



FROM HOMELESS TO THE MOST IN-DEMAND IT MARKETING CONSULTANT IN THE WORLD

HOW THIS FEISTY, 'NO-HOLDS BARRED'
REDHEAD EMERGES TRIUMPHANT AGAIN
AND AGAIN

SUCCESS FACTORS

***“Character cannot be developed
in ease and quiet. Only through
experience of trial and suffering can
the soul be strengthened, ambition
inspired, and success achieved.”***

–Helen Keller

If you had met Robin Robins 30 years ago, you would never have guessed that one day, she'd lead the IT industry's most successful, respected, and fastest growing marketing firm for MSPs. But that's exactly what she did, persisting through extreme adversity and against all odds, forever changing the face of the IT industry with her Technology Marketing Toolkit. To understand the grit and fierce determination she has, you have to go back in time.

Homeless at 12 after her parents divorced, Robins was taken in by her mother's church: a nondenominational, "fire and brimstone" religious group that encouraged poverty, faith healing, and living by the strict rules of the Bible. For women, your greatest ambition was to serve God by finding and submitting to a husband and raising a brood of children. Education and "furthering" yourself were frowned upon, as was saving money, buying a home, or taking any initiative to improve your life. A faithful member of the church until she was 21, Robins scraped by and attended the church's school, which went through 10th grade but only taught to a seventh-grade education level. There was no diploma or career training — just basic math and reading.

After school, Robins cleaned houses, shoveled snow, worked in a flower shop, and did any odd jobs she could to help pay rent for the apartment she and her mother lived in. "I'm ashamed to say I stole bread from some of the homes I cleaned," Robins confessed. "It was devastating and demoralizing, but I was starving. I never stole anything in my life. I still cringe when I think about it." Without a car, she rode her bicycle to her cleaning jobs, even in the cold and often icy Philadelphia weather. "Occasionally I'd give in and buy a bus token, but that \$1.25 was enough money to buy something to eat or even an 'expensive' treat: a Dunkin' Donuts coffee."

At age 21, she finally escaped the church's grip. "Breaking free of that religion was one of the most terrifying and difficult things I've ever done," Robins said. "Unless you've belonged to a cult, you cannot begin to understand the psychological grip they have on you. I had no money, no home, no family to fall back on. The church was the only thing I knew, but deep down, I knew that this was all wrong."

Triumphing over what many would consider to be insurmountable odds, the struggle was far from over in both her personal and professional life.

Completely on her own, economic hardship was her reality until her late 20s. Initially, Robins took a job for minimum

wage as a secretary for a sales organization called Country Fresh Foods. Her big break came when the telemarketing manager was unable to show up for work one morning — and for an untold number of months — due to a "tax evasion" problem. Desperate for a sales "babysitter," the manager asked Robins to sit in the telemarketing room to monitor the reps and ensure they showed up on time and made calls.

"This was the first exposure I had to selling and earning a commission," Robins recalled. "After sitting there for a week, I got curious about whether or not I could do what they were doing. It paid \$5 for each appointment scheduled, and I could use the money ... So, I picked up the phone and start dialing."

Robins used every spare minute to improve herself. During a four-hour break between shifts, she would work out at the gym, then head back to the office to watch old VHS tapes of Zig Ziglar. "Between that and the help of the general manager, I got a taste for selling, and it turns out, I wasn't half bad at it," Robins said.

Robins also took a few free classes at a local community college on computers. Thinking that "getting into computers" would provide financial stability, she found a job fair for IT people, printed up a bunch of resumes, and went.

"My plan was to get a job working for an IT company in any capacity and then learn the business from the inside out," Robins said.

Despite having no computer skills, she landed a position in the collections department at CGI Systems by convincing them of her hard work ethic and eagerness to learn.

Once hired, she started teaching herself Lotus Notes, an application used throughout the organization and profitable services division of the company. After quickly writing a program to track all invoices and past-due money for the company, she was given the chance to be promoted into the company's computer training division as a sales rep. As an employee of that division, she was allowed to sit in on training classes for free. Her goal: "Tolerate" the sales job just long enough to get trained to be a Lotus Notes programmer or Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer. What actually happened, though, changed the trajectory of her life.

"I was selling like crazy and started making what I thought was insanely good money," Robins said. "It was around \$70,000 a year — nearly four times more than I had ever made in my life." Making more money than many of the programmers and engineers, Robins went all in, doubling

down on learning how to sell, buying books and audio tapes, and going to every seminar she could to learn how to get better. Before long, she was one of the top reps. After she was noticed by a Tennessee marketing firm that her manager hired to generate leads for their IT courses, she and her manager decided to start a division of the marketing firm in England to serve the European, Middle Eastern, and African (EMEA) market. Selling her car, quitting her well-paying job, and giving notice on her apartment, she left the U.S. to build a startup marketing firm based in Lemington Spa, England.

“It was a tremendous experience, and I learned a lot,” Robins said. “But the business and the relationship with my partner were total failures.” Returning state side after just one year, Robins hit rock bottom again.

“I had sold everything I had, given up my job, and had no money in the bank, so I had nothing to come back to,” Robins said. Starting over from scratch yet again, she took a job as a sales rep for the Tennessee-based marketing firm she attempted to start in England. Buying a car she couldn’t afford on credit, she packed what little she owned and drove from Philly to Nashville.

Again, she ran into problem after problem. The marketing firm she joined was not paying its bills and was cheating clients by not delivering the campaigns they’d been paid to mail. Distraught by this discovery yet unable to quit, Robins vowed to *never* be in this situation again.

“I’ll never forget that day,” Robins said. “I left work angry and frustrated to tears. I felt like a prostitute ... working for a man I didn’t respect, doing something I knew was wrong because I needed the money. I remember pounding on the steering

wheel of my car and shouting ‘I’m done with this s--t!’” In that moment, Robins made herself a promise she’s absolutely kept: to get truly financially free so she would never be slave to poverty and debt again.

Trying to find stability, she bounced around a few more jobs, one of which was for the motivational guru Tony Robbins. But in early 2002, the final straw came when she was fired from the last job she would ever hold.

“It was the first week back to work after the Christmas break,” Robins recalled. “The 9/11 attacks had everyone on edge, and no one was hiring.”

With no money, a mountain of credit card debt, and rent to pay, she started hustling for small marketing jobs. “I called everyone I knew and even a few I didn’t,” she said. “I got enough business coming in that I started to think I could actually work for myself.”

She figured out her niche — the IT industry — thanks to a project she did for CompTIA that led to securing multiple value-added reseller (VAR) clients. A rapidly rising trajectory, after just a few years, she had hundreds of clients and hired seven people to help her manage the fast growth. That growth revealed the next big lesson she had to learn: how to hire, manage, and build a solid team.

Within a period of six months, she got nailed by a series of setbacks that most businesses would not survive.

The first employee she had to fire for nonperformance took Robins’ entire client list to her competitor. When she filed for a cease and desist for a violation of confidentiality, they filed a counter against Robins for defamation of character as a counter-bargaining tactic — a claim that was later dropped.

“This first employee was a really bad egg that should have been fired much earlier, but I didn’t have the courage and hated confrontation, so I ignored a lot of the misbehavior,” Robins said. “But a bad employee is like a cancer. They never get better when ignored and end up destroying the attitudes of their coworkers and your culture.” This became public and caused a number of additional problems with other clients.

The next employee, a friend of the fired employee, up and quit without notice, angry that her friend was fired. Also disgruntled, a salesperson Robins hired repeatedly refused to make the calls she was hired to do, saying they were “beneath” her. Consequently, Robins had to let her go. In retaliation, the employee attacked Robins publicly, making false claims about what she was doing in the business, forcing Robins to get a lawyer involved. Another employee, who going through a tough personal time, was also failing to do her job. That was a friendly, mutual parting of ways, but still a hardship, since Robins’ staff was falling apart rapidly. As if that wasn’t enough, Robins discovered another employee stealing from her when petty cash went missing and the employee made personal charges on the company credit card. In all, 5 of 7 employees either had to be fired or quit.

Then, in a cruel plot twist, Robins was diagnosed with melanoma and suffered a miscarriage, all within that same six-month period. “It was, without a doubt, one of the darkest periods of my life,” Robins said. “It was all 100% my fault. But the good news is that hardship is a very effective teacher, and I learned lessons I’ve never forgotten that have served me to this day.”

Despite long hours, a grueling schedule to keep the business going, and facing enormous personal difficulties, she was determined to succeed. Fortunately, the melanoma was

caught in time and had not spread, and the employees were replaced with a stronger team, most of whom are still with her today. The business continued to grow. And the best news of all, Robins delivered the first of two healthy baby girls roughly one year later.

From those ashes, she’s gone on to build a solid, debt-free, high-profit, fast-growing, multimillion-dollar business that looks very different from the early days. She has mentored, coached and helped over 10,000 MSPs and IT services firms who have enrolled in one or more of her programs — a number that grows every year. She runs the largest C-level IT peer group, and her annual event is one of the largest in the industry. “Many of the vendors joke that joining my program is a rite of passage for small MSPs to grow,” Robins said. “One recently said they thought I was written into the journey of becoming an MSP; you get a PSA tool, and RMM, and then you join Robin Robins.”

Today, Robins’ company is not only the largest reseller of CRM and marketing automation systems to the MSP industry, but it’s also the biggest reseller of Infusionsoft in the world. Recently Robins launched Big Red Media, a marketing firm dedicated to helping vendors selling to the MSP channel through effective strategies and media to acquire new partners. She also launched Big Red Live, a virtual event platform “birthed” from her annual event, which became the biggest and most successful virtual event in IT history after she quickly pivoted from a live event to a virtual one in just a few short weeks due to the forced COVID-19 shutdown. This platform has taken off in sales, as organizations flock to Robins team seeking direction on how to deliver a successful virtual event.

Reflecting on the hardships she faced, here are insights into how Robins proactively turned adversity into triumph and how you can, too.

Don’t Retreat —Double Down

Everyone goes through periods of time where everything goes sideways at once. It’s during these times you must dig in even deeper and be courageous. “There are times when you think, I can’t even breathe. I’m so crushed. I’m so disheartened. I’m so frustrated. I don’t want to do this anymore,” Robins said. “You want to give up. In those moments, you ask yourself, ‘Why am I doing this?’ and second guess your choices and abilities. How you handle those moments determines whether you recover and grow or sink. Far too many hit that wall and retreat. Big mistake. Part of growing a business is being able to hold the line as you go through intensely difficult periods. But every time you push through, you get a little stronger and gain more skills and more confidence.”

Make Adversity Your Vitamin

Don’t try to make everyone happy. “Far too many business owners are bullied into timidity in marketing for fear of what others might think or say,” Robins fervently proclaimed. “When you’re running a business and making

tough decisions, you’re absolutely going to be met with criticism and opposition. People will try to undermine you and crush you, even well-meaning people who should be on your side. You must stand strong and be okay with being unpopular. You cannot run a business trying to keep everyone happy. You’ll end up making everyone mad or get nowhere fast.”

Be Grateful For ALL Experiences, Good And Bad

Don’t try and avoid the bad experiences, and don’t complain about how hard it is. Ever. Instead, change your mindset to expect problems and see them as an opportunity to get stronger and develop a clearer vision or learn a new skill. When you do that, you are better equipped to overcome problems faster, even in situations you’ve never encountered before. “I don’t have it all figured out,” Robins said. “No one does. I deal with all kinds of new problems every single day in business. But every problem I solve, every challenge I overcome, makes me smarter and stronger when it comes time to handle the next one.”

“One of my favorite Jim Rohn quotes is ‘Don’t wish it were easier; wish for more skills.’ Frustrations, setbacks, problems, and dealing with dishonest and unethical people is the daily walk of an entrepreneur,” Robins said. “You learn to have the strength to look those things in the face — not back down — push through, and figure it out because it will make you stronger. It’s also necessary for progress to happen.”

Embrace The Suck

“If you can learn to love the suck ... embrace it ... appreciate it ... everything gets easier,” Robins said. “True self-respect and confidence come from pushing yourself through tough times and from doing things you know others won’t do. Thoreau said most men live lives of quiet desperation. That’s 1,000% true, but the desperation doesn’t come from being buried in problems. It comes from running away from them, making excuses, and failing to do what you know you should do. You can lie to others, but you cannot lie to yourself.”



Done-For-You Services

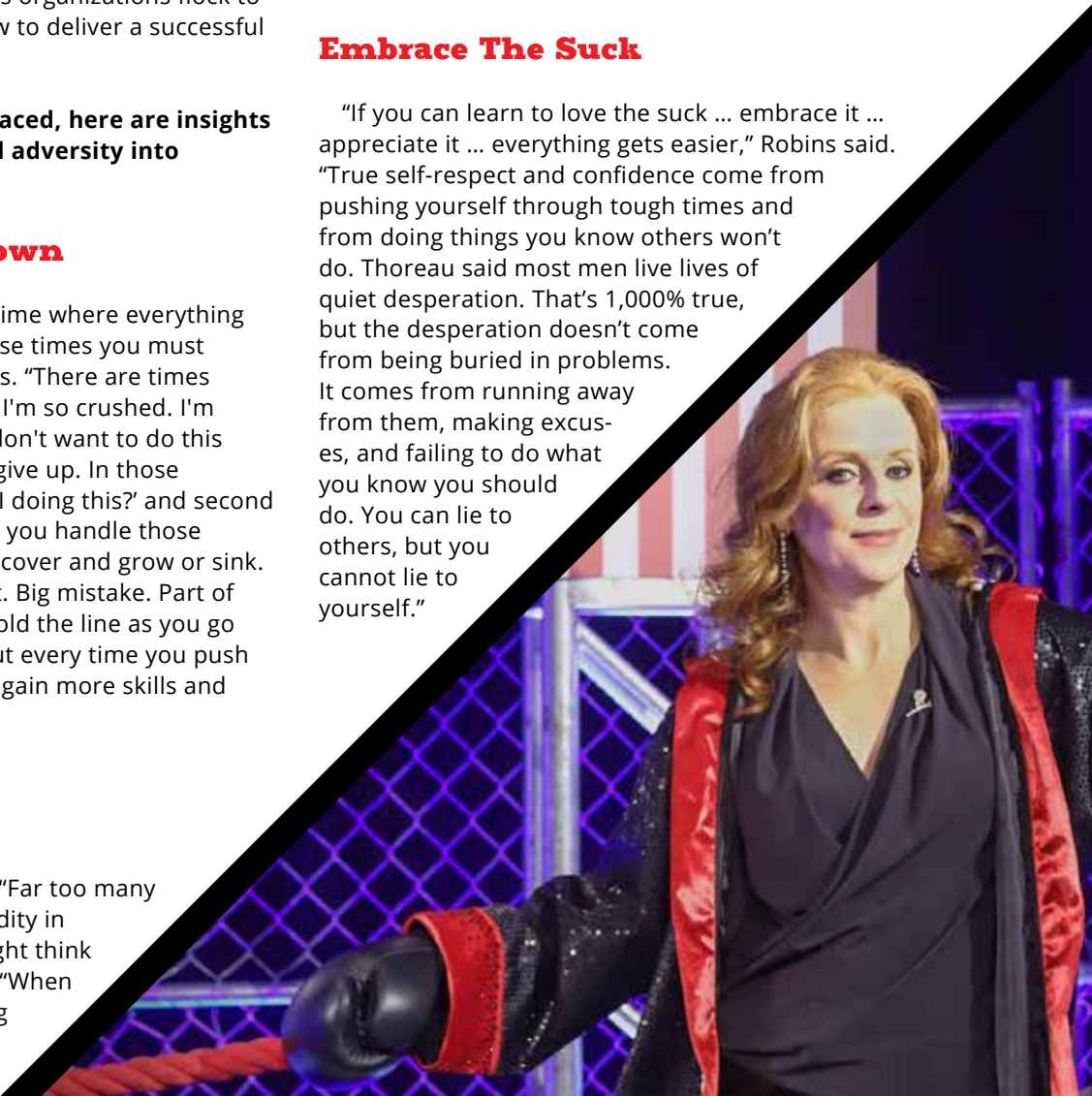
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Own It ALL

Certain things happen in a business that you can't foresee and that you don't deserve. Take the COVID-19 shutdowns as an example. It was no one's fault, and there was nothing any business owner did wrong, yet many paid a dear price and lost everything.

That said, as a business owner, you must take personal responsibility for what happens in your business.

"Three weeks before our big annual event was scheduled to go live, we were forced to shut it down," Robins said. "This was a disaster on many fronts and took a huge financial bite out of our hide." But Robins didn't roll over. She and her team quickly came up with a Plan B. Going virtual, she pulled off what many in the IT industry called the most inspiring and impressive pivot they'd ever seen, getting almost 5,000 attendees and rave reviews for the experience and content.

"At some point, you get to a maturity level where you stop saying, 'Why is this happening to me?'" Robins said. "As a business owner, problems are what you deal with on a day-to-day basis. It's like being a goalie in a hockey game, but with 12 pucks flying at you all at once. You better be ready. But remember, you signed up for the job, so you can't blame anyone but you," Robins said, adding, "The benefits of personal and financial freedom that come with running a business come with a price. That price is being willing to take complete and full responsibility for every bad thing that happens. Everything. If you can't accept that, you'll never succeed in business."

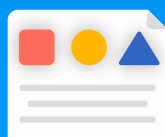
Make Sure Your Actions Support Your Spoken Goals

"I'm an amateur gardener," Robins said. "But as inexperienced as I am, I've never planted tomatoes and ended up with broccoli. Just like a garden, you reap in life what you sow. If you want something, you must get clarity on it, then make sure your daily activities support that goal. If you don't back up your goals with action, you're full of it. Stop lying to yourself and others."

Robins is crystal clear on why she is in business. "It is the financial freedom promise I made myself a long time ago that still drives me today," Robins said. "But I also get tremendous satisfaction and pride from overcoming so much. Running a business is like enrolling yourself in the toughest personal development seminar you'll ever attend." ■



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Expand

your portfolio by adding new services and products to be sold virtually.



Grow

by converting more leads that come through your website.



White Label

your services and sell them through a virtual channel.

Start Selling



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