

## Short Notes

*From Cheryl Clausen,  
Business coaching for agents.*

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### Are You Going Through a Phase?

When your parents didn't approve of your behavior did they attribute it to a phase you were going through? Perhaps you have even found yourself saying something similar about your own children. As an adult you probably thought phases were a thing of the past and not something you could expect to go through now. Wrong, as a business owner you and your business will pass through three phases.

#### Phase I

This phase represents your start-up and early growth phase. It can last from inception to somewhere around the 5 year mark or perhaps a little past that time frame. As with all the phases they aren't so much time based as they are accomplishment based. Your challenges in Phase I include:

- Not being able to schedule enough appointments each week to close enough business to meet your financial goals.
- Not closing enough of the appointments you do hold because you aren't adept at the buying/selling process.
- Too many of your clients are rather low value so it takes a lot of clients to hit your break even point.
- You never have enough time to devote your attention to the things that result in money in the bank.
- You don't have a plan or a tracking system that yields consistent results.

#### Phase II

At this point you have a pretty stable business with a good client base.

Your income is at least comfortable and you aren't facing the terror of an empty bank account like you frequently did in Phase I. You're starting to realize though that while your business is pretty stable it isn't growing and it may even be on a slight downward trend. Your challenges now include:

- The realization that what worked to make you successful in the past isn't getting the same results anymore.
- The realization that real growth isn't likely because you aren't getting enough repeat business and/or referrals.
- Your suspicion that you may be focusing on the wrong things but you aren't really sure what the right things are.
- Being so busy working in the business that you aren't really managing the business through effective planning.
- The realization that you want to grow the business but you aren't really sure how to make that happen.

### Phase III

This is the ultimate decision time – it's now or never. In this phase you will either resolve yourself to just hanging on with your current client base in hopes that you will be able to eek out at least some small gains, or you will make the commitment for growth. You realize that whichever path you choose now will define your retirement future and your family's legacy, if any. When you choose to follow the path for growth you face decisions about:

- Your revenue targets and how to make that happen.
- How you will obtain results through other producers so you can actually run the business versus working in the business as the main producer.
- Identifying the most important things to focus on now to achieve the desired results.
- Whether this be a lifestyle business providing well for your family as long as you are an active participant in the business, or will it be a legacy business that provides for your family today as well as after you are no longer actively participating in the daily operations of the business.
- The best way to develop producers that get results quickly and consistently. Plus the best plan for compensation.

Understanding which phase you are in today and some of the challenges you can expect in the future should help you to make better plans. If you know right now whether you want to leave the business as a lifestyle business or a legacy business it will effect the decisions you make about resources and their use even in Phase I. It will also help you to understand the direction you need to take in your own personal growth and development to prepare yourself for the next phase and your desired final outcome. Identifying and planning for challenges that you are likely to face lessens their impact as you already have a plan for overcoming or avoiding those challenges. The sooner you start taking the time to plan a business rather than just working in your business like an employee the sooner you will build a business that meets your needs now and in the future.

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Look for Cheryl's column "Coaching Excellence" in Omaha's newest paper the "Heartland Messenger". Any business wanting to receive a copy of this free paper can email [hrtlndmessenger@yahoo.com](mailto:hrtlndmessenger@yahoo.com) to have an issue delivered each month. May issue: "Is Your Business Failing?"

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