

with columnist Fiona Walsh



## To grow your dream, lead your team

*Take the leap from business owner to CEO with confidence and vision*

She had been working for the competition 10 years when she got the idea.

She looked at the market and saw the need for a company that provided excellent customer service. Her vision was to provide products and customer service that would make spa owners successful; the more successful they were, the more successful her company would be.

Five years ago, Karen Engelage launched Beauty Solutions ([www.beautysolutions.ca](http://www.beautysolutions.ca)), a wholesale beauty supply company. Karen has seen her dream grow from a virtual office to a seven-figure company with a warehouse, showroom, training facility, customer service staff and a sales team.

But Karen admits that her business growth stagnated for a while when she was trying to do everything herself – selling, accounting, shipping, customer service and administration.

To save money, Karen kept staff to minimal levels. She fell into the trap that so many entrepreneurs do. They keep acting as a small business owner instead of moving into the role of CEO and leader.

I've seen it happen many times. You start a business. Money is tight, so you do everything yourself. Finally, when you are ready to crack up, you bring on a staff member. But by then things are so busy you don't really have time to lead or manage properly. You just throw them into the fire and keep working harder and harder.

The biggest hurdle for many business owners is making that leap from being part of the team to becoming a CEO and managing your team. It's like being an acrobat in Cirque du Soleil: you need to make that death-

defying leap from one moving swing to another. But it's scary. And a lot of business owners don't make a successful transformation into the CEO role.

How did Karen manage to do it so successfully? I asked her to share her secrets for CEO beauty sleep:

Have a clearly defined vision of what you are building. Know how many sales you want to make, what kind of customers you want to attract, the type of corporate culture you want to create. Then be able to clearly articulate this to your employees.

As a leader, you set the tone for the company. Karen's vision was to offer preferred pricing, bigger purchasing power, and superior customer service, and that is what her team focuses on building.

Get very clear on what your business model is. An effective CEO develops the habit of "getting the right things done." One of Beauty Solutions' biggest growth curves happened when it went from carrying 100,000 products down to six lines that staff educate and service their clients on. Now, when people approach the company about carrying new products, Karen and her team ask: "Does this product fit in with our business model?" And, "Will our customers want it?"

"Before I would have taken them on automatically and then changed our processes to make the product work," Karen recalls. "Not any longer."

Be confident, she adds. "Now that I see the potential for my company I take action to get us there. Before, when making decisions, I was afraid of offending people or not being liked, which led me to make a number of decisions that were bad for the

business. A real turning point came for me when I realized: 'I am liked. I am fair.' "

That day, Karen gave herself permission to lead her team. She's never looked back since.

"I welcome input from my team on new products and marketing programs, but I realize that the buck stops with me. I no longer make decisions based on emotion. I look at the business case, and if it makes good financial sense we do it. There is a tremendous feeling of success that comes from stepping into a leadership role and seeing the people around being motivated by your vision."

So there you have it: three simple rules for turning yourself into a CEO. Peter Drucker, the management guru, pointed out that there is no single "effective personality" for being a great CEO. It's more a matter of deciding to take on the mantle and doing the right things to create a great company every single day.

*Fiona Walsh is one of only three business coaches in North America approved to provide the highly successful and popular Ghost CEO coaching program. An expert in sales and business development, she offers tips for growing your business at [www.fmwalth.com](http://www.fmwalth.com). Fiona Walsh is not related personally or professionally to Michael Walsh.*

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