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## Listening to Yourself: Building a Work Life You Love

After 24 years of entrepreneurship, PopCom founder and CEO Dawn Dickson is ready to teach women about listening to their inner voices to create business success. [🔗](#)

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Beatrice Dixon, co-founder and CEO of the HoneyPot Company, speaks with Dawn Dickson, founder and CEO of PopCom, at Inc. Founders House at Black Tech Week.

Success is rarely linear. More often, it involves peaks, valleys, wins, and losses along the way. Even once you've built a profitable business, you're not necessarily done, but you're on a good path. Next, you have a chance to maintain or increase that success if you can keep up with market changes and factors both in and out of your control. And if the business ultimately doesn't work out, you still have to be okay with yourself.

At a recent Founders House Black Tech Week panel presented by Capital One Business, Your Next Move's host Beatrice Dixon, co-founder and CEO of The Honey Pot Company, spoke with entrepreneur Dawn Dickson, who has founded businesses in a variety of areas, including a tech consultancy, restaurant, yoga studio, community website, recreational vehicle (RV) company, shoe brand, and vending machine and kiosk technology company. During the talk, she shared some of her insights from being a serial entrepreneur.

## **1. Be willing to take risks for your passion projects.**

Like many other business owners, Dickson found the pandemic to be a setback. Her best-funded company, PopCom, was mostly selling items in vending machines in airports and malls at the time. But airports and malls were largely closed.

She used the time to start up several other businesses that she'd always wanted to do. She started and sold her restaurant. The RV company she created is still in business today. And she ultimately decided to let go of the yoga studio because it felt like too much work. She calls that a \$75,000 lesson, but one she doesn't regret.

"It was fulfilling because I said, '[I'm] doing everything I ever wanted to do.' I funded it myself," Dickson says, adding that it was a "beautiful feeling" to not have to seek funding.

## **2. Diversify and play to your strengths.**

"A lot of times people do one thing, and their identity is so closely tied to that one thing that when that thing doesn't work out, they feel worthless and they feel like they failed," she says. But she's too busy doing other things to ruminate on what didn't work.

Dickson felt unfulfilled when she was running just one business. She realized that what she enjoyed and what she was good at was starting businesses, not running them on an ongoing basis.

Wherever possible, she learned to delegate and automate so that she could focus her attention on the start-up stages of new projects.

## **3. Research potential investors.**

It's tempting to accept money from anyone who offers, especially when few people are biting. But Dickson said she learned the hard way that many investors just sprinkle cash here and there to see what succeeds rather than making any true ongoing investment in a business that doesn't immediately soar.

Dickson advises asking investors to see their portfolios. Request the opportunity to interview some of the founders, but understand that they'll likely connect you with their "success stories." She advises also asking them to tell you about their failures, including why they failed.

#### **4. It's okay to hit pause.**

Sometimes, a faltering business can be rescued, but at too high a cost. Dickson has pressed pause on businesses or walked away when it no longer felt worth the effort, either because the work was draining, or she didn't have the right team behind her.

"Always trust yourself, your inner guidance system," she says. "It is there to tell you the way. It knows everything. It's already in us. When we don't listen to it, we suffer. And when we listen to it, even though it doesn't always make sense to our human self, we find ourselves on the path of our purpose and in our alignment."