

## Love and Business: 4 Tips for Working with Your Significant Other

By Nicole Fallon Taylor, Business News Daily Managing Editor February 14, 2017 02:30 pm EST

Share an entrepreneurial drive with your romantic partner? You might think launching a startup together is the perfect way to merge your personal and professional lives. But lovebirds, be warned: Going into business with a significant other may not be exactly what you're expecting.

When serial entrepreneur Nicole Bandklayder co-founded jewelry e-commerce company [Bijouxx Jewels](#) with her fiancé, David Pomije, they already each had their own startups. While they were familiar with the world of entrepreneurship, she admits they were a bit naïve about what it would be like to start a business together.

"I liked the prospect of spending more time together, but being together all the time while working is not the same as being together for date night or other romantic ventures," said Bandklayder, who serves as CMO of Bijouxx. "You really have to be in the right mindset to work and always be on the same team."

If you're thinking about going into business with your sweetheart, here are four smart survival tips to help you keep your relationship and your company healthy.

### **Divide and conquer**

If you think you and your sweetheart are going to be working side by side and sharing responsibilities, you may want to think again. When Randy and Angie Stocklin, the husband-and-wife team behind e-commerce company One Click Ventures, started their business, Angie Stocklin thought she'd be working on common tasks with her husband, she said. She quickly learned that their very different strengths meant they were better suited to have separate responsibilities.

"At the end of the day, our varied strengths and divided responsibilities made us a stronger team, because it allowed us to become experts and excel at different areas of the business," Angie Stocklin said in a 2014 email interview. "We didn't have competing strengths and therefore quickly learned to rely on the other person to carry their portion of the responsibility."

Meg LaFavre, who co-owns a Bottle & Bottega franchise with her husband, Paul, said they approach their business handlings much like their marriage and parenting: divide and conquer, and play to their strengths.

"Although we work together, we have separate responsibilities which helps to keep us focused," LaFavre said. With both marriage and entrepreneurship, there

are highs and lows. Going through the process as a team however, provides unique insight and appreciation for the accomplishments."

### **Keep personal and business issues separate**

Scott and Roxanne Bobowicz, WIN Home Inspection franchisees, said that as small business owners, they now have the freedom to do more with their children and work together to sustain a balanced schedule. But it is indeed work: There are going to be times when a business dilemma makes its way to your dinner table, or when a personal disagreement follows you to the office. These crossovers are hard to prevent completely, but you should both actively try to maintain a line between your work and home lives.

The couple advised setting boundaries as often as possible and to try to have operating hours.

"When we first launched our business, we would answer our phones any time and any day of the week," said the Bobowiczes. "While there are still some instances where people call us directly – like a realtor calling us at 9:45 p.m. on a Friday to discuss water quality testing – we've made these interruptions more manageable."

### **Make time for your relationship**

Any entrepreneur knows how time-consuming running a business can be. When you're working with your significant other, it can be even more challenging to find the time to devote to personal activities, such as side hobbies and spending time with other family members and friends. But doing so is important to the health of your personal relationship.

"It's hard to separate work and home life," said Mike McEwan, who co-founded boutique daily deals website Jane.com with his wife Megan. "We have found the best way to balance this is by putting our marriage and relationship first. We check in with each other a lot. It's not always easy, but I find it best when I put Megan's needs and concerns above whatever is happening at Jane."

"Once the business day is over, always try to take off your [business] hat and spend quality time together," added Pomije, Bijoux Jewels' CEO. "A good balance is necessary to make your business grow and succeed."

### **Understand what you're getting into**

Entrepreneurship isn't a 9-to-5 job — it's a lifestyle choice. A couple who wants to go into business together needs to realize what this entails and prepare to devote themselves to it.

Meg Schmitz, FranChoice Chicago franchise consultant who mentors couples looking to get into business together, said it's important to truly know yourself and your spouse before taking the plunge into entrepreneurship as partners. In her

consulting work, she includes the spouse at the start of the business investigation and covers each of their interests and concerns about financial investment, impact of the business on lifestyle, management skills and preferences, how young or old their kids are, and long-term financial goals.

"Some couples work very well together, and know and respect their boundaries and complimentary skills. Others work together, not necessarily happily, and are at odds about aspects of running the business," Schmitz said. "If you have a good marriage, put that first."

Randy Stocklin noted that if you have a strong relationship, complementary skills and shared goals, building a business together can be a very rewarding experience.

"You have to be honest with each other on all three of these points," he said. "If you ... are prepared to face difficult situations together, you have a much better chance [of succeeding]."

"If you put your mind to anything, you can do it, especially with a partner," added Megan McEwan of Jane.com. "It makes it so much more fun to build a business with a partner instead of doing it by yourself. We are able to help each other see from another perspective and then make the best decision."