

FREE CD
Inside

This is it. No excuses. Make 2012 YOUR Year!

SUCCESS

What Achievers Read

THE
FUTURE
OF MEDIA
By Barry Diller

Tips to
Lead Your
Team to
Greatness

ROBERT DOWNEY JR.

**CANDID,
FUNNY,
FEARLESS**

(PLUS: HOW HE STAYS ON THE RIGHT PATH)

Faster,
Smarter,
Cheaper!

**5 Marketing
Ideas** for the
Internet Age

6 WINNERS
SHOW HOW
THEY MET
BIG GOALS

Cool Inventions
That'll Change
Your Business—
and Your Life



SUCCESS.com
January 2012



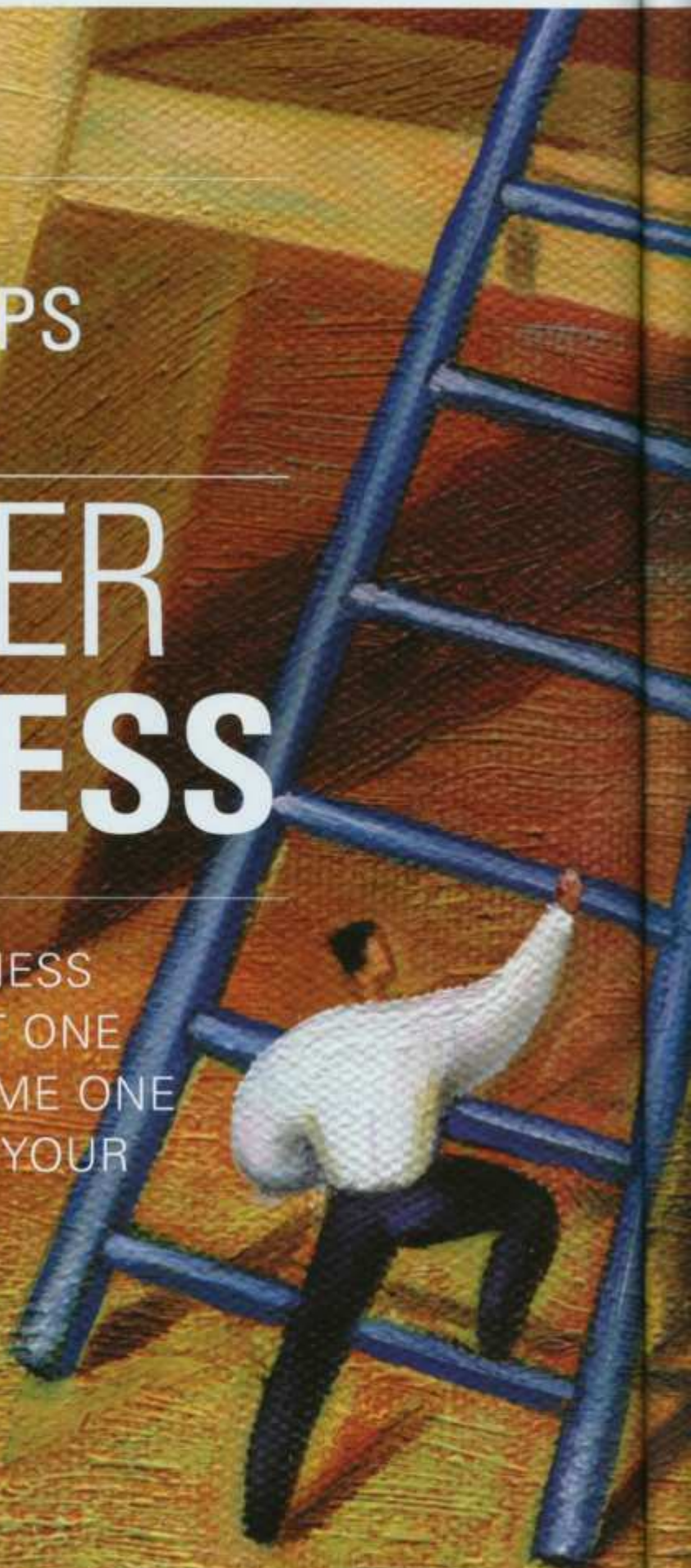
BABY STEPS

« TO »

BETTER BUSINESS

THESE SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS PROVE THAT ONE SMALL STEP CAN BECOME ONE GIANT LEAP TOWARD YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL.

BY JILL BECKER



A painting of a wooden staircase with a blue ladder leaning against it. The scene is rendered in a textured, painterly style with warm, earthy tones of brown and gold. The ladder is a vibrant blue, contrasting with the natural wood. The perspective is from a low angle, looking up the stairs.

**SOMETIMES, ALL YOU'VE GOT IS
10 MINUTES.** Or 10 dollars.

But 10 minutes a day or 10 dollars
a week add up.

When it comes to building business,
small steps can make the biggest impact.

Don't believe us? Listen to these
entrepreneurs. Each one of them faced
a huge goal and met it—
one small step at a time.

LAURA DAVIS
VICE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR OF
MARKETING, HPD ARCHITECTURE LLC
DALLAS



"It's not what you know, but who you know that gets you in the door," says Laura Davis, acknowledging the old adage. Back in early 2009, her design and architecture firm was about to complete its existing projects and had no new ones on the books, so the decision was made to seek contracts with federal, state and local agencies. "It became painfully obvious, though, that the larger architecture firms were hungry for work too and were pursuing the same small projects we were," Davis says. By the time they learned of an opportunity to submit a bid, they had little chance of getting short-listed. So Davis began reaching out to other architects who had experience with government projects and, more important, who had personal connections with the contracting officers.

THE GOAL » Network with relevant decision makers and other industry insiders to earn new business.

THE STEPS » "First, we joined a local chamber of commerce, which hosted happy hours and community brown-bag seminars," Davis says. "I was scared to death at the first happy hour I attended because I didn't know what to say after, 'Hi, I'm Laura. I'm an architect with HPD Architecture.'"

"Fortunately, a few months later I attended a seminar about Twitter. There, I learned several important things that gave my networking more purpose. I learned that on Twitter, and in other marketing efforts, we have the opportunity to be an expert resource.

"Second, I learned I needed a compelling story and a goal to focus my efforts. Once I grasped the concepts behind business networking, I brought the idea of hosting our own happy hour to my partners. We were nervous we wouldn't even have the required 35 attendees at our first event to get the free appetizers provided by the bar, but our fears were put to rest when more than 100 people showed up. Clearly we found a group of people needing a way to connect."

Davis's other networking efforts include offering introductions between contacts who could benefit from each other's expertise, blogging, podcasting, sitting on expert panels, mentoring students and volunteering in the design community.

THE RESULTS » In 2008 there were zero Google search results for "HPD Architecture," but by 2011 there were nearly 4,800—a marked improvement in visibility. As an expert resource, the firm is mentioned in everything from blogs to books, and team members participate in speaking engagements at conferences across the country. Adds Davis of their networking efforts: "We've learned how to talk to prospective clients and not undervalue our services. It has changed the way we approach business and how we view our firm." And the new clients are nice, too.

THE TAKEAWAY » "Be approachable and open to new opportunities," Davis advises. "And where there are no obvious opportunities, create your own that are a win-win for everyone around you." More important, she says, don't get stuck in "analysis paralysis." Start now to take the small steps necessary to complete your mission.

Don't get stuck in
analysis paralysis."