



## Leveraging personal networks and outside sources, TAB franchise owner Blair Koch is an agent of change

**BLAIR KOCH BEGAN HER CAREER AT SOME OF THE LARGEST ORGANIZATIONS** in the country, including IBM and General Motors. It wasn't long, however, before she learned that big company culture wasn't a good fit for her. "I am a change agent. I like to instigate change and make it happen quickly," she explains.

With a degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management Information Systems (MIS) and Communication Studies, Koch turned to the technical startup community for more fulfilling work. Here, working in Marketing and Sales, she helped one company go public, and then spent 10 years helping to build another small company into a \$500M multinational.

Still, the potential of working with small businesses beckoned Koch. After stints at multiple startups, in 2000 she hung her own shingle as a consultant. “My philosophy is if we can get Main Street healthy, the rest will take care of itself,” she states.

In 2005, Koch purchased a TAB franchise to compliment her existing consulting business, assuming that the bulk of her revenues would come from consulting for TAB members. While that proved to be true initially, today Koch sees a 50/50 split between consulting fees and member revenues. However, while well on her way to achieving her goal of 80 members by the end of 2012, Koch has refocused her professional goals toward building her TAB membership.

“You don’t know what you don’t know” is advice she often imparts to her TAB members. It is also how she describes the initial launch of her TAB franchise, which grew to 15 members and three boards in only a few months.

***“My goal was to be bringing in six figures, but I needed to figure out how to build a business that would allow me to grow the business and have exit options in place as well.”***

Fortunately, Koch found that TAB’s comprehensive processes gave her the formula she needed for not only running her new venture, but also recruiting quality board members. “It’s not effective to wing it,” she advises. Instead, Koch followed the “bouncing ball” (TAB’s scripted process) and found she soon had more members than she could handle on her own.

Initially, Koch brought in contract facilitators to help her manage the boards, but this approach didn’t fit her personal or company vision. “Figuring out a business model that would allow me to achieve my personal vision without killing myself in the process was a big challenge,” she says.

Koch was able to overcome this challenge by developing a partnership business model that has

allowed her to continue to expand her TAB business while maintaining the high level of facilitation and coaching services she delivers to her members. Her current partners each facilitate and coach three to four boards, and develop additional consulting income opportunities for themselves. “Each partner owns 10 percent of the franchise,” Blair says, “so they have skin in the game.” She is currently actively executing the launch campaign of her third partner, who just came on board, and is looking to add one more partner to fully utilize her territory while maintaining 60 percent ownership of the franchise.

Adding partners is a huge undertaking in and of itself. Koch actively solicits prospects to become TAB partners by leveraging her personal network and using outside sources such as BizBuySell.com. The partner vetting process can take anywhere from nine months to a year. Koch knows it is vitally important for prospective partners to fit in with the vision and the culture of the organization. Individuals must also fulfill minimum financial requirements and have strong sales and business development aptitude.

The most important thing she advises potential partners is to be willing to take advice from the TAB community.

***“TAB Facilitators are business owners just like any other; they have to be open to learn and grow.”***

