

# According to Wolfgang, My Business

Expert advice on successfully starting  
and sustaining your small business,  
with an equestrian twist

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1. Business & Investing

2. Small Business & Entrepreneurship





# Introduction to the Author

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**M**y objective in writing this book is to offer the many who know my father, Wolfgang (Wolf) Schinke, an opportunity to follow his journey over the years and share the stories of his success as he pursued his dream. In doing so, he learned from his experience and I have tried to capture that to pass on to anyone dreaming of starting their own business or adding advice to those who already started a business. His experience is in the horse world but much of his advice is not specific to horses. His advice can be considered for any type of small or start up business.

Although this book encompasses many significant experiences Wolf recalled, much of it is focused on his second business called The Horse People, and their successful years. These were also the years most filled with achievements and milestones. During this book writing process, we scoured boxes and envelopes of photographs, countless inspiring memories of events, and recollections of the many people who touched his life. I know he is hopeful these people who touched him as much as he touched them will have an opportunity to read this book.

We also researched what other experts might say about sport, marketing, competitiveness, fitness and many other topics to ensure opinions of other professionals were offered. We were able to draw expertise first hand from many friends and acquaintances we know personally and

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are hopeful this gives the particular areas discussed more credible opinions. It appears some of “According to Wolfgang” input does not sound like him but he very much wanted to offer a modern opinion that he would have supported had he been in business today.

My love of horses began very early and not necessarily as a result of my father talking about horses. I believe one can be born with a passion and it gets developed when a parent encourages it. Alternatively, my passion for the business world hit me much later and quite by accident when I went from health services to sales leadership. My leadership role evolved to a successful senior executive role in the private and public sector. Wolf’s influence was always there.

Many will say I have been lucky. I do not see any of my accomplishments, either with horses or business, as luck. It has taken a focused and determined mindset coupled with plans and goals, to achieve what I have. I also believe attitude is everything and with a strong positive attitude, and determination, one can achieve almost anything. My goal, for example, to pursue my MBA sat with me for 10 years while my children were young and finally, the timing was right. For almost three years I worked by day and studied by night and weekends and felt very accomplished to graduate in June 2005. I would not change the sacrifice my family and I made for this achievement. Although not often discussed, I thank my father for instilling in me an unstoppable pursuit of wanting to achieve whatever goals I wanted to reach. Looking back, I accomplished whatever I set out to do.

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The idea for this book came about while visiting my father over two years ago (December 2017). We were making small talk and comparing the differences between his generation, my generation and today's generation. When I challenged him on some of his insights, he began to recollect examples of what motivated him as a youngster and about some of the dreams he had, and achieved, that many years ago. It struck me at that moment. I needed to capture his experiences and wisdom! The writing of this book began that very day and this project has involved hours of interviews, research, writing workshops and reaching out to the many people that knew him.

Each chapter contains information about my recollections or what Wolf shared with me regarding his memories and at times, included our research and my perspective as well as personal experiences. In the "According to Wolfgang" sections, he adds stories in his words and recommendations, for the entrepreneur. These are Wolf's perspective and are sometimes supported by detailed facts that he (we) researched. While we tried to tie the story telling and the business lesson, the content was not always available. We are hoping the reader can tie the entire book message together. There is even a note section at the back. Enjoy!

# Acknowledgements

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I would like to thank the many family members and former students who contributed their memories and insights. I received so many wonderful comments. It was very touching to both me and Wolf.

I also appreciate my father's patience sitting at the kitchen table for hours on end; sometimes for 4 or 5 days straight while we discussed, reminisced, researched and debated the facts that went into this book. Since we live on opposite sides of Canada, some of our discussions were online and Wolf was sent assignments which he diligently completed on time. Wolf became very proficient at text messaging and much preferred this to emailing. Thank goodness for his iPad (which he calls "The Pad")!

My step mother, Bev, supervised many of our conversations and was able to recollect the detail when my dad could not. Her skill at remembering names and places from years ago served as an important contribution you will read in this book. The fact she pursued her Master's Degree while running a busy camp and business is impressive and as you will read in the pages ahead, her expertise was appreciated and well utilized in the training of camp councillors and business operations.

Thank you to my husband, Brian, who assumed I would not join him after dinner but rather sit in my office for several



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hours each evening writing, researching, rewriting and rereading. Cheerfully every day he would ask me how the book was coming along and never suggested I was proceeding rather slowly. He was also instrumental in some of the technical detail converting my document to one Amazon would approve. Not an easy task when self-publishing, at least for the first time.

Finally, thank you to those who took the time to read my first, second, third, fourth and fifth drafts and offer valuable feedback. In particular, my daughter Kirsty was instrumental in helping me improve the sequences and formats. That is not to mention the editing and correction of grammar. Thank you too, to my friend Darlene, who offered some great suggestions and corrections I noted. I believe one can edit a book forever but at some point, it needs to be released. Here we are.

I truly hope many of you who read this have somewhat of a history with the topic, with Wolfgang or with small business and can relate to the stories and advice given. Considering the power of a community, perhaps we can get this book circulated with as many Horse People alumni as possible. I appreciate your support.

...Kris



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## Chapter One

# An Entrepreneur Starts with a Plan

“The Beginnings; Meeting Canada”

**M**y father, Wolfgang, (more commonly known as Wolf), who is 90 years old at the publishing of this book, always has sensible and interesting advice to give. He is a born story teller too. What makes someone a good storyteller? Story telling may be something we all do naturally, but there really is a difference between good story telling and great story telling. Great story tellers exude perceived animation and ownership about their stories. The story teller is able to appeal to their listeners imaginary and visual senses; essentially painting a picture. Some story tellers are so engrossed and passionate about their stories, they appear to be on a mission to convince the world their story is extremely important and meaningful to everyone. That describes my father's story telling abilities and all of a sudden on a visit to him in Ottawa just over two years ago, it occurred to me others might delight in reading about the wisdom his advice stems from. He is a natural entrepreneur, a go-getter and very confident in getting what he wants. These are traits that spurred him on in life and made him a successful business man and entrepreneur.

He always says "have a plan"; without a plan you have nothing. A plan might be a dream, a goal, a vision but it is something you would like to achieve in the future. Once you

have your plan, know the "W's". Where do you want to go, what do you want to do or achieve, why do you want to do this, when do you want to start and/or finish and who are you catering to? Of course, "How" is the biggest question of all but as Wolf says, this can't be answered until the plan is decided. As the quote (unknown) goes "A dream written with a date becomes a goal. A goal broken down into steps becomes a plan. A plan backed by action becomes reality". A plan that is thought about, dreamed about, talked about and researched becomes a passion. A passion becomes an emotion and a strong emotion can be compared to a fever. This might become an obsession but a good obsession that creates a sense of urgency to get the plan underway, despite obstacles or short comings.

When I asked him if he really had a plan in 1950 when he immigrated to Canada from Germany, he immediately replied, "Yes! My plan was to come to Canada, to become fluent in English, get a job and one day have an equestrian facility because this was my lifelong dream. I considered many areas of Canada and was told when I was on the boat to Montreal that "Germans settled in Kitchener, Italians in Montreal, Eastern Europeans in Winnipeg, Chinese in Vancouver and French in Quebec City". He still decided on Montreal since he claimed his research confirmed it was the best place to start a new life. The ability to research in those days was somewhat limited but he landed in Montreal so it was immediately "home". Montreal was the most cosmopolitan city in Canada and appeared to welcome newcomers. Moving anywhere else would have been a chore after travelling across the pond, as they say when arriving from Europe. He knew other friends and family members would soon be immigrating and wanted to be sure

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he was there to greet them and make their first touchdown spot as simple as possible. Now Immigration Canada officials steer new immigrants on where to settle and even promise to expedite landed immigrant status if candidates settle in areas that have a shortage of workers. Organizations also exist that help new immigrants with items such as banking in a new county, resume preparation, customs and cultures in the workplace and job searches. I was quite surprised that he had such a focused plan since I never realized an equestrian facility was a dream my dad had from a young age. Accomplish his plan he did; his first equestrian facility opened in 1967.

I believe he chose to stay in Montreal because he told me stories of his first days in that city walking from the ship, Arosa Kulm, east on St. Laurent Boulevard which turned into Park Avenue. At the Delicatessen Schwartz's, now world famous, he turned into a small side street called Laval Street and saw a sign "Room for Rent". After being shown a large and sunny room looking onto the park, he signed an 8-week lease. Little did he know his landlord had three daughters of marriage age that still lived at home and perhaps she figured he might be a "suitable suitor". His \$5 a week rent included breakfast and of course, the daughters attended. It is likely the mother insisted. He moved out of town before he became that suitable suitor! Although for the short term he did accept a job as a dishwasher and cleaning boy for a classy restaurant on Park Avenue. Luckily dinner was included so he did not have to spend much of his income on meals! He has many colourful stories to share about his first few months in Montreal and area.

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His goal to get a job was accomplished quickly. Shortly upon arrival in Canada, Wolf was on a train to Kenora, a small town in north western Ontario, at the Manitoba border, courtesy of the employment service who was helping him. At that time, Kenora was an important city to the lumber industry and they were actively recruiting lumberjacks. Wolf worked with a partner cutting down trees and was paid by the cord. They lived in a hut in the forest near their cutting assignment and once per week would walk two kilometres to the main camp to collect provisions. Once winter hit and operations were shut for the season, Wolf's co-workers told him to head to Timmins for work. Another "exciting" job was available working in gold mining. He was assigned to an elderly and tenured worker who taught him the trade and winter passed quickly as he worked long hours deep down in the gold mine. His first year in Canada passed quickly and by now he had some money in his pocket that he felt he could face a successful future in Canada. He purchased an old, but safe (in his opinion), car and charged a few co-workers to drive with him as they drove back to Montreal. His first year in Canada was an experience and exposed him to some of Canada's natural beauty and size. Wolf felt wiser and was convinced he landed in the greatest country in the world!

I am not sure what makes a person an entrepreneur but Wolf was certainly one. Or perhaps if one is a good dreamer, this makes one appear an entrepreneur? According to Brian Armstrong ("Successful Entrepreneurs"), being a successful entrepreneur means more than starting new ventures every other day. It means the right attitude towards a business and the determination and grit to achieve success. A successful entrepreneur has a strong inner drive that helps him or her to

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succeed. An entrepreneur is excited by the prospect of work. They always have a strong drive to succeed and overcome obstacles. They not only set big goals for themselves but it is also safe to say that they are actually committed to achieving them regardless of the countless setbacks that occur. A successful entrepreneur always has a strong sense of self confidence and a healthy opinion of their skills and abilities. Their personality is assertive and strong. They are always focused and do not really dilly dally with the issues at hand. This is what makes them different from the rest.

An entrepreneur is always on the lookout for new innovations and ideas in order to emerge as a winner. They should constantly reinvent themselves and think of better ways to run a business and improvise on the products and services offered by them. According to entrepreneur John Hope Bryant, “An entrepreneur works 18 hours a day to keep from getting a (real) job”. Bryant’s advice, well after Wolf’s early days in Canada, describes Wolf well. Bryant says, “Be nuts, believe in you, vow to never be poor, make friends everywhere, redefine success, have confidence and empower others.” It is as if Bryant and Wolf somehow taught each other!

Another important quality of a successful entrepreneur is openness in adopting change. They should not be headstrong and stubborn when it comes to choosing other options. Change is the only thing that is constant in business and no one can make profits on old methods, or at least not as much. A big change for Wolf was learning a new language. Although Germans all learn English in school, he had not had the opportunity to practice much so his English was not fluent. Movie theatres were a great help. On

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Sundays, Wolf found a movie theatre where movies were three for the price of one. Guess where he spent his Sunday's? In later years and once he was in business, he joined networking and public speaking organizations like Masons and Toastmasters. Eventually he went on to take courses at Loyola College and McGill University.

Competition should never scare an entrepreneur. In fact, competition is what a successful entrepreneur thrives on. Monopoly is never a good thing. This is because in a monopoly there is no scope for improvisation or change. An entrepreneur should be highly motivated and energetic. He or she should always be on the go. At the same time, the commitment levels have to be pretty high. Only when a person is motivated can he do justice to his line of work. Unfortunately, monopolies in business today are not uncommon; despite the law against. When a seller faces no competition, consumers have few, or no, options. Most of us do not realize that there are consumer monopolies that exist today. For example, Luxottica, a manufacturer of glasses, owns most of the market in the world. By the 80's, they started buying every eyewear company they could afford and they market their glasses under many different brands. YKK is another company who is closing in on a monopoly and although most of us have not heard of them, we use their product all the time. They produce zippers and are the largest such producer in the world. Eighty percent of the corn harvested each year in the U.S. is engineered by Monsanto. They are in the business of everything corn and corn related and don't grow it but actually engineer it to withstand the environment. Google controls almost 70% of the web search market and since its inception, has grown and branched off into email, online maps, GPS tracking systems, online data



storage and mobile phones. Combined, Microsoft and Yahoo own less than 30% of the market, as a comparison. Social media has never been considered ripe for a monopoly, over 70% of online adults use Facebook. Microsoft is another powerhouse, albeit not as strong as it once was, and claims 75% of market share.

Accepting rejection or constructive criticism can go a long way in making an entrepreneur successful. Criticism shows what he or she is not doing properly or where change is needed. Accepting criticism is actually a good way of improving. According to Anne Wojcicki, co-founder and CEO of 23andMe, “As a business leader, you have to be very comfortable being criticized and recognize it is not about you. It is about learning how to be even better. And who wants to be in a static state?” She recalls a conversation that you never sit back and think, “I am so great”. Great ideas can come from anywhere. Do not be afraid to replicate.

Finally, passion, resourcefulness, willingness to improvise and listen to others and strong determination to succeed is what makes an entrepreneur successful. Alternatively, a dreamer means that one spends time thinking about and planning for things that they would like to happen but which is improbable or impractical. Essentially, ideas remain a dream. The dream does not evolve into an achievement; it just remains a dream indefinitely. There is a better chance a dream can become reality if the dreamer shares his/her plans with as many people close to them as possible. The timing is likely never perfect but it is ideal to pick a date, in the future, that you would like to see things getting started, even if that means the plan laid out. There is no question; my father is not a dreamer and very much an entrepreneur!

My parents married in 1954 and shared accommodations for 18 months with relatives because they could not afford a place of their own. My sister and I were born 14 months apart and at that time daycare for little ones were not common, if even available. We lived on one salary but when a new subdivision in an affordable suburb opened, Wolf purchased a house. The house was in one of the first developments sponsored by the province of Quebec. The province offered a five percent kickback to the new home owner so the price and terms were right for my father to move his new family to this subdivision. As a matter of fact, he made a deal with the builder that if he purchased two houses, could he get a better price? That is how my aunt and uncle came to be our next-door neighbours when we moved to our first house. The area became popular with German immigrants; it is an easier life when new immigrants can help each other. My aunt did the child care and my father, mother and uncle worked outside the home. Life was wonderful as we had a big shared yard and play area plus an indoor garage. My uncle's parents owned a cottage north of Montreal in the Laurentian's and we spent many summer weekends enjoying the lake in the hot weather. It did not take Wolf long to realize after 5 or 6 years a new house would have appreciated and he sold it, making a good profit, to buy a piece of land way out in the country, 45 minutes southwest from the city of Montreal.

I had been begging for a horse since I could speak. I didn't even play with dolls as a young girl like my counterparts did. Lacking anything horse related but in love with animals, I dressed my cat and pushed him around in a doll carriage. If I

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did find a stump or log, I sat on it and pretended to ride a horse. I believe I was born obsessed.

We now owned a parcel of land, an old dairy farm to be exact, so my father purchased a horse for me. Our first horse was named Tonka and he was a gentle, big and dark coloured retired Standardbred. At that time Montreal East was being developed and an expressway was being built so existing farms were purchased by the government and developers alike. Some farms were vacated quickly so my father was able to buy Tonka at a low price. Tonka was really my horse but Wolf got as much pleasure from the horse as I did. I will never forget my father telling me he had purchased a horse. It was such an exciting event! In part, this was the beginning of the horse business!

He and his business partner each built beautiful, but affordable, homes on the farm. Our home was fairly unique, a Panabode red cedar log house with the original log inside and out. The back of the house backed onto field and forest and a large expansion was glass so the view was beautiful all the time. They fixed up an old cow barn to accommodate Tonka. Then came a pony, a rooster and eventually more critters that we could easily keep in the barn. Every morning before school and every afternoon after school, I would walk to the barn with as much water as a ten-year old could carry in two buckets and water the animals. Of course, I would feed them as well. The evening check and feed involved a flashlight since the cow barn did not have working electricity. I persevered on, however, since Tonka was the highlight of my life.

Somehow, he was not ready to build an equestrian facility so invested in what he thought might be a “get rich” business, raising chinchillas. Fur farms, which are called ranches, were popular at that time since high end fur coats were the trend. These ranches included mink, fox and chinchilla. Few remain today; the animal rights activists had a great deal of negative influence on this industry and manufacturers have been able to produce more affordable faux fur garments that most consumers prefer. Faux fur is essentially fake fur that has the appearance and warmth of animal fur. It was introduced to the market some time ago; in 1929 the first attempts at imitation were made from using alpaca hair. Now it is made from synthetic fibres such as acrylic or polyester.

The chinchilla ranch was a success thanks to some savvy initiatives to gain visibility. Although initially he thought he could sell the pelts to his brother, who was a furrier, he did not like that aspect of the business and decided to change his direction. Rather than raising these little soft animals for pelts, Wolf bought some of the best breeding males he could afford and ventured out on the show circuit showing them across Canada and the USA. Wolf also flew across Canada to purchase a black male mutation, for breeding, that, at the time, was a rare colour. None existed in eastern Canada. This animal was very valuable as a stud. There were competitions where over 100 breeders competed. As with any breeding animal competition, the chinchillas that won not only increased in value, so did their stud service rate. A top male breeder, or two, was essential to expand one’s ranch. The shows were also ideal to expand business connections and before too long, he began to sell Chinchilla starter kits that included one male, four females, cages and six months of consultation. That was more rewarding, and lucrative,

than the business of selling pelts. Wolf advertised in business start-up magazines and his venture became not only successful, but hugely popular. Like many other ventures, the fur trade business was a passing fad.

***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on having a plan:***

*From a young age I was an avid reader of travel and history adventure literature. A German author, Karl May, was one of my favourites. He published over 70 books selling thousands of copies! Set in the American West and Canadian North, his words describe the most beautiful countries in the world. For me reading his words opened up a new world! I followed the wagon trails up and down mountains, wild rivers and across the vast prairies. I was mesmerized by his stories and by his description of horses. Horses that were the main mode of transportation and also horses that were used by the northern police force now known as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).*

*The RCMP was formed in 1920 by the merger of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, founded in 1873, with the Dominion Police founded in 1868. As of 1920 the RCMP is the Canadian National Police Service and an agency of the Ministry of Public Safety Canada. The RCMP is unique in the world since it is a national, federal, provincial and municipal policing body. The RCMP was born out of a need for a national police force to implement the law in Canada's newly acquired western territories; it has since evolved into a world-renowned organization of more than 28,000 people.*

*In 1937 Assistant Commissioner Wood accompanied a contingent of men and horses to the coronation of King George. Wood was extremely impressed to see the scarlet*

*tunics of the cavalry riding black horses. At that time each troop was allocated horses of a particular colour including dark bays, dark brown, chestnut, grey and black. Wood felt that the colour combination of scarlet red tunic and black horses was a more impressive match than the past practice of using different coloured horses. The following year, when Wood became Commissioner, he directed that all future Musical Ride horses were to be black. This directive remains in effect today.*

*At the end of the war, as a teenager turning young man, I was completely lost in Germany. This was between 1945 and 1950. Universities were closed or reserved for home coming German soldiers consequently the waiting lists for entry was years long. New political groups were formed but the talk was often the same and the guilt of the Nation who caused the holocaust shamed me; I carried heavy weight on my shoulders. I needed a change and a fresh start so started my citizenship application to Canada. I mention the information about Karl May and the RCMP because that was my perception of Canada and I could not wait to follow my dream!*

*Remembering that my father promised to open an equestrian establishment with me on his retirement from the army was top of my mind. I could not see myself doing this alone in Germany; my father never returned from the war. Selecting Canada was an easy decision. After the war, I was fortunate to meet a group of Canadian soldiers in my home town. I found them very respectful and polite. One story that sticks with me is when I asked a soldier that the others addressed as "Chief" where his tribe was located and the name of it. The others in the room roared with laughter; this*

*“chief” was actually the chief Chef of the Regiment and resided in Toronto. I only assumed he was indigenous because of the title “chief”. It was indeed a good life lesson not to assume. Regardless, my exposure to these kind Canadians confirmed Canada would be the place that could allow me to follow my dreams. I believe one should hold onto a dream very tightly and never let go.*

*My love of horses was ignited by my exposure to them in my early childhood; four years old. My father, the Commandant of the local Garrison, stabled over one hundred horses as mounts for him, his officers and his soldiers. I spent many a day at the stables and the soldier grooms were informed to humour me and look after my safety. In a short time, I was allowed to ride some of these powerful horses and an equestrian was born!*

*Things are different today for those who try and immigrate to new countries. Borders are not as open and it is harder to immigrate, especially without money or specialized skills. My advice is to learn the language and study the culture if leaving your country to move somewhere new. It is the immigrant who has to fit into a new place, not the place who has to cater to the new immigrant. Social media is a wonderful resource because one can make new "friends" in whatever country or area of the country one chooses. One can even get job leads, resource leads, recommendations and advice before even deciding where to move! At one time this was considered a pen pal and communication was exchanged via mail but the outcome was really the same. Today, however, it is more likely we will have the opportunity to meet our pen pal. At one time a pen pal was a person we*

*became friendly with, across the miles, by exchanging letters. It was not likely we would ever meet this person.*

*At the end of the day, no one fulfills their dreams by accident or in error. If you really want something badly enough, live and breathe it. Research and buy books. Get to know people who can help you. Network and make personal connections with your customers. Find a mentor or coach and decide which one best suits your needs. Decide if you want someone to make suggestions and ask questions to help you make better decisions (mentor) or you want someone who will give you direction and follow up with an expectation you have followed this direction (coach). Tell everyone since it is less likely you will give up when others are enquiring how your plans are going. Learn as much as you can well before you even begin. Design the idea, whether it is a company, a trip, another person; doesn't matter. Plan what would be ideal and as you learn, you can tweak the design. Finally, keep very good records of your dream. That way you can compare when your dream has become a reality and help others by sharing your experience.*

*Ideally, if you are lucky, you have a hobby that is important to you so you can turn your hobby into a potential business, or start a business as a side line for extra cash as you continue to enjoy your hobby. If you are starting a business from scratch, and it is a hobby, it better be a passion, even a lifestyle. Be sure to ask yourself if this hobby is very personal to you, how might it evolve to appeal to your customer? When making decisions, always put yourself in your customer's shoes before you make a final decision. That gives you a start up on expertise, even if you do not have a great deal of business experience. Just the fact that you*



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*have the guts to start a business, shows you must be an entrepreneur! Having said this, be sure to realize you will have to work long hours and not punch a time clock. But, in the end, the rewards are worth it.*

*When I first started my business, my competitive students were mainly Combined Event (now called Event) riders. People would joke that event riders were jack-of-all trades but masters of none, as the expression goes. That is not the case; a horse and rider team that can successfully complete the cross-country phase are full of guts and stamina. I believe it is one of the riskiest sports that exist. That is what you will need to get started!*

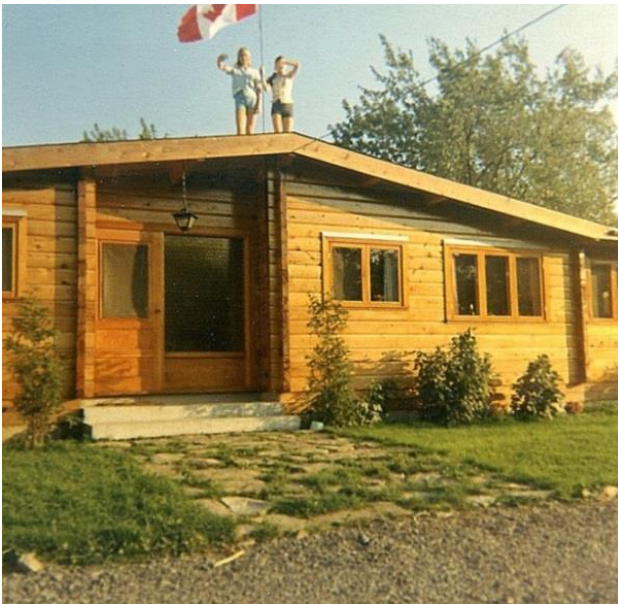
*Before starting your business be sure adopt a philosophy of looking outside your circle of comfort for new ideas, learn from the old, as they say. I looked at established horse breeding nations and made contact with the most successful breeders and training facilities in Europe to get ideas, and learn more. Build bridges; most professionals will be receptive but it takes one person, with the most to gain, to initiate the contact. As our horse business became well known, we became the “go to” business for the successful development of young people in equestrian sports. The Horse People attracted many young people from Europe who found our facility on line. As the expression goes “What comes around goes around”. Believe in this!*



According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Two

# Look for Opportunity

“Reflections of the First Summer Camp”

**W**olf sent me to summer equestrian camp when I was 11; I was delighted! It also gave him a chance to see what a summer camp looked like and what perspective I brought home at the end of the summer. I was an 11- year old consultant without knowing it! I had plenty of suggestions to share with my father after attending a month of summer equestrian camp. First and foremost, food has to be good and abundant. Campers are active all day long and develop quite an appetite. Many campers would judge a summer camp on food alone. Secondly, the camping program has to be well organized with plenty of activities all day long. Campers do not want to sit in their cabins for unlimited hours on end but they also prefer some variety in their daily schedule. An equestrian camp might specialize in horses and horsemanship but there is no reason they can't also offer swimming lessons, arts and crafts and evening activities that keep everyone involved. Finally, summer camp staff must be well trained, especially where it concerns people skills and an interest working with children. Typically, summer camp staff will be young teenagers who may not possess life skills and leadership experience. They must, however, display an interest as demonstrated by their involvement in sports and other activities that involve a peer group or young people.

Summer camp once was a wonderful opportunity for young people to make lifelong friendships. There were likely many

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who only met up during the summer and before the days of social media, went their separate ways rest of the year. It was also an opportunity for young people to get their first jobs as camp councillors, once too old for summer camp. A role as camp councillor, or instructor for specialty camps, was a great way to recognize and develop leadership skills and even help determine an interest for a future career.

I was thrilled with the idea of my parents starting a business at our home that involved horses! I enthusiastically participated in any and all required jobs and at the age of 12, I was already teaching riding. It so happened I had the patience for it, and becoming an instructor does require patience since learning to ride with poise and finesse takes time. Yes, anyone can hop on a horse and hold on to avoid falling but being able to ride while making it look easy takes a lot of practice. I do not consider myself creative but I seemed to have the ability to create original and unique ways of learning the sport and passed this on to my students. I also found, since I always want to know the “why” behind something that if I passed on thorough explanations to my students they would engage and participate better. I believe this early experience of mine uncovered an ability that I may not have known existed. To this day, I love to teach and although I have never been a teacher, or trained as one, I have found myself in a teaching role throughout my entire working life. Even now, having left the business world, I enjoy teaching riders and horses, mentoring business professionals and sharing my business expertise with others.

Both my parents and their business partners kept their full-time jobs and bit by bit they built a residential summer camp facility for children specializing in equestrian sports. They

bought left over pre-fab buildings from the World Exhibition in Montreal called Expo for residences, constructed a mess hall and kitchen, built a horse barn and riding arena and inserted an in-ground swimming pool. The summer camp was named Sans Souci! The name was significant to Wolf because it meant “without care” in French and happened to be the name of the summer palace of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia in Potsdam, near Berlin where Wolf grew up. The castle was built to fulfill King Frederick’s need for a private residence where he could relax away from the pomp and ceremony of the Berlin court. Wolf felt a summer camp for children should represent a carefree environment where there were no worries or concerns. The business name seemed to fit the goal of ensuring children enjoy a fun filled summer reflecting “Sans Souci”. Canada’s Sans Souci Riding Camp does not boast such a property but now, more than fifty years after it was started, it continues to attract young people who just want a carefree few weeks to learn to ride. It was really one of a kind in its day and still is; this residential summer camp quickly gained a reputation for being an awesome facility where children could come for two to ten weeks and learn to ride.

At the outset, the summer camp program was quite simple. Students were assessed based on their riding ability, or lack thereof, and placed into the appropriate group. Each group had a pool of horses the riding instructors assigned to students; more often than not a student rode the same horse for many of their lessons. Familiarity encourages confidence and confidence is a key element in learning to ride. Typically, the mornings involved a formal 60 to 90-minute riding lesson and afternoons involved a less formal horse related activity including trail riding, vaulting (most often described as

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gymnastics on horseback), mounted games and horsemanship theory (I.E. first aid, anatomy, feeding programs and breeds). The summer camp included a casual swimming program; nothing better than cooling off after a ride in a swimming pool! Evenings included camp fires, award ceremonies, recognition about accomplishments and movies.

Between the four adults (two business partner couples) they would take summer vacation from their day jobs so at least one owner was on site 24/7 during the summer months. Riding instructors and camp councillors were hired and eventually trained and promoted from within. I was a head riding instructor at the ripe age of 14! Many of my friends came to apply to work at Sans Souci either as camp councillors or for the equestrian friends, as riding instructors. It was a great summer job that included accommodations and the best socializing ever for that age group!

Jane M, long-time friend of sister Birgit and me, who became a staff member, writes *“I feel like the Schinke family, was my second family, and home away from home during my teenage years. Birgit (eldest daughter) was a best friend in my final years of high school and I spent many days and weekends at her house. Not only were Birgit, and Sister Kris, good friends but they also had horses. Although I had little experience with them, I LOVED horses.*

*When I first started hanging out with the Schinke's, there was just a barn with a handful of horses. It is incredible to think of the changes that happened on their property in a space of a few years! Riding rings were built, horses were purchased and trained, dormitories erected and even a*

*swimming pool installed. This became Wolf's vision of "Sans Souci".*

*While setting all this up, Wolf was still working in Montreal and on top of the one-hour commute, still took the time to train horses, and helped me out with my inexperience with horses and riding. I loved to be there, and ended up being a councillor and helping with the beginners.*

*One thing I will always be grateful to Wolf for is getting my own horse. I fell in love with a horse, Ben, the first summer I was there. In the fall, when summer camp ended, one of the campers made an offer to Wolf to buy a few of horses for their own stable. Wolf knew how much I loved Ben and let me know that Ben was for sale. I was devastated, as a teenage girl can be, and know that it was out of the question for me to buy Ben as we were not living on a farm. Wolf talked to my Dad, and offered board in exchange for my working at the barn on weekends. Thanks to Wolf I got the horse I loved and got to spend more time at the place I loved! I will always appreciate his generosity, and his recognition of how important a horse can be in a young person's life."*

One small claim to fame for Sans Souci was the Musical Ride. With Wolf's love of the RCMP Musical Ride, he thought of a fun way for riders to ride in unison with their horses, and to music. Thanks to the dedication of a local television and radio station manager, the music was arranged and an obsolete sound system was donated so practicing to music was possible. This practice went on over time and eventually there was a dedicated team of riders and horses who performed a musical ride. This ride was



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complete with matching outfits; riders wore green Sans Souci logo jackets and beige breeches (riding pants) and each rider styled their hair in two braids. Horses were decorated with traditional braided manes and their braids were decorated with green pompoms, which was unique. The team of musical team riders performed on site whenever there was an opportunity, such as camp turn around days but also at several local events, such as the Ormstown Fair. In those days the Ormstown Fair was a respectable local farmer's fair but also an A circuit horse show (highest level) and a weeklong midway. We were also invited to a suburb of Montreal, Westmount, to perform our musical ride in one of the parks. It was a huge success, not only to show people what youth are doing during the summer but also to expose Sans Souci Summer Camp to the city of Montreal. The media, including newspaper and television, served as free promotion.

Wolf soon realized horses ate all year around and his summer camp only operated for two short summer months. He expanded his business to include week end riding camps in spring and fall; he had the overnight facilities for the riding students so why not use them. He also decided to market to adult riders; there seemed to be no shortage of interest from adults who had always dreamed of riding and never pursued the opportunity. The adults stayed for the day, either Saturday or Sunday, and brought their own lunch. There were also evening one-hour lessons offered. These lessons were only offered as packages (i.e. a package of eight or ten lessons) so rider commitment was higher and cash flow was consistent.

**ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on business particulars:**

*Sometimes a business grows without a lot of pre-planning. When I expanded the chinchilla business, it was because prefab utility buildings that were used for Expo '67 in Montreal became available for purchase. With these buildings I had more space and could move the chinchillas from my basement to a big building. I could now really grow the business and that is what I did, to almost 1000 animals. I began to dislike, however, the killing of these animals to harvest the pelts. I decided to sell live animals instead and developed "starter" packages of chinchilla families to new ranchers. I also gave advice on how to care for and grow the ranch. It became almost a fad to start chinchilla ranches, as well as fox and mink ranches. The long and cold Canadian winters certainly supported the demand for fur coats. As an entrepreneur I can say pursue something you deem potentially profitable but keep in mind if your pursuit is not a passion, the odds of sustaining the business is not nearly as good. I was selling starter packages of up to 20 chinchillas when realistically, to have a profitable ranch, a chinchilla rancher should possess thousands of animals. I lost interest in expanding to this extent and realized it was time to sell the chinchilla business while the consumer demand was still decent.*

*It is common for large companies to look at acquiring smaller companies as a growth strategy and gaining a competitive edge quickly. When starting a business, ask yourself if this is a business that might be appealing to a larger company; once the new business is well established. Even if your new business is a passion that you feel you can sustain forever, do not be naive and assume that will be the case. Circumstances happen in life when we least expect; knowing*

*that a business is sellable can give you reassurance if selling becomes a temptation or a necessity. On the flip side, ask yourself if this is a business that can expand to more locations or even franchise. Maybe it already a franchise and you can see yourself purchasing another one and eventually many. Set your sites on the bigger picture to force yourself to think ahead in all aspects of the process.*

*Another question to ask yourself is whether to incorporate or just register your business. If you don't need all the corporation earnings for personal income, you can leave them in the corporation therefore deferring personal taxes on withdrawals and possibly getting a preferred tax rate. Your corporation has tax flexibility so if you sell shares in your private corporation, capital gains will be tax-free. You will not be personally liable if your business does not succeed so will not be responsible for most business debts and liabilities. Often consumers, vendors and potential partners prefer to do business with an incorporated company. The administration costs are more expensive, however, with a corporation than with a sole proprietor or partnership. These costs include incorporation costs, annual financial statements and annual corporate income tax return. Losses in an incorporated business cannot be personally claimed. Regardless of the direction you want to pursue, consult a good accountant before making a decision based on what friends or family say. You also must ask yourself about drawing a salary. Initially, and that means likely two to three years, even if small, draw something so you are eligible for Canada Pension Plan or whatever government assisted plan that exists in your country.*

*Never hesitate to ask for advice. Surround yourself with lawyers, accountants, business friends, etc. Develop what you believe is a high-level strategy and compare it with the best in your industry. Go global to do your research; you may even become a trend setter for your country or area of business. Make as many contacts as possible; much easier these days with social media and business sites such as LinkedIn. The more contacts you have, the better and who knows, you may develop a relationship that can enhance your business. I got to know Dr. Christman, the Vice-President of Hanoverian Branded Horse Sales for North America, and invited him to visit us on one of his trips from Germany to Canada. He did just that and observed some schooling sessions and offered his feedback. His counsel was appreciated. This is just one example of looking internationally and beyond a typical “backyard”.*

*It is not easy to get a business loan that has repayment options suited to your business. In my case, my peak revenues were during the summer months and my bank allowed me to make payments on my business loan that were in proportion to my revenue. In the winter months, my business broke even so my horses were fed and my staff were paid but there was not a lot of extra so my bank deferred payments until the next season began. Be sure you interview the bank; do not let them interview you. You are there for a loan but you are also there to sell the bank on your potential; they need to take a small risk and believe in you. That is why I recommend you go to a local bank and interview enough banks until you find someone who you feel believes in you. Not at the highest interest rates either. I began with the Federal Business Development Bank who no*

*longer exists but there are others out there that believe in small business.*

*I had the land and the passion and decided it was a good time for me to pursue the horse business. I purchased another 8 pre-fab buildings, scrubbed and disinfected the chinchilla buildings and converted all these to accommodations and a mess hall kitchen. What I learned is that to finance a start-up business, with a partner, is a challenge. The business grows very slowly and it is difficult to reach consensus, as a team. It is a difficult relationship which is why so many partnerships based on friendships or family relationships fail. This is not to say one cannot leverage expertise from friends or family members, or even hire or ideally, barter with them for services, but at the end of the day you do not have to rely on anyone else if you do not have a partner. I recommend a solo business and a business loan. Having a loan to pay back is the best incentive there is!*

*Be sure to spend quality time on preparing a business plan. Plenty of resources exist at your local library or online. Templates are available and it is ideal to get some qualified opinions on the thoroughness and clarity of your business plan. This plan should include short term (two years) and long term (ten years). Lending institutions will not only require a professional looking business plan before making a lending decision but also the rate of interest you pay will be based on how risk adverse your lender is. If you plan to leave your day job right away, and your source of income, it would be ideal your expenses are minimal or your family partner has a source of income that can sustain you both for the short term. Do not be tempted to spend on nice to have*

*but frivolous expenses such as a larger vehicle with company logo, out of town conferences or elaborate swag with your company logo. That can wait.*

*If you start a business that requires employees, train them well so you don't have to hire experienced employees at a higher pay. Use word of mouth to recruit employees that come with reliable references. Once you are assured the character is intact, you can do the training. Except for some speciality roles, many roles do not require skill but rather the right attitude and willingness. These are the people you are looking for! There are usually jobs unrelated to the actual service you offer so the least experienced employees can start with these roles and advance as they continue to train. Right from the start, promote the job opportunity as an experience, whatever that might be for your business. If your industry requires certification, help your best employees through that and do not overlook government grants to do so. The same goes for insurance requirements; do not cut corners where it concerns liability. What you will do is create a culture based around your vision, your attitude to your customers and your burning desire to build your business successfully and sustainably.*

*There are typically a variety of grants available for new or small businesses. Finding them requires some research but it is well worth it. Any municipal, provincial or federal agency should have information on available grants. Research these resources thoroughly to maximize what may be available to you. Join your local Chamber of Commerce to meet other business owners and operators. You should never underestimate the importance of networking and getting to know those that have the experience to help you set a*

*direction or explore an opportunity. Your local Member of Parliament can be a good resource both provincially and federally and should be knowledgeable in helping you source the appropriate grants. Contacts you make, and stay in touch with, can be an important resource. My Member of Parliament, at the time, was a big help in facilitating the approval of several grants. He was a good contact to have for many years.*

*Early on I knew if we were unique and found a way to capture attention; it would serve as an advertising venue. The Sans Souci Musical Ride did just that. There was no other local stable or facility that performed a musical ride that caught the attention of all viewers. It was less about the knowledge or appreciation of horses but rather the synchronized efforts of a group of eight teenagers riding in unison to music; and they all matched! This musical ride caught the attention of Montreal media and was featured on a local CTV television station by host, "Magic Tom". That show was known for years to come and often people would comment they saw the green jacket riders on TV. No, it was not as spectacular as the RCMP musical ride but served a good publicity purpose. Is there anything your business or service can do to stand out? Is there anything unique to you that your competitors do not do? Can you be associated with something memorable or recognizable? Today one can capture attention much more easily through social media and the internet. Regardless, the more original your business is with the objective of capturing attention, the better! Do not forget the health of our economy is tied to the success of small and mid-sized businesses.*

According to Wolfgang





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## Chapter Three

# Impact

“I Met a Wolf and I liked It”

**W**hen I was compiling this book and reached out to former students for their thoughts and memories of Wolf, long-time client, staff member and now an adult still involved in the equestrian business, sent in this essay. It expresses the tireless qualities we discuss on customer service, innovation, knowing your audience and I thought you would enjoy the story. E. E. Johnson writes *“When I was researching horse camps years ago, I came upon Sans Souci and thought to myself, a horse camp with a name meaning, “No Worries”- Could life get better than that? I think not! On my list of camps in the province of Quebec, within an easy drive of Montreal and with a good solid name, it shot to the top of my “favorites”. I was ten years old. Weeks, in truth, half a semester had been spent after school dreaming, planning and trying to find a way to get to a good “horse camp”. I didn’t even really know what that meant as far as what happened there, but inherent in “horse camp” were “horses” and to me, nothing else mattered. Coming from a non-horsey family, in fact a highly intellectual and rather anti-horsey family, I did all the leg work myself and so my parents felt compelled to reward me for my persistence (and nagging) by letting me tour my choice of camp which I had already scheduled and planned with a nice woman at “Sans Souci” on the phone who was kind enough not to discount a child drilling her with questions, as a “prank call”.*

*So, off we drove one spring afternoon, to the place of multiple horses and no worries. I remember loving that I had to jump out to open the gate (which kept in horses) before driving down their long, graveled lane bookended by enchanted woods and dark fencing before pulling into park in front of some cabins. It would come to pass that I drove that lane innumerable times for the next eight years and never once lost the feeling of excitement and happiness that bubbled into a quiet smile as I leaned into the proximity of my arrival. That first day, I stepped out onto the laneway and ran ahead of my parents to what appeared to my child self, was a huge barn. My paw on the door to the tack room, I suddenly heard a booming, cheerful voice behind me. I dropped my hand and turned to see this icon of horsemen. Big smile and hand extended, I met Wolf and it was impossible not to grin back. Years and a good two feet of height set us apart, but I still instantly felt I was more in the right place than I had ever been before. Energy and enthusiasm radiated from his extended hand. Like the barn, he seemed larger than life. I was awestruck that his “job” was to run this training center. Lucky guy!*

*I grew up in a medical family and Wolf spoke “horse” like I heard “medical” in my house. I liked him immediately. His voice had a great rhythm to it. The kind of rolling rhythm I came to enjoy when I really learned how to sit tall and still while pushing through my horses’ extended trots. Accented, rolling, jovial and knowledgeable, it could be soft or extend across multiple fields. I remember my dad winking at me to gauge my reaction and I instantly winked back. The Wolf was good. This seemingly very tall, active and smart horseman, finished his tour of what my parents were most interested in, facilities, pool, dining room all the while*

*interjecting his experience in Germany with horses and then, he spoke directly to me: “We haven’t ever had someone so young call us and set up her own appointment to see the camp. I think Jennifer would probably like to see our horses now, is this right?” I could barely nod. It was RIGHT. My chest pounded. I don’t think I drew breath while I listened to Wolf very seriously explain to me what the daily schedule was with barn management, how many hours I would get to ride a day, that I would be responsible for the care of one horse, all to myself, for feeding and grooming. That I would be taught to be a good rider. “And do you know what wolting is?” he asked. Puzzled, I shook my head. “Wolting- (Like I simply had not lived until I “wolted”) you will do wolting too, on a galloping horse.” BIG Wolf-like smile! Vaulting- which, if anyone has seen done well recently, looks like Barnum and Bailey invited Cirque du Soleil to rehearse their entire show on one cantering horse. It is not for the faint of heart. Trying to learn it is exactly the bad end of what you imagine it would be, when you have no idea how to do it. Poor Tasha, cantering along on a twenty meter circle, had more “roadrunner” outlines imprinted on her side, belly and rear end as children threw themselves every which way at her, trying to get on, hang off, kneel, drag someone else on...In a word; WOLT! I saw my father’s head roll back, his eyes skyward for a second, in the way it did when he was completely defeated. I beamed at him and my mother laughed. Then Wolf, a bear of a man, laughed too. I was sold. And, that was even before I saw the sixty horses.*

*Much the same as happened with skiing when I wanted to learn and had no choice but to get on a bus alone at 7 years old to go to the Laurentians on Saturdays, my parents were a little horrified I was so enthusiastic about going. To*

*overnight camp. With large animals. Far from where they were. I insisted. They tried to gently explain to me that I'd be "alone" at camp. No cell phones back then. It might as well have been carrier pigeon communications, they made it sound. Help was going to be far away. A shy, small child, they tried over and over to gently paint a picture for me. I, however, liked Wolf's picture better. Horses, goats, donkeys to hug and play with and care for. I was IN. There was no actual scenario where this would not be good for me. I knew it at ten and I wasn't wrong. I heard my parents loud and clear, but I heard Wolf's voice like dogs can hear a dog whistle. We spoke a language on the same frequency. And Wolf spoke to me that day with capital respect for me, for my clear determination to ride and with adult respect for my love of animals. Sans Souci was earning itself another convert. It was not merely the training I wanted, although what I did at that camp was the most fun, most deeply satisfying and important experience in growing to be the accomplished three day eventer that I eventually became because we experienced all the different ways to ride and partner with your horse, the overnight rides, the lessons, swimming with our horses, the attention of the riding staff, the authentic competition every two weeks, the teaching we did, the training of young horses and yes, the competing a few of us were allowed to do but it was more than just that, too.*

*Sans Souci was a place where people understood a child's will to learn, to love and to grow their real obsession with gorgeous, kind equestrian athletes. It was a place to learn responsibility for beings other than yourself. It was a place where you got out as much as you put in and at an age when you didn't even realize what value that held. It was a place where Wolf would have you galloping bareback over*

*cross country fences in the dead of winter with your best friends, jumping higher every round and making you and your horse feel like it was the best idea ever to be jumping four feet in a blizzard when you finished. (Don't try this at home.) He built trust, bravery and commitment between horse and rider. His wife, Ann, always had an eye out for children who might need a hug or a kind word in a solitary moment. It taught me to love community, work at friendships and respect creatures great and small. It was a place where I wasn't alone in my adoration of horses and my interest was coddled and nurtured with friends in fun and adventures whenever I was there. Fun, kind and trusting, Wolf also pushed children to trust themselves. I wouldn't say it was Lord of the Flies, but we were allowed to learn through error too, most of it smartly hidden from Wolf. I became very familiar with the cautionary phrase, "discretion is the better part of valor!"*

*The community that Wolf and Anne built is hard to repeat. They spoke to their little riders like little adults and were interested in what we had to say. We were encouraged to push our limits as riders and as horsemen/women, which paid off in the type of bravery and comfort with speed and distance that is impossible to teach to upcoming "indoor arena" riders. What made him riveting as a first coach, beside his big voice and big presence, was his product. There was nothing more that I enjoy, even to this day, than to get to the end of a beautiful summer's day having accomplished my own targets for riding and be able to sit down and watch better riders than I, train with their equine partners. At ten, I watched Wolf helping his daughter win events all around Quebec on her fabulous grey gelding, Julius Caesar. The image of an excellent rider on her*

*gorgeous knee-snapping grey, thundering across fields over all or any cross country fences in their way, made me an eventer. It made me a horsewoman. It made me a trustee of horses. I had been riding since I was three when I found “No Worries”, multiple horses, multiple dear friends, a correct riding seat and beaming joy. To finally (at ten years old) find a place where I could stay and ride for weeks at a time, riding, learning and playing with horses and friends just like me, was a brand new world. It was also the beginning of realizing a lifelong passion and extended career with horses which even as a working MBA, I am still involved with to this day. As an adult, I can’t express how many times I’ve heard “I was so lucky to have a passion”. It took me a few years to be self-aware enough to understand how it can drag you forward through life’s challenges and repeated tasks! How that passion lands you softly on the very journey that will mirror the effort it takes to be excellent in every channel through life, striving to be the best rider, human being, trainer and trustee to our equine partners that we can be. What they were saying too is, “you are so lucky to have a ‘happy place’”. No matter what was happening, I could put it in perspective through the horses, competing, caring and focus. A lot of it originated with Wolf Schinke’s kindness, respect and interest in little people who wanted to learn what he wanted to teach.*

*One simply cannot bottle the magic many of us felt growing up with purpose and fun in equal measure at his farm. If you want to be a great rider, learn to play with your horses. It’s good for them. It’s good for you and it’s vital to you both as a team. Even until recently, I always handled my own horses, groomed them, dressed them, undressed and treated them myself. It is my temple, that intimate, quiet barn time. It’s our*

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*friendship time when we are equal and not trainer and student. (The learning goes both ways, as my horses like to remind me.) It is our “quality time”. Only in competition did I accept help if I was running more than one. The practice of recognizing the feel of your horse, the growth of a laser-like eye that unconsciously studies every hair on their body for change, the ebb and flow of their energy, the observance of the way they move, stemmed from my learned love and discipline of caring for my horses, of being thoughtful of them. Being a great horseman is a journey and it started with brushing my horse three times a day at Sans Souci. And lastly, as a personal side note, vaulting back up on a galloping horse between penalty zones (back when we had them) if you had been tossed cross country or if a baby had offed you in the stable yard or even just hacking bare back and being bucked off, saved a lot of time. The “wolting” really paid off! Wolf, we were inspired by your energy, your excitement for the sport and your professionalism.”*



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## Chapter Four

# Risk Taking

### “A Big Life Change”

In 1974, and six years after starting Sans Souci, Wolf and my mother divorced and Wolf left Sans Souci behind. Wolf left Canada, and his long-time job, to travel extensively with his new partner and step children. He settled in Israel for a year before returning to Canada. He worked as a consultant designing equestrian facilities while living in Israel and gained a reputation there that made him quite well known. He taught English riding, Dressage basics and 3-Day Eventing in the Golan Heights at Vered Ha Galil Stables. Wolf personally rode a beautiful stallion and who was shown on Israeli TV. He and his students were regularly invited to the Canadian troop's mess hall for special occasions. After six months he received a job offer he could not refuse in the Golan Heights; it was a gorgeous and plush country club in Rishon Le-Zion, a suburb of Tel-Aviv. It was a great job for Wolf and he enjoyed living in a new culture and embracing Judaism; especially as a newly converted Jew himself. By this time Wolf had remarried and his new wife, Bev, was fluent in Hebrew so could help him with communication. The then Minister of Defence, Moshe Dayan, came with some of his troops for riding lessons. Wolf noticed they were reluctant to accept his direction so said to the Minister, “You are under my command here so will have to accept my feedback”. They both had a good laugh and the ice was broken.

Incidentally if a business has a good foundation and continues to be well run based on its original mission and

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vision, it can continue successfully. As much as one thinks the business cannot be successful without the original owners; that is not necessarily true. A business might be very successful with founding owners, and new owners with new ideas might make it even more successful. It may depend on additional resources applied or it may depend on external trends that work for the business. Sans Souci, over 50 years after inception, continues as a successful residential summer camp with complimenting equestrian activities throughout the year. It has since been renovated, and Wolf's original partner's daughter now runs the business with her husband. Kudo's to Sans Souci for continuing a successful legacy!

Wolf had resigned from his position with long standing employer in Montreal, E.F. Walter Limited, before traveling abroad so upon his return to Canada, he knew now was the time to resume an equestrian facility and use his past experience to expand upon future success. He had no interest in going back to work for someone else. This was a pivotal time in his life and he was willing to take the risk to start again. He and Bev researched locations and eventually travelled across Canada looking for a new start up facility they could afford, with their limited resources. They found the property they liked best near Ottawa and on the old highway 17 that linked Ottawa and Montreal. He bought land with a very old farm house, a very old cow barn and not much else. This is how The Horse People got their humble beginnings.

There was not a lot of thought required to name their new facility "The Horse People". They wanted an all-encompassing name that encouraged all "horse people" to

feel welcome. They knew this new facility would be a diverse facility that was more than a summer camp. In choosing a name, Wolf and Bev wanted something catchy that created a vision. They wanted something easy and flexible to meet the plans they had. Finally, they wanted something easy to remember and as short as possible. When they settled on the name, they knew it would become a facility unlike any other; a true “horse people” facility!

Wolf's wife, Bev, was a former summer camp director so she set about creating the summer camp programs while Wolf designed the new stables and bought the horses. Since he was well known in Quebec and Eastern Ontario, he supplemented his minimal income travelling to other stables for clinics and coaching sessions. It did not take long for his reputation to precede him and interest in his new business grew. He had learned a lot about starting a summer equestrian camp so capitalized on that knowledge to get started. He also knew what mistakes not to repeat and since he had already owned a camp, he knew how to forecast revenues for summer residential camp, horse boarding and all other relevant areas of operating a stable and farm. It was not as difficult to put together the business plan as it was the first time around.

The Horse People sat on 170 acres of mature farmland and forest as well as 150 acres of pasture leased from a neighbor; another 18,000 acres of forest called Larose Forest bordered the farm. The Larose Forest was planted in 1928 when a local agricultural scientist planted on abandoned farmland. The soil in that area was sandy which was ideal for red pines. The more poorly drained areas better supported white cedar. It was a sanctuary for birds,

wild life, streams and a haven for horseback riders and in winter, cross country skiers. The property included swampland and beautiful mature trees. Bev's late brother was internationally recognized as a Fish Farm Designer so was happy to consult on how to convert the swamp to a nice pond stocked with fish. Fish in a new pond should be stocked in a particular order, starting with minnows. Bluegill and bass can follow. Before long ducks and swans swam in the pond that was fed by an underground stream. An aeration fountain was installed to keep the water aerated; this increases and stabilizes the amount of oxygen in the water and has other beneficial effects on pond health, including benefits for the fish.

Pine trees were planted along the drive way and a spacious sand parking lot was fenced with a white picket fence. A large sign announcing the equestrian centre name was hung at the entrance. Paddocks were designed for the horses and a large grassy field beside the main entrance was designed as a jump ring. The farm house and cow barn (now converted to horse stalls) were painted a dark brown with white trim. Grass and flowering bushes were planted anywhere a sand driveway and parking lot didn't exist. Finally, big whiskey barrels containing red geraniums were strategically placed everywhere. The first impression of a visitor was fantastic! Wolf knew all too well this was important.

Their objective was to become accredited with the Canadian Camping Association (CCA) and the Canadian Equestrian Federation (CEF). The CCA is a non-profit national federation that represents over 800 camps across Canada. Its mission is to be a national federation dedicated to the

growth, development and promotion of organized camping for all populations in Canada. Its objectives are to further the interests and welfare of children and youth, to encourage the development and maintenance of high standards and to provide guidance, advocacy and resources for camp leaders. When a camp becomes accredited and remains in good standing, The CCA will list the camp on its website. This listing includes location and camp speciality making it easy for those interested in a particular type of camp to find it. Most provinces also have a Camping Association with similar mission and objectives.

The CCA has a long list of standards that must be followed, including compliance with relevant provincial and federal government legislation pertaining to food service, health, water quality, transportation, water safety, building codes, fire codes, labour laws and human rights. In addition, accredited camps meet the additional standards set by their provincial camping association. Inspections are impromptu so there is not time to prepare and usually occurs during the peak of the season so an inspector can see the camp in full operation. The chef needed to be licensed, meal preparation and specific dietary needs had to conform to standards; drinking water had to pass inspection so samples were taken, lifeguards had to be certified and a curriculum had to exist. The children's health and welfare were always the CCA's priority. Knowing that a camp is accredited gives a parent confidence that the camp is qualified to care for their child.

The CCA also hosted an annual camp "expo" or trade show where camp owners could attend and meet parents face-to-face. Typically, private schools and organizers of kids'

programs also attend this annual trade show so it proved to be an excellent resource for Wolf and Bev to not only meet potential customers but to network and promote their business. In today's environment, there are fewer overnight camps so a trade show may not occur in major cities but most accredited camps do host an Open House. Parents should go online, with their children, and decide which are feasible to attend. Of course, it is a good idea to seek camps that meet the interests and needs of the child.

The camp Expo was not the only trade show they attended to promote their camp. They took advantage of every opportunity including a Trade Show organized by the Canadian Government for Canadian businesses to promote their businesses, both locally and abroad. They advertised in the newspaper, equestrian trade papers, posters at Equestrian Retail stores and mail outs. That was just at the beginning; the advertising, marketing and promoting of The Horse People became much more extensive over the years.

Wolf and Bev also attended professional development opportunities promoted through the Canadian Camping Association. There is also an association for professionals for children's camps called Society of Camp Directors. Established in 1969, they exist to promote research, education and professional practices in the operation of children's summer camps. The networking as a result of the many contacts made by Wolf and Bev at these events led to invitations to present themselves. With the goal of increasing the knowledge of camp directors and senior camp staff, Wolf and Bev made themselves available to present and speak at any opportunity related to this cause. Wolf would attend, Bev would speak. Now it is not that Wolf was shy to speak; Bev

had the expertise as camp director and to Wolf's dismay, these conferences were not about horses!

Eventually they travelled as far as Calgary a few times to attend Spruce Meadow's famous "Masters" Competition each September to promote the Horse People facility at Spruce Meadow's trade show. This competition attracts riders and tourists from all over the world and is accompanied by family entertainment, food venues and trade show vendors. These vendors come to showcase their products and services and range from artwork to vehicles and everything and anything horse or animal related in between! This was a great marketing opportunity, albeit pricey with flights, vendor fees, hotels and meals. Spruce Meadows was a former feedlot purchased by the Southern Family in 1971 and five years later hosted its first of many annual tournaments. By 1979 annual attendance made history by reaching over 50,000 people.

A large expense was buying the horses required for summer camp. Six months before the first summer camp session began, Wolf attended a local farm auction regularly to purchase horses destined for slaughter. Wolf also knew he needed a few months to get these horses trained and conditioned and most importantly, safe as school horses. His entourage of interns and working students would start by ensuring the horses were safe on the ground; this is an equestrian expression that means a horse can be led with a rope, groomed while standing still and handled around people and other horses. When that was confirmed, horses would be saddled up and walked around for some time before attempting to mount and ride. Once mounted, the training would begin. This was slow and steady to ensure



## According to Wolfgang

basics were covered and the horses associated all training attempts as a good experience. It was good basic training for the horse and better training for the riders. It is rare for a rider to have the opportunity to experience a roster of horses and learn to adjust one's technique to the personality and disposition of the horse. It is called mileage; and not specific to equestrian sports.

Wolf was able to attract business from both Montreal and Ottawa; his farm was almost half way between the two cities. He also had a number of clients from Toronto and the U.S.; the farm was merely a five-hour drive away from Toronto and even closer to the U.S. border. He decided he had the facility and capacity to create a very unique equestrian facility; one that offered almost anything related to the sport. With his experience starting Sans Souci and working in Israel, he knew he did not want to limit his new business to strictly a summer camp. He began to plan how he could pursue the various revenue streams that were possible with an equestrian facility to ensure there was revenue all year around. With this new business, he and Bev did not have a full-time income to depend on. The Horse People was their full-time income and they also had two young children to support.

### ***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on getting started:***

*I needed capital to get started; I consulted with several banks until I found one that supported small and start-up businesses. A big mistake start-ups make is under financing and then falling short. My proposal included the grand scheme; a new and modern barn, indoor arena, residential cottages and in-ground swimming pool. My vision was*

*presenting a park like setting giving visitors a "wow" impression upon arrival. I believe a first impression image is critical. As the expression goes "you never have a second chance to make a first impression". Present your business as you would want a new client to remember. People remember in images; if the images are strong you have overcome a big step. Not only did I need capital for new buildings and structures but for equipment to complete much needed landscaping. I advise to go big; get it done early. Build all requirements of the business; clients do not want to know what is to come but rather what is available to them now.*

*Before you approach a bank for a business loan, be sure to have researched insurance requirements. Also, be sure to shop around. If your business is unique, as mine was, research and question everything. If you have a conversation with a broker or insurance company directly, request this in writing so you know your contract is what you expected. In today's environment, insurance is a relatively high expense, in many businesses so getting as much value as possible is important. Going forward be mindful of the premium increases year over year. Sometimes what seems to be a great price is not the best price when factoring in annual increases. If possible, try and get referrals from other owners in a similar business.*

*So many good businesses fail or remain mediocre because the location is not ideal. It may be tempting to select a location based on price, especially when new business access to funds is limited. The fact remains, no matter how knowledgeable the business owners or how appealing the service is, if the location is not convenient, traffic will not be*

*adequate. There are many factors that go into picking a business location including ingress and egress (especially if situated off a busy road), draw of potential clients, access to signage (i.e. road), parking and drive by appeal. Other considerations for some businesses can be access to public or private transit. It is also important to learn what the area expansion involves, if any. Is the business in an area that might be prime real estate in the future or is it in an area that might be expropriated for public expansion (i.e. train rail or highway)? The research before investing in land or building is very important.*

*A business name is important when competition or multiple languages exist. My first horse business, Sans Souci, was a good name because it had a message; but a message for only those who were German, or who spoke French. It was not crystal clear how to pronounce it and unless someone looked up what it meant, did not describe the business. My second horse business, The Horse People was clear! It was obviously a business about horses and the owners were horse people! A name can play a role in capturing the attention of potential and future clients. A name that is hard to remember or does not create an immediate snapshot of what the product or service does, is risky. Imagine if the company name is common, across industries, and a prospective client tries to find you online. They may never find you. Another consideration in today's reality is ensuring that if you use your company business name, the website domain is available. Imagine if you went through the effort of incorporating the business to find out you cannot create a website with the same name. Do your homework and ensure you survey others, who are detached from you and your passion, to see what the name means to them. I highly*

*recommend a business name have clarity, simplicity and be easy to translate or universally understood. Test your business name with your friends, neighbours, social media connections; where ever you can find people who will be candid. If they don't like your business name suggestions, they must tell you why. If they like or love your business name suggestions, they must tell you why. The time to do a survey is worth it. Imagine registering or incorporating a business, paying for a logo, designing letter head (no one really does that any more) and buying business cards to learn there is something amiss with your business name?*

*Besides a business name that is catchy, consider a slogan. A slogan that is original and distinctive can help your brand and give you a unique identity. Think of something that people might remember or if they hear again, they will think of your business. Develop something that grabs attention and as short as possible; under 5 words. According to consumer agency, Yankelovich, consumers receive between 3000 and 5000 advertisements each day ranging from television and print advertising to social media and blogs. A slogan needs to cut this chatter and get consumer attention, quickly. Make it punchy. At The Horse People we found our slogan "follow your dream" caught on, made the statement we sincerely meant, and met the requirements advertisers and marketers recommend.*

*I advise partnerships (including spouses) have varied expertise and different strengths to enhance the business. This is the only way a business can be as well rounded as it needs and hiring consultants for expertise can be avoided. That is the beauty of pursuing a passion; I had my horses and Bev had her camp. That is an ideal match! You may*

*have a partner who does not compliment the business needs or matches your expertise. It would then be important to take the time to attend seminars, conferences, online learning and enough research to feel confident in a particular, and necessary, area. In today's online environment, there is knowledge available but the learning needs should be recognized before a business gets going. The odds are a passion or strong interest helped you start the business; now be sure you acquire any missing skills that cannot be covered by simply having a passion.*

*When we started The Horse People, we did not own anything. Besides the investment we needed to make in horses, we also needed horse equipment. I did not know how I could invest in 40 to 50 saddles and other items required, such as bridles and halters. After some research, I went to the source and travelled to India to buy saddles and bridles for a fraction of the price. Even after paying airfare, accommodations and shipping, the equipment was still a bargain. The experience was a trip of a lifetime. I was taken aback at the poverty and the amount of people, especially children, begging at every street corner. Getting around was difficult because of the congestion and the atmosphere felt dirty and pollution was evident. From contaminated drinking water, I contracted Hepatitis E as a result of my trip so I really did pay the price despite saving thousands on tack (any equipment used for the horse). None the less, my message is to become resourceful. Do not spend all of your investment or income to start your new business. If you are cash deprived, you will find it very stressful and difficult to continue going. If your business does not take off as predicted, you can lose investments and really struggle. Cut*

According to Wolfgang

*as many corners as possible when you first start out without compromising basic products and services.*

*I advise, when first starting a new business, to recruit as many family members and friends as possible to help you. Make a long list of who you know that might have expertise or resources to contribute. These are not paying roles but rather appeal to those you have relationships with to assist. Be sure there is plenty of recognition, appreciation and food as payment. After our first year of summer camp at The Horse People we had a small list of clientele and we invited the parents of campers to help with spring cleanup. This included weeding, fence painting, jump building and painting and many other farm related chores. We promised a big party at the end and the parents could watch their children offer a riding demonstration. The turnout was beyond my expectations and this annual tradition continued year after year! I believe everyone has a sense of pride and this event surely appealed to it.*



According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang





## Chapter Five

# The Business Pyramid

“Begin with a Triangle”

**B**eing complacent was not in Wolf's nature. In the following order, he created his business based on horses and people. This took about ten years to come to fruition but the goal was always to have a business that had anything to do with horses, hence the appropriate business name. The Pyramid was designed in order of revenue and profitability contribution thus forming a foundation and building from there. Not all of the following areas of revenue were pursued indefinitely; some were discontinued when the demands decreased.

### **Summer Camp**

Kids want to have fun. The facility was a summer residential camp, with a focus on equestrian. That included fun with horses, not only serious riding lessons. The children were divided by age and ability with the minimum age being 10 and maximum being 18. There were other activities offered including recreational swimming, swimming lessons, team sports, dance lessons and art.

### **Boarding Stable**

Students who owned horses (including adults) left their horses for 24/7 care and continued lessons for training, depending on their individual goals. Services included horse care; turn out, horse training, competition coaching and veterinary or farrier supervision.

### **Hourly Riding Lessons**

These were designed for children and adults who did not own a horse but wanted to continue to learn more about riding, competitive or not. The lessons were offered year-round excluding the summer months when all focus was on the summer camp. Students were typically grouped by age (except adults) and classes ranged from three to 6 riders.

### **Week End Program**

A bus was sent to Ottawa each Saturday morning to pick up riders who would spend the day riding. The program included a morning and afternoon lesson and riders brought their own lunch. Saturday was reserved for children and youth and Sunday for adults although no bus service was provided for adults. This program ran almost all year round excluding the coldest months and during summer camp. On long weekends and school breaks the week end program also included overnight stays. A small group was accommodated compared to summers.

### **School Riding Program**

The local schools were offered an after-school program with bus pickup and delivery from and to the school; this program was considered part of the physical education program equivalent. The program was designed for beginner riders and duration was once weekly over three months to ensure enough tuition and practice was offered to allow someone to learn the basics of riding.

### **Hosting Pony Club Events**

Local pony clubs were offered the facilities to compete, including Canadian Pony Club Competitions. Since it was not practical for all competitors to bring their horses, school horses were provided for the competition. Competitors came from across Canada. Canadian Pony Club is a volunteer organization for young people who would like to learn and ride together. Pony Club has a specific curriculum designed to give members a solid foundation of horsemanship and stable management via a progression of levels one needs to graduate from.

### **Hosting Horse Shows and Tournaments**

The facility was donated for Canadian Equestrian Federation (now Equestrian Canada) recognized competitions such as Eventing, Dressage and Hunter/Jumper. The benefit was for in-house students who could compete without travel. The facility also gained considerable visibility as a result of hosting world class competitions. The undertaking was massive since these competitions were entirely planned and executed by volunteers.

### **Competitive Program**

The Horse People students travelled locally and internationally to compete in Eventing, Dressage and Hunter/Jumper gaining considerable recognition as an international training facility for Young Riders (a qualified group of successful competitors aged 16 to 21 years of age). Success was impressive from a ribbon perspective.

### **Professional Development**

Riders were prepared for "Young Riders"; a prelude for the provincial or national team. The preparation was rigorous

including travel to qualifying competitions, fitness and mental preparation. In addition, camp councillors were required to attend pre-camp professional development offered by Bev (BA with a Major in Psychology and English and a MAGNA Cum Laude Masters in Adolescent Counselling).

### **National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP)**

All Horse People riding instructors were required to attend this program and external students were also able to apply to this six-month residential program. The Internship program was offered on site for qualified and approved applicants. The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) creates a Canadian standard and allows coaches to succeed as nationally approved coaches. It is designed and delivered in partnership with the government of Canada and a portion of the program is not sport specific.

### **Hosting Clinics**

The facility was offered to qualified equestrian disciplines including well known instructors looking for a recognized facility to host two to four day clinics. The best known clinicians included Captain Mark Phillip, Ian Millar (Captain Canada) and Captain De Demeter (international coach and judge).

### **Horse Sales and Training**

Young horses were imported from Germany; horses were selected from world famous Verden Horse Auction in Verden; a city in Lower Saxony, Northern Germany. These were pure bred Hanoverian young horses, a warm blood horse breed that is one of the most successful, numerous and oldest breeds in the world. They are often first choice as competitive horses due to their potential as jumpers and

dressage competitors. Local horse owners regularly brought their horses to Wolf for training and resale as well.

### **Off Site Coaching**

Wolf earned his honorary NCCP Level 4, the highest available as per Canadian standards, and was consistently invited to riding facilities in Columbia, Mexico, Bermuda and within Canada to offer clinics in equestrian sports. He was also the Coach for the Ontario Pentathlon Team; Equestrian phase.

### **Quarantine Barn**

Given the remote location and several detached barns, the facility at The Horse People was suitable for quarantine time (up to 30 days) for horses imported into Canada from Europe via Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal. Arrangements would be made via veterinarians and only a veterinarian could approve a horse be removed from quarantine after the appropriate blood testing.

### **Tack Shop**

The summer campers were given a list of equipment they should bring including the safety aspect of their equipment such as certified helmet, hard boots, riding or stretch pants and a grooming kit for the horse consisting of two brushes, a hoof pick and a comb. An on-site tack shop was set up and offered to campers so they could conveniently purchase their equipment on site. Horse People logo t-shirts, sweatshirts and jackets were also for sale. These were a big hit and strategically changed up every year to attract new buyers.

**ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on thinking ahead:**

*Any business can expand and develop; a business should not have to maintain one narrow focus. I say make a list of possible business expansion or related products and services based on the interest and audience of the business; how far can one go? What might seem farfetched or impossible might be quite possible with brainstorming, marketing, same interest business development and trial and error. One should never limit possibilities for expansion or using knowledge/facility in addition to the core business. One should research industry trends and try to determine if this is a potentially long-term business or a short-term trend. Revisit the possibilities for expansion at least annually to stay on point with the current trends. Do not hold onto a business plan that is not working for too long. You have to ask yourself, if it is not working, is the issue a new trend, the economy or the competitive environment?*

*Besides expansion, ask yourself what products are related? Are there products or services that go along with what you offer or can your clients purchase these elsewhere? Is there a way to integrate these products or services into your business model? Can you expand by opening another location? Diversification may not be an urgent item to consider but it may be part of a survival strategy depending whether your business meets your expectations or if the external environment changes and you cannot expand as anticipated. Be very connected and involved in your industry; you may even be the one who shapes the inevitable change all industries experience. Or you may meet the person or group who wants to invest in your business, or even buy it if you are so inclined.*

*I recall when I started the business the local farming community advised a business situated in a rural area could not succeed given the limited demand locally. They were very skeptical. I knew then I could not depend on the local economy or community and committed to gain recognition first provincially, then nationally and then internationally. I was determined to expand my thought process to where the business could be in 5 and 10 years. There is no luck; success is always based on a vision and a plan. Long term success is in proportion to how effective the execution of the plan is. One must ask oneself how dedicated and devoted to execution one is. Trust your instincts.*

*Even though I could not depend on the local business area, I knew I should not abandon them either. It has never been more important to clients, employees and stakeholders that the business they endorse has a corporate responsibility program. I decided to create a Scholarship Program for local riders and offered two free summer camp sessions each year to deserving students to be recommended to The Horse People by the local Children's Aid Society. The Children's Aid Society looks after and protects children who come under their care because they come from homes who do not have the resources to do so, or, sadly, are abused and must be removed from the family home. There are 49 children's aid societies across Ontario and they typically become involved in the local youth community. Build your business on your reputation. Be ready to overcome any pre-conceived notions. Never rest on your laurels; be consistent once your beliefs are set and get ready to grow your business reputation.*

*There are some great programs out there to encourage children to stay active and for children in financial need, funding is available. Jumpstart comes to mind; a program by Canadian Tire Corporation that started over 15 years ago providing a helping hand to families in need. As of 2015, this program had helped 1,000,000 kids! Kidsport is another great program; it is a national not-for-profit organization that provides financial assistance to kids who just want to play sports. Since its creation in 1993, over 750,000 kids across Canada have been given a chance to play sport. Kidsport organized community chapters who fundraiser, take in applications and distribute grants locally. Over 177 chapters exist. Likely one of the most famous of all is Tim Horton's Children's Foundation. This foundation hosts programs in Canada and the U.S. that help youth develop the skills they need to become resourceful, responsible and empowered individuals. Their camps feature a variety of outdoor and indoor programs and activities. The point is, depending on your passion and a cause you believe in, as a business owner, get behind something early on so you have a community cause that can become your legacy. Through promoting the causes you most believe in; you are inadvertently also promoting your business. My examples involve youth because that was the nature of The Horse People; having your cause relevant to your business makes sense since you will gain more natural exposure but are certainly not absolute.*

*There is no question any child or young person actively involved in a hobby or sport has less time to become a "mall rat" or spend endless hours on social media or on line games. The youth I saw who fell in love with horses and the sport, did not seem to get involved in the bullying one hears*



*so much about or worrying as much how to fit in with their peers. They have a place they feel they belong and they become hard working (no choice with chores), adaptable (riding requires such a variety), creative and tough. There is also a requirement to have a strong work ethic; there is always a lot to do at the barn and many others to help out. The mental determination gets challenged and for many that own horses and know their parents may sacrifice money and time to support their board, lessons and showing, they are appreciative. So, it was easy for me to sell the benefits of hosting young people at my farm.*

*A vision does not necessarily have to be a formal business plan. Jotting down what the business might look like in the future and what potential the business might have to succeed is a good start. Get a small hard cover journal that is easy to carry with you to write in and use this for note taking and ideas when they occur. We all know we can get excited about an idea but after tucking the idea away for a few days, we forget what caused this excitement in the first place. Writing it down right away, even if it is in the middle of the night, will ensure you do not lose those brilliant ideas. I realize many of you will use a smart device instead; the same advice holds. Write or type it right away!*

*Business planning is a mixture of so many moving parts, especially early on in the business development when resources and staffing are minimal. A business owner has to keep asking oneself what you want to have happen, what will likely happen, what can happen and how others can help. Business planning has to occur daily, weekly, monthly and annually so there is a methodology of measuring actual outcome of said plan. One cannot afford to waste resources*

*by hoping the business will be on track. Today one refers to a SMART plan (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely). The main thing is progress and outcome is reevaluated regularly and ideally by not only you, as the owner, but by a third-party mentor or business minded friend as well. Be sure to give any third-party participants permission to be candid and give recommendations. You do not want your evaluation coming from a banker or lender who is questioning progress or success! Learn your lessons so don't be afraid to make mistakes. Keep a journal so you do not forget.*

*As early in the business planning as possible, I recommend the business owner creates a Business Pyramid. Simply draw a large triangle on a piece of paper with the point of the triangle at the top of the page. It should take up the entire piece of paper so that you have room to fill it in with the appropriate business avenues you expect to create. The lowest lines in the pyramid represent the highest contributing revenue and as the lines get smaller, the revenue contributions are less. This may change over time or as trends occur and ideally, and annually, you can predict what revenue you will generate from each tier. To take this pyramid one step further, beside the anticipated annual revenue, write in the number of clients or business transactions you need in each tier. This exercise also allows you to plan the number of new (or retained) clients you need at each level so you are able to predict your advertising and marketing needs. But do not over plan; timing is never perfect. If you are 60% there, you are ready enough, in my opinion. Planning is good but do not obsess.*

*The Business Pyramid needs to be evaluated every year before budgeting and planning takes place. There are potentially layers of the pyramid that can flip flop and a business owner needs to know why. Was it economics or some other external circumstance? Was it clever marketing that contributed to better revenue than expected? There is a plethora of potential reasons; this assessment can take hours or days to ascertain but it is important. One cannot repeat something if one does not understand reasons behind it. It is ideal to involve others and as much as a sole business proprietor does not want to share confidential revenue specifics, one should have a group (I.e. committee) of trusted advisors to ensure there is a broader perspective. I recommend a business owner makes a list of those who might have the experience or expertise to participate in a voluntary committee that meets quarterly to offer a fresh perspective to the business progress. This has to be a trusted group who will not compete with one another, try and sell a service or share any aspect of what is discussed. Ensuring this group of at least four to five individuals is diverse is ideal.*

*In most sports one only refers to coaches; coaches help athletes (and exist in business too) to improve their skills, boost mental performance, build confidence and the list goes on. Coaches direct the athlete to make whatever changes needed to accomplish their goals. Coaches recognize when an athlete makes improvement and hopefully cheers them on. Coaches are necessary when an athlete needs to be safe (so a beginner), when improving skills to achieve higher levels of accomplishment or when competing. Mentors are also a valuable asset to an athlete who may want to turn business entrepreneur. Offering mentorship is a much newer*

*phenomenon because mentors point, ask questions but ultimately let the mentee make their own decision. It is an interesting decision slightly ahead of my time but one that offers another area of opportunity to an experienced coach with a wealth of experience, information, success and knowledge to share.*

*The more a business can present an entire “package” to a client, the more business potential there is. My business pyramid reflects that since I designed my business to cater to a client starting out and if they stayed with the sport, I could cater to them in many areas for years to come. I also factored in a convenience factor by offering supplies through the Tack Shop, transportation from Ottawa via bus and horse care by offering boarding and training. I also had my daughter, Kris, offer portrait photography to each camper by having them pose, with their favourite horse, in front of a huge willow tree. There was never a camper who went home without their portrait; they were beautiful and offered memories for years to come. In hindsight I should have continued this service but as the days of phones taking photos became popular, I did not see the point. Brainstorm your business or service and ask yourself what enhanced products, services or features you can add to make your business offering all encompassing.*

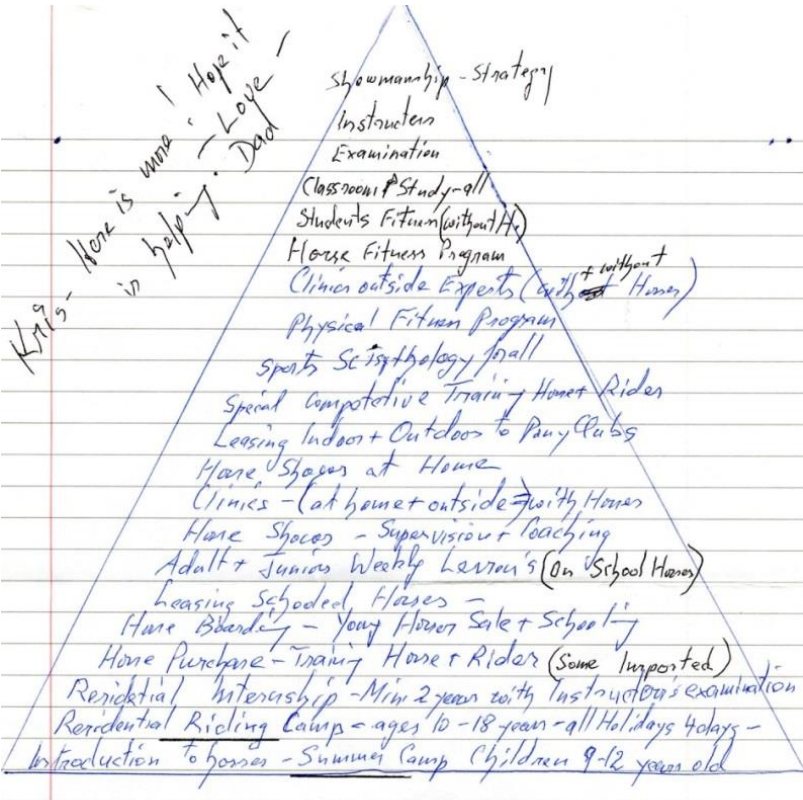
*When planning a service or product new to your core business, be sure to complete a “pre-mortem”. Make a list of all the obstacles, opportunities, criticisms and potential monetary losses. From that list, decide how these might be overcome. Is it resources, training, advertising, space, expertise, competitive environment or anything else that might prevent success? Depending how extensive your pre-*

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*mortem list is, or how high the risk might be (especially monetary), the decision has to be made on it and how to proceed. If the initiative does proceed, ensure there is a time line of when a post-mortem is completed. The post-mortem has to be compared to the original objectives set to decide whether there is merit in continuing. An easy way to complete this exercise is to ask yourself "What would I do differently next time?" Solicit others in these exercises, if possible. Sometimes a fresh perspective (unlike your own), lends merit. Also be sure to record what went well. Some post-mortems contain mostly what went well with little opportunity for improvement, especially if the initiative is not new.*



Kris - Horse is mine / Hope it  
in helping / Love / Dad



## Chapter Six

# Building Your Business

## “The Next Summer Camp”

**D**espite a busy schedule, considering the many aspects of The Horse People, Wolf wanted to continue growing the most profitable aspect, the residential summer riding camp. Considering how competitive residential summer camps were at the time, he felt marketing the camp internationally would attract more campers willing to pay a higher price to attend a first-class residential summer camp in Canada. His assumption was based on the interaction he had up to this point with students who attended The Horse People while attending private school in Ottawa.

In the 1980's and 1990's summer camp, whether it be soccer camp, horse camp, gymnastics camp, hockey camp and the list goes on, was a popular phenomenon amongst school aged children. It was a way for working parents to keep their children out of day care and perhaps enjoy evenings and weekends without children. They would send their children to, on average, 4 weeks of summer camp and then vacation together upon their return. Voila, the summer was over and time for back to school shopping. Then the computer age hit and the availability and popularity of smart devices. Summer camps were replaced by technology. Kids grew up in front of a screen of any size and today it appears to be the norm.

It should be mentioned that The Horse People was situated close to Ottawa and being Canada's capital city, Ottawa was home to many diplomats. These diplomats, from all over the world, were keen to expose their children to summer camp in Canada. Generally speaking, diplomats and officials are issued a multiple-entry visa that is valid for up to three years. Through word of mouth, it was not long before dignitaries' children, and their friends, were frequent visitors to The Horse People.

To build the business, Wolf travelled with business and trade groups supported by the Canadian government, to meet agents in other countries (similar to a travel agent but they placed children in foreign camps). These were essentially trade exhibitions supporting many industries, including equestrian. Many business owners do not realize the Canadian Government has funding and support programs for doing international business through the Trade Commissioner Service. This program helps Canadian companies take their business to the next level by providing financial support, matching them with potential foreign partners, and helping them to pursue partnerships and commercialisation opportunities in new markets ([www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca](http://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca)).

Supported by advertising, this trade initiative proved to be a success and within a few short years close to half of his campers were international students. His first trip was to Mexico City and his host made it very clear to him that he had to wait for the designated driver to identify himself at the airport. Wolf arrived slightly early and was approached by many individuals to take him to his destination. Had his host not emphasized not to accept a ride with anyone else, who



knows, kidnapping of a foreign business man may have occurred! His trip to Mexico was an eye opener. His host arranged a three-car convoy and this is how Wolf travelled to equestrian centres to promote The Horse People. When the convoy stopped at restaurants for dinner, the armed drivers would get out of their vehicles first to stand at the restaurant entrance, firearms drawn, to allow the guests through. At the time there was an average of 3000 kidnappings a year of foreign business travellers so the risk was real.

One of the most memorable trips was to Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Dubai is simply a “city of wonder” that is in continuous expansion and development. It boasts the tallest building in the world, the biggest shopping mall in the world and spectacular and unique experiences unlike any others. It is truly a combination of modern and historic culture blended together in one city. The major turning point in Dubai was the discovery of oil in 1966. Coupled with joining the newly independent country of Qatar and creating a new currency together, this enabled Dubai to expand and grow. Wolf and Bev travelled there to display and promote the camp at an equestrian exhibition, in part organized by the Canadian Government for Trade, and were honoured to be invited to the Sheikh’s palace for dinner. The Sheikh, Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has been the ruler since 1990. Dubai has been instrumental in fostering political alignment with the western world and increases in oil prices allowed Dubai to focus on rapid development of key infrastructure.

A common challenge for summer camp (or any other short-term residential business) was hiring a qualified and reliable chef for the short term. Through word-of-mouth from students who attend private schools, Wolf and Bev were

able to hire a chef who cooked for an Ottawa Private School September to June and was pleased to cook at The Horse People July and August. It was a perfect situation for all involved and he was an incredible chef that stayed right to the end. Not unlike a private school mandate, the objective was to ensure the food offering was healthy and freshly prepared. There were weekly trips to Costco to take advantage of discounted pricing and bulk ordering and most foods were homemade, including dessert. There was no such thing as food complaints during Johnnie's tenure as camp chef! Over the years, however, there were many chefs who were not as qualified or competent as Johnnie. The only regret was the years it took to find someone this good.

Before long, students were coming from countries all over the world. What a wonderful experience for the campers and students to learn more about each other's culture and language. There were also students that became employees from other countries; there is an international appeal to work in Canada. The government has a few initiatives, including Workaway ([workaway.info](http://workaway.info)) and WWOOF ([wwooof.ca](http://wwooof.ca)) where by foreign youth can come to Canada and work in exchange for room and board. There are well over 2000 hosts in Canada alone for youth to partner with hosts. Once in Canada and having completed their three or six-month commitment to employer, they can stay for up to a year. Many stay and travel the country while they are here. As Canadians, we take Canada for granted and forget how vast our country is. It is a stunning country to tour!

In the nineties, The Horse People were featured on Regional Contact, a CTV Ottawa production by producer Bruce Page. He received an international award for "Most Artistic Sports

## According to Wolfgang

Program”. This show is referred to “heart and soul” television and has since been hosted by Joel Haslam for over 25 years. It features the beloved celebration of extraordinary people living in Eastern Ontario and West Quebec. Since the show was filmed and produced in Beta converted to VHS in the days of VCR’s, a digital online copy does not exist. CTV News, however, has a great list of archived shows on line dating back to 2012. It was quite an honour, at that time, to be featured on such a respectable show and it was a dream to watch.

Wolf’s relationship with his customers was a good part The Horse People success. He created a relationship with them and Bev and senior staff continued to grow these relationships. This was really the core of the business; without the clients there would have been no business. The Horse People was a small business; and for most years it operated before the days of available data, or the ability to recognize the data. Knowing who bought what and when, or who contributed the most by being the “best” paying clients, or who used the most services was all unsystematic. Therefore, everyone was in the same boat; cater to each client with a great relationship and make them feel as important as possible.

### ***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on marketing:***

*A business needs to "grow" its clientele and in any sports related business, growing a clientele base is important to future business. I knew if my base clientele was focused on children, these children would potentially stay with the sport, and therefore support my business, for years to come. This does not only include the base of the business (in my case residential summer camp) but also horse purchasing,*

*competing (both locally and internationally) and pursuing industry specific credentials and joining my internship program. But do not be naive and put up your feet because, at a given time, you have enough clients and you are satisfied with business. This does not last so be ever in pursuit of new clients. The best position to be in, if this can exist in your business, is a waiting list or a line up to purchase your product or service.*

*I love this letter received many years ago from a loyal instructor who was with us for many years. Melissa writes, "I would just like to say that I really appreciate all the time and dedication you have put towards my riding. I would also like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to ride such amazing horses. My riding has improved a great deal and I owe it all to you. No one ever bothered to help me as much as you have and yes, sometimes it is overwhelming but, in the end, very much appreciated. Thank you for everything that I have learned here and thank you for giving me the chance to pursue my goals in riding and coaching." Here is a good example of loyalty and longevity in our equestrian relationship. By the way, this was a hand written thank you letter and despite the simplicity and convenience of email communication, hand written thank you notes stand out! Do not underestimate their impact. Consider sending them yourself to those recipients you may want to stand out to. Do not hesitate to ask for reviews; you will find your best and loyal clients love to provide them. I believe they are impressive to use for your website or for future advertising. Keep them current so you always have new, and different, reviews to use.*

*I also advise that all businesses pursue professional credentials and remain accredited in industry related areas. This gives a business, its owners and its operators, visibility and consumer confidence. It is also a way of ensuring employees pursue professional development and make life long connections that can spur them on to future endeavours. A business that has recognized credentials should ensure these are used in marketing campaigns and brochures or flyers. Even better and if possible, get involved in associations that offer accreditations. Most of these are not-for-profit and therefore have a Board of Directors. Becoming a Board Member or Executive Board Member allows you some input into influencing your industry, and gaining valuable visibility.*

*Business owners should evaluate the appeal of their business beyond the immediate business area. Had I not decided to promote my business abroad, the likelihood of being recognized internationally would not have been likely. Promoting a business in today's business environment has never been easier because of consumer appetite to research and purchase on line. Now one can advertise for little or even free through social media. Word search optimization is another resource that I would advise a business owner consider; the cost per customer acquisition is "reasonable". Just be savvy; the free sessions, seminars, workshops and webinars are abundant but you have to realize, these facilitators are not going to work for free. There is a sales pitch and it is always very tempting. Nonetheless, much of this free material is worth the one hour to view or read and there are typically enough take-a-ways to learn something. Never forget, however, there are business cycles. Nothing*

*lasts forever so do not get too seduced with the promises of guarantees for these offers.*

*There have never been more changes and conflicting opinions on marketing to today's perspective customers. Traditional marketing has been overcome with social media and even that seems to be changing by the minute. Do your research and do not commit any dollars until you have a good sense that your investment is worthwhile. The nice thing is, social media is low cost or can even be free. It does take effort and more time than placing an ad so staying organized and being consistent is important for results. But from what I am told there are metrics provided to you so you can play with your social media campaigns until you achieve success. The main thing is, in my opinion, your marketing largely revolves around developing a trusting relationship with potential clients. This takes time but once achieved, you may not have a shortage of new clients! Do some brainstorming with others to determine what your efforts might look like.*

*Despite the ease of marketing online and gaining exposure quickly anywhere in the world, I still see merit in face-to-face marketing. A potential customer who is considering spending a few thousand dollars on a service may want to meet that business owner and make an assessment. Advertising sells but having a friendly conversation with a knowledgeable operator can be more effective and gives the potential client a sense of connection. That is where trade show participation is effective, as are networking events and even an old-fashioned telephone conversation or if from a distance, Skype and Facetime. The cost of travel and*

## According to Wolfgang

*accommodations is likely justified and, of course, tax deductible. It would be important, however, for a business owner to establish a tolerance for cost of client acquisition and an objective for how many customers the business needs to attract, per event, to be successful.*

*I recommend being practical and taking advantage of any opportunities. When I started to buy horses in Germany, I always had at least two commitments from clients. Essentially the horses I bought in Germany and sold to my clients were pre-paid; although they did come with a guarantee of suitability. This greatly enhanced my reputation since the client, despite the advance investment, had nothing to lose and gained confidence in my decision making. The reality was, horses were transported via airplane in pallets of three. I paid for three stalls within these pallets whether they were full or not. I always brought back a third horse since that horse's transportation was already paid for. That third horse was usually the youngest, so least costly, that I kept for a year to two to prepare for sale in Canada. Do not get bogged down by "what if's". Adopt a "we will cross that bridge when we get to it" approach so you do not get stuck with indecision when time is the criteria.*

*Networking is critical even if that means travelling outside of the business area. Trade shows are effective since they attract interested, or curious, potential customers. Having an effective display, including props and videos, will appeal to emotions and help someone imagine using your product or service. Ensure all necessary forms are available and ready for signatures, or whatever data input is required. Once one walks away to "think about it" the likelihood of being as interested or remembering what caused the interest, is not*

*nearly as high. Therefore, making an impression is critical; rather than try and sell your service, develop a relationship and talk about what might ignite an emotion about your product or service.*

*Follow up on all enquires is key; that also allows a potential customer to speak with a business owner and get a sense of personal contact. Do not procrastinate answering voice or emails. It is possible the interest in your product or service is fleeting and you are one of many businesses contacted. Time sensitive enrolment (or early bird), with a discount, can be effective in prompting customers to make a buying commitment. If the commitment is made well in advance (i.e. 6 months or more), do not expect a full payment but rather a deposit. Usually a deposit is enough to establish a commitment. Discounting for multiple purchases can also be effective and potentially attract siblings, relatives or neighbours.*

*I also recommend you have a tight payment policy that is strictly enforced. Most small businesses cannot afford expensive software or accounts receivable employees so receiving payment when expected is important. At The Horse People, we required a minimum deposit upon submission of application and the balance paid two weeks prior to arrival. It was seldom an issue and keep in mind, the clientele we largely catered to were not struggling financially. Perhaps in today's environment one can attract a broader range of clientele by offering payments via credit cards, debit cards and even services like PayPal, Moneris, Chase or from what I understand, many others. Research what works for your business size since they all take a slightly different percentage of the payment for their fee. I recommend*



*discounts are considered for loyalty, multiple clients per family and a kick-back for referrals.*

*I had some very loyal clients over the years that were not influenced by discounts. They simply believed The Horse People was the best place to ride, for them. We had a young student who attended summer camp and as others did; her parents purchased a horse for her. She continued to board her horse with us, even after the summer. She had a full high school schedule so did not ride during the week but rode every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It might not sound remarkable but this young student, and her parents, came every week end all the way from Toronto! That was a 5 to 6 hour drive! Weekly! There were times, when she had a Friday off school so she came by train and we picked her up at the station. This family's dedication was truly appreciated yet they would be the ones to thank us. This family joined our family for many occasions and we feel truly blessed for the years we spent together. Once the college years set in, it was no longer practical and the horse was moved close to home and this pair continued a successful competitive career.*

According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Seven

# Unique Expansion

“Going International”

**A**s international interest grew, Wolf decided to ramp up his summer camp marketing efforts to include even more countries. This attracted students from Europe, the Middle East, and South America and all over North America. Countries that campers came from included Germany, England, France, Spain, Russia, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Israel, Egypt, Emirates, Mexico, Bermuda, Venezuela, Columbia, Belize and United States. Wolf is a huge lover of flags and before too long he began to ask these international campers to bring a flag from their country. He erected flag poles in an open area near the mess hall and began to feature these flags while campers were in residence. The constant flags that never came down were provincial flags from each Canadian province and Canada's flag. These flags, representing each visitor, hung with a great deal of pride whether they represented a faraway country or were from within Canada. Of course, the flags served as a great photo opportunity and the parents who were visiting The Horse People were impressed when they saw their child posing in front of their province's or country's flag! In some cases, the parents of campers only saw the flag posed photos of their children via photograph since they could not visit the camp themselves. It definitely was a souvenir photo, in that case! Those who know Wolf also know he had as much pride as the visitors because he saw the pleasure obtained by his flag displays.

## According to Wolfgang

With Wolf's visibility abroad, his facility became well recognized as an international equestrian facility. Through his friends and acquaintances in Germany, for example, he had visitors that wanted to see (and inspect) The Horse People and learn more about what Wolf was doing in Canada. He was buying up to a dozen horses a year in Germany and bringing them back to Canada for training or sale; this was turning heads! His trips to Germany to buy horses were mainly to the annual auction in Verden. The average Canadian associates an auction, even for horses, like a farmers gathering in an old arena with a hot dog stand outside and wooden bleachers on the inside. In Europe, it is common to sell high caliber horses through an auction setting. The difference is, these European auctions often require formal attire and horses are shown under saddle with rider in formal show clothing. It is considered a gala! And the horses are priced suitably!

Wolf travelled with a team of riders who had the opportunity to test ride the horse prior to auction and share their recommendations. Usually his team travelled ahead of him so they could spend a few days trying horses. At times there were close to 20 to 30 horses to test by riding, more than once. Usually he and his team were the only Canadians among approximately 10 to 14 nations, and proudly so. The arena of bidders, or potential bidders, was often filled with over 1000 potential buyers and breeders from all over the world. He was always proud when the auctioneer called "sooold" to "Caaaanadaaaa" and with each sale, the ushers brought him the sales slip with a bottle of cold Champagne, including glasses. The average cost of the horses was between \$10,000 and \$35,000 and the top prices reached up to \$800,000.

Former Mexican camper turned intern, Federico MS, at the Horse People says *“I like to consider Wolf my mentor because he showed me the wisest lessons on doing business. He always said everyone one is useful and when we started training young horses, some were selected for dressage and some for jumping. Some were so wild and immature; I told him they were useless. He responded by saying all of them are horses and all of them are good for something. It is our job to find out what their talent is and develop it. In my career as an executive, every time someone is not achieving goals or has a poor performance, I ask HR not to fire. I have a chat with that person and we figure out what is it that they like doing or are good at and we give them the chance to develop that talent. We are a business of talented people!*

*All jobs have good days and bad days. If you don't love what you do, the bad days will end up making you change your job. If you love what you do, no matter how hard your problems are, you will find inspiration and motivation. Whenever I interview a new hire, I ask them “why do you do what you do”? The only ones who get the job are the ones that mention loving what they do.*

*Through my experience working at The Horse People I learned working as a team is important. I learned by having a roommate, with different standards, that we cannot become a team by acting or thinking as individuals. To be a team we must act like a team and compromise.*

*If I was ever late to work, Wolf would ask “If you win a trip to Paris and if so, would you get to the airport late?” I*

## According to Wolfgang

*responded no; I would get there early. He would explain that I would be early because I was excited about the trip even if it meant getting up at 3:00 AM. Why would I not be as excited to get up early to get to work on time? It is all about attitude. In the chaotic Mexico City that I live, where everyone is late, I am always 5 minutes early! An important client once hired me because I was 5-minutes early, recognizing this as a sign of respect, trustfulness and compromise.*

*Wolf said to me and taught me an important riding lesson, "Hold the reins as you would hold the hand of your girlfriend. If is too soft she will not feel the passion, if it is too tight she will smack you."*

*The days I had to ride more than 5 horses; Wolf would send me for coffee every couple hours. One afternoon I told him if I kept having coffee breaks, I would not have enough time. He explained to me I had to rest my mind and emotions, not only my body. Even today and every day, I have a coffee break before making important deals, meetings and negotiations, just to recharge myself.*

*Wolf would ask questions such as if my horse did not go over the fence "why did you not go over the fence" or if I made a mistake on my duties "why would you do that"? Made me think; I love Wolf and I miss him; meeting him changed my life."*

I had the opportunity to spend four months at the Nationale Deutsche Reit Schule in Warendorf, Germany after graduating from high school. I spent this time riding and working with German students who were taking their tests to

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become certified instructors in the German program. This program is a vigorous program of standards with the minimum apprenticeship taking two years and up to eight years for a Riding Master. I rode, on average, three hours per day and worked another six hours lunging horses, walking horses, grooming horses and cleaning tack (any equipment used with horses). I was one of the few international students accepted to this prestigious facility and was left with a lifelong memory. Not to mention the skills that I learned by such an immersion.

The Horse People attracted students from afar, including Venezuela. Horses were always assigned to students to look after during their stay; they did not necessarily ride these horses but were responsible for their meals, grooming and turn out. When one of the foreign students was assigned his horse, he asked "Where is my groom?" He was surprised when Wolf explained to him that good horsemanship starts with grooming and keeping the horse you are responsible for healthy, clean and exercised. It was later that Wolf learned the enquiring youth was the son of the President of Venezuela. He was clearly not prepared for camp but adjusted very quickly and without further complaint!

Wolf became well known through his many international connections and began to receive invitations by foreign riding facilities to give riding clinics. A clinic is essentially a workshop conducted by a guest instructor versus a regular coach. He gladly accepted and began giving clinics that lasted three days or more. His reputation continued to grow as a well-respected and knowledgeable German Canadian equestrian coach. Some of his students asked to come to Canada to spend time under Wolf's tutelage; some students



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stayed over a year. Wolf had one student who moved to The Horse People from Japan as a 15-year old to enhance his equestrian skills. He attended a private boy's school during the week and lived with Wolf and Bev on weekends and summers. He stayed a full five years before returning to Japan to open an equestrian facility modelled after The Horse People. During his time in Canada, he was also a successful competitor competing in the Jumping Discipline. Masami now owns a successful equestrian facility, Okamoto Riding Club, in Gotemba, Shizuoka, Japan.

Wolf also invited other coaches to come visit him at The Horse People to give clinics; the most notable one was Captain Mark Phillips, then husband of Princess Anne. Captain Phillips was a 1972 Olympic gold medal and 1988 silver medal winning horseman for Great Britain. Today he remains a leading figure in British Equestrian circles, including a noted eventing course designer and a columnist. His daughter, Zara, won a silver medal with the British team at the 2012 Olympics. Royalty aside, the family was clearly an equestrian success! What an honour it was to have him at the camp for all involved!

World famous Canadian equestrian jumper Ian Millar (Captain Canada) was also a guest coach; Millar is a two-time winner of the Show Jumping World Cup and an Olympic Silver medalist. He became a household name riding his show jumper, Big Ben. His longevity and accomplishments in competitive show jumping is unprecedented in Canada and he has now competed in 10 Olympic Games, not to mention World Cups. In London, 2012, Ian Millar set a record by becoming the first athlete in any sport, from any nation, to compete in 10 Olympic Games. It was in London that he

### According to Wolfgang

achieved his best ever individual Olympic performance with top 10 finish riding Star Power. Millar is also a member of the Order of Canada, the Canadian Sport Hall of Fame and was awarded an honour art doctorate by the University of Guelph.

George Morris attended The Horse People as a clinician; he is an American trainer and judge of horses and riders in hunter and show jumping as well as an author of several books. He is considered a “founding father” of hunt seat equitation. Equitation is defined as the art or practice of horse riding in as far as the rider’s position and ability to ride correctly and effectively is concerned. He was also chef d’équipe for the United States Equestrian Federation show jumping team. A chef d’équipe is responsible for the overall team management for major international competitions in equestrian disciplines.

The late Hans Renz was a very well-known equestrian coach, originally from Germany, and was the coach that led the Canadian 3-Day Event team to a gold medal at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico. He went on to become the National Coach of the Bermuda Equestrian Federation in 1976. He was a loud and colourful German whose techniques may not have been favourable today but his students found his stern and expressive style effective. I personally worked with Renz for many years and attribute much of my success to his coaching. My father and I adapted many of his techniques to pass on to The Horse People students.

The late Captain Gabe de Demeter was a Hungarian who became very well respected as an equestrian coach and judge in Canada and was a regular clinician at The Horse

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People. His claim was a small leather sack of sugar cubes that he would hand out to the horse upon completion of a lesson. It did not take the horses' more than two lessons to learn that once their rider dropped the reins at the end of a lesson they should do as sharp an about turn as needed to reach that bag of sugar! His daughter, Dorit, was also an accomplished equestrian and judge and carried on her father's legacy after he passed. Wolf was invited to give the eulogy at Captain de Demeter's funeral.

The late Colonel Major Michael Gutowski was a regular clinician at The Horse People in the earlier days when there were dressage riders or event riders who needed to continue polishing up their dressage. He worked effectively with the show team not only at The Horse People but all over the world. He was a Polish citizen but lived in Canada for some time and raised a Canadian family who remained in Canada when he returned to Poland. He rode in the Berlin Olympics in 1936 and after that made his way to Great Britain and fought alongside Canadian troops. He was the trainer for the Canadian Olympic team and some of Canada's finest riders were trained by him. He was also a successful and sought-after public speaker.

Creating an international facility, and involving his students to do so, was a great way to keep the tenured students engaged and involved. So was regularly inviting internationally recognized clinicians to come for a few days and share their expertise. Wolf feels, although there are so many ways to engage and involve clients, this was definitely a good strategy to keep his students loyal and focused on their equestrian careers.

**ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on client engagement:**

*Making clients feel important is a key factor in customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are repeat customers who are much more likely to tell their friends, neighbours and acquaintances about your product or service. The flag initiative is a good example of that. It also created a great sense of pride; another factor in customer satisfaction. It is important to find something unique to help your business stand out. If it's mainstream, it won't necessarily stand out to your business brand. Know your repeat rate and compare it to your industry. If you feel you have improvements to make, implement something new in your customer satisfaction strategy and start by asking your customers! Customer surveys should not be underestimated but they are only credible to your customers if you take action.*

*Reputation is also critical; people reference their bad experiences more than their good ones so a business needs to create an outstanding experience, not simply a good one. These outstanding experiences are what people talk about and word of mouth can be a very effective marketing tool. If your business is small you won't necessarily have a service line or website to handle complaints so being very aware of potentially unhappy customers is critical. If you suspect there has been a bad experience, ensure you contact the customer and follow up. Handling a customer complaint effectively is often the make-or-break point when it comes to ensuring loyalty to your business. Remember the old adage "the customer is always right"; even if they are not right treating the situation as if they are is necessary. Handling complaints effectively is critical to any business reputation. I keep saying this but particularly now a day when the transfer of information through social media is quick and far reaching.*

*Always stay calm and when presented with a complaint, remind yourself it is not personal so do not get defensive. Listen and if possible, take notes. Sometimes people just need to vent. Always acknowledge the complaint and thank the complainer for bringing this issue to your attention. Be sincere but do let them know it is important for you to learn from your customers, even if not always pleasant. Ask them what they feel a suitable solution is and if possible, accept their suggestion. Do not consider your service a loss of money if it means offering an unhappy customer a free or deeply discounted (or extended use or upgrade) service. Time is not necessarily money, despite how the saying goes. According to Lorri Freifield (Training Inc.), fewer than half of unhappy customers will bring a complaint to your attention. Those who never say anything will tell an average of 10 other people about their bad experience. It is important we recognize complaints as opportunities, so we can sway these averages.*

*Some industries have a fairly small pool of fans so news can travel fast; Bermuda is a good example. Bermuda may have a high population of horses per capita but in total, there are not a lot of people actually involved in the sport. Marketing a brand can be easy in a situation like this. Much of this marketing is word of mouth because the industry involves a small pool of residents who all know one another. Although this might not be a common example, when one finds a pool of people who may know one another and have the same interests or needs, stand out in this crowd and word will travel! Be sure to measure how much new business you get through word-of-mouth. Compare it to your industry standard and if this is not known, focus on word-of-mouth marketing. Your best clients would be happy to help you, I am sure.*

*Creating an experience is also important and can lend a big helping hand to a brand. What might be a unique experience depends; in my case these international students truly were in awe of the vast size of Canada. Students were in Canada attending The Horse People as equestrian students but were also taken to Canada's capital city, Ottawa, to sight see, as well as other notable field trips. Many were taken to Upper Canada Village to experience Canada's past and humble beginnings; Upper Canada Village is a replica of the pioneer days and is situated in the heart of Eastern Ontario. Like Ottawa, this was not more than a one hour drive from The Horse People. Canada Day each July one was a big event; celebrating all things Canadian can be memorable for someone from outside of Canada. Clearly not all businesses or services involve foreign clients so think hard how you can create an experience for your clients. What makes your business or service unique in what is likely a competitive industry? If you are not unique, how can you offer something extra without being too costly to your bottom line? Is there something you can offer that no one else does?*

*As much as possible, expanding a customer's knowledge can spill out to similar but not necessarily related areas. For example, the competitive equestrians were given workshops by successful non-equestrian competitive and accomplished athletes. They learned new perspectives on competitive spirit, mental preparation and physical challenges from Track and Field athletes, fencers and swimmers. Over the years a variety of national competitors attended The Horse People, with their medals, to demonstrate their skills and share their experiences to keen listeners. Even if their sport did not hold interest for all attendees, the motivation and inspiration to*

*hear from a national or international competitor leaves an impression on a young mind. Think about what you feel your clients would like to learn more about and whether you can provide complimentary learning from time-to-time. This can be face-to-face or via hand out.*

*Fun is so important! Each business should pursue an area that makes it fun, regardless of how focused or serious the learning might be. The most memorable fun times for students that were learning were events like bareback riding into the water, water tag on horseback and double riding bareback in the water. The water does make the riding fun, but it also ensures safety is priority. And everyone gets a laugh over a dunk in the water! Even the horses enjoy it since they are not apt to hop into a pond and swim on their own. Mounted, however, they are willing participants in water shenanigans! In your particular business or service, can you create a theme from time to time around a holiday, for example? Can you create a fun and informal competitive or recognize birthdays?*

*Another fun event was riding in the deep snow. The horses loved it and were anxious to lift their legs high and “passage” (passage is a movement seen in upper level dressage in which the horse performs a highly elevated and extremely powerful trot) and riders were engaged and enthusiastic to feel like they were floating in the snow. And once again, although safety is a priority, being playful in the deep snow is less of a risk if falling off than it would be on hard ground. During these activities there was never a complaint of the cold! Team or group-based activities are important for both clients and employees.*

*Fun times were had with horses during colouring activities. The poor horses were coloured with washable paints and competitions were encouraged for the best “painted” horse. Although the horses were not really poor; they always loved the attention of half a dozen young people doting and laughing around them, the outcome was humorous. The outcomes were also interesting with a team of campers collaborating on how to paint their horse. There was always a story to tell; never an abstract of simply scribbling on the horse. There were maps of the country and the world, themed colourings of an event (I.e. Canada Day) and colourings of a team (I.e. group of friends at camp). Of course the horses enjoyed a soapy bath after the fact and a good body rub before being turned out to pasture. I am sure there were many horse and camper memories after those events. Not to mention the many photos that likely exists in albums today! I believe in the power of good memories and as they say “a photo speaks 1000 words” and it has never been simpler to take and circulate photos.*

*Sometimes a business or service is serious at ensuring the client gets what they paid for and strives for that. One should ask, how can the client achieve their expectations for my product or service in addition to enhancing related skills. My example is the vaulting program we had. It was an extracurricular program for those campers who wanted an additional challenge; one they really had to work on. Youth today are athletic and many are actively involved in dance, gymnastics and skating. Imagine combining these skills and talents on a horse? The sport is called vaulting and involves gymnastics on horseback. Although popular in Europe, it is not well known in North America. There is special equipment needed, almost like a pommel horse type strap with handles*



*on the horse, and a very patient and reliable horse that has good stamina. The athlete learns to jump onto the horse, from the ground, while the horse is walking, trotting or cantering. Multiple riders might hop on one after another and perform poses while the horse is moving. Athletes kneel and stand while the horse is moving, including cantering, which is very rocky, and also hang off the sides in hand strap positions. This sport takes team work, athleticism, stamina, flexibility and guts; as well as a tremendous amount of practice! Essentially it is a sport within a sport. Vaulting helps with balance, as does regular riding. The vaulting team sure enjoyed demonstrating their new found skills to their parents on show day! If it is relevant to your business, ask your clients early on whether there are any specific skills they would like to learn. Weaving this into your product or service will help set a tangible goal and contribute toward focus.*

*Engaging your customer is crucial to ensuring enjoyment in the activity or sport. Engagement also allows a student to learn new skills and habits in a positive environment while having a good time. It has been confirmed engagement is also an important attribute to team productivity, enjoyment and comradery. Engagement takes the work out of the activity, hence the elevated aspect of fun. Especially when dealing with youth, ensure your business is engaging and encourages the emotions that put a smile and sense of achievement or adventure on your client's face. A former camper recently created a Facebook Group, The Horse People Inc., and to demonstrate the mark our business had on children who attended and are now adults, a few comments are published below (published by permission).*

According to Wolfgang

*“Horse People is an enormous piece of who I am. I could never have asked for a better childhood or adolescence. Endlessly grateful for the world you created for us. It is heartwarming to think we could honour Wolf and all the beautiful life lessons he taught.” Mia K*

*“I would not be who I am today if not for Horse People. Couldn't wait for summers to come when I was young. My life working with horses is because of what you (Bev) and Wolf created. Thank you for everything. In jump offs I still hear Wolf telling me “ride like a bat out of hell!” Alex BL*

*“I second and third Mia and Alex's comments. I still quote Wolf on a weekly basis when I teach, as well as in regular life. I think of his comments with his accent in my head! I am honoured to be part of this alumni.” Julia H*

*“Went from Mexico when I was 15. To know Canada would be my home for 10 years later is wild. Best camp ever!” Monica F*

*“Camper to staff; such great memories. Loved it. I remember so many of Wolf's lessons, and the great lines he'd use. One thing I do remember is if someone wasn't listening, he would say “stop sitting on your brain”. I loved that! And loved all the times as a camper and counsellor I spent learning from both Wolf and Bev.” Krista D*

*“The best summer job I could have. The memories are priceless.” Chantal G*

*“I loved going from being a camper to being a staff member! 10 summers there! I remember Wolf's talks all the time (ha-*

*ha). When he would have us put a hand on one ear so that the information would go in and not out.” Alia JG*

*“Summers of 89, 90 and 91; some of the best memories that I have. I also still use some of the skills I learnt there. My love for horses transferred to my kids and they both ride now.” Alexander NR*

*Creating client trust is an important attribute of a successful business. I believe maintaining a positive and encouraging attitude, as a business owner or operator, is critical. That can catch attention and become contagious. Share your knowledge regardless if it leads to a client acquisition or a sale. A business owner cannot be self-centred and ask what is in it for them but rather ask what is in it for my client? Sharing knowledge and expertise, to teach someone, will be appreciated and create loyalty. Trust comes over time and loyalty is required to create that time. It is a cycle that should never be taken for granted. There is always another business owner or operator happy to woo your clients to their business or service. Finally, I believe in under promising but over delivering. That catches attention, and referrals!*

*Every company should strive to create an unforgettable culture and therefore strong legacy. Keep in mind anything you do, as a business owner, can be copied by a competitor; if they have the ability or desire to get around to it. For you, the culture of your company should be priority. A strong culture is hard to copy. Think of companies such as Apple; President Jay Elliot credits much of the company’s success to the cultural fit Apple looks for and inspires in its personnel. With a team totally committed to the Apple culture, Apple*

*does not need to sweat the imitation Apple stores now popping up with the same look, even the furniture, selling Apple products. These knock off stores lack staff with the all-critical Apple mindset. Can you describe your business culture? Even if you are service based, what do your clients say about how you make them feel? Kris and I researched a few companies well-known for their unique cultures, and although they are all large with visible branding, is there anything you feel you can learn and adapt for your company?*

*West Jet is another good example of culture, although as they have grown many consumers might agree that they appear to be more of a main stream airline. None the less, they initially sought to enrich the lives of everyone in their world by providing safe, friendly and affordable air travel. Their travellers were “guests” and their employees were their “people”. They appeared to be having fun while they built their business and their employees were encouraged to offer the traveller an “experience”, complete with comedy safety presentations during flights. As they continue to expand, and grow less apart from their Canadian competitor, Air Canada, they hold onto a very loyal clientele.*

*Tim Horton’s is iconic because they tailored their brand to meet the culture of Canadians. By positioning themselves into Canadians hearts and minds, and saturating the media, Tim Horton’s built a brand that, for many, has become part of the Canadian identity. The link to hockey, and the real Tim Horton, helped establish the brand, but it was all about expansion from there. They are everywhere in Canada and even built a location at Kandahar Airfield during the war in Afghanistan. Tim Horton’s involvement in communities and*

*their camp sponsorship makes Canadians proud. There are many rumours that they have figured out a way to make their coffee addictive; some will say it is their double double (high sugar high cream) that becomes addictive and not likely how anyone would drink their coffee at home!*

*Lululemon is another company whose unique approach to retail started with its inspirational philosophy and employee development. The company showers its staff and customers in a culture of personal growth, self-empowerment, and physical health. It refers to sales staff as “educators”, for example. New markets are tested with small outlets and limited hours; this creates a buzz. Despite competition with box stores for similar athletic wear, Lululemon continues to see year over year growth due to customer loyalty. They stand behind their product and are good at bringing out limited editions; these offerings get customers to buy before it is too late thus further engaging customers. They are masters at engaging their employees and customers alike; not only do many locations offer in store yoga, or partner with local yoga studios, but they also have a Lululemon Ambassador program and an applicant qualifies for and through social media and face-to-face promotions, these ambassadors promote the brand. It is brilliant marketing!*

*The Body Shop is an interesting story; they were the pioneers of using natural ingredients and supporting fair trade. The products were affordable, fun and exciting to young people with fruit flavoured glycerine soaps and lotions. 20 plus years after they opened, rivals had caught up who developed similar products and encroached on The Body Shop's market share. L'Oréal bought the chain in 2006 and failed to add any value to it; it was a small percentage of*

*their overall portfolio. Consumers turned against The Body Shop, now part of a huge cosmetic conglomerate that wasn't even against animal testing. It was a sad demise because they did not stick with their original culture and legacy, despite perhaps through no fault of their own.*

*The reality is a company owner cannot touch every single customer transaction. If your employees and/or partners believe in your vision as much as you do, the shared vision will be obvious when interacting with customers. With a strong and unique culture, you will be able to create consistency and your employees will not require your presence to remind them how to treat customers. Their motivation will come from within; they will not require you to constantly motivate. Remember, how you treat your employees is how they will treat your customers. Never forget that! Be sure to research programs and initiatives that you might be able to implement for your employees. These will rub off on your customers if they contribute to recognition and appreciation. Be original. Think to yourself, what could another business do to make you loyal to their product or service? What products and services are you loyal to and why?*

According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang





## Chapter Eight

# Competing

“In It to Win It”

**D**eveloping a competitive program was an important part of The Horse People legacy. It gave the young students who fell in love with the equestrian sport something to work toward. One day these young students would have the experience and skills to become competitors themselves. The horse sale program evolved from this; nothing more rewarding than competing on one's own horse. The Horse People had, on average, at least 25 school horses and five privately owned horses for sale on site at any given time. Those interested in considering a horse often leased their favourite horse for a few months to ensure the relationship between horse and rider was good; if so the horse was sold to the appropriate student. This was a rare opportunity to ensure the rider commitment was where it needed to be for horse ownership and was a rare opportunity to “test drive” the horse.

Competing with horses is not a simple task. It goes without saying there is considerable physical and mental preparation but managing the logistics of transporting a team of horses and riders to competitions can be considered daunting for many. There is also the challenge of finding and reserving accommodations for this team. Finally, there is the cost. The athlete commitment has to be substantial to justify the cost of competition. Transportation, entry fees, accommodations of horse and rider, on site coaching and feeding, both horse and rider can run \$500.00 to \$3000.00 per horse show.

Considering in many climates horse shows are limited to spring and summer, a rider can find themselves competing three or more times per month. As a result, many riders look for sponsors but only the most successful have a chance of landing a sponsorship contract.

With all these moving parts, responsibilities were divided up. A rig was purchased that included a pickup truck and 6-horse trailer complete with tack room accommodations. A nine-passenger van was also purchased. A retired truck driver and neighbour became a hired driver and the caravans began! Most of the competitions were either local or in neighbouring provinces or states. None the less, a horse show might consist of an overnight stay, or even three or more. There were waivers to get signed before each competition and chaperones to assign. With that organized, the most important aspect of preparation had to be implemented; preparing two athletes for competition, namely a horse and a rider. Programs were designed based on the level of each athlete, including a calendar planning the training frequency and other particulars. Besides training mounted, each competitor had their own ground work to do. Although the experienced rider might consider riding an activity, versus a workout, there is a considerable output of energy to serious riding.

Cardio training is critical to ensure the rider athlete has the stamina to endure, especially during competition when stress is higher. The most effective cardio was training in intervals, for horse and rider. Completing full blown gallop for horse and running sessions for riders, in short bursts, and taking breaks afterward, allowed endurance levels to improve. This type of training is easy to measure since it can

be timed and over a period of time, improvements can be noted. Documenting each gallop or run is vital to know if improvement has been made. Over time the improvement in speed, distance and recovery is astounding. Both horses and riders were expected to track their cardio levels prior to show season to ensure their cardio abilities were sufficient to endure the demands. There is a vet to check the horse at each endurance related competition to make sure the horse's recovery is suitable to continue the rest of the competition.

Often stretching sessions were combined with relaxation or meditation and facilitated by Bev. Some athletes will favour dynamic stretching just prior to a workout or sport but riders mostly benefit by static stretching while focusing on relaxation (and therefore coping) techniques apart from a riding session. This stretching is yoga like and involves correct breathing techniques which are extremely important when nerves run high during a competition. Practicing this at home ensures one has developed the right habits at competitions. Now a days Yoga specifically for riders is quite common although the poses and stretches are not unique.

Mental preparation is another important factor in competition, regardless of sport. Bev co-authored a book "Focused Riding" that addressed the effectiveness of mental preparation through visualization. She shared these techniques with The Horse People Competition Team and encouraged them to utilize and practice these techniques leading up to each competition, or stressful event. In addition, competitors were asked to keep a journal to write about their mental preparation for competing. After walking and studying a jump course (or test), they were asked to find

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a quiet place, relax and visualize riding that course or test. If there were any challenges or difficulties, they were asked to go back to that challenge “in their mind’s eye” and try a different approach or better preparation. The brain apparently does not know if one is actually performing the challenge or visualizing it. That is why mental training for athletes, through visualization, is such a powerful technique to help an athlete get into the right mindset for competition.

According to Nicholas Noble-Willock, founder of NobleVitalityFit, there are many factors to consider when looking at fitness for riders. There are several components of fitness broken into two categories; health related and skill related. Cardiovascular endurance, muscle endurance, muscular strength and flexibility are the most important factors in health-related fitness. Reaction time (the amount of time it takes to start a movement), balance and coordination are the most important for skill related fitness. Combining and developing all these components of fitness will put the rider in the best possible position to get the best out of their riding. Before putting a program together, the rider should go through a full assessment. This involves a physical assessment by a qualified personal trainer to determine what muscles are tight, weak, inactive and underdeveloped as well as what muscles are strong and dominant. There are several types of assessment; it is up to each professional to use their preferred method.

Noble Willock continues to say common problems riders complain about are tight hip flexors; this is a group of muscles toward the front of the hip. This is thought to be due to the position taken up when riding; it is likely the hip flexors are overworked because they are in constant contraction so

the joint angle and muscle length does not change during contraction. When the hip flexors are overworked this can put a strain on the pelvic girdle; the enclosing structure formed by the pelvis providing attachment for the legs. When putting a riding fitness program together these factors should be taken into consideration. Strong abdominals and core are important. Planks, side planks, farmer's walks, overhead barbell walk and renegade rows are effective exercises for the core. Mobility and flexibility are important for the muscles and joints to move through their full range of motion. Dynamic warm ups before the work out or the ride will help not only help prep the body but give the rider the opportunity to work on flexibility and mobility.

It is important to evaluate performance post competition to identify what can be done differently next time. Whether the outcome is exceptional or disappointing, the competition post-mortem should be completed, and recorded. Identify what was within the athlete's control and what was not (i.e. weather). This must never be done to discourage oneself but rather to be constructive to know whether training methodology needs to be tweaked or if attitude and imagery needs to be improved. Or perhaps the athlete has achieved a personal best; now is the time to set a new goal even if it means exceeding a time limit by seconds or a score by one number. Competition is not always about winning, it can also be about achieving personal bests or qualifying for the next level.

Bringing these techniques together allowed some of the most talented students to advance to international status by qualifying for Young Riders. The Young Riders is a team of the best equestrian athletes in that given calendar year

between the ages of sixteen to twenty-one competing for their province, country or North America. The competitions are run under rules of the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), the international governing body for equestrian sport. These young riders gain experience competing within Canada and abroad and some, like Wolf's step son, Robert, advance as adults to the National team. Robert competed in four North and South American Junior Championships. In his last year as a junior, Robert was selected to Canada's Pan-American Games Team. He competed in the Eventing Discipline; this is an equestrian event where a single horse and rider combination compete against others across three disciplines of dressage, cross-country and show jumping.

There were other competitors in the family too. I competed for years in both Eventing and Dressage. In the mid-seventies I was the only rider to achieve highest points for the show season in both disciplines at Provincial Championships. I competed with two horses at the Quebec Provincial Championships finishing first and third. Eventually, and after many broken bones thanks to the sport and falls, I retired from Eventing and continued to show in Dressage with several horses in Eastern and Western Canada as well as the USA. I competed in a time when German bred warm bloods were not readily available in Canada; it goes to prove it is less about breeding and more about the training that makes one successful in competition.

My Event competition preparation was rather unique. Wolf would create cross country jumps, including hay wagons, small cars, humans crowded around hay bales and pasture gates. Needless to say, my mounts had no issues letting themselves out of their pastures or stalls when they wanted

to by simply jumping over and out. Wolf also worked hard to create jumps he anticipated at higher level events, including water jumps. Once he dug deep into a very small pond to create a drop jump into water, a jump in the water and a climb out at the other end. He was anxious to have me test the jump and although I was on my way out on a date, all dressed, he begged me to test said new water jump and promised to have the horse tacked and warmed up so I only had to hop on and hop off to continue my evening. I reluctantly agreed; Wolf did not realize I never got dolled up and had spent considerable time painstakingly applying makeup. I hopped on my mount and galloped toward the jump. There was more mud than expected so the horse's legs got stuck and I went over his head straight into a muddy pond. So much for my date that evening!

I thought I had learned how to maneuver water jumps after that practice jump at home but apparently not. While competing in Bromont at the pre-Olympic trials where the course was essentially being tested, I approached a water jump a little too fast. My reliable and successful competition horse, Julius Caesar, took the jump but got stuck for a split second in the mud at the bottom of the jump. I came off, right over his head and was submerged in water. Determined to continue, I lay on my back and lifted my legs to let the water drain out of my boots. I quickly got back on and continued the course. We gained some speed to make up for the lost time and again, approaching the last log jump a little too quickly, Julius Caesar clipped the log and considering my wet clothing I slipped off. I was eliminated and the show organizers were kind enough to put "retired" on the score board instead of "eliminated". Someone had caught a photo of me draining the water from my boots and said photo was

enlarged to a poster and hung in the home of the show organizer. The following year, Queen Elizabeth, attended the venue to watch her daughter, Anne, compete. I assume she saw my photo from the previous year and always like to boast that I, indirectly, met the Queen!

Wolf's step daughter, Joy, was also an avid rider and competitor. She showed Dressage at First, Second and Third Levels for a number of years with her imported warm blood, Bon Jovi. Her daughters, Lauren and Allie, also competed in Hunter and Jumper shows in Quebec and Ontario in 2003 to 2010. Then came the other grandchildren from out of town and some of them latched onto the horses since they all attended summer camp; granddaughter Kirsty eventually working as camp councillor. Granddaughter Amber showed in Alberta for several years and in 2000 was the Provincial Gold Medalist in Dressage at the Summer Games in Grand Prairie.

When I first started competing, only one type of warmblood existed in Canada, the Trakehner. Importing warmbloods from Europe had just begun and Europe was not giving up their best horses. Warmbloods were ideal since they were a blend between the fast thoroughbred "hot blood" with plenty of speed and stamina and "cold blood" work horse types who were mellow and calm at all times. My highest-level competition horse was a "homemade" warmblood; he was a cross between a Canadian bred (cold blood) and a thoroughbred (hot blood). Ambitious Trakehner breeders in Canada and the United States brought over stallions and began their own breeding programs. Other European breeds followed suit, including Irish Thoroughbreds and German Hanoverians, to name a few. The breeding standards, as



compared to the top European countries, were not the same and the North American born warm bloods did not meet the caliber of the European horses. Europe had standards and strict programs in place for many years; to this day little exists in North America to control the breeds. Eventually, however, it was recognized there was a bigger market for warmbloods that were lighter in build, more energetic and as a result, had better stamina. That is the warmblood of today, bred for athletics and movement. The best of European bred horses are now available in North America, for a price.

***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on competing effectively:***

*Being interested in competition is the ultimate in goal setting, regardless of sport or industry. Anyone willing to commit to the preparation, hard work and time required is clearly serious about this commitment. Although it is great to compete with the objective of winning, competitors might also look at competing as a way to measure themselves against like competitors. In many cases scores are used making it easy to compare to one another. In addition, it is important competitors also work at beating their personal bests; if these are beat there is progress even if not in first or second place. Competitors should record their scores, their times or anything that is tangible and relevant to the competition. These records should be dated and compared to past and future outcomes at competitions. That is how one knows one is making progress. That holds true for any accomplishment; improvement is progress and eventually enough improvement means success, whether it be sport or business.*

*A competitive outlook can be healthy and can make goal setting more interesting. For example, look at the benefits of*

*having or wearing a smart device (i.e. Smart phone, Fitbit or Garmin) to measure one's activities and compare to a "team" of friends. Start a friendly competition! In my day all we had was the stop-watch, which incidentally, can still be a good tool today. One can start with current activity and add to that each week. Decide what progress means to you; keep it realistic and you will be consistent. Today's recommended minimum may be 10,000 steps a day but an athlete can likely go well beyond that. The rider athlete needs to calculate how to transfer this to the equine athlete to ensure the fitness level is increasing prior to the competitive season.*

*As mentioned with visualization, the brain does not distinguish with imagining the performance or actually performing it. The ideal is daily mental preparation and ensuring the mental preparation is well developed prior to completion. According to my friend, Terry Orlick "Psyching For Sport", imagery plays an important role. There will likely be a great diversity in terms of athletes; some will feel more comfortable with activating thoughts, some with calming thoughts, some with detailed reminders and others with less organization. Some athletes like to listen to a certain song or recall a certain image or past performance. The most important mental preparation is executing moves "perfectly" with positive recollections and positive affirmations. I recommend if you have a service business, research more about visualization and decide if it would be a useful technique with your clients.*

*According to Terry, today's athletes face some unique challenges. The standards are higher, the competition is tougher and the stakes are greater. Among the best,*

*physical preparation is more complete, and the psychological component is more important than ever. Winning qualities of an athlete include self-disciplined, self-reliant, self-motivated, determination, organization and concentration on task. Orlick says today's goals are tomorrow's realities. Dream a little. Goals that are unimaginable are also not achievable. Training the mental state to focus, deal with distractions, control activation level, think positively and extend one's limits is ideal. Developing a competition strategy to push or stretch past capacity is critical. Orlick's mental training for athletes is fascinating, and then there is physical training.*

*Confidence and belief in one's ability is critical for successful competition, regardless if sport or business. Practicing and rehearsing, until the performance is second nature, will contribute to success. Ability might remain constant but performance and confidence increases with this practice. Minimize self-doubt and learn to focus on the plan to achieve. Again, whether business or sport, it does not matter. This can be tiring and there are certainly ups and downs. Once there are fewer gaps between the ups and downs or more downs than ups, it is time for a change. This might mean a vacation get-away or another type of rest, but the change is important. No one can perform at one's capacity indefinitely.*

*One of our biggest accomplishments was competing in Kentucky; a famous 3-day event venue that hosts one of the biggest events in the world. At one time we competed in the Pre-Rolux event (not as many international riders as at the Rolux Event) and with about 40 other North American teams competing, earned "Best Conditioned Horse" award. It meant*

*a lot to us because a Three-Day event horse must be fit for three different phases. We worked hard at the fitness component, including conditioning in hot summer conditions. I never saw the value of going to a competition and risking the horse's health by not being as fit as possible. There was also no getting around it since a vet was on site after each ride to check the horse's pulse and heart rate. If this was not to standard or the vet was concerned for horse health, it meant elimination from the competition.*

*Regardless of your business type, be prepared for an evolution. With access to information, technology and resources, it is inevitable a business will evolve, or cease. Ensure you remain educated, informed and continue to research and look beyond your business circle or geography to keep your finger on the pulse. Do not be afraid to become a trend setter, and if this comes at a higher expense than you can manage, think creatively about how you might find a sponsor, cohort or investor to help out. Being on the edge of your business's evolution makes you the type of trend setter that can get noticed. Getting noticed gets your business more attention and therefore new business. Do not hesitate to stand above the others in your industry! Also be sure you keep yourself informed and educated and are familiar with your industry trends. My business included a competitive event stable and later, as the popularity for eventing faded a bit, evolved to a hunter and jumper stable. Ultimately that was more popular and profitable given that there were serious hunter and jumper competitions.*

*Again, regardless of your business type, there is likely an opportunity to become competitive. Perhaps your industry hosts a competition. Perhaps you can plan and organize a*

According to Wolfgang

*competition amongst your customer base. Maybe there is an online competition, of sorts, that might work for your industry. Put some thought into it; competing creates goal setting during the preparation process. Signing up for a competition usually creates some type of accountability for the competitor as they make their entry known to others or engage a coach. Who knows, initiating a competition within your industry can make you an industry leader, even if within your local community. It can also create public relation opportunities, all good as an advertising venue.*



According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Nine

# Leadership in Your Industry

## “Hosting”

Considering The Horse People was a full equestrian facility on close to two hundred acres of land, including indoor and outdoor arenas, cross country jumping course and fenced paddocks, it was a natural place to host a competition. An annual Event was planned. An event is typically spread out over two days and years ago, it was three days (at that time they were called Three Day Events).

Hosting a competition requires a great deal of organizing. Equestrian Canada has a set of rules that must be adhered to when hosting a horse show of any kind. There are horse related specifications, including fitness standards, rules for officials and rules for equestrian participants. A sport license must be obtained and the horse show organizers must assume liability for all incidents if standards and regulations are not adhered to. Health and Safety is a big area of emphasis, as is ensuring insurance exists to avoid law suites. If the show is recognized, meaning there is prize money and competitors can accumulate points toward Provincial or National awards, results must be reported to Equine Canada. There is also a provincial body in each province and another body that covers the specific discipline. Professionals must be on hand such as veterinarians, stewards, Emergency Technicians, Judges and Scribes. Food services must be available and suitable food preparation facilities set up. It is complicated and takes an



enormous amount of organizing. A large group of volunteers needs to be assembled, trained and duties assigned. Organizing such an event needs to begin close to a year in advance considering the facility preparations such as building jumps, preparing the land for suitable rings and erecting temporary stabling (if facility does not have enough permanent stabling). Competitors must submit entry forms and documents, including presentation of a passport for their horse. Despite such a challenging undertaking, The Horse People hosted a premier competition once a year for almost twenty years. It was suitably called The Wendover Horse Trials; Wendover was the town The Horse People was situated in.

The Pony Club is an international member-based volunteer organization for young people up to 25 years old who are interested in riding, learning about, and caring for horses. There are Clubs in most communities and typically these young people get together, with their horses, on a regular basis; in Canada alone, there are over 140 clubs and 2,200 members. A curriculum exists to ensure members develop a solid foundation of knowledge and skills. This curriculum offers a gradual progression of guidelines to prepare its members from beginner levels to advance. Often the program is compared to a similar progression of grade school to university. There are study guides, followed by hands on learning and then tests which a member has to pass before advancing to the next level. The program is typically completed in groups to encourage team work and comradery. Many members compete; first locally, then regionally and provincially before advancing to nationals. The Horse People was an ideal venue for national competitions since there were horses available for riders

who wanted to compete but could not travel from far away cities with their own horses. The Horse People was honoured to sponsor The Canadian Pony Club Rallies by donating their horses and their facility for a few days.

The modern pentathlon is an Olympic sport that comprises of five different events; fencing, freestyle swimming, equestrian show jumping and a final Event of pistol shooting and cross country running. Wolf was approached to coach the equestrian phase of this sport for the Canadian pentathlon team. These were elite athletes who required all-round fitness and stamina, with five events taking place in one gruelling day. Competitors earn points in each discipline, with the number of points gained from the first four determining the starting position for the final event, the cross-country run. Each event has a set standard, which if met will net the athlete extra points. Falling below will mean points are subtracted. The athletes came to The Horse People to train since Wolf had the horses. In this event riders never bring their own horses to the competition so they gained a lot of experience and expertise by learning on different horses. This was excellent preparation for the competition. The riding event was compatible to show jumping over a course of 12 jumps with at least two of these being double and triple jumps (this means the jumps are very close together and have to be jumped in sequence). As with show jumping the athlete has a specific time limit and penalties are awarded to complete the course and also if any jumps are knocked down. Horses are selected for the riders via a draw.

**ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on social responsibility:**

*Although it takes a great deal of preparation to offer one's facility to a large group of people, if one owns such a facility it is a really impressive commitment to any given industry. The preparation is often taken on by volunteers, but managing a team of volunteers is not an easy task. Volunteers may lose interest so having more than required is ideal. The key is keeping everyone focused and motivated on a common goal; competition day! You may have a business that is not involved in competitions yet you have a venue you can loan or involve with a cause you would like to support. Alternatively, you may have a service-related business in which case you can lend manpower and find a way to involve your staff and clients in a worthy cause; this makes a big difference knowing a percentage of funds raised are being donated. In today's environment there are free or low cost online tools to help recruit and manage volunteers, such as [volunteerssignup.org](http://volunteerssignup.org). Research this to help stay organized and potentially save many extra hours.*

*Volunteers require training so having trained volunteers returning year after year is an advantage. Creating a sense of team and offering a group of volunteers something (i.e. company t-shirt or jacket) can be a small incentive. Parents of competitors can be a source of help; they are on site anyhow. A post event celebration or party is a great team builder, especially when recognition and appreciation is apparent. Set a new date for next year's event so that date can be shared at this event; the sooner everyone commits to returning the more likely they will. With the advantage of today's social media, advertising the need for volunteers well in advance, and with testimonials, can solicit new volunteers*

*and also serve as an advertising opportunity for the event. Ensuring there is a social media “group”, “club” or “blog” can help attract attention. Finally, asking current and loyal volunteers to “share” the cause can also help attract new attention.*

*In today's environment, corporate social responsibility is an expectation. An event should select a cause to donate funds to, whether a percentage or a fixed amount. A business or service can also donate time or supplies. This will serve to motivate volunteers, attract sponsors and justify entrance fees. Selecting a cause that is important to the competitors, and competitors' families, is recommended. Searching for sponsorship is another recommendation; there are companies, ideally local, who can make a donation in exchange for getting their name highlighted at the event. Perhaps a sponsorship also serves as a partnership, even if just for the event. For example, if the business hosts a horse show, as I did, can a horse feed dealer provide samples for all competitors and receive the appropriate title of sponsor. Think of what other businesses, not competitors, compliment your business or service and if so, how? Are they near you? Do you share customers? Can you become their sponsor if they become yours? The bigger and better the partnerships, the more win-win for all involved.*

*Giving back to the community is honourable and also expected these days but organizations can gain considerable exposure by doing so. Although not the intent of the giving, no organization minds the additional marketing received. Today's consumer prefers to support organizations that support causes they like. Research these causes thoroughly before deciding who to support and donate funds*

*to. It is not easy to recommend what amount of funds or what type of cause. Each business needs to decide that and the closer the cause to your heart, the more likely you, as a business owner, will be enthusiastic and show the passion you possess. At The Horse People we opted to support local community; namely children in the community either by way of monetary donations raised during our horse show (a percentage of the profit) or free services to local children unable to afford attending an elite summer camp.*

*Social Responsibility aside, what other businesses can you partner with that might be worth creating an event? Are there other same sized businesses that may not be competitors but might have the same challenges you can partner with for brain storming sessions or workshop afternoons? Can you use this opportunity to create a network for future events or even an association that provides consistent communications? Can your business be the leader in initiating this? This will provide visibility to your business and put you on a pedestal as a leader. Can you actually start a community? Or can you host your own event and use this as a marketing opportunity by attracting new clients by adding attendees to your mailing list?*



According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Ten

# Stay Ahead of the Standards

### “The Standards”

There was an evolving period of time where by the Canadian equestrian community wanted to standardize the qualifications required to instruct riding and related equestrian activities, including safety. The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) was launched in 1974 to support a standard in coaching (all sports, including equestrian), as well as to give coaches the confidence and knowledge to succeed. This never happened and although there is a nationally recognized standard, anyone can call themselves an instructor. Europe has had standards in place for some time. Germany, for example, under the umbrella organization German Equestrian Federation (Deutschland Reiterliche Vereinigung) is the governing body for sports and breeding including internationally recognized competitions. In Germany the instructor standards are high and becoming certified is a long process. It involves three levels of certification including internship and apprenticing under a recognized instructor or school. This certification is recognized around the world. Only those who are certified can charge to teach or train. As awareness grew regarding this standard, it seemed apparent there was status for an equestrian facility to have "qualified" instructors. By qualified, they must be certified. The challenge was that those teaching and coaching the instructors came from varied backgrounds and therefore possessed different standards. Wolf knew there was a demand for preparedness of instructors to take the exam

offered by the NCCP. This national body tests and certifies coaches of all sporting disciplines, not only equestrian, but at one point there is sport specific testing that leads to certification.

Given the number of instructors The Horse People employed over the summer months and those that applied for employment, Wolf created an Internship Program that allowed interested candidates to prepare for NCCP Equestrian specific certification. His "course" was a minimum of 6 months and if the candidate was approved as per his standards, he would include them in the NCCP tests that he sponsored at his facility. Some of his students would live on site in one of the three mobile homes that existed. Otherwise they would commute daily from Ottawa and surrounding areas. There was a hefty charge to receive Wolf's mentoring and an additional charge for housing but that did not deter his enthusiastic students. At that time, his program was the only one that existed in Canada. Now there are a few that exist that are called Internships but they do not include the NCCP testing. It is nice to gain experience working under a mentor but it is better to do so and receive the valuable certification. The criterion to be approved for his internship program was tough; there was a minimum age and riders had to have completed at least three years of residential riding camp with The Horse People. Interns were assigned to certified and experienced in house riding instructors and doubled as teaching assistants. They also gained experience to horse show preparation by travelling as grooms to horse shows and learned about stable management, horse maintenance, feeding program and upkeep of equipment. They had the opportunity to attend clinics offered by The Horse People by some very well-



known clinicians thus gaining further exposure to techniques and areas of opportunity for their own riding techniques.

Examiners from the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) would arrive on site for two days and conduct the workshop tests for small groups of people. The CAC would publish workshop test dates so that other interested candidates who did not intern with Wolf could reserve a spot and attend. Wolf's interns would also attend other facilities for their NCCP certification test if they were ready and Wolf didn't have a group big enough. The test consisted of written and practical comprising of safety standards, lesson plans and demonstration of lessons. Besides the sport-specific workshop tests, there was also a coaching component that was not sport-specific that had to be taken. Today this component can be taken on line but at that time it was taken with other coaches from a variety of sports, at community centres or for the more advanced levels, at universities. The standards created for successful completion of said test was modelled after existing standards established by Germany and other European countries. These countries were ahead of North America who had no standards in place until the early seventies.

The Horse People also had their own set of standards for employees that included St. John's Emergency First Aid Training, Sport specific certification for lifeguards and swimming instructors, NCCP minimum Level One for Riding Instructors and mandatory attendance at an organized week of pre-camp employee training conducted by Bev. Training throughout the peak seasons was ongoing and included weekly seminars on topics such as handling illness, nightmares, homesickness, bullying, rudeness and physical

altercations. There was sensitivity training and harassment training offered, and emphasized. Employees were also taught relaxation techniques and exercises to help them cope with their responsibilities and ensure they could destress when necessary.

Unfortunately, no real regulatory standards exist regarding safety of horses. There are certainly safety and common-sense rules but there is not a body that ensures these are followed unless, of course, a local animal welfare group suspects neglect. Even then enforcement is difficult. No different than handling any other animal, a horse handler or owner should take training with a qualified and experienced equestrian to minimize risks. Close to half of horse-related injuries are minor but involve children 10 to 14 years of age (according to Canadian Injuries Reporting and Prevention Program) and involve being stepped on, being kicked, falling off, being bitten, getting knocked over and being dragged. Protective equipment is important such as hard toed shoes or boots and certified helmets. Sadly, less than 25% of those injured reported wearing protective equipment and this is not enforced in Canada, unless the equestrian facility itself enforces it.

Horse health is important and can be complicated. Just like us, horses eat differently depending on age, activity levels and type of accommodations. There is never one size fits all. There is a lot of access to nutrition information and most reputable feed dealers have equine nutritionists who are happy to visit a facility and make recommendations. There is also an organization in Canada called the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) that brings together animal welfare groups, enforcement, government and farmers under

a collective decision-making model for advancing farm animal welfare. This includes a Code of Practices, animal care assessment, promoting Canadian standards internationally, sharing information between farmers and providing a link between government and other partners regarding farm animal care.

Emergency First Aid Training is a prerequisite for most employers with at least one person trained and certified for a certain number of employees. A variety of requirements exist depending on the province and the risk of the workplace. Many organizations offer a complement of First Aid and CPR Training to ensure compliance with federal and provincial occupational health and safety legislation. Now, the Canadian Red Cross also incorporates Corporate First Aid training and health and safety products to the appropriate workplaces. It is the responsibility of the business to ensure proper compliance; in today's environment even first aid kits and defibrillators may be a requirement. In addition to the initial training requirements, users must maintain their certification. Employee and customer safety have become a big priority.

Safety standards also apply to riders. The Horse People evolved and interestingly enough, the fastest growing group of campers were the youngest with the least experience. The challenges were to find enough safe and trained horses to accommodate the beginner riders. Typically, there was a group of school masters (experienced and well-trained horses) for beginners, more challenging mounts for the intermediate and then young horses for the experienced riders. It was difficult to find enough suitable horses so Wolf decided to stream line his camp and raised the minimum age

of camper as well as reduced the number of campers he would accept. He felt he could offer a higher level of service and attention to fewer campers with more riding time so therefore he felt justified in increasing the cost to attend camp. He promoted the internship program for serious riders wanting to become certified and did indeed attract more advanced riders who stayed longer at camp.

Sometimes safety rules are changed as a result of an incident, or a number of the same type of incident. In 1973 I competed in my first Event on a lovely thoroughbred mare named Mariah. Unbeknownst to us, Mariah had moon blindness. Moon blindness (equine recurrent uveitis or ERU) is an acute inflammation of the uveal tract of the eye. There is no known cause and can lead to blindness. Mariah showed no obvious symptoms although shortly after this competition, her eye became cloudy. She performed beautifully in the Dressage phase and I was excited to begin the Cross-Country phase. We galloped along the first couple jumps and suddenly, at a felled log jump, she veered left quite suddenly. What she did not see was the barbed wire fence that ran perpendicular to this jump so we became entangled in the wire and as horses would, she panicked and tried to get herself free. We rolled in the wire and eventually became so entangled, she lay still and let the team of rescuers cut her free. We both survived, albeit with dozens of stitches and for me, a broken wrist and finger in addition to facial stitches. To this day I have kept that jumping saddle as a souvenir, complete with barbed wire holes and scratches. The point is, there should never have been a barbed wire fence running alongside a cross country jump and after this accident, the rules changed and now fences of any kind have a minimum distance from a cross

country jump. Even if I had been aware of Mariah's condition, I could have competed with her had the standards been in place.

**ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on reputation:**

*In all sports, standards evolve and at times, standards are created due to unfortunate incidents. The riding helmet is a good example evolving from an inexpensive velvet covered fibre glass to well-designed outer shell of ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene) plastic with polystyrene liner. Helmets are now required to be certified by a national body such as Equestrian Canada and should be replaced in the event of a fall. Business owners must be vigilant where it concerns safety and not take any short cuts to try and save time or money. It is never worth the risk and a business can be shut down or go out of business very quickly if there is a serious incident. Every province has an organization that oversees health and safety in the workplace; be sure to join and sign up for e-news or newsletters to ensure you are always up-to-date with regulations and standards.*

*A good and conscience business owner or operator should want to contribute to their industry standards whether it is through association involvement or teaching. The more standards that exist within a given industry the more consistent and therefore clients and consumers benefit. These standards can also affect premiums paid for insurance; costs are skyrocketing and can be prohibitive for new businesses. Getting involved in your given industry can give you valuable visibility; even if it is with your peer group. Marketers say the more you focus on your immediate circle of influence, such as peers, the better for your reputation. Others in your industry will look toward you as the industry*

*expert and this in itself can even open some doors for business potential. Often one's nature is to wait for standards or rules to be communicated and then complain. Participate early on!*

*A thorough and comprehensive Health and Safety program must be a priority and employees must be well versed with this program. That includes documented training and certification to demonstrate the employer has done their due diligence. In the unfortunate event there is an incident involving safety, employers will be found responsible if obvious standards do not exist. Have a third party or industry specific association assess the level of standard to be sure they are up to expectation. Of course, it never hurts to network with your competitors and learn about their strengths and opportunities.*

*While I realize my industry is somewhat unique since it involves health of both horse and rider, it is not an area any business owner or operator should take for granted. Horses are unique, just like people, and have a variety of health needs for nutrition, supplements and housing. The same holds true for your clients and employees although, unless you have a residential facility, you need not be too concerned for nutrition and supplements. Housing, however, whether over night or not, is important. Be sure to have your workplace inspected before buying or renting so that you know it is safe. Get to know all the technical rules, including environmental and weather related. Also, be aware that your workplace may be required to have a Health and Safety Committee as well as a Safety Representative.*

*Depending on your business type, keep standards top of mind. We regularly had drop in visit from the Department of Health that governed our facility, pool and kitchen standards as if the inspectors would show up at any moment. Imagine dropping the ball and ending up with an infraction meaning operations have to cease until standards are met and inspector returns for another visit. That can take weeks and what would one do with a business in the meantime? Not to mention residential students! Certify as many people as possible and know your insurance liability in case something goes awry that might be out of your control. Train yourself and your employees to understand the whys behind high standards and housekeeping; that will make the standards easier to implement and support. Encourage your clients to participate too; they likely come from all walks of life. If a client notices something of concern, and they don't speak up, you may have missed an opportunity. Even worse, if there is indeed a concern that for some reason you are not aware of, you can lose a client for no good reason. It may be something like shower or restroom facility that you do not happen to use. Inspect whatever facility you own or rent; use a checklist that is signed and dated upon every inspection so there is proof of that.*

*My decision to eventually reduce the camper head count by one third and increase the fees was very successful. I was able to justify this for safety reasons and it did make sense that finding enough reliable and safe horses for a large roster of very young people was difficult. As a result, we effectively increased our standards and with more experienced students attending, we also required a higher caliber of employees. We were equipped to train the appropriate employees so effectively increased our staff*

*training and internship programs. Occasions other than summer camp also expanded. We began offering camps for long weekends and spring break. Regardless of the nature of your business, appeal to these occasions when planning your marketing. When there is extra time available, a consumer is more likely to consider a trip, a course or something new. The concept of having extra time should be taken advantage of.*

*There are many types of standards, as noted. Be sure to make a list that applies to your business. Do not be afraid to go overboard or list the ones that are highly unlikely. It is easier to have a preventive and proactive approach versus a defensive and reactive one. Although standards sound softer than rules, I never hesitated to have rules. In today's environment one would say "Policies and Procedures" and these are often to ensure standards are being met and maintained. My campers were shocked when they discovered a rule was no cell phones, blow dryers or curling irons. There were some practical reasons such as very slow dial up internet, at that time and not enough power to accommodate many dryers being used after evening showers. But also the intent was to provide a camping experience to these youth that was comfortable and safe but lacked some of the luxuries of home. Of course, respect was always shown if a camper needed to contact home, they were allowed to call and speak with parents.*

*Integrity is an important standard in all business environments. In my business, integrity applied to both horse and rider. According to Jack Perconte ("Raising an Athlete"), "using performance enhancing drugs may be considered by a young athlete to recover from an injury and therefore*



*enhance the chances of competing at a higher or a professional level. It is almost impossible to talk about sports without the issue of performance enhancing drugs coming up. There will always be an issue with these in our society because we place such a great emphasis on players being their best. In addition, rewards are so great (millions of dollars and the admiration of many fans), the temptation to use to reach the top will always be an issue. Parents and coaches should emphasize that achieving full potential is only praiseworthy through hard work, and only through legal means.” I would add this philosophy applies to any type of business or service, and not only in relation to performance enhancing drugs. There are many potential temptations in business to give your business a boost that may not be ethical. Everything catches up with you, in the end. Just don’t get tempted and hold yourself, and your employees, accountable to ensure there is a check and balance system in place.*

*I recall a great partnership that touches on shared respect for standards. We did an exchange business with Sue O from Bromont, Quebec. We donated mature and retired mares to her for breeding and she donated young horses to us for training. These mature mares would have been only good as a pet, which almost never happens to horses due the cost of keeping a horse. Her equine youngsters were always for sale but not for much since they were unruly and untrained. We were able to save our mature mares and she was able to sell her youngsters as novice three and four year olds. It was a great exchange that benefited our business, her business and the horses involved.*

According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Eleven

# Travelling to Create Business

“Clinics, Travels and Cowboys”

**W**olf was invited to Bermuda by a local family and the Bermuda Equestrian Federation to conduct a three-day riding clinic. After this clinic, a long-time relationship began between The Horse People and many Bermudians. Two Bermudians became regular summer campers, Heather and Peter, after this clinic. Wolf was invited back several times and subsequently another 12 students attended summer camp. Wolf regularly flew there in the off season and trained these students even further. There were also horses purchased from Wolf who would drive them, or have them driven, to Newark, New Jersey via horse transport and then send them by ship transport to Bermuda. Wolf, or a senior employee, would accompany the horses on the ship for this five-day trip. Transporting horses by roadway, ship or air is stressful for the horse and the horse's heart rate must be monitored regularly to ensure stress is not in excess. Horses are a fight or flight animal and either scenario will cause undue stress.

One of the students from Bermuda recalled his many years at the Horse People and wrote to Wolf a few years ago, *“It has been a LONG time! Bev and Wolf were two of the most important people to help shape my life as I know it today. I am a professor, a father of three and very happily married. It all started on a farm outside of Ottawa. For that I will always be grateful. Life is short but what we do here is important.*

*We have not stayed in touch but I want you to know how thankful I am to have had you in my life and how thankful I am that I could share yours for the time that I did. There is magic at your place! The tools I learned from both of you are still with me. I still use imagery to get through tough situations! All the best, and Wolf, "sit up straight and relax"!*

Wolf had an invitation by a client's parents to travel to Mexico and evaluate the training methods at various equestrian facilities in Mexico City and area. He travelled to six facilities, spoke with managers and offered advice via riding lessons to students. This adventure began a long-term relationship with Mexican students that spanned many years. Wolf concentrated on the basics and many of the students were so pleased with these lessons they travelled to The Horse People for residential equestrian camp. Some took riding very seriously and also interned with Wolf to achieve their Canadian accreditation.

Wolf was invited to Cali, Columbia, which was home to the Pan American Games in 1971. After conducting a three-day riding clinic, and meeting the parents of these students, interest in travelling to Canada to attend The Horse People was founded. Another adventure began with young students from Columbia that lasted for many years. Some of the Columbian campers attended long enough to become staff. The Horse People staff roster became more and more diverse as a result.

Wolf also had a partnership with The Bahamas and I remember him sending me there to research and meet the stable owner. That was a difficult assignment (tongue in cheek) and my only venture to that beautiful island. The

stable owner called my father late in the week and after work on a Friday night, I was on a plane to Bahamas. Once arrived, I baked in the heat and humidity, not to mention the beauty of the island. I rented a car, checked into my hotel and rested for the evening before meeting the potential client the following morning. The following morning when I got to my rental car to leave for the meeting, I had no gas. Someone has siphoned the gas during the night! It was in the days of very high gas prices and cars that did not have a lock device on the gas cap! I eventually found gas and a helpful local to fill my tank and made it to my meeting. Once I learned the price of hay, I was astonished! Keeping in mind hay is shipped in; the equestrian sport becomes a huge privilege on a small island.

Many years ago, a group of what Wolf refers to as “cowboys” approached Wolf for riding lessons. Cowboys are often associated as reckless riders who herd cattle, participate in rodeos and participate on ranch related duties. Today, cowboys are riders who ride in western gear, and cowboy hats, but are typically not reckless or work on ranches. Many do not herd cattle nor compete in barrel racing or calf roping. For this group of western riders, their objective was to fine tune their positions and effective aids. Keep in mind this was years before “Western dressage” became a well-known discipline. A big group of them trailered to the Horse People with their horses, from the other end of the city, each week to take lessons. In equestrian sports there are many disciplines including dressage, jumping, equitation, western, endurance and eventing. Usually the different disciplines do not mix and often do not appreciate each other’s ways of riding. Both Wolf and the cowboys learned a lot from each other and felt it was a very worthwhile exchange.

Wolf travelled within Canada as a clinician, including Vancouver, Edmonton and Halifax. He got to the point where he really didn't have time to travel but he was always flattered to be invited to teach a group of enthusiastic students he had not met before. He was a good motivator and colourful speaker so held his audience's attention throughout the ride. He was also known to impart words of wisdom to his eager students; undoubtedly advice they held on to for many rides to come.

***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on expansion:***

*If your business can handle expansion, get as much exposure outside of the immediate business area as possible. This can include advertising in industry specific publications and writing articles to send to the appropriate publishers. Nowadays social media, including a blog relevant to your business expertise, can be another great tool. The students that I attracted from Bermuda became a good source of revenue considering the length of time I had them and the variety of my business they utilized. All this from one referral!*

*In any popular industry, there is potentially more business or experts offering services than there are interested consumers. In order to sustain a business, ensure that it is diverse and the business focus is not too narrow. Business trends can be short lived and what is popular today may not be tomorrow. If a business is diverse, sustainability is more likely. Consider if your product or service is one you can take to your potential clients versus the client coming to the business.*

*I feel it is important to market to industry associations and trade organizations that might benefit from learning more about a particular product or service. If the purpose is education, the interest in learning more is likely. This is when word-of-mouth publicity can be very effective and lead to new business or business leads. A business owner has to ask oneself what they can teach to someone within their industry. Is there business that can follow as a result of teaching someone? Can one offer free or paid presentations or lectures to solicit business, albeit not directly? What about blogging? Today's generation seems obsessed with social media. How can a business owner take advantage of this obsession to obtain clients, and therefore new business? It continues to boil down to networking within the right circles of influence.*

*I always knew if I catered to riders and their families during the pivotal time when the riders were anxious to compete and needed to ride regularly, I would likely keep these clients for a long time. I had such a family who visited the camp frequently all the way from Bermuda. The mother, Nancy, purchased a mobile cottage and I let her place it on my land so she and her competitive son, Peter, would have a convenient place to stay while they visited. They would visit for up to a month at a time allowing Peter valuable time in the saddle. Eventually Peter went on to become an instructor so the cottage was not utilized since he lived on site with the other instructors.*

*This cottage went on to become a week end home for another competitive family who did a beautiful job renovating and lived there every week end and even some week days.*

*The entire family rode and between parents and sons, they owned three or four horses at any one time. Mother Kathy and son Alex became the more serious riders in the family, as well as competitors, and I know allowing them access to this home and therefore the facility encouraged regular riding and practice. Eventually they moved on to A-level competitions and relocated but I am proud to report that even today, son Alex is involved with horses as his career.*

*As the cottage, now extended house and not very mobile, became vacant once again my senior employee and barn manager, Christine, moved in. This saved her a valuable 45-minute each way commute time to and from Ottawa. I believe having this home and letting her stay was a convenience and made her desire to become a leader and instrumental influence at The Horse People more likely.*

*Is there a convenience you can offer your clients that might perhaps extend or enhance your business? Can you think big picture on what you might be able to offer loyal and best clients or future employees by offering them something unique? Accommodations aside, since not everyone needs this, what else might appeal to the most loyal? Might it be a program, a facility, a partnership or collaboration? As you complete your enhanced business plan, think on this and get creative. A client who represents your business well can become an investor or partner, should the opportunity arise.*

*As demonstrated by my Western “cowboy” riders, get to know your competitors. Ideas and initiatives can be shared and who knows, some of these might result in partnerships even if just for an event. Always keep in mind you have nothing to lose to reach out to a competitor; if they do not*



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*respond or tell you off, it will all be forgotten. Learn to stand out; be the one who takes the initiative. Have your compliments and your questions ready when you call or reach out.*

*Once again, I cannot emphasize how important networking is. The clinics I was invited to give were all as a result of people I knew or had met at some event or another. I never once advertised any services to do with travelling to teach clinics. Of course, I did not mind the travel or the clinics, and as most entrepreneurs I could rarely say no but I did not promote or pursue them. I just always made it a point to mix and mingle with new contacts at every opportunity and always invited my new acquaintances to come visit me at The Horse People next time they were nearby. I had many a person ring my door bell and say hello. Of course, my coffee pot was always ready and we always had cream in the fridge!*



## Chapter Twelve

# Effective Networking

“The Rich, the Famous and the Passionate”

**W**olf was a business person who loved to promote his passion, which was horses. Whether by design, or by coincidence, it was not long after establishing The Horse People that he attracted some very well-known people. Of course, being situated not far from Canada's capital, Ottawa, it was natural that politicians might send their children to summer riding camp. There were many politicians but most notable were the daughter of Margaret Trudeau Kemper and son of Ed Broadbent. We all know Margaret Trudeau is the mother of Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. Ed Broadbent is a Canadian social-democratic politician who was the leader of the New Democratic Party from 1975 to 1989. The only reason to mention this is how interesting it was to note the ability for children to blend in with others without judging. When all the children were in the mess hall for meals, one would never know who was who. The Horse People was an elite camp and priced accordingly. The type of clientele who could afford, and justify, spending what they spent to send their children to summer camp were well connected and people who are well connected typically come from similar circles.

Some campers arrived by helicopter, some by limousine, some by yacht and some by small aircraft. Of course, the majority came by car. There was security detail for those who had to have it, especially those from other countries that were high risk for kidnappings. But children do not judge and

### According to Wolfgang

everyone was always safe; the children were on first name basis with each other and as mentioned, one would not know who was wealthy and who was not once they arrived.

Wolf really enjoyed meeting and spending time with Guy Laliberte, one of the founders of the Entertainment Company, Cirque du Soleil. Guy was once named by Time Magazine as one of the most influential people in the world and recognized as one of the most creative and innovative minds. Cirque du Soleil became one of the largest and most profitable brands worldwide. Maybe they had something in common since Guy used all of his savings to travel his dance troupe to California for a festival hoping his small company of performers would catch attention. Had it flopped; he did not even have the money to fly them home to Montreal. It was a huge success and the rest of Cirque du Soleil success is history. Wolf and Guy often joked that The Horse People could teach traditional horseback riding and Cirque du Soleil could teach the circus riding. His daughter attended The Horse People.

Frank O'Dea's daughter was a long-time student at the Horse People. Frank O'Dea is a well-known Canadian entrepreneur, humanitarian and author. He left a lifestyle of homelessness and co-founded the Second Cup coffee stores. His personal accomplishments have inspired audiences around the world and Wolf felt blessed to have much one-on-one time with him discussing business and, of course, horses. As much as Bev and Wolf loved making coffee for their guests, they were always a little bit apprehensive brewing a cup of their own in their coffee maker when Frank and his family were visiting.

## According to Wolfgang

Wolf recalls a time when he was sitting on an airplane mid-flight and the captain made an announcement requesting that Wolf come to the cockpit. Of course, this was at a time when cockpits did not have closed and locked doors. To his surprise, one of his client's fathers, an Air Canada captain, was inviting him to sit in the jump seat and enjoy the view. To this day, Wolf doesn't know how the captain knew Wolf was on board! What Wolf did not realize was the captain sees the passenger manifest, and Wolf Schinke is not exactly a common name.

Wolf had a call once from the British Embassy to ask if one of their representatives (Wife of the British Ambassador) could borrow a horse so that she could attend a Hunt in Ottawa. Wolf was enroute to this hunt with five others so Wolf selected a suitable mount and, followed by security detail (RCMP), had the extra horse driven to where the Hunt was. The challenge was the RCMP who was protecting her was not prepared to follow her on horseback. Obviously the RCMP horses are trained for performances of the Musical Ride, not the hunt! Wolf suggested he be quickly appointed as a "deputy" and off they went at a gallop with the hounds! The RCMP officers had to wait behind!

Marie Zubryckyj, now Chief Technical Aviation Adviser at United Nations, then responsible for Federal Air Safety was a client, and a boarder, often came by air and landed her plane in a small air field in Pendleton, a few kilometres away. She says she has many precious moments to remember at The Horse People. *"The fondest memories for me were the family atmosphere at the barn! The dinners and lunches, and especially the Christmas parties, the Christmas show and then dinner and opening of secret Santa gifts were so much*

*fun. Of course, then there was the Schnapps before a cross country course and the excitement of going to the Ottawa Valley Hunt. I remember a get together for a Sugar Shack breakfast with the adult group of advanced riders and the galloping around in deep snow. We laughed in the winter when we dumped snow by shaking a branch on a fellow rider. The eventing shows as part of a Horse People show team were great as was the fabulous coaching from Wolf and Robert! The excitement of seeing your new horse freshly purchased from the Verden auction in Germany, the training that went with it and in the end, feeling part of a horsey family where everybody has one big thing in common. The love of horses and having fun! I have to say, these were some of the most precious moments of my life and I still think about these wonderful times and wish so much that I could find something similar again. To conclude, I will always cherish those precious times at The Horse People and Wolf holds a very special place in my heart!"*

Rubbing shoulders with the elite had its benefits. Wolf and Bev can recall many invitations to memorable events, including being frequent guests of the then Ottawa Senators owner, Rod. His private box, complete with waiter and unlimited wine and snacks, was impressive! The average man does not typically own a tuxedo but money was well spent for Wolf to purchase one to wear to the many parties and gatherings he was invited to attend. Rod's daughter, Kathy and grandson Alex were long time students at The Horse People and went to compete successfully in the jumper discipline. Alex continues to be involved with horses and is a successful trainer and competitor in New Zealand. Although the family was engrossed with horses before they

became involved at The Horse People, Wolf takes solace in knowing he had an influence with this family.

**ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on making impressions:**

*As the saying goes, “birds of a feather flock together”. If a business benefits on well-off or well-known clients, a great experience by these clients will surely promote word-of-mouth advertising. Free publicity is ideal and it is always possible that someone might know someone who can help promote your business. This is a type of person that probably networks easily and is well connected. Do not be shy to network effectively; there is nothing to lose if you have an offer that may be of value. Just ask and invite; you might be surprised. Be sure to remember, with this demographic, you must uphold the best image and ensure high integrity.*

*Sometimes one gets tongue tied when seeing someone famous; it can be intimidating. Keep in mind famous, rich or important makes no difference. Self-confidence of this group might be slightly better, due to experience and exposure, but never miss an opportunity to rub shoulders with someone well known. Do not hesitate to get contact information (i.e. business card) and give them yours. You might be surprised to know few people reach out to someone after meeting if the assumption is they are too busy or too well known to spend time with you.*

*Know the ideal client for your business; otherwise you are jumping into deep water without a life saver; or walking in the dark without knowing your environment. Study your potential client closely and know where to find them. Once you find them, decide how to best market to them. Do they like incentives? Do they like to keep up with others? Do they like*

*to have bragging rights? Also think about what your client needs to learn after investing in your service or product. If they invest, is it likely they will be successful? Do they need education, training, direction, support or all of the above? Is this a built-in service, after investment and add on service or neither? What is the success rate of clients investing in your service or product and is there a repurchase or return rate? What is the life cycle of your client and is there a way of extending this for continued benefit, not only for them but for your revenues too?*

*I am also proud of my students whom I may have influenced that continued to pursue horsemanship, in some way, shape, or form for their careers. Yves started with us as a young boy in the beginner group at summer camp. He was a natural rider and good student who returned each summer and eventually became an intern learning from our senior instructors. After a few more years he joined our staff team as Instructor. He attended University and eventually graduated with a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from St. Hyacinthe; Universite de Montreal. We were fortunate to have his connections and if an equine emergency occurred, Dr. Yves would make sure we received an expedited appointment. He took a special and personal interest in our horses. For that I am grateful and for helping create the love of horses in him, he is grateful. Do not hesitate to encourage your most loyal or talented students to pursue their passion, even if you become competitors down the road.*

*We had a student with us over ten years who was a camper, competitor and instructor. She became an Intern and earned her Level One Certificate from the CEF after several years of schooling. She also loved to help our farrier when he was*

*trimming and shoeing the horses. This is truly an art; hot shoeing involves heating an iron horse shoe in the forge and placing it briefly on the horse's foot to sear the path where the shoe will lie. The purpose is to create a smooth surface between the hoof and the shoe and ultimately kill any fungi and bacteria that may cause problems in the hoof. It is a smelly job with a lot of smoke. It is fascinating work and very important to be accurate, considering the importance of a sound horse for riding, and especially, competing. Eventually this student, Julia, became a certified Farrier and moved to Kentucky, settling with her farrier husband, in horse country.*

*I was very touched to receive this note from a long-time student, instructor and now friend. Dr. Isabella writes, "Wolf has a big part in me becoming the person that I am today. The first thing Wolf taught me was work hard, play hard. Wolf loved for us to work hard but he loved to reward us as well. Whether it was liquor in some whipped cream he made up, stopping for popsicles on the way back from week end camp, or beautiful steaks from Montreal on the BBQ, Wolf wanted us to experience the good life and be rewarded for our hard work. I have used this in my own life, both to reward myself when I knew I had done a job well, or to reward my staff when they have put in that extra effort. I know it makes a difference. It makes you feel special to be rewarded, and gives you incentive to keep working toward your dreams.*

*Dreams, yes that was something Wolf believed strongly in. As an equestrian coach, he taught us to dream and dream big. From the beginning he had us dreaming of the Olympics; of becoming great riders. It was bringing us to competitions in the U.S. and competing against Ian Millar, inviting Captain Mark Philips to give us a clinic, having us try*



*out for the Ontario Young Riders team or having us attend a movie premier about a family's horse and rider; Wolf wanted us to know that we were destined for great things. He wanted us reaching for the stars. This made me feel like there was nothing I couldn't do inside and outside the riding ring. It gave me the guts to call one of the top scientists at Columbia University in New York (Eric Kandel; who has since earned a Nobel Prize in learning and memory) to ask him for help. This call and Eric's help made a big difference in me obtaining my doctorate degree. It allowed me to walk into board rooms in downtown New York, or board rooms on the executive level of a billion-dollar company and feel like I belonged.*

*Wolf taught me to always use my head. He taught all of us if a mistake was made it did not go without a teaching opportunity. Once he sent me to pick up some windows and I brought them back flat in the truck and they cracked. I remember him looking at me with that "what did you do" look but he didn't miss the opportunity to teach me about how to transport glass. I have never forgotten. He turned almost all mistakes into a teaching opportunity. If it was doing something better, faster or more efficiently, Wolf wanted to make sure you knew how to do it.*

*I would be remiss if I didn't talk about Wolf teaching me how to work hard, and how to set an example for others. The best thing about Wolf was that he didn't expect anything from you that he wouldn't be willing to do himself. From getting on a young and untrained horse that might try and buck you off to being awake and at the barn at 5:30 AM for early morning training sessions, he was all over it. He set an amazing example. He worked harder than we did. He did the barn*

*chores alone in half the time the rest of us would. He brought horses in himself when there was a thunder storm starting; that might be 20 or 30 horses! He pushed us hard, but for him it was an overwhelming passion. That work ethic and passion helped me achieve many things in my life and for that I am grateful. Often, I will say to myself, "you can sleep in your grave" when I am tired and having to go the distance to get something done.*

*I look around me and see twenty something year olds who I observe barely putting in an 8-hour day, doing not very much and going in no specific direction. Poor you, I think. You never had a Wolf to kick your ass, spray you with a cold hose at 6:30 AM, stand over you after you got bucked off a horse or chase your boyfriend away who comes to visit you because he might distract you. Poor you; you never had someone who really cared about you and what you did or who you became, did you?"*

*Long-time client and instructor, Jenn says "I never thought I would pursue the horse industry as a career. I graduated with a teaching degree at a time when there were no jobs; even applied up north. My parents asked Wolf if he thought I could pursue the camping business and unbeknownst to me, one day my dad came into our den and asked if I would like to drive to the Annapolis Valley as there was a property he'd like to look at. He bought it for me and the rest is history. Wolf and Bev gave me the camp forms and said they would stop advertising in this area to help me get started. That was in 1984 and 35 years later; I am still operating a much smaller version of The Horse People. I still miss Wolf and always think of him on our mutual birthday. Those were the happiest days of my life; I truly mean that."*

According to Wolfgang

*Retail mogul, the late Larry and his daughter, Jackie, were regular clients for many years. They visited us so often, Larry purchased a lovely mobile home and we placed it on the corner of the property. He and Jackie would come every week end and eventually Jackie became an instructor and show team member. They owned several imported horses and bred a few for sale as well. When we first started out, Larry invested in the business allowing us to expand more quickly. As networking would have it, my daughter, Kris started her successful retail career with Larry's company and worked her way up over the years. It was a great example of loyalty and many years of client support.*



According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Thirteen

# Break Tradition

“The Hunt, the Horn and the Music”

**F**ox hunting is a traditional activity involving the tracking, chase and, if caught, the killing of a fox. Now hunting a live fox is no longer done so a scent is dragged along the area before the hunt starts. Foxhounds are still used and the horses follow the hounds. There is a "master of hounds" who leads the chase. Wolf was invited to attend a hunt and met many new people and what he felt were potential clients. Wolf felt the riders were not very skilled considering they were riding, whether trotting or galloping, for up to three hours.

Following the original invitation to the hunt, Wolf and a few of his adult students joined the Ottawa Valley Fox Hunt Club and attended Fox Hunts several times a year. From his involvement, he attracted new adult clients who came for lessons to improve their riding skills riding with hounds in the hunt. This was a new business avenue for The Horse People; although they had an adult lesson program, the tradition associated with this sport was very unique.

One of the thrills of the hunt was the sound of the huntsman horn. When huntsman and hounds are out of sight, the horn keeps the knowledgeable fox hunter informed as to the progress of the hunt. There are different sounds, including “Gone to Ground” which means celebrating a successful conclusion. The horn is very difficult to blow so being able to stick to a tune is truly an art. A book has even been

published as a guide on how to blow the horn, including lip placement and how much spit to achieve certain notes. There are actually twenty-five horn calls; it is doubtful today's modern-day huntsmen (or women) know enough to recognize them. Not to mention enough horn masters to continue a very old tradition.

Attending the hunt also meant taking a turn in providing the post hunt dinner. Feeding 30 or 40 hungry riders was not the easiest task! The Horse People summer camp chef, Johnnie, was hired to buy, prepare and transport the food. That was a hit; a chef experienced at feeding many hungry campers knew exactly how to feed a few hungry adults! I might add the traditional post hunt meal included some adult beverages too. It was always a long day and although the huntsmen complained of fatigue and sore muscles, it was really the party lasting into the wee hours that caused the fatigue!

It should be mentioned that proper turnout and etiquette for a fox hunt involves a special outfit. Typically the men wore a red tail coat with white shirt and tie. Bottoms include white breeches (riding pants) with tall black leather boots. At that time, men also wore black top hats to complete this traditional look. Women wore a similar outfit but usually a navy jacket. Today, the rules are more relaxed and the traditional dress only applies to the large and more formal hunts. Top hats are no longer worn and have been replaced with proper and certified protective helmets; that includes all equestrian English disciplines. In one way many feel it is sad to see the top hat disappear but all would agree, the top hat was not a protective helmet in any way, shape, or form.

## According to Wolfgang

Aside from a huntsman horn call or the sound of galloping hooves, music is a powerful tool to motivate not only riders, but horses and audiences alike. Riding is really based on rhythm and sound. Even the lay person would recognize the sound of galloping horse beats on the ground, sight unseen. Riders hear, and enjoy, the sound of hoof beats on pavement, leaves or splashing through water. Riders tend to relate to music by its beat; similar to a horse's hoof beat. That can be two, three or four beats. Or even something in between depending on one's riding discipline. Some riders will say singing gently to their nervous horses has a calming effect; perhaps no different than singing to a restless child. Blocking someone, or something, from a potential distraction, has a calming effect, so long as it is gentle. According to a study by Clare Carter and Linda Greening of Hartpury College, USA, who studied the impact of different genres of music on horses, the horses exhibited signs of stress when exposed to jazz and rock. The horses much preferred country and classical music; it was found this music even has an "enriching" effect. Study aside, like people; horses are individuals so how every horse, or person, responds to music is potentially different.

According to author, innovator and entrepreneur Tom Popomaronis, as a stress relief for personal or work environments, music can deliver much needed respite. When music is on, and one likes it, the release of feel-good neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine, which helps one feel happy and relaxed, is released. These hormones help achieve a better focus. Surgeons routinely listen to music in the operating room specifically because it relieves the stress that could compromise their focus and performance. An improved



mood from music also affects how one interacts with co-workers. If one feels better, one usually is more respectful, patient, and cooperative which can lead to better team work.

***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on influence:***

*Anyone who has a business that requires demonstrated competence and expertise must stay in perfect practice. It would not have been effective for me to lead my clients at the hunt if I were not able to ride for several hours. Swallow your pride; if you need assistance with physical preparedness, so be it. You can do this privately with a competent coach; no one is too old or experienced for ongoing improvement. The relationship between fitness and flexibility to ride well has never been stronger; practice what you preach. The old adage to “judge a book by its cover” does hold true whether we like it or not so look and act the part you are representing in your business.*

*Do not limit your business expansion because of how you feel about a related business aspect. For example, the Fox Hunt traditionally involved chasing a live fox and once the fox was caught, the dogs tore the fox apart. There was enough pressure for change so therefore the laws were adapted to appease the participants of the sport. If there is an aspect of your industry that you feel needs to change, get involved. Do not stand by complaining. That will not get you potential clients or important visibility. As a matter of fact, you can gain good visibility by standing up for what you believe or by rallying behind the public who oppose current legislation or regulations. Alternatively, you can chase an effective publicity campaign to gain visibility to your industry and as the lead on this, become known as an industry leader.*

*At The Horse People one of our initiatives that is somewhat unique to a business is we hosted at least three client events a year. Our best and most tenured clients were invited (that includes parents of the campers) as well as all of our local employees. These events involved demonstrations, recognition of achievements, food, and music and for the adults, wine. As mentioned already, there was also our annual spring cleanup and yes, we put our clients and employees to work, as volunteers, but rewarded them with a fantastic after work party. By nature, most of us like to socialize with those we have something in common with so attendance was always high and over the years we received much expressed gratitude. It was a business relationship built on appreciation. Make sure the word “thank you” is one of the most common things you say.*

*Our top activities, with most impact and least resources included networking at every opportunity (the coffee was always ready), word-of-mouth (I asked everyone to bring their friends and relatives), client newsletters, trade shows and mounted exhibitions for demonstrations. At that time, and I believe even today, a mailing list was important and no one dropped off the mailing list unless they asked to be removed (which seldom happened). Timing is everything and a potential client may have to receive a number of mailers (or perhaps today emails and “posts”) before timing is right. Law of averages in effect. Clearly your goal is to create ongoing loyalty and attract new business so do not avoid the “sale”. Without a call to action of some kind the likelihood of clients coming to you to buy is not nearly as high, in my experience. Talking about experience, that is precisely what you are trying to create with your activities.*

According to Wolfgang

*You are trying to help your client or potential client imagine themselves using your service or product.*

*There may be no reason what so ever for you to incorporate music into your business, business presentation or service offer but if you dare, research the “metronome”. I loved it! I would turn it on and imagine the message I needed, clearly in my business with riding, to the beats required. Now these gadgets are called beat detectors, beat makers or beats per minute calculators; still very powerful aids that may just fit a beat you have in your business. They say in music, the beat is the basic unit of time and pulse. Beat is a rhythmic movement, or noise. It is the tempo to which you might tap your toes when hearing. Make it work for you, if you can!*

According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Fourteen

# Anticipating Obstacles

“Preparation and Planning”

**W**olf once had a client from Boston contact him to buy a horse. The client wanted a very specific horse and agreed to purchase one that met their criteria, sight unseen. The horse was shipped to Boston via horse transport and although Wolf tried to stay in touch he never heard back. Until one day when the owner of this horse got upset and contacted Wolf to say the horse was untrainable and could not be ridden. Wolf and Bev made the trip to Boston, with a horse they felt was better suited, and picked up the horse the client wanted to return. The client exchanged the horse for a more suitable mount, and one that was trained, and the horse that was deemed “untrainable” became trained and even competed internationally with step-son Rob. The customer was a high-profile executive who became a great source of referrals for Wolf’s imported horses. This could have been a very negative situation with potentially negative publicity and quite the opposite happened!

Training young horses requires patience and rushing the process can result in poor success for the horse, and as indicated in the Boston Exchange story, the rider. Training a young horse starts right after birth. How foals are handled in their growing stage will set up future results. The foal learns to walk, trot and canter beside the mother and only haltered after that. When foals are young, sessions should be brief and in small enclosed with limited distractions. If the foal is

not weaned, include the mother and always reward desired or requested behaviour with a small treat. Like with any athlete, building confidence with positive training methods will make progress quicker and ultimately, easier. Although not all horse training experts agree, training horses is all about a reward system. When the horse does something correct, encouragement from the rider tells them they have made the right choice. Praise allows us to develop trust with the horse and give him a desire to perform, and knowing what motivates your horse will make you the best rider. Remember that you are always in-training with your horse. A pat on the neck goes a long way in communicating to your horse that he is on the right track. Some riders like to reward with a sugar cube or similar treat; no matter what the reward, positive training with frequent praise promotes a confident horse.

When TV and radio weather forecasted snow and rain for the next few days in 1998 for Eastern Canada, no one ever imagined it to be one of the worst natural disasters in Canadian history. The “Great Ice Storm of 1998” as it became known as was a massive combination of five smaller ice storms that struck a relatively narrow swath of land from Eastern Ontario to Western Quebec. It caused massive damage to trees and electrical infrastructure all over the area, leading to widespread long-term power outages. Millions were left in the dark up to several weeks. This ice storm led to the largest deployment of Canadian Military personnel since the Korea War, with over 16,000 Canadian Forces personnel deployed. The media kept warning the public to get prepared and considering Wolf had a stable of

### According to Wolfgang

horses, he tried to secure the water supply in the event of a power outage (his horses were watered by automatic water systems). He also purchased bottled water jugs and filled all the bathtubs in the house. The house had several fireplaces so enough wood was stored nearby and adjacent shed was filled. When the storm hit, the electrical system was the first to go and some of the poles carrying wires were broken by the freezing rain turned to ice. Power was cut completely. It took a few days to obtain a generator from a neighboring dairy farmer to operate the pumps and get water to the horses. They lived in squalor in the house with food defrosting in the fridge and freezers and the only cooking utensil being the top of the wood stove.

Eventually the military arrived and assisted not only Horse People, but neighbours as well. They brought additional generators, cleared debris from roads (which had been impassable) and even helped to water the horses. The Horse People was without power for 6-weeks. It took another 6 months to clean up, replant and return the facility to normality. It was an extremely difficult time for horses and residents alike and stresses ran high. In hind sight, no one was prepared for such a disaster and although perhaps extremely rare and unpredictable, the value of preparation for natural disasters should not be underestimated. There was much to learn from this experience.

### ***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on ethics:***

*Ethics in business needs to be kept top of mind. It is not a black and white area since ethics are tied into one's morals and principles and these vary from person to person. That is*

*why all sized businesses should have a set of policies and procedures that guide decision making and behaviours, at all levels of employees. Templates exist but since every business is slightly unique, consideration needs to be given to issues such as bribery, discrimination, harassment, respect and abiding by the law. Your policies and procedures need to be understood by existing employees and to ensure formality, should be signed and on file. Your vision and mission might contain some key words to demonstrate your view on ethics such as honesty, loyalty, fairness and integrity. Find a way to weave these in or support their meaning. Do not wait for a situation before realizing you have not addressed the importance of ethics.*

*Part of my business involved selling horses. Not all buyers were experienced. It would have been unethical for me to sell a young and untrained horse to someone who lacked the expertise to either know how to train or how to select a trainer. If I did not have the horse started at my facility, I would never put a horse for sale until it had been put through basic training with my own staff. Even if the horse was not a youngster, I would treat them as such to ensure they were competent in the basics. In the end, if I tried to do a quick sale, there would be harm to the horse and to my reputation. Although it is not always that practical with Canadian geography, it is ideal to send the horse to the prospective new owner on a trial basis. It is risky, yes, since once the horse is off site the owner of the horse would lose control but it is ideal. Another alternative is having the rider come to your facility daily for a period of time to gauge the fit between horse and rider. What is your business or service and how might ethics come into play? Is it possible to, even if inadvertently, to “walk the line” as far as ethics is*



concerned? What would be the consequences in your business?

*On another spectrum, the #metoo movement has taught business that ethics and compliance are important and matter. The issues raised in the past few years are not new but awareness has important, to be extremely high where it concerns potential employee or partner concerns. Prevention is important and a business owner must not take anything for granted, regardless of how insignificant a comment or gesture appears. Recognize what sexual harassment actually is; do not consider even the smallest concern insignificant. Create the appropriate culture early on, even if there is a very small employee group. With the ease of social media, people are speaking out. People feel empowered to do so especially if leadership is the culprit or not approachable. Do not neglect your responsibility, as a business owner, to educate yourself and your employees accordingly. Understand the multinational culture of your clients, and employees. Establish best practices and reporting standards early on and keep your hand on the pulse of this important issue.*

*Consider what type of business you operate and what you need to do to continue your operations, or salvage your business, in the unlikely event of a natural disaster. I learned the lesson of the importance of investing in a generator; animals (and humans) cannot survive without water, during the ice storm of 1998. Every business, and home, is different but it is worth the research to know how to best cope with disasters. We have had ice storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods and fires. Be sure to know what your back up plan is to ensure your safety, salvage your business and help your*

According to Wolfgang

*neighbors do the same. There is plenty of information on line and in your community. Do your research. Make this plan part of your business strategy. Ensure you have a regular (i.e. semi-annual) audit of your preparedness plan. As drastic as it sounds, expect the worst so your disaster plan is as inclusive as possible.*



## Chapter Fifteen

# Setting Rules

“No One Likes Rules”

**M**any might say today's youth grow up with fewer rules than their parents faced. Each generation says that. The rules implemented at The Horse People were likely old-fashioned rules, if surveyed. Wolf did not believe technology, as in cell phones, was necessary so were not allowed. At least as far as he knew but the bad news for the campers was there was no available cell service and, data availability was either not available or really expensive. Today things are different; he could not have imposed a “no cell phone” rule. The fact is kids grow up reliant on technology and with fewer rules than the generation before. There were many rules at The Horse People summer camp. There were daily inspections on cottage standards and awards for the cleanest cabin. These awards were announced daily at mess hall. That seemed to serve as a good initiative. Any camper enjoyed the cheers of being awarded cleanest cabin! No one wanted the playful shame of being the worst cabin, or one not up to standard.

Tack cleaning standards was a big event every Sunday. Saddles were lined up on the log hitching posts to clean and polish. Bridles were also cleaned and saddle pads were sent to the local laundry mat. These saddle pads were pretty well caked with sweat and in my experience, laundromats do not accept equestrian items to wash; maybe The Horse People ruined it for all due to their high volume of items to be washed over the years! A staff member's car was loaded

with dirty saddle pads and this lucky individual, plus an assistant, got to spend the day, or part of a day, at the laundromat. It might be safe to say those that had to partake in saddle pad washing have not have used a laundromat since!

The expectation was the tenured staff took on mess duty on rotating days and this was not too glamorous. Mess duty included scraping leftovers into the trash and emptying the trash into the bins. The staff was known to delegate these duties to campers, however. Once campers had left the mess hall, the duties included washing the tables and the floors. Imagine this “privilege” was extended only to tenured campers. Many campers would say it gave them a new appreciation of the work involved in feeding many hungry mouths and they also recognized how much food is wasted by taking more than necessary. Many staff began to dole out food and invite the hungriest campers to take a second helping versus throwing away a first helping. That worked so well it became the norm.

Other rules included “lights out” at a specific time and a staff night crew who were assigned to listen closely for signs of giggling shenanigans in the cabins. Or flashlights. Or raids on each other’s cabins. The possibilities were endless and considering it was summer camp, meant to be fun, the rules were meant to be broken. Unless Wolf was on duty. That was different and communication amongst the ten cabins travelled quickly that the lights out rule must be obeyed, this time.

There were also rules on attire; the riding attire included hard hat helmets, sturdy foot wear, special riding pants and,

preferably, gloves. Most of these were safety related so there were no exceptions. Attire had to be labelled so the right outfit, especially helmet, was worn by the rightful owner. Fitting a helmet is specific to head size and needs to be correct to be safe. All of the attire had to travel with the owner; it could not be left at the stable, mess hall or elsewhere. For those students who may not have had a great deal of responsibility at home organizing their belongings, this rule was a new challenge. Staff spent considerable time following up and ensuring each student's entire outfit was complete at all times.

The laundry rule was always a fun one; at least for the campers who could look on and see an item "auctioned" in the mess hall after meal time. Campers were required to label all their clothing and bring a laundry bag. Laundry was picked up each week and delivered back a couple days later in the same bag, although folded. There were always a few miscellaneous pieces, without a label that could not go back to the rightful owner. This miscellaneous pile was held up for fun bids, including modelling, in the mess hall. For some reason these unlabelled items were often under garments so campers had fun egging on the rightful owners to claim their items. Many would have rather gone without to have to stand up in front of the entire camp to get their belongings!

There were safety rules too such as no swimming with a lifeguard present and not entering the barns in sandals. When the program involved younger campers, campers were doubled up as "buddies" so there where abouts of all campers was always known. Footwear had to be left outside the mess hall during mealtimes; now that was quite the picture of seeing 100 or more shoes and runners strewn in

front of the doors! It only became a problem when one of the resident dogs decided he liked to “borrow” footwear and drag it away!

***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on rules are meant to be broken:***

*Some say rules are meant to be broken and I am likely well known to challenge the rules, as long as they do not offend or hurt anyone. But when trying to manage a large group of campers, who are away from their parents, rules need to be put in place to maintain some sense of order. Be sure to distinguish the difference between a rule and a policy. A policy is serious and is usually accompanied by a procedure so there is little flexibility. This policy might be necessary to support compliance, safety or avoid a law suit. A rule, however, is nice to have and is not truly that important. Sometimes rules are in place because they have been in place for a long time. Most of us can recall a time when we questioned a rule and we were told, “That is what the owner wants” or “that is in our rule book”. Be sure to know why your rules are in place and if they need to be updated. Never make a rule as a result of one unfortunate incident that might occur on a rare occasion. Rules turn your clients off.*

*Although rules might be a challenge to enforce, if you have employees it is necessary for them to know what you expect. As much as you would like to think all employees, or volunteers for that matter, have the same judgment as you; do not be naive in thinking that. Consistency with clients in a business is important and that is where rules come in. Depending on the nature of your business and the age and status of your clients, you may want to refer to rules as guidelines instead. It sounds less harsh but it still delivers*

According to Wolfgang

*communication on a group of standards. Be 100% sure your employees, who are expected to maintain or even worse, enforce, the rules, understand them and can explain the why to enquiring clients.*

*The importance of rules depends on your clientele. There are some services, or businesses, where implementing rules may not make sense. If they are safety related, there can be no compromise but otherwise, be sure you can answer the “why” behind the rule before trying to implement and enforce. Most businesses and services are competitive; an excess of rules will distract and make your business less competitive.*



## Chapter Sixteen

# Customer Appreciation

“Celebrate and Celebrate”

**W**olf and Bev hosted a Christmas Party on the first Saturday of December for many years. It was the event of the year and fittingly, the final year end wrap up event. There were usually up to 100 attendees that began to arrive late afternoon and the evening began with the junior students putting on a riding demonstration for their parents and other adults in the heated and well-lit indoor arena. The audience watched from the viewing lounge on the upper floor of the indoor arena; a bird's eye view! There was homemade mulled wine and appetizers to nibble on while watching the riders. After a two-hour demonstration of a variety of performances and skills, everyone was invited to the house for a buffet dinner.

This was an opportunity for Wolf to thank his clients for their support and loyalty; there was many a toast during his annual speech. In true Wolf style, he involved others in his speech so many got an opportunity to speak, whether they wanted to or not. And the speeches were never short. Wolf was a born speaker, or so it appeared and the recognition of others, the story telling and the toasts would go on and on. He always seemed to keep the audience engaged; their attentiveness must have been what encouraged him to keep going!

The house was nicely decorated and there is nothing more festive than a big old-fashioned farm house ready for



## According to Wolfgang

Christmas! No one ever tires from seeing strings of Christmas lights both inside and out. The party lasted well into the late hours; this was a rare social occasion everyone had to mix and mingle. The junior riders left after dinner and the adults continued to party. Of course, favourite horses and proud accomplishments were compared and new goals were set. Many of the attendees only met each other once per year at this event. It was truly the event of the year and a perfect wrap!

A grand celebration the campers took seriously were the horse shows hosted at the end of each camping session. This was a demonstration for parents, and often grandparents, by the campers to show off their progress and accomplishments. The campers practiced for days and organized demonstrations such as musical rides, jumping in tandem, jumping hands free, vaulting and dressage. They also often braided their horses and organized a dress code, by class, to show unison. Each instructor worked with their individual classes to organize something that showed each camper's strengths. There were photo sessions, including the riding, cabin photos and new best friend photos. Parents were invited to the mess hall for lemonade and snacks and of course, to the stables to meet the horses.

People, who rode together, socialized together and met each other on occasion through The Horse People's various celebrations and events all shared a common interest. According to Erica Judson, MS, RDN, CLT, a happy mood and a feeling of motivation happens when the brain chemical dopamine is released. This feeling of pleasure, and reward, motivates one to continue repeating the behaviour associated with this happy feeling. This is often why people

get motivated by exercise; the same feeling of improving mood and boosting endorphin levels is evident. Science aside, when events are happy, positive and people feel accomplished; they associate an event with that same feeling. The Horse People events were well attended and I will dare say, attendees looked forward to the regular ones well in advance!

***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on word-of-mouth:***

*Customer appreciation is important; a business owner cannot take customer loyalty for granted. Hosting an annual and very grand event is a great way to bring customers together and thank them publicly for their support. Encouraging clients to bring friends and family can be a great way to acquire new customers; there is nothing more fun and appealing than seeing someone you know having a good time and wanting the same for yourself. A friend can do the selling of your service or product for you; without having to say much because the demonstration of having fun or feeling rewarded says it all.*

*Do not underestimate the power of a community; the socialization that occurs with people sharing the same interest is very powerful. Many people are too busy to have an active social life; being able to participate in an interest and make friends at the same time is ideal. In today's marketing environment, some of the most successful efforts are events. Not events geared to making a pitch or signing up clients, but a true old-fashioned customer or potential customer appreciation event with free food and drinks. If there is follow up, it is in the form of a thank you. No sales pitch or request to sign up. Keeping it simple; always.*

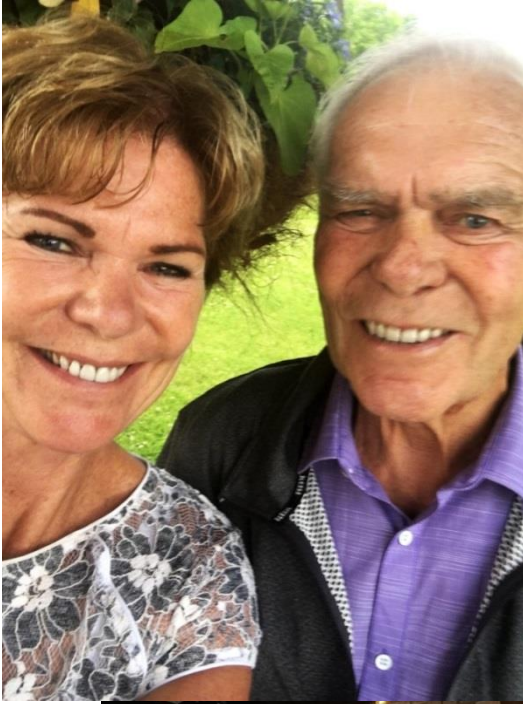
*Culture is such an important aspect of any business; it is the reputation you have for both employees and clients alike. Culture is important in today's environment of social media; word gets out quickly if culture is in disarray. Create a "way of life" for your business; what are you known for? How are you known to do things? What do your clients know of your outlook, attitude and values? What traditions are you known for that make clients and employees feel good? For example, every Christmas we would host a Christmas party and included all available students and their parents. The students would perform a ride for their parents, complete with horses decorated for Christmas. It is one thing to be invited by a business owner to an annual appreciation event but to be invited into a business owner's home for an annual appreciation event is not so common. We had many students who told us this was their party of the year!*

*We live within several communities. The children and adults who rode at The Horse People were part of The Horse People community and enjoyed spending time with each other while they were there. I look at it as a tribe. But apart from The Horse People, they did not communicate or see each other. Consider the people from the average work; it is a tribe at work and although everyone typically enjoys working together and celebrating some milestones and events, it is really just a work tribe. One may also have a community tribe from the neighbourhood and this is limited to conversations and gatherings in the neighbourhood but that is all. Depending on your business or service, these tribes you circulate in are all potential clients. Not because you are selling to them but because they are part of your tribe. Get to know them first and the sale can follow if your service or product is suitable for them.*

*A loyal and satisfied customer can provide a source of revenue for a long time if a business has spin off potential. For The Horse People a customer may have started as a young rider in summer camp and evolved to a horse owner and competitor. Perhaps that original young rider eventually becomes a summer employee at The Horse People, or even a full-time intern. As well, do not underestimate the power of referrals. We all love to refer, especially if we get a compliment on our hair style, outfit or let's face it, riding ability. If you ensure your clients have an experience, not just a service, referrals can surprise you. If you have a way of rewarding your clients for referrals, you might see an increase too. Once again, social media makes asking for referrals easier than ever. People seem to like to share and tag (so I am told); ask your customers to do this often and find a reward for those who do.*

*There is a customer life cycle, though and a business owner should never be complacent or satisfied with the status quo. It is imperative that an ongoing initiative is a search for new customers. Every business should know how many customers bring the business to capacity and how many customers (weekly, monthly or annually) typically drop off. This way one can calculate how many new customers need to be acquired to keep the business viable and prosperous. Is there a next generation of customers to consider? Are consumer interests changing and more young/older people considering your service or product? Know your environment and how your business might impact today's society so you can adjust accordingly.*

According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Seventeen

# The Future Business

“Family Business, or Not”

**T**o ensure the children or relatives remain in a family business, the mentoring needs to start early on. That is how a family member can carry on the business legacy. Besides, a family member will likely not make a decision to invest, and give up their current career, at the last minute. This must be well planned years in advance. New generations have new ideas on how to carry on a business, and that might be a good thing. Nonetheless unless business basics, including ethics and culture, are apparent a successful business cannot be replicated unless the mentioned mentoring takes place.

It was my dream to work with my father, as well as in the horse industry and unfortunately, I took this on a little too early in The Horse People's start. At that time there was not enough work (and income) to keep both Wolf and me financially employed so my interest went elsewhere as I established a career in business that ultimately took me out of province and clear across Canada. Looking back, I have regrets not only that my family and I moved so far away but when The Horse People had the business momentum to include another expert such as myself, I was already established in business elsewhere. Had I stayed in the area and simply pursued a short-term career locally, I might well have been interested in taking over the family business and even sharing the responsibilities with siblings. I am not sure if we could have done this by more ongoing discussions, or

better planning of the future, but once a family comes along and careers are set, change becomes difficult, and risky. I continue to remain involved in equestrian sports. From my father I learned to teach, through explaining the why's behind what one does and engaging the audience in storytelling. I did not realize it at the time, but I notice that I can engage someone in a variety of stories that relate to personal experiences and I always noticed my father doing that as well. I also learned hard work with limited resources still gets the goal accomplished. I never felt I had a "silver spoon", as the expression goes, yet was able to compete or surpass others with sheer determination and a superior work ethic. Others have told me I am just plain lucky and I call rubbish on that; it is seldom luck. It is focus, determination, strong goal setting and a belief that you can make it happen.

Families should discuss the desire of selling the family business as early as interest is demonstrated. That is the ideal time to divide some roles and responsibilities to the perspective family member for the sake of exposure while still being there to support and direct. Treat it like a business but recognize you are mentoring family and treat accordingly. Be sure to put the business relationship and expectations in writing; anything that is informal can be perceived as never having happened.

Be sure to assign strengths to family members even if the business ultimately and eventually requires all encompassing skills. Starting with strengths develops confidence and eventually the opportunity areas can be developed or others can be hired to complete what is outstanding. Separate family from business so when family gathers for family events, do not discuss business. When



meeting for business discussions, do not refer to family. This takes discipline and is not consistent with the face to face relations that may have occurred in the past. According to StartupNation, only one in three family businesses survives to the next generation. In addition, in today's business environment, acquisitions have never been more rampant and therefore family errs on the side of profitability before family.

To determine what to sell a family business for, add up the value of everything the business owns, including equipment and inventory. Deduct any debts or liabilities. This can be the starting point for determine the business worth although usually a business is worth more than just its net assets. Annual revenue should be taken into consideration including what the potential is based on untapped potential, changing trends and future commitments. When the buyer is a family member, the price might often be what the sellers need to retire comfortably on plus good will. Every scenario is unique and as long as the family members are satisfied, it is likely a fair deal.

***ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on a family business:***

*The family were all exposed to horses early on. My daughters Birgit and Kris were 12 and 11 respectively when I started my first horse business and my step children, Rob and Joy were 10 and 9. Essentially all the kids were raised with the family business and had to take some responsibility in animal care and upkeep. For Birgit and Kris, it was chinchillas and then horses, for Rob and Joy it was horses. From a young age they took on the before or after school care as well as longer days on weekends. Even if they did not demonstrate the most interest in horses, they learned*

*basics such as safety and handling of animals. They rarely got to sleep in and perhaps had less socializing outside of camp activities due to being involved with camp.*

*We were very fortunate that most of our children and grandchildren were attracted and interested in the business, from an early age. Many became horse lovers and as parents and step parents, we were proud of our influence on them. There were trips abroad to attend the National Reit Schule and many horse shows locally and in the United States. What we did not do from an appropriate age, when young people are planning their future, is discuss whether taking over The Horse People was an interest or an option. Looking back, I recommend family businesses think about the distant future early. It is likely too late, like in our case, when the adult children have their respective careers and pursue their sport casually, if at all.*

*If one would compare to farmers, who very often sell their farms to their sons or son-in-law, this expectation starts early. By the time the children are in high school, they are already encouraged to pursue post-secondary education in agriculture so they can continue the farm but upgrade based on current day practices. The parents often stay involved, or perhaps hold the loan, for years to come and semi-retire nearby. One sees so many farm names as "X Farm and Sons". Be sure not to under estimate the influence you, and your partner, have on your children. When I look at my children and step children, they are all well-educated and successful in their chosen careers. Is that coincidence or is it an influence I did not realize I had? We can all influence without telling others what they have to do or what they should do. As a business owner, you will be influential. Be*

*aware of that and ensure however you influence, it is on a positive track.*

*I recommend you ask yourself if your business might be a business you would be proud for the next generation to take over or is this business one you hope to sell down the road. That decision, early on, will govern your long-term mission and vision and perhaps your risk taking as well. Regardless of how long you hope your business will last, ask yourself often, "What legacy would I like to leave behind?" It was not a question I ever asked myself and I am always told I have indeed left a legacy. But my advice is to do so and I believe identifying a legacy will also govern your actions today and in future years.*

*No one said building a business or starting a company is easy. There is a price to pay and the risk that family members think you work too hard your whole life is real, and they do not want to do the same. Times have changed. Your family members may not be the risk-taking type, or fear they cannot keep up with the legacy you built. Your family may not have seen you suffer, or worry you would not make it. If you hope to pass on your business to family or a close employee, loop them in early on all the challenges. Help them envision the future and changing times. They may have ideas you did not think of and the time to brain storm is while you are still engaged in the business. Just plan it early, or plan to sell while the business is successful.*

*Unfortunately (of course my opinion), not everyone is born an entrepreneur and owning a successful small business requires entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours. It is not uncommon to hear of a business that has been passed to*

*another generation and with the best intentions, the next generation or perhaps the generation after, does not succeed. From my observations this is often due to expansion or a change in products. There is nothing wrong with either but it has to be based on sustaining the business for the long term, especially in changing times. The Horse People could not have been sustained relying on summer camp alone; the summer residential camp business has changed too much. I knew that when I down sized the summer camp but had enough other revenue sources to remain successful. Running a business is stressful; coping skills must be strong and emotional turbulence cannot be a daily occurrence. Perhaps today or tomorrow's generation is less resilient; they may not have had to struggle as much as my generation. The awareness regarding mental health is growing exponentially; that was never a topic of awareness or discussion when I was starting out. When I was younger speaking out about one's mental health was a sign of weakness. We just did not do it. Be sure to lay all the pros and cons on the table with a healthy and honest family discussion, and perhaps debate, before making a final decision to pass the business on within the family.*

According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang





According to Wolfgang



## Chapter Eighteen

# Collect Testimonials

“Close to the Heart”

**S**tepdaughter Joy writes  
*“For those who have not had the experience, growing up on a horse farm sounds glamorous and it is. It is an incredible experience to be responsible for a four legged beast that often weighs up to 650 kilograms. It is a pleasure to develop a partnership with an animal that requires trust, care and love and have that come back to you in spades. The beauty of these majestic animals and their movement can often be described as poetry in motion. If you have had the privilege to experience life on a horse farm you also know it is a lot of hard work. The physical labour of shovelling manure, keeping a stall clean and safe, grooming and the care involved after a ride or when the horse is sick or injured requires dedication and a lot of time and energy. I would not have traded my experience growing up at the Horse People for anything. There is so much to say however I would like to share the highlights into poignant life lessons taught to me by my mother Bev and my stepfather/coach/cheerleader Wolf.*

*Motto was early to bed early to rise; horseback riding lessons began at 9:30 AM and that meant being in the barn at 7:00 AM. The horses needed to eat on time in order to digest their food before clients arrived. Mucking out (the lay person calls this shovelling manure) was the second thing we did after we fed the horses. 90 minutes of work occurred before you could ride or teach lessons. This means that for*

*the most part getting to bed at a decent hour helped/. Not to say we did not party as teens and have some late nights. The added benefit of physical labour is the awareness you develop of what it feels like to be fit. The precedent set me up for a lifetime of craving movement and exercise. Another motto was mornings are the best time of day. When you start your day early you live more life, get so much more accomplished and are exposed to the peace and beauty of quiet when a lot of the world is sleeping on a weekend morning. Birds chirp louder, dew on the grass is fresh and nothing compares to the whinnies your equine family greets you with when you open that barn door. The whole experience was always augmented by the incredible farm breakfasts that were cooked for us by my mom, Bev.*

*Wolf used to say “many hands make light work” and considering the farm was a huge property that required a lot of maintenance that made sense. Fences required annual painting; Bev and Wolf would host a large crowd each year for a day long work party. What would have taken weeks to accomplish could get done in one day. Working in teams is fun and bonding. I have brought this solution into our family life and also used it reciprocally with friends and neighbours. I believe that years of working with that belief system has been instrumental in cementing life-long relationships that were first formed at The Horse People. My parents taught me cohesive, committed group, good food, drinks and great music goes a long way into getting the party started and moving you closer to actualizing a goal that may otherwise have been daunting.*

*There was no such thing as finishing your job and taking off; everyone leaves together. Wolf and Bev reinforced that your*

## According to Wolfgang

*work is not done until everyone's work is done. The lesson has influenced strong work relationships in my life. I love this philosophy! Another metaphor that has helped me navigate daunting prospects in life and engage in more risk taking is "throw your heart over the fence and the rest will follow". Wolf used this phrase often with reference to our jumping lessons and the nerves we sometimes felt in anticipation. Bev and Wolf incorporated a motto; if you want something done ask a busy person. Balancing school, chores and competitive life requires learning how to organize yourself so that you can achieve your goals and that, of course, includes social and recreational time. Being busy is empowering. It taught me what I am capable of. I watched my parents build an internationally recognized equestrian facility from scratch while my mother was attaining a graduate degree as a mature student. I first realized the value of this lesson when I left town for my first year of university at age eighteen. I worked part time and carried a full course load. Just having to look after myself and not 40 horses felt like a holiday. Many other students struggled with time management.*

*I consider it a "Wolfism" to hear "rules are meant to be broken". Wolf's philosophy is not if, but how. He believes the world is your oyster and rules that do not necessarily make sense can be challenged with*



*critical thinking, audacity and perseverance. When he was courting my mother, Bev, and was looking after me and my brother for the day, he had staff open Park Safari in Quebec on their closed day just for us by asserting, with authority, that he was the “owner”. I later used this chutzpah on many occasions in my own life and once had a police team open a bridge that was barricaded for a car chase so that my daughter would not be late for her dance performance.”*

Granddaughter Amber writes

*“I was only three-years old when I moved away from my grandparents and The Horse People. I remember days of following my Grandpa around in the barn. I don’t actually remember, but was told, when he had to handle horses and could not carry me; he would place me in a box stall with a rabbit or some other small creature, for safe keeping. At the time, my parents were not aware. Of course. Maybe that is why I never minded getting dirty or never worried about getting germs. A girly girl I was not; thanks to you Grandpa!*

*I had the horse bug as soon as I was born, I believe. Again, I do not remember but I am told by the time I was two-years old; I would beg for a ride on my mother’s horse. Even in the winter in the bitter cold, I would sit on a folding chair in the middle of the indoor arena to watch her ride because I was promised a ride after she finished. She tells me she had to put two snowsuits on me to keep me warm. Apparently I was a child who never sat still so this was quite the accomplishment for me. As my mother looked through old photos for this book, we came across a few with me sitting (slouching) on ponies and a donkey while being held on by my grandpa. He would ask me to lead the smaller ponies and even foals since he knew I was not afraid. There was*

According to Wolfgang

*never an issue; I believe animals always know when someone is harmless. He taught me confidence.*

*We moved to Edmonton and away from my grandparents when I was three years old but I still wanted to ride and as soon as my mom found a stable, I was begging to ride again. I began to ride at the age of four and never looked back. When I was able to fly as an unaccompanied minor I would fly to visit my grandparents, with my sister, and spend time with them and at camp. Of course, my priorities were the horses but it was nice to visit the grandparents too. This went on every summer while I was in school. When I graduated from high school, I spent a few months working at The Horse People and was fortunate enough to go to Germany from there to prepare and ride horses before the presentation at the Verden Auction. Although I have not been trained or ridden professionally, it was and still is, in my heart to do so. That passion has not left me and who knows, one day the opportunity may come knocking. Regardless, my passion for horses will never leave me and I am the family expert on anything you need to know about racing. My Grandpa and I can sit for hours and discuss the racing community, the winners and the losers and solve all the racing industry challenges of today!*



*I was fortunate, thanks to my Grandpa and Mom, to acquire their passion for anything equestrian. I also learned that to accomplish dreams one must be dedicated and relentless with practice. Nothing falls on one's lap. As a side comment, I also inherited their love of sweets!"*

Granddaughter Kirsty writes

*"Grandpa was always this big man in my childhood eyes. Whenever I think of him, I think of him as having this giant stature, I guess because of his giant personality. Even now when I see him, I'm sometimes surprised that's he's not as tall as I remember. He has a strong work ethic, high expectations and is a big believer that you can do anything you set your mind to. He didn't take it easy on any of us because we were family. In some ways, he expected more from us. He knew what we were capable of and was always proud of us. He loved introducing us to guests, to campers, and to clients. When my sister and I would arrive during the summer, he would seat us at the head table, the first meal anyways, and would proudly tell everyone who we were, much to my embarrassment. When we saw him outside of camp, he was always fun loving and a bit of a trouble maker. He didn't follow rules and since I am an avid rule follower, this always caused me some anxiety. Now, I hope to be more like him as I get older as I think it's so important to be who you are, with no apologies.*

*As kids staying with our grandma and grandpa, he would sneak us Oreos, after we were in bed and had already brushed our teeth. One of my most vivid memories was one night after going out for dinner, we stopped at a grocery store, my sister, another rule breaker, jumped into a grocery*

*cart and my grandpa ran down the aisles yelling “Blast off” as loudly as he could. They laughed hysterically while I hid in another aisle. He worked so hard but he played hard as well. He never lost his young spirit, which is probably why he got along so well with his students and campers.*

*As I grew older, I began to appreciate how my grandpa always stayed young at heart. How he was able to do what needed to be done but also enjoy every minute of his life. In my early 30’s after visiting and looking through pictures of my grandparent’s trips around the world, I realized that I wanted to do the same. I arranged for a leave of absence from work and planned to travel for a year. My grandfather was my biggest supporter. When everyone else told me I should wait and save more money, or wait another year, he beamed and told me how proud he was of me following my dreams. I visited shortly before I left on my trip and he was so excited that he bought a world map and started planning my route around Germany. Where I should go first and all the places I needed to go. He started to open up about his life then. He shared with me some of his hardships and when I got to Germany, he arranged for me to meet one of his childhood friends, who showed me the little town he lived in when he was a child. He would email me (despite having no clue about technology) and read my blog religiously. In fact, if I didn’t post regularly, I would get a message from him (through my grandma usually) asking where my next post was. After returning home, he raved about my trip, insisted on copies of the travel books I had made and still shows them proudly to anyone who visits. His total faith in me and his unwavering belief in my dreams, kept me motivated and really gave me the confidence to travel the world on my own.*



According to Wolfgang

*Growing up, he was always positive about what you could do and didn't accept excuses. Being a teacher now, I realize that I share this belief. I know that my students can do anything they set their minds to, and I do everything I can to build their confidence. I definitely got this from my grandpa. My grandpa taught me a lot of lessons and continues to do so. He taught me to take what you get in life and make it into whatever you want. You can be negative or bummed about your circumstances or you can reach for what you want. I learned from him that sometimes it's ok to break the rules (although he wouldn't call it breaking the rules). I also learned that it's important to do what you love and not see it as work.*

*Since he's gotten older, I've really grown to admire how he took a childhood filled with some difficult experiences and turned it into energy that he put towards his passion. I love that he is so positive and doesn't get down when things get hard. He just keeps going. He's brave enough to take what he wants and doesn't care what others think. He doesn't conform to what others think he should be and doesn't pay much attention to what others think of him, something we should all do more of. When someone tells grandpa he can't do something, he sets out to prove them wrong. I admire that spunk, and I strive to have more of that myself. I am so grateful that Wolf is my grandpa. I had a childhood filled with happiness, play and laughter. I've been inspired to do things I never thought I could do and will always be proud of where I come from."*

Granddaughter Lauren writes

*"Some of my earliest childhood memories are of spending time with my grandparents at The Horse People. When I*

*watch home videos of myself as a child, I was often (if not always) asking my parents when we could go visit grandma and grandpa on the farm. The Horse People or “the farm” as we called it in our family, was a magical gift created by my grandparents, Bev and Wolf, so many years ago. It was their passion project. My grandmother’s passion for working with children and camps combined with my grandfather’s passion for horses, kids and coaching that came to fruition after years of hard work. They really did pour their hearts and souls into this place and that was so clear to me.*

*The Horse People held many different representations and significances for me growing up but knowing how lucky I was to be a part of it was always something I was consciously aware of. Over the 30plus years it was open, it was a solstice to children from all over the world to come and learn, feel safe, create lifelong friendships and pursue their passion for horses. It was a place to nurture your competitive spirit and to learn the true essence of responsibility.*

*My grandfather is not only an exceptional horseman, recognized by the best of the best in the Equine industry but he is a one of a kind motivator and inspiring coach who knows how to push people to their limits in order to grow in ways they didn’t even know possible. Being part of what they created is without a doubt my favourite part of my childhood and is still a big part of who I am today. I was taught the value of hard work and exceptional customer service through their example at a young age which I now use on a daily basis in my professional career in the recruitment and staffing industry. Through my grandparents, and in turn The Horse People, I learned perseverance and resilience which are resources I am grateful to have been taught both in my*

According to Wolfgang

*professional and my personal life. Setting goals, planning the steps necessary to attain them and celebrating my successes as a result, are skills I was taught at The Horse People. The skills were taught predominantly for competitive horseback riding but also helped me succeed in my education, my career and various aspects of my personal life. Lastly, a phrase my grandfather is famous for among his students and family (and my personal favourite that will always carry a lot of weight in my heart) is “throw your heart over the fence and the horse will follow” has inspired me thus far throughout my life to continuously follow my dreams despite any fear that may hold me back. The Horse People was my grandparent’s dream and despite challenges and many years to build, they never gave up. They followed their dream and it turned into such a beautiful part of so many people’s lives.*

*The Horse People will always hold a special place in the hearts of many and particularly my own, and I hope Wolf and Bev are aware of the impact they have created on so many lives. It truly is something special.”*

Granddaughter Allie writes

*“When I think of my grandfather, many eclectic (and chocolate-filled) memories come to mind. Nonetheless, a select few have been catalogued as placeholders that seem to hurdle through my temporal lobe when I hear the name “Wolf”. My grandfather has become a true aficionado of sorts over the years. He has earned ample credibility in a plethora of different professional disciplines, including but not limited to; Schnapps seeking, dessert tasting, life coaching, horse whispering, and has even dabbled in diplomatic relations during his short stint as an ambassador!*

According to Wolfgang

*From shovelling stalls to travelling to the manure pile in his raised tractor bucket, my grandfather always felt it was important for us to see the fruits of our labour and of course, to follow through with any given project from A to Z.*

*We had grown accustomed to being bucked off horses and dumped in ponds. Wolf always made sure to teach my sister and I the valuable skills that everyday life would later on necessitate, including; picking yourself up when you fall and the importance of quality laundry detergent.*

*From a young age, my grandfather also taught us the value of a balanced diet, as well as the five main food groups; white chocolate, dark chocolate, marzipan, ice cream, and cake. He routinely whisked us away to the local market to pick out our treat of choice, further ensuring that our nutritional needs were met.*

*My grandfather always proved to find value in asking for what he wanted. In turn, this taught my sister and me just how far a bit of confidence and an accent could go. After one of our grandfathers' performances in the Ottawa Airport, we knew one thing for certain; Starbucks employees anywhere would re-open their storefront for a chance to serve the German Ambassador.*

*My grandfather has truly made my childhood an unforgettable one. He has brought so much love, excitement, laughter, and of course; chocolate into my life. I would not be the woman I am today had I not learned from his unwavering work ethic. He will always hold a special place in my heart!"*



**ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on leaving a legacy:**

*I always strove to teach my children, students and staff to become independent thinkers. My Mantra was “there is no one who can help as much as you. Think first.” Always ask yourself, what can I do about my problem or dilemma? If you truly cannot come to any conclusion or solution, find a wise person to ask. All my life the word “legacy” never came up in my mind or in conversation with friends, my wife or my children. Perhaps living a peaceful, happy and respectful life, with love all around me, will help me better understand legacy.*

*My upbringing and some of my early challenges made me strong and determined to always think positively and set goals for the future. I was never one to shy away from a difficult goal or challenge and without knowing, passed that onto not only my children but many of my students and clients. It is humbling when others tell you they learned*

*important lessons from you; it was not my intent but I am overwhelmed by the many who have told me what they learned, and many years later, what they remember on a daily basis.*

*I know a father is an important influence in a child's life and it is without design that my children and their children may have learned from me. As the expression goes, "the apple does not fall far from the tree". When there are common passions, such as in my case the horses, this holds even more truth. I am very proud of all of my children and what they have accomplished in life; this entire generation is educated and successful in their chosen profession and hobbies. I hope the many memories and stories shared in this book will be helpful to the next generation should they decide to become entrepreneurs.*

*Always do what you set out to do and impress others (and yourself) when doing so. Smile when others say to you "you are so lucky to be successful with your own business" because you know, like no one else knows, it is not luck that creates success.*

*When I was a youngster, my father told me "When you like what you do you will be on top of the world, no matter what you do". I followed this advice my entire life. Be positive and start each assignment with the thought "Yes I can do it!"*

According to Wolfgang



# In Conclusion

**S**usan Stafford-Pooley from Horse-Canada writes:

*Bev and Wolf devoted their lives to teaching youngsters, and adults, from all over the world riding skills and the art of horsemanship. “It was one of the most fulfilling experiences of both our lives” said Bev. “We actually lived our dream and shared it with children we will never forget. I miss it.”*

Michelle Warren from Our Kids writes:

*Flags from a dozen countries hang from the ceiling of the indoor riding arena at The Horse People; colours representing the nationalities of campers who have been attracted by the riding school’s reputation. “I decided to do what I’d always wanted to do all my life” says Wolf. His passion began when he was a boy growing up in Germany.*

The Ottawa Citizen writes:

*The Horse People – helping young riders feel safe and confident, and advanced riders master new challenges.*

In 2012 Bev and Wolf made the difficult decision to sell The Horse People and retire. They would have liked to stay on the farm but it would have been a shame to leave a 40-box stall barn and indoor arena empty, not to mention the other buildings and the hundreds of acres of land go to waste.



## According to Wolfgang

They remain in the area and enjoy warm winters south of the border. Hardly a day goes by without a discussion of memories about days gone by at The Horse People. They continue to stay in touch with many past clients, campers and boarders. The business may be gone but the culture remains.

“Follow Your Dream” was their slogan.

### **ACCORDING TO WOLFGANG on following your dream:**

*Despite my 90 years, I feel so refreshed in working on this project with Kris. I was a self-taught entrepreneur who used my strengths and ideas to build my business. I read and tried to stay on top of business trends and changing times. You might think some of my “According to Wolfgang” advice is not typical of me, but as Kris mentions at the start, we spent hours discussing the past and researching credible sources so the advice would be current. We did not want to go into great detail on specific business operations, marketing or business development; that would have been too specific. Times have changed and I realize it now more than ever. Regardless, I hope my experience over the 50 years I was in the equestrian business has offered insight to your business or service today. If you are not in business but are an Alumni of mine, I thank you for your interest and think of the many wonderful times we had. For those of you who I hear from, I enjoy reliving the past and reminiscing. I am proud of you all!*

*Never let go of your dreams even it seems they may take a life time to accomplish. But do not put things off forever, you*

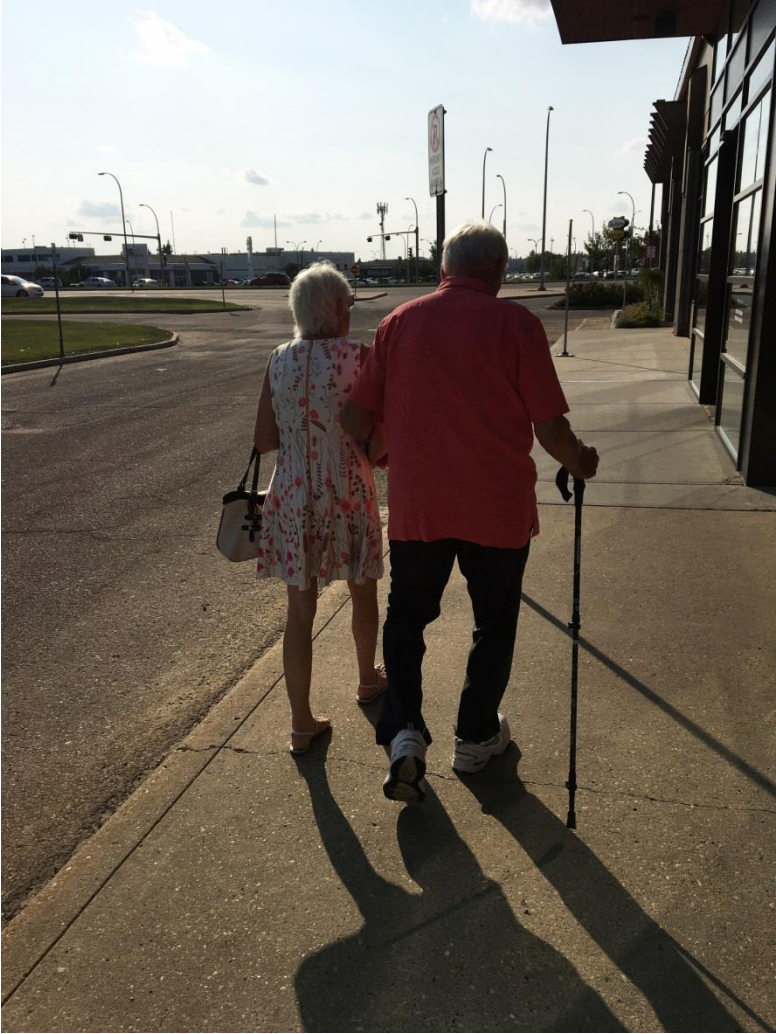
According to Wolfgang

*can always start small or start as a hobby. There is so much information available without effort today, take advantage. Thank goodness for my Pad! I have learned a lot contributing to my Book.*

*Please, Follow Your Dream!*



According to Wolfgang



According to Wolfgang

Notes:

According to Wolfgang

Notes:


According to Wolfgang

If you would like to get in touch with Kris, do not hesitate to do so. If you have a message I can pass along to Wolf, let me know. Now that this project is behind us, he doesn't seem to check his Pad anymore. If you would like to leave a review, kindly go to [amazon.ca](https://amazon.ca), book title and review.

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