

POINTS OF COURAGE: EPISODE 04

Inferno Fitness

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POINTS OF COURAGE: ARTICLE

Advice for Entrepreneurs: Teach Yourself, Be Bulletproof Positive



When Jo'Annes Williams served in the U.S. Army, she tackled many challenges—including combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom. After she returned to civilian life in 2010, she experienced yet another difficult test. Crippled by financial loss, she became homeless and found herself living out of her car in Antioch, Tennessee. “When they towed my car away, I knew I had to do something,” she says.

So she did. While in the Army, Williams had fallen in love with fitness. With her last \$12 she bought four fitness mats off of Craigslist. She began training four female clients in the same mall parking lot where she had been living, effectively launching her business: Inferno Fitness. “Those four ladies worked at a big company in Nashville, so they influenced a bunch of other

people at their job,” she says. “There’s no better advertisement than your actual clients. They are human billboards, literally.” In a few weeks, Williams had 40 clients.

Today, Inferno Fitness has 700 active members spread across six full-scale training facilities in the Atlanta area, as well as Nashville and Houston. Williams has turned \$12 into what is fast-approaching a seven-figure business.

Williams claims that if she had not hit rock bottom, her vision may never have materialized. “Sometimes you just need something to happen that forces you into pursuing your vision,” she says.

While dire circumstances gave her the fearlessness she needed to spring into action, she believes her success is mostly tied to having a solid business plan, which she put together with help from the Internet, poring over business plan templates, how-to articles, and YouTube videos. “There is a wealth of free information available,” says Williams. “I honestly believe that if you’re a fast learner you can take control of your business by teaching yourself.”

As an entrepreneur, Williams believes it’s important to not only carry out your vision, but to protect it as well, which is why she has **business insurance** through small business insurer Hiscox. They have already helped keep Inferno Fitness running. “About two years ago there was a leak in the gym,” she recalls. “Hiscox completely reimbursed the funds to purchase [the damaged] equipment. It was effortless and seamless. I have no doubt that if something were to happen again they would be there for me.”

Much of Williams’s advice regarding successful entrepreneurship can be tied to her Army background. “The Army really taught me about master planning. For example, you can’t just pop out in the middle of the field and start firing away. You have to have an exact tactical mission. It’s the same thing having your own business,” says Williams. Besides strategic planning, she credits the Army with teaching her discipline, professionalism, teamwork, integrity, honor, and loyalty—all of which have served her well in building and growing Inferno Fitness. “I wouldn’t be here without that Army training,” she admits.

A positive attitude helps, too. “If you don’t believe your business is going to be booming, it will never get to that point. You have to be bulletproof positive that it will always be a great day.”

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