

Sue Thompson's BeExceptional

[Your Character is Showing](#) | [About Sue](#)

The Times They Are a-Changin'

I'm sucked in by a good story, and I tend to look at my life as one in the making. While I love a dark tale (Patricia Cornwell fan here), I tire quickly of the relentless unhappiness and depression of, say, every single episode of "Mad Men." I believe I have some direct influence on whether or not my narrative turns to the sunny side of life, even if it means I simply view it through rose-colored lenses. That's not to say I ignore reality. My mind filters that reality, removing the unproductive and inconsequential, leaving the bones of the story.

The plot: almost three years ago, I set out on an entrepreneurial pursuit in full-time mode. I've been speaking and writing for more years than I want to mention right now, so it seemed a logical progression for me to work at it 24/7.

Here's the good stuff: I love doing my own thing. I enjoy networking. I'm all about relationships and I like the challenge of making, nurturing, and maintaining them in order to create business. I like the whole I'm-in-business-for-myself-and-don't-answer-to-anyone feeling. I like that every day is different and every client is unique, that every speaking engagement gives me adrenaline-filled joy at getting to use my talents.

Here's the not-so-good stuff: I missed the routine of my job, of which I need a modicum. I have very high affiliative needs (says my consultant guru), meaning I need to be around a significant number of people in daily interactions because people energize me, and unless I have a speaking engagement or coaching assignment every day, I don't get that. As anyone self-employed knows, there are good months and there are bad months, and I haven't mastered the skill of dealing with that inconsistency.

When I left my last full-time job of nearly fifteen years, I was so ready to get out of my industry I thought I'd never look back. I'd been through some really tough experiences and I was crispy from burnout. I was sure I wouldn't want to return, ever.

Because I've maintained the great relationships I'd made in my position, I was still involved in the industry. I continued to serve in my professional organization. I started to remember how much

Exceptionality



fun my work was prior to the craziness that sucked the enjoyment out of my days. I realized that if I found myself in such a hard place again, I'd handle it much better. I started to miss what I'd grown to do well and had continued to follow. (More importantly, I missed dressing up every day for work. When you work at home, there's no one to say, "What a gorgeous suit!")

So I weighed the pros and cons and started looking for a full-time job, and a truly glorious one has landed in my lap. I'm excited, buzzing with anticipation and relishing the possibilities. I don't feel sad or ashamed that I'm returning to corporate employment, because I don't see it as less desirable than self-employment. It's just different. I'll still do what I've always done, just as I did it before. I use my weekends and vacation time to travel *and* speak at conferences. I get a regular paycheck and a supplemental income. It's all good.

We can read our stories through a filter that accuses and wears us down or one that encourages us to reassess and explore. I'm not going to tell you I'm unfamiliar with the voice that sounds just like mine and hisses at me that I'm lazy, unmotivated, not good enough, not smart enough, and a failure. It's just that I prefer the louder and more appealing assurances that it's okay to try new things, because you can always go back to the old things; it's a good thing to challenge yourself and be changed by the experience because it will change you in ways you can't see until you need the new skills; it's a sign of maturity that you don't keep pushing at doing what's not working as well as you expected it to and make adjustments.

Every single thing I've done up until now will be used to great advantage in my new position, and I've got future speaking engagements lining up, so I haven't lost a thing. That's how I see it. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it. *

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Like skaters, we move forward by actually moving from side to side.

—Richard Rohr

There is in the worst of fortune the best of chances for a happy change.

—Euripides

All things change, and we change with them.

—Alexander Pope

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YOUR

Click here listen to interesting people
talk about their character strengths!



Stop by www.YourCharacterIsShowing.com and listen to one of the many interviews Sue has done with business people on how their character strengths have guided them in their work and personal lives! Entrepreneurs, talented sales professionals, a veterinarian, a dentist—and more—can provide insight on the principles from which they make decisions and manage relationships.

More interviews to come in the fall!

About Sue

Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

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