



## Small Business Owners in Personal Crisis – Five Moves for Moving Forward

I am a Small Business Owner with a business currently producing 0.00 dollars in revenue at this moment. My days are filled working with clients on all points of the COVID-19 continuum, collaborating with our amazing team to pivot our family business, Suzy's Swirl, and continuing to support our local community partners to keep small businesses open and support those in need. I can empathize with many Small Business Owners in the same situation. I can honestly say my heart breaks as I read Facebook posts from Small Business Owners sharing the pain of closing their business, letting their dedicated team members go, and the overwhelming sense of loss of their hopes and dreams.

For over 20 years, I have worked with Small Business Owners in all types of extreme crisis, downsizing a company, letting key team members go, leading through hurricanes, floods, sub-zero arctic blasts, and food and workplace safety situations. In our current environment, I know that some days it feels like all of those things are happening simultaneously.

On the bright side, I have also worked with Small Business Owners when they have opened their new concept, achieved unprecedented growth, promoted an amazing team member, and celebrated milestones of success with their teams, customers, and communities.

Here is a question I have been asked on several occasions:

***“What does a Small Business Owner do when they are in personal crisis at the exact same time their business is also in crisis and they still need to lead their team and business out of the crisis?”***

### **Here are my First Five Moves for every Small Business Owner**

**You First Mentality – Take Care of Yourself – FIRST.** We all know the story about why the flight attendant tells us to put on our oxygen mask before helping others – catch your breath.

- 1) Establish a routine to physically take care of yourself – eat food good for you not just comforts you, drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquids, get some exercise, and get the best sleep you can.
- 2) Establish a routine for emotionally taking care of yourself – meditate, journal or just take 30 minutes for yourself to completely disconnect and do whatever relaxes you. Some of my favorite things to do is journal every morning and then watch random obscure Netflix shows for 30 minutes.

There is no purpose served if you go down for the count. Your team and business need you clear headed and at your best! One of my words of Woodism is “The Team is a Reflection of the Leader.”

**Address Your Personal Fears** – *Kick your biggest fears, worries, or concerns in the ass.* Get them out of your head and onto a piece of paper. The longer they are in your head the more they paralyze your actions. Small Business Owners are amazing problem solvers – prioritize your issues into immediate, next week, and next month. Shelf the next month issues as our world is changing quickly. Attack your immediate priorities.

This is also not the time to do everything alone. Take a minute and write down 5 people who love, trust, and support you and reach out today! It does make problem solving easier when you solve with someone else. If you are really stressed and it is severely negatively impacting you then please reach out for professional help. Your family, friends, team, and business need you and you are never alone! There are plenty of people to help – including me!

**Allow Yourself Forgiveness** – *Forgive Yourself to Move Forward* – Small Business Owners have been forced to make so many tough decisions about the business they built with their blood, sweat, tears, and so many sacrifices. Many decisions had to do with downsizing, furloughing and letting go of team members. Many Small Business Owners said this was the hardest thing they have ever done in business. Many also took the blame with emotional statements that started with “what if”, “why didn’t I”, “would of”, “could of”, and of course “should of.”

Wow, none of us had a crystal ball on the magnitude of COVID-19. Think about it if everyone knew why would our entire country be scrambling for much needed resources. We would have already had them in place. I don’t say that for political reasons, I say it to provide perspective to every Small Business Owner that is “shoulding” all over themselves right now.

I always recommend to Small Business Owners to first forgive themselves for not being “all knowing” because truly no human being can be. Second, grieve your loss and then start to let it go to move forward. The car was created to have a small rearview mirror and a big front windshield so we took the best from the back and saw the window of opportunity in front of us.

**Focus Forward – Develop Your Pivot Plan** - There is an old saying; “if you don’t know where you are going, how will know when you get there?” You built your business once and you can rebuild it again. This is a great time to look at opportunities to pivot based on your new realities. Ask yourself these four questions:

- 1) What did you always want to try, correct or change in your business?
- 2) What ideas have your team and customers given you and you never tried?
- 3) Who you can collaborate, seek funding from or partner with for your business?
- 4) What shifts have happened in your marketplace that you can leverage?

Steve Jobs would say; think, act, and be different. Open yourself to innovate, collaborate, and then start making things happen. One more Woodism; “The only way to get out of a hole is to start filling it.”

**KATHLEEN WOOD**

**PARTNERS**

**BUILDING SALES & COMMUNITY IN A CHANGING WORLD**

**Founder Faith** – *We are truly all in this together.* We all need a lot of faith. Faith in ourselves, each other, our businesses, customers, and community. It is so important even in the most difficult times to keep our faith for a better day. Here is a mantra I tell myself at the beginning of my work day and then many more times during the day and maybe it will help you:

You must take care of yourself for you, your family, friends and team they need you,  
You are never alone there is always someone to call,  
Your leadership is needed as the world needs leaders,  
You can manage today and plan for tomorrow,  
Your work is meant to help the world – keep moving forward

What will your mantra be? Take a moment and write what comes to your mind to remind yourself once, twice, or many times a day what truly matters most!

This is just one moment in time not for all time. There is always time to connect to love, joy, and happiness. As our lives have been impacted by an invisible deadly virus. We most move forward being impacted by an invisible loving force of faith!

If you are a Small Business Owner in deep crisis please seek professional help – your family and friends are here for you and we need you. If you are a Small Business Owner and you would like to talk to other Small Business Owners, please email me at [Kathleen@kwoodpartners.com](mailto:Kathleen@kwoodpartners.com). I am setting up a Small Business Owner Circle for connection, community, and collaboration. No strings, no sales, just support!

As one Small Business Owner to another, I also look forward to brighter days when .00 is at the end of a revenue number and not the beginning! Until then, we are all in this together and let's keep moving forward with great health, pivot plans, and faith!

**About Kathleen Wood** - Kathleen Wood, is the CEO and Founder of Kathleen Wood Partners, a growth strategy firm specifically focused on working with Founders, Entrepreneurs, Small Business Owners and Franchisees. Kathleen has been committed to small business success for over 20 years. She continues to be even more committed to small business success today as America is built on small businesses.

Kathleen is also the Co-Founder of Suzy's Swirl, a family-owned and operated frozen dessert retail company in Lake Bluff, IL. Previously, she was the President and COO of Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers, leading the company before, during, and the recovery from Hurricane Katrina. Personally, and professionally Kathleen knows the challenges of small businesses in trying times because she is leading her own businesses in real-time and working with her clients across the country as everyone bands together to navigate these unprecedented times.

***Please keep safe, healthy, and moving forward – we are all in this together!***