

# Make the most out of owning a business

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A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to participate in the “Weekend to End Breast Cancer Walk.” More than 2,200 people participated in a 60k event that was exhilarating, emotional, and fun — not to mention a little tough on the legs. The only regret I had came at the finish line. No, I was not unhappy that I completed the walk (in fact I was very surprised); I was only sad that I did not tell my employees about the event. Between you and me, I was afraid that I was not going to finish, so I kept my involvement relatively quiet. As it turns out, having them enjoying the moment with me would have been terrific for all of us, which brings me to the following point.

I think the benefits of owning a business go well beyond satisfying an entrepreneurial urge. Yes, as business owners, we provide career opportunities for employees, and we offer important services to clients. In addition, though, we can support community causes, work to make working for us fun, and encourage our coworkers and customers to be part of the family/community in which we all work and live. Most of us never thought about that when we set out to make our first dollar.



A jubilant Joanne Young participates in the “Weekend to End Breast Cancer Walk.”

Our business is an extension of ourselves, and we have the opportunity to use its name, reputation, and financial resources to support causes in ways that we, as individuals, could never hope to do on our own. By involving coworkers, we also give them the opportunity to do something for their community that they may not have been able to do by themselves. I think *involvement* is the key. I would much rather volunteer our company resources to build a raft, construct a float, or sponsor a barbecue for a charitable event than to cut a check for the same cause. Becoming involved is fun, and shared experiences help with team building and fostering employee loyalty.

Being able to have a presence at a community event is also a wonderful way to gain exposure. There is nothing wrong with a little self-promotion when it comes as a natural by-product of your involvement with the community.

Again, though, I go back to that walk and truly wish my coworkers had been there at the finish line waving me on. I feel that way because we do so many things together at other community events. We raise money at the Great Canadian Stationary Bike Race for the Cerebral Palsy Association, and our company supports causes such as the Park Foundation, the Calgary Educational Partnership, and the Kerby Rotary House. When a nursing home client of ours wanted to plant a courtyard, our team stepped in to help.

When you think about it, business owners have choices. They can run a tight, self-contained ship that goes about its work in finishing projects and building careers. Or, they can leverage their business into having a presence in the community, developing relationships, supporting causes, and involving employees in fun and charitable events. I truly believe that owners who get involved are making the most of owning a business. Walk on! 