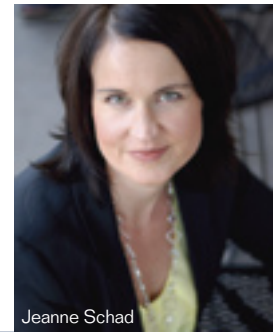




How are your leadership skills?

To grow or even sustain your credit union in a rapidly changing financial environment, your team needs to show true leadership. One way to assess and improve your leadership quotient is through coaching. "We use 360-degree evaluations and follow-up coaching to help leaders assess their own skills and get feedback from their managers, peers and subordinates," says Jeanne Schad, founder of Internal Relations Professional Coaching Resource in Los Angeles. "From this feedback, leaders can learn to use their strongest skills most effectively. Weaker skills can be identified and improved, and leadership teams can be formed to complement skill sets." By optimizing each leader's strengths and helping everyone work as an organization, you position yourself to think and become big.



Jeanne Schad

Growing Pains

Should you grow by adding a branch? Which ATM location is right? What about offering a unique product for a segment? It isn't just credit unions that have to debate endless ideas and opportunities in taking a step toward growth. This challenge unites all businesses in their common purpose of creating value and building long-term equity.



By **Robert Kiyosaki**

My friend's wife recently asked me if she should expand her profitable fitness studio to another city as suggested by her friends.

"Are your friends entrepreneurs who have grown multi-location, interstate or international businesses?" I asked her.

"Well, no," she said. "Most are professionals, but they're successful."

"They may be successful," I said, "but as professionals or small-business owners. What qualifies them to encourage you to expand?"

"Big business, small business — what's the difference?" she asked.

"A world of difference," I said. "Just because you're successful building a small business doesn't mean you'll be successful building a big business."

I've learned to be careful whom I take advice from. If you want to grow a small business into a big

business, seek advice from someone who has built a big business. Small businesses are the backbone of the economy. Yet very few entrepreneurs grow their small businesses into big businesses.

In any successful business, the team is balanced by leadership. My rich dad told me, "A good team requires a good leader," and the Marine Corps taught me that there are no bad soldiers — only bad leaders. Many entrepreneurs aren't good leaders, so they fail to attract good people.

When my friend's wife heard this, she was offended. "Are you saying I'm not a good leader?"

"No," I replied. "I'm saying growing a small business into a big business requires increased leadership skills and experience."

In the past, she had employee and partnership problems. Her employees only wanted more money and her partners didn't listen. She left our meeting still convinced the problem was with other people. Now, her second location is having the same problems — leadership problems.

Strong leaders know how to evaluate and assess business challenges. The strongest ones know the futures of their businesses depend on their ability to target strengths and weaknesses — in themselves as well as in others.

Entrepreneur and investor Robert Kiyosaki is coauthor of the "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" series of books.