

SPOUSES

The 5 Commandments of Running a Successful Business With Your Spouse

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Being an entrepreneur comes with a unique set of challenges but running your business jointly with your spouse can take that to a whole different level. Can this be a successful venture both personally and professionally? Absolutely. But it must be done with a great deal of care.

Here are the five commandments you need to follow:

1. Division of labor

In your personal lives, you may have a very casual division of labor (say, one cooks dinner and the other helps with homework), but it's critical that you don't let that stretch into your business life. Having specific roles

and responsibilities is key and you must ensure your team members know who the ultimate decision-maker is to keep productivity flowing.

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As owners and spouses, you must be steadfast when you divide the duties and then hold each *other* accountable. In our particular case, we each own a specific KPI (key performance indicator) for the business. David staffs our accountant team and ensures each one is performing at the highest level while Carrie focuses on new customer acquisition numbers. While either person can and should input on approach and strategy, there is no question on who makes the final call.

2. Setting work (and personal) hours

Create specific work hours (and non-work hours) as well as explicit meeting times to discuss the larger business metrics. When we first started out, we talked about business *nonstop*. But now we have a meeting each Friday where we do the "week in review" and brainstorm areas that need a bit more focus and attention. This is also the time to go through our specific to-do lists for each other. While we obviously talk throughout the week about what's happening, we save important conversations, such as the strategic marketing plan, for our meeting. We never discuss it

over dinner or while bathing the kids!

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3. Pretend you aren't working together

Ask your partner how their day went. Don't assume that because you are running the company together you'll each have the same experiences day-to-day. Focus your commentary not on the particular subject but on how your spouse is *feeling* about it. Try to act as if they've come home from work and you really don't know how their day went and let them talk about it. Be supportive and don't always try to fix their problems - - sometimes we all just need to vent. Lastly, don't talk about work all evening or weekend. This may be the hardest, but most important, thing to do.

4. Create your own space

Have your own working space and routine. Just because you work together doesn't mean you have to *be* together all day long -- that could be a recipe for disaster in the long run. In the beginning, we had an office and sat next to each other, chatting each time something came up. Over the last five years, we've developed our own rhythm and routine and surprisingly enough, don't interact much during the work day. While that may seem odd, it helps us stay focused on our specific tasks and responsibilities and is ultimately more productive for both of us.

5. Reap the rewards

Appreciate your unique relationship. The entrepreneurial lifestyle can be intense and having someone to share it with helps make it more manageable but also rewarding -- sharing your passion for the business with the one you love can be powerful.

Also, don't forget to celebrate your successes together! When you reach important milestones or exceed your expected revenue for the month, it's time to set work aside and toast your success. Whether it's at home or out on the town, revel in your success. You deserve it.

When working with your spouse, remember that your professional success is tied to the same principles of personal success: You need to be true partners in order to thrive and prosper.

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