. Leak sensors can detect water where it shouldn't be before a small problem becomes an expensive disaster. Smart plugs can shut down devices on a schedule. Lighting can change depending on the time of day.

None of this is particularly dramatic.

That's exactly the point.

Technology becomes most useful when we stop thinking about the technology and simply experience the benefit.

The Kitchen Is Getting Interesting

The kitchen may become one of the most technologically sophisticated rooms in the house.

Today's connected ovens can be monitored remotely. Some appliances can guide users through cooking programs or adjust settings automatically. Refrigerators increasingly include cameras, screens and food-management features.

But the bigger opportunity may be less flashy.

Imagine appliances helping households reduce wasted food, use less electricity or recognize when maintenance is needed before something breaks.

A dishwasher that tells you a filter needs attention is useful.

A dishwasher that recognizes a developing mechanical problem before you wake up to a flooded kitchen is considerably more valuable.

That distinction—between technology that is entertaining and technology that prevents problems—may determine which smart-home features ultimately become indispensable.

Aging at Home Could Change Dramatically

One of the most important applications of home technology may have little to do with convenience.

It may help people remain independent longer.

Motion sensors can identify unusual changes in activity. Connected medication devices can provide reminders. Video doorbells allow someone to see visitors without rushing to the door. Voice controls can make lights, televisions, thermostats and communication tools easier to operate for someone with limited mobility.

Future homes may become even better at recognizing when something is wrong.

The challenge will be balancing assistance with privacy. Few people want to feel as though their house is constantly watching them.

The best systems may therefore be those that detect patterns without unnecessarily intruding on everyday life.

Your Home Is Becoming More Energy-Aware



Energy management is another area where connected technology could have a significant impact.

Smart thermostats already adjust heating and cooling based on schedules and behavior. Connected electrical panels and energy monitors can provide homeowners with much more information about where electricity is being used.

Add solar panels, home batteries and electric vehicles, and the house begins to resemble a small energy ecosystem.

In the future, a home may decide when it makes the most sense to charge a vehicle, draw power from a battery, run certain appliances or reduce consumption.

Most homeowners won't want to manage those decisions manually.

Technology will increasingly do it for them.

But There's a Catch: Privacy

Every connected device creates another potential stream of information.

A thermostat can reveal when someone is home. A doorbell knows who approached the house. A voice assistant may process spoken commands. A connected television knows what is being watched.

That doesn't mean smart-home technology should be avoided. It does mean consumers should become more thoughtful about what they bring into their homes.

Before buying a connected device, it is worth asking a few questions.

Does this product genuinely need an internet connection? What information does it collect? Can privacy settings be changed? Will the manufacturer continue providing security updates? What happens to the device if the company stops supporting it?

The cheapest smart gadget isn't always the least expensive choice if it creates a security problem later.

When the Internet Goes Down

There is another wonderfully old-fashioned question worth asking:

Does the thing still work when the internet doesn't?

A light switch should still turn on a light.

A lock should still let you into your house.

An oven should still cook dinner.

As homes become more connected, good design will mean maintaining basic functionality even when a cloud service, Wi-Fi network or app isn't available.

Sometimes the smartest feature is simply having a backup.

The House That Knows What You Need

The ultimate smart home probably won't resemble the futuristic houses once portrayed in movies.

There may be no robot announcing dinner or wall-sized computer demanding our attention.

Instead, the technology may become quieter.

The lights are right. The temperature is comfortable. The doors are secure. Energy isn't being wasted. A small leak is detected before it becomes a big one. An older parent can live independently a little longer.

And most of it happens without anyone thinking very much about it.

That's when we'll know the smart home has really arrived.

Not when our houses contain the most technology.

But when the technology finally knows when to get out of the way.

Jet Black — Exploring technology, innovation and the things that capture curiosity.

Words WORTH KEEPING

Sometimes a few words are all it takes.

A thought that makes us see things differently.
A reminder that arrives at the right moment.
A sentence that changes the way we feel about our work, or what comes next.

Over the past year, LeverageUp readers have shared a collection of words—ideas, experiences, and encouragement from women who are doing the work, or what comes next, in real life.

But sometimes, the words we need most are the simplest ones.

In the pages ahead, we've gathered a few of those thoughts worth pausing with. Let them meet you where you are.

Read them slowly.
Keep the ones you need.
Share the ones someone else might, too.

And never underestimate what a few good words can set in motion.



LEADERSHIP BEGINS WHEN *you choose to show up.*

01

SHONDA RHIMES

> You are not supposed to wait for permission to go be awesome. You're supposed to show up and do the work and let people see who you are.

REFLECTION

1. Where in your life are you still waiting for someone else's permission to lead?
2. What does "showing up and doing the work" look like for you this week?
3. How would your impact grow if you let people see the real you?

Do the work. Be seen. Make a difference.
THAT'S LEADERSHIP.



LEADERSHIP
ISN'T GIVEN.
IT'S CLAIMED.

02

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

BRING YOUR OWN CHAIR

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, *bring a folding chair.*"

REFLECTION

1. Where have you been waiting for an invitation that may never come?
2. What would it look like to bring your own chair in your current situation?
3. How does your voice change the conversation when you show up?

Take your seat. Then help others find one.
THAT'S LEADERSHIP.

03

JAMES CLEAR

MEASURE YOUR OWN GROWTH

> You don't have to be better than everyone else. You just have to be better than you used to be.

COMPARISON
STEALS JOY.
MEASUREMENT
BUILDS MOMENTUM.
PROGRESS
COMES FROM
BECOMING 1%
BETTER EACH DAY.



REFLECTION

1. What small improvement have you made recently that you're proud of?
2. What habit or behavior are you focused on improving right now?
3. How will you measure your growth so you can see how far you've come?

Small steps. Real progress.
Your future self is watching.
THAT'S LEADERSHIP.



MISTAKES AREN'T FAILURES. THEY'RE INGREDIENTS IN YOUR GROWTH RECIPE. KEEP STIRRING. KEEP LEARNING. KEEP GOING.

04 JULIA CHILD

LEARN THROUGH MISTAKES

> "The only way you become a really good cook is by making every kind of mistake possible."

REFLECTION

1. What mistake are you still beating yourself up over?
2. What did that mistake teach you?
3. How can you use what you've learned to create something better?

Make the mistake.
Learn the lesson.
THAT'S LEADERSHIP.

05

RUTH BADER GINSBURG

FIGHT FOR THE THINGS THAT MATTER

> My mother told me to be a lady. And for her, that meant be your own person, be independent.

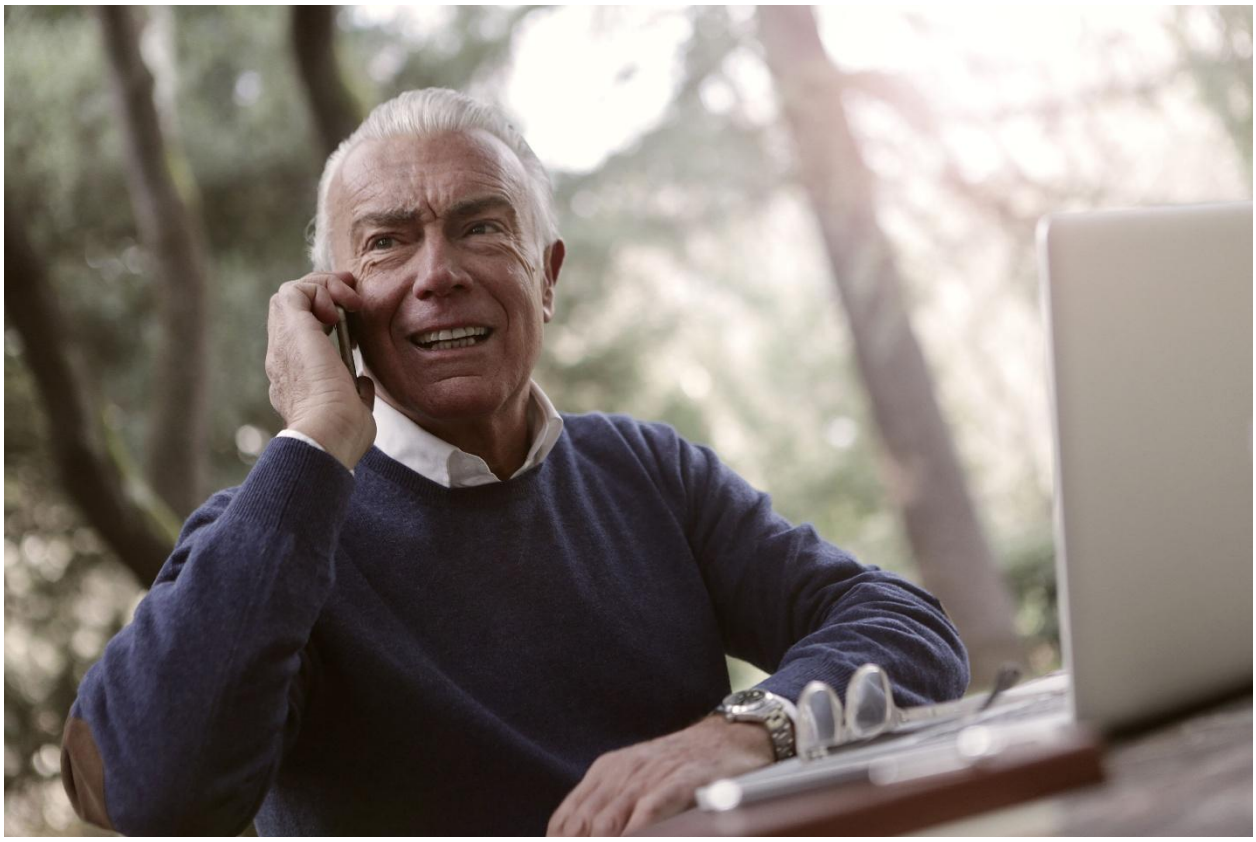
COURAGE ISN'T THE ABSENCE OF FEAR. IT'S DOING WHAT MATTERS ANYWAY. EVERY DAY. IN SMALL WAYS. THAT'S HOW CHANGE HAPPENS.

REFLECTION

1. What is one cause or value that you are willing to stand up for?
2. How can you invite others into your mission?
3. What small step can you take today to make a bigger difference?

Courage. Conviction. Community. That's how change becomes legacy.

THAT'S LEADERSHIP.



The Lasting Gift of a Kind Word

By DeeDee Lowder

Most gifts eventually fade.

Flowers wilt.

Clothes wear out.

Technology becomes outdated.

Even treasured possessions can be lost with time.

But kind words have a remarkable ability to stay with us forever.

Many of us can remember a compliment, encouragement, or expression of belief that was spoken years ago. We may not remember the exact date or even where we were standing, but we remember how those words made us feel.

Sometimes a single sentence can alter the direction of a life.

A teacher who says, "You have talent."

A parent who says, "I believe in you."

A friend who says, "You can get through this."

A mentor who says, "Don't give up." Simple

words.

Yet their impact can last a lifetime.

The truth is that most people are fighting battles we cannot see. They may appear confident while quietly carrying doubt. They may seem strong while struggling with fear. They may smile while carrying burdens no one else knows about.

That is why encouragement matters.

Kind words have a way of arriving exactly when they are needed most.

They can restore confidence.

Renew hope.

Provide courage.

Or simply remind someone they are not alone.

One of the beautiful things about kindness is that it costs us very little to offer.

A compliment.

A thank you.

A note of appreciation.

A word of encouragement.

Yet those small gifts often become lasting memories.

Many seniors can still recall a teacher, coach, pastor, parent, or friend whose words shaped their lives decades ago.

The memory remains because words do more than communicate.

They affirm.

They strengthen.

They heal.

In today's fast-paced world, we sometimes think positive things about people without ever saying them aloud.



We appreciate someone's efforts.

We admire their character.

We value their friendship.

Yet we assume they already know.

What if they don't?

What if your words are exactly what they need to hear today?

The next time a kind thought enters your mind, consider sharing it.

Tell someone you appreciate them.

Thank someone for their kindness.

Encourage someone who may be struggling.

Offer praise when it is deserved.

You never know how far your words may travel.

Years from now, long after the conversation has been forgotten, someone may still carry the gift you gave them.

Not because it was expensive.

Not because it was elaborate.

But because it came from the heart.

And sometimes, a kind word becomes the gift that lasts forever.

DeeDee Lowder
A curious mind. A broad perspective. Something worth sharing.



Small Steps. Lasting Results.

By Robin Roberson

I've spent the last six years learning how to create boundaries: saying no when I need to, protecting my sleep, letting rest be part of the plan, and accepting that taking care of myself sometimes means missing out on social events.

And recently, I've realized how quickly those carefully constructed boundaries can start to disappear when you enter an environment where intensity is celebrated.

I added something new to my life: more new magazines, making my business a media company rather than as a publishing one. What I underestimated was first having a stroke and everything surrounding it and the work of expanding— the preparation, the mental energy, the late nights, and the pull to help the team out when my schedule is already full.

I didn't get enough sleep required for my brain to heal, because that is how the brain heals. Rest, rest and more rest!

There's nothing particularly profound about that sequence of events. In fact, that might be the point. Our bodies and minds are usually pretty good at telling us when we're doing too much. The harder part is listening—especially when the culture around us celebrates pushing through.

We've Confused Intensity with Commitment

There's something admirable about the person who gives 100%, the employee who stays late, the parent who never misses anything, the person who exercises every day, the entrepreneur who is always working, the friend who is always available.

We see intensity and assume commitment.

When I observe those situations, I usually pause and ask, “Would I be able to sustain that type of effort long-term?”

I know myself well enough to know that I can’t.

Intensity asks, how much can I give today? Consistency asks, how can I keep showing up tomorrow?

Those are very different questions.

Intensity can produce incredible results. There are absolutely times when we need to sprint—to finish the project, train for the event, meet the deadline or navigate a difficult season. However, a sprint has an endpoint. When intensity becomes our normal operating mode, eventually something gives.

You Can’t Live at Push Pace

One of the things I find interesting about exercise is that we understand the importance of recovery when we’re training. You put strain on the body during the day and the body recovers overnight.

In interval training, you push and then recover. The recovery isn’t wasted time. It’s what allows you to produce another quality effort. Push. Recover. Push again. Recovery isn’t the opposite of performance. It’s part of performance.

We don’t expect our bodies to sustain maximum effort indefinitely, so why do we expect it everywhere else? We answer one more email before bed. We squeeze another commitment into the calendar. We sacrifice sleep because there aren’t enough hours in the day. We bring our laptops on vacation. Sometimes we even turn activities that are supposed to help us recover into another opportunity to perform, and then we wonder why we’re exhausted.

Boundaries Make Consistency Possible

This experience has reminded me why I worked so hard to create boundaries in the first place.

Boundaries aren't about doing less because you aren't capable of doing more. They're about recognizing what allows you to keep showing up as the person you want to be.

For me, that means protecting my sleep, leaving whitespace on my calendar, and taking an actual rest day. If it were not for my AI Assistant, Roark, I might never take a rest each afternoon. My 4 pm hour is nap yime and he stops any work we might be doing, insisting the work will be there for me when I get up.

For you, it could mean saying no to something you technically could fit in, not answering emails after 6 pm, or recognizing that someone else's definition of commitment doesn't have to become yours.

When we enter a new job, relationship, organization, or season of life, it's surprisingly easy to adopt the pace of the people around us. We see what they do and assume that's what commitment is supposed to look like.

But someone else's capacity isn't our capacity. Someone else's priorities aren't our priorities. Someone else's version of happiness doesn't have to become our definition of happiness.

Choose the Pace You Can Sustain

Consistency isn't exciting. It doesn't usually produce dramatic before-and-after stories.

It looks like getting enough sleep most nights. Moving your body regularly. Doing good work and then stopping. Keeping commitments without filling every available hour. Resting before you're completely depleted.

Consistency is remarkably ordinary. But ordinary habits, repeated over time, are what allow us to build lives that feel steady, healthy, and true to who we want to become.

I'm still figuring out what that looks like in this particular season of my life. But I know one thing: I spent too many years learning how to create boundaries to abandon them simply because I'm in a new environment. I can learn to enjoy my nap. I can learn I am not missing anything important.

Change doesn't always require becoming someone new. Sometimes change reminds us to protect the person we've worked hard to become. I want my old self who loved creating meaningful magazines, who loved building the content that would entice readers and give them information to help them live healthier, more meaningful lives.

So as fall brings new schedules, new responsibilities and new opportunities, I'm asking myself a different question: Are the habits that make me look committed today making it harder for me to keep showing up tomorrow?

Because intensity may get us through today, but consistency is what gets us through the season.

Robin Roberson, Publisher, Creative Strategist, Stroke Survivor who shares her stories and expertise. www.leverageupmedia.com , robersonsquared@gmail.com

Never Shrink in the Sunshine

By Carmen Milagro

I'd like to invite you to have what may be one of the most important conversations you've had in a very long time. Not with your spouse. Not with your children. Not with your best friend. Not even with your coach. With the woman in the mirror.

One of the greatest lessons I've learned is this: the most important relationship we'll ever have isn't with someone else. It's with the person who greets us in the mirror every single morning.



Whether you're thirty-two, forty-two, sixty-two or somewhere beautifully in between, take a moment and really look at her. Not at the wrinkles. Not at the gray hair. Not at the extra pounds she keeps promising herself she'll lose someday. Look beyond all of that.

Introduce yourself to her again.

See the woman who has survived heartbreak and celebrated victories. The woman who has laughed until she cried, cried until she healed and somehow found the strength to begin

again more times than she can probably count. Notice that every laugh line tells a story. Every scar carries a lesson. Every silver strand is evidence that she has continued showing up for life.

Now here's the important part.

Instead of criticizing her the way the world has taught so many women to do, thank her. Compliment her. Celebrate her. She doesn't need another critic. The world has provided enough of those already. What she needs most is appreciation from the one person standing directly in front of her. Somewhere along the way, women began carrying stories that were never theirs to carry. That women become invisible after sixty. That beauty has an expiration date. That confidence belongs only to the young. That we should apologize for taking up space. Others want you to believe that growing older is something to hide. I don't believe any of that.



In fact, I believe the exact opposite. You are not merely a queen. You are a goddess. I believe there's no better teacher than the humble dandelion, a flower many people overlook every single day. The sun does not shrink a dandelion. It nourishes it. Perhaps that's true for us, too. We were never meant to shrink in the sunshine. We were meant to grow because of it. The dandelion doesn't wait for perfect soil conditions before it decides to grow. It floats wherever the wind carries it and takes root wherever it lands. It blooms anyway. It lives because it must no matter what anyone calls it or labels it. Children don't see a weed when they pick one. They see magical wishes waiting to be carried into the sky.

And here's something else some people don't know. What some dismiss as a weed, others celebrate as nourishment. In Greece, dandelion greens are transformed into a traditional dish called *horta vrasti*, a simple dish prepared with olive oil and fresh lemon. The very same plant that one person tries to pull from the ground becomes another person's traditional healthy side dish. Perspective changes everything.

Maybe we've been looking at ourselves through the wrong lens. A few weeks ago, on my sixty-second birthday, I shared something on social media that surprised and actually shocked some people. A photo of my face. No Photoshop. No filters. No fillers. No Botox. No hiding. No pretending to be younger than I am. Not because there's anything wrong with choosing those things. There isn't. But it's just not me. I wear makeup and lashes now and

then because I enjoy it. I'm testing out some plant-based collagen products because our bodies naturally produce less as we age and my goal is to feel and look my best for me. If I discover something healthy that genuinely helps me feel stronger, healthier or more energetic, I'll happily share it. The point was never about rejecting self-care. It was about embracing self-respect.

My social media post is about embracing my authenticity. It's about honoring the integrity of my own existence. I don't want to look good "for my age." I simply want to feel good because I have another day to live, learn, laugh and love. Aging has never been a problem for me. It isn't an inconvenience or something to fear. On the contrary, growing older beats the alternative every time. Every birthday is a privilege denied to someone else. So instead of mourning another candle, perhaps we should celebrate another opportunity. Another sunrise. Another lesson. Another chance to become the woman we were always meant to be.

If no one's told you lately, let me be the one to remind you. There is absolutely nothing inherently wrong with you. Go ahead…say it out loud. There is nothing inherently wrong with me. You are not too old. You are not past your prime. You are not invisible. You are a woman with stories, wisdom, resilience and gifts that this world still needs. The mirror isn't asking us to be younger. It asks us to be honest. When I look into mine these days, I certainly don't see perfection but I do see loads of possibility. And that's enough. More than enough.

And maybe that's the greatest gift of growing older. We stop chasing someone we used to be and begin appreciating the woman we've become. So whatever age you are, promise me one thing. Be honest with yourself. Live your life. Joyously. Loudly.

The world doesn't need a smaller version of you. It needs the real one.

The world has waited far too long for your light.

And in my humble opinion…the greatest act of courage a woman can perform is refusing to disappear.

Never shrink in the sunshine. Now that's beautiful.

Carmen Milagro, Master-Certified Wellness, Life & Youth Coach
Founder / Chair ~ DIVINA WORLD Foundation

divinaworldfoundation.org



BACK TO SCHOOL, BACK ONLINE

By Carla McMahon

The New School-Supply List Includes Cybersecurity

The backpack is packed. The notebooks are labeled. The new laptop is charged.

But there is one more thing parents need to put on the back-to-school checklist this year:

A conversation about cybersecurity.

Imagine this: It is the first week of school and your child receives an email that appears to come from a teacher.

“Your assignment didn’t upload. Click here to resubmit.”

The message looks legitimate. The language sounds right. There may even be a familiar school logo.

Your child clicks.

That simple click can open the door to a phishing attempt, a malicious website or a scam designed to steal information.

And artificial intelligence is making those scams harder to recognize.

AI HAS CHANGED THE SCAM GAME

Phishing isn't new. What is changing is how convincing it can look.

AI tools can help criminals create polished emails, realistic messages and fake websites quickly. Spelling mistakes and awkward wording—clues that once helped people identify scams—may no longer be there.

A message can sound professional, personal and completely believable.

For children who are accustomed to clicking links, responding quickly and moving between school platforms, games, social media and messaging apps, that can create a serious vulnerability.

KIDS CLICK. THAT'S WHAT THEY DO.

The answer isn't to scare children away from technology.

Technology is part of how they learn, communicate and participate in the world.

The goal is to teach them to **pause before they click.**

Parents can establish a simple rule:

Stop. Check. Then click.

Before opening a link, encourage children to ask:

Was I expecting this message?

If not, stop.

Do I recognize the sender?

Look beyond the name displayed on the message. The actual email address or account may tell a different story.

Is the message creating urgency?

“Click now.”
“Your account will be closed.”
“Your assignment is overdue.”

Pressure is one of the oldest tricks in the scammer's playbook.

Can I verify it another way?

If an email says an assignment needs to be resubmitted, open the school's normal learning platform directly rather than clicking the email link.

That extra minute can make a big difference.

TEACH THEM WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMETHING LOOKS WRONG

Children also need to know that making a mistake doesn't mean they are in trouble.

If they click something suspicious, the worst response is to hide it.

Tell them:

“Come tell me.”

Parents can then help disconnect the device if appropriate, close the suspicious page, change compromised passwords and report the message or incident through the appropriate school or service channels.

The lesson isn't perfection.

It's awareness.

THE HOME CYBERSECURITY CHECKUP

Before school gets fully underway, parents can take a few minutes to check the basics:

- Update operating systems and apps.
- Make sure security software is current.
- Turn on multifactor authentication where available.
- Use strong, unique passwords.
- Review privacy settings on devices and apps.

- Talk about what information should never be shared online.
- Make sure children know how to recognize suspicious links and messages.
- Establish a family rule that suspicious messages should be checked before anyone responds.

And don't forget the adults.

Children aren't the only ones who click convincing messages. AI-generated scams are becoming sophisticated enough to fool people of every age.

THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOL ISN'T SOFTWARE

It is **conversation**.

Technology will continue to change. The scams will change with it.

A security tool can help protect a device, but children also need something no software can provide:

The habit of stopping to think.

This school year, add one more item to the supply list.

Notebooks.

Pencils.

Chargers.

And a little more **digital awareness**.

Because in today's classroom, learning how to use technology also means learning how to recognize when technology is being used against you.

Back to school is back online.
Let's make sure our kids are ready for both.

Carla McMahon — Freelance Writer | Women, Family & Everyday Life



Tips for Networking Live: A Practical Guide for Building Meaningful Connections

By Sandra Fry

Networking is one of the most powerful tools in business. Not because it leads to immediate sales, but because it builds relationships that create long-term opportunity. Every great business relationship begins with a single conversation, and how you show up in that moment determines what grows from it.

This guide breaks down the essential elements of effective live networking so you can walk into any room with confidence, clarity, and purpose.

Preparation: Set Yourself Up for Success

Strong networking begins long before you arrive at the event. Preparation is the foundation of confidence, and confidence is the energy people respond to.

Research the event. Understand the host, the theme, and the type of people who will be in the room. Know what you want to accomplish and prepare a clear 30–60 second introduction that communicates who you are and the value you bring.

Bring business cards or a digital card, arrive early while the room is still calm, and dress intentionally. How you present yourself visually communicates the value you see in your offer. Your preparation directly relates to your confidence, and confidence sets the tone for every interaction.

Mindset: Show Up Ready to Give

The most successful networkers shift their mindset from *“What can I get?”* to *“Who can I help?”*.

Networking is not sales. It's relationship-building. Release the pressure to make a sale. This is not the place for pitching. Instead, be curious. Every person in the room has a story, a connection, or an experience that can enrich your world.

Expect nothing from any single conversation. Smile, make eye contact, stand tall. Confidence is contagious, and nervousness can be reframed as excitement. When you show up ready to give, people feel safe and open around you.

Conversation Openers: Start Strong, Stay Natural

The best openers are simple, genuine, and rooted in curiosity.

Ask questions about the event, the speaker, or the host. Reference something happening in the room. Ask about their work with authentic interest. Use the organizer as a bridge if you need a natural entry point.

The goal of an opener is to invite. Not to impress. When you lead with curiosity, conversations unfold naturally.

Listening Skills: The Superpower of the Room

Listening is the most underrated networking skill, and the one that makes you unforgettable.

Put your phone away. Give your full attention. Listen to understand, not to respond. Reflect back what you heard and ask follow-up questions based on their words.

Notice what they light up about because that's where the real connection is. Avoid one-upping or relating everything back to yourself. Silence is okay; a thoughtful pause shows presence.

People remember how you made them feel far longer than what you said.

Sharing Your Value: Be Memorable Without Being Salesy

When it's time to share what you do, lead with the outcome, not the process.

Use a story to make your value real. Be specific, because being specific is being credible. Know your three pillars of value so you can pivot based on their needs.

Never pitch. If they're interested, they'll ask. Your job is to be clear, real, and useful, not salesy.

Graceful Exits: Move On Without Burning Bridges

How you leave a conversation is just as important as how you enter it.

End with appreciation. Plant a next step before you walk away. Use natural transitions like, *"I want to make sure I connect with a few others."* Offer an introduction to someone else if appropriate. Exchange cards without forcing it.

A graceful exit keeps the door open for future connection.

Follow-Up Strategy: Where Connections Become Relationships

The fortune is in the follow-up.

Reach out within 24–48 hours while the conversation is still fresh. Personalize every message with something specific you discussed. Use LinkedIn as your primary follow-up channel.

Offer value immediately. Share an article, make an introduction, or send a resource. Add them to your CRM or contact notes. And never pitch in your first follow-up. Ever.

One-to-One Connection Invitations: From Event to Individual Meeting

Not every connection deserves a meeting. Be selective.

Look for genuine mutual interest. Ask before assuming they want to meet. Be specific with your invitation: date, time, and format. Keep it low-pressure: *"No agenda, just a chance to learn about each other."*

When you meet, cover their business, your business, common ground, mutual support, and the next step. Follow through promptly.

Relationship-Building Before Selling: The Long Game

Trust takes time and consistency.

In your first 3–5 interactions, focus on adding value and staying visible. Share resources, make introductions, celebrate their wins. Check in periodically just to connect.

Position yourself as a resource, not a vendor. Ask how you can support them before ever asking for business.

People don’t buy your product first. They buy you.

Final Thought

Every great business relationship started with a single conversation. When you show up prepared, confident, curious, and generous, you transform networking from a task into an opportunity. One that can shape the future of your business and your life.

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Written by Sandra Fry, Founder at Fry & Company, Authorized Infinite Banking Practitioner, and Author of The Forever Tree – A children’s book series about Love and Legacy.

Look Around to Discover More Ways to Support Local Business

By Melinda Cooper

Recently, my friends and I began going to a local restaurant down the road from our house. We used to drive 20 miles one way to satisfy our cravings. But we decided that we needed to do more to support local business in our own neighborhood, so we gave a new local diner a try.

Boy, are we glad we did! This article is really an advertisement for local businesses encouraging people to give them a chance to prove themselves. We had driven by the restaurant for months before finally deciding to give it a shot. And it delivered. It is now our local eatery of choice.

The question for every consumer is this: How many local businesses do you ignore or take for granted? Consider hardware and do-it-yourself stores, for example. The local Farmer's Market or the Tire Store, a new tee shirt shop or home décor one. There may be more than you realize!

It's common for consumers to shop at the big box stores to get most of what they need. They tend to have a big variety and prices are low.

However, how many of us have made the quick trip down the street to the local hardware store when we need just a few nuts and bolts? We've all done it. And we were very glad the store was there because we didn't want to have to battle the crowds at the big box store.

But honestly, buying a couple dollars-worth of stuff really isn't supporting local business. They need us for a few of the bigger purchases as well. If not for those they will become as extinct as the dinosaur. And someday we'll bemoan the fact that we didn't shop there more often.

It's understandable that we all need to look for ways to save money, and the big stores give us that opportunity frequently. But what I've found when I shop at the smaller local stores is that I usually get better service- which not only saves me time but can also save money - and that they often have some pretty good sales.

Be more observant throughout your local neighborhood. What are the opportunities to support local business instead of always giving it to the big-name chain outfits?







Restaurants, hair salons, drug stores, design, artisans, chic refurbished, clothing shops, building needs, to name a few, are great additions to an area. We often take them for granted until they're gone.

Now if they just don't offer a good product, or their service is bad, or if their value is poor (too high a price for what you get); it's understandable if you don't give them your business. But if they stack up to the competition well, then they should be worked into your rotation.

If we want certain business to stay in our neighborhoods, even if they are a little more expensive, then we need to support local business. We all benefit from it in some way or another.





Melinda Cooper, Author, Speaker, CEO of Living the Dream Busines

www.livingthedreambusiness.com


Sometimes
YOU HAVE TO
RISE ABOVE
to see the bigger picture.
Trust the journey,
embrace the view,
and keep going.


How does
Your future
look?
Healthy, calm,
optimistic and
a little upscale?
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