

August 2026

My dear NAWBO Sisters, Corporate Sponsors, Community Partners, and Future Members, I've been thinking about courageous leadership a lot lately. Why? Because life has been throwing a lot of curveballs my way, and those curveballs have required me to sink or swim. I chose to courageously swim.

Friends, having courage doesn't mean you're fearless. Courage is making the decision to move forward and "do the dang thing" despite the fear raging inside your heart.

As a competitive fencer, I get the opportunity to be face-to-face with athletes that are downright scary to compete with. In fact, in one tournament, the other Veteran women told me I was NUTS for even thinking of entering into one of the events I had signed up for. You'd better believe I was shaking in my shoes as I took my "On Guard" position on the fencing piste. Despite the shaking hands and butterflies flapping in my tummy, I went for it anyway, and I walked away proud of myself for #1 not dying and #2 actually landing some really good touches on my opponents.

So, what does this look like as a businesswoman? It looks like being brave and raising your hand before you feel ready. Or asking for the sale knowing you might hear the dreaded "no." It's launching the new business without knowing whether it will succeed. And sometimes, it's having the courage to admit, "This isn't the right path for me."

Ouch. That's a hard one to swallow!

I'd like to share a story with you. Last year, I convinced myself to create a second business (as if I needed one more thing on my plate).

So I invested \$5,000 into a program to learn digital real estate.

On paper, it made perfect sense. In reality...I hated it. Every lesson revolved around SEO, Google updates, technology, and systems. All things I detest and hire others to do for me.

But I fell for the glittery marketing (which mentioned none of the above) and the potential extra income this could bring.

Yet, I dreaded logging into class. And there was a lot of frustration and tears. Ironically, the part I enjoyed most was designing the logo and business cards. That should have been my first clue.

For weeks, I wrestled with what to do. I had invested my money and my time; I had the website built, the business cards printed and I had even announced the business!

Walking away felt like I was being a coward and a quitter -- neither of which I am.

So I reached out to a few of my trusted advisors and a few fellow NAWBO board members. I shared exactly what I was experiencing. I felt vulnerable and scared I'd be judged as I asked for their perspective.

If I'm being honest...I don't think I was looking for advice. I was looking for permission.

- Permission to admit I had made a mistake.
- Permission to stop forcing something that really wasn't right for me at all.
- Permission to close the business without feeling like a failure.

Do you know what they gave me? **Peace and clarity.**

They reminded me that this wasn't a reflection of who I am as a person. And that it was totally okay to stop and change direction.

That conversation changed everything. Because once I gave myself permission to let go, I realized something: I absolutely love what I already do, and I wanted to put more effort into making it even more successful.

Closing that second business was actually a major win because it helped me realize I was exactly where I was supposed to be all along.

Ironically, shortly after shutting it down, a few people reached out wanting to hire me for that exact work. I graciously turned them away. Not because I couldn't have used the income (hello, fencing is expensive!) but because I couldn't, in good conscience, take someone's money for work I wasn't passionate about and knew I couldn't serve with excellence. The technology changed faster than I could keep up, and that simply wasn't where I was called to spend my gifts.

It took courage to walk away... and I have to wonder, is there something you need to walk away from, or is there something you need to run towards this month?

Remember, women who are impossible to ignore are so because their impact is impossible to overlook. Having the courage to try and to possibly fail (forward) is a big part of ensuring that you make that big impact!

Keep shining,



Carolina Marrelli
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