Dawn Peters

One More Step

Standing at the base of a telegraph pole that seemed to be a hundred feet tall, Dawn Peters saw more than the very top rising high above her, and the trapeze to which she'd need to leap—she saw her fear. She had always been afraid of heights, but also always one to face her fears. So when her Life Coach Group committed to doing this unique team-building exercise, she had agreed.

Now, as the assistant helped secure her harness, she wasn't so sure. "Will you do me a

favor?" he asked. "Go as far as you can, and then take one more step. Can you do that?"

"Yes, I can do that!" Dawn replied, and through her fear, she was able to grasp the defining lesson that would come to characterize her work ethic. "From that moment, I realized that we all have self-imposed limits, whatever they may be," she says today. "How many phone calls will you make today? Make one more. How many miles will you run? Run one

more. Anytime we think we've reached a limit we perceive for ourselves, either personally or professionally we can always take one more step."

Now the founder, owner, and CEO of ConneXion Hub, a multi-level, multi-touch marketing platform and network for connecting B2B and B2C clients, a lifetime of "one more steps" has led Dawn around the world, exploring new cultures and ways of life to find the perfect one for her. 'One more step' led her across the Atlantic Ocean from her home country of England to lay down new roots in a new country. And step by step, opportunity by opportunity, and person by person, she has built a life, a business, and a professional ecosystem that has helped countless individuals and businesses take their own next steps too.

When Dawn arrived in America from England in 2000, she knew two people in

Washington, DC. Since that time, she's organically grown her network and reach to over 300,000. "In the beginning, I didn't do that with any thought or intention," she says. "I just wanted to meet people in my new country, and I had a corporate job that required me to network."

As time went on, and driven by her innate love of people, Dawn joined a number of networking organizations, a national speaking network, and nonprofit boards. "I've always been fascinated in what makes people tick," she says.

"I'd find out what makes one person tick, and then I'd discover that same motivation or purpose in someone else, so I'd connect them. I had this 'rolodex' permanently at work in my head, and in time, I came to realize that people really valued and appreciated these connections."

In 2009, Dawn decided to start her own coaching business, which allowed her to see even more connections between people's stories and their businesses. She

decided to start doing workshops and networking lunch-and-learns, which required her to develop a method of consistently getting the word out to as many people as possible through various platforms, and with multiple touches. She developed an impressive marketing platform that centralized all her connections in a single database, quickly realizing just how many people she had come to know over the years.

As the business networking lunch-and-learns began to pick up momentum, people began approaching her to co-host the events. Those individuals and companies would then promote her business in their networks, which expanded her network, and vice versa. As the ripple effect compounded rapidly and required more and more of her time, she made the decision in 2013 to professionalize her connection work for incorporation under her company umbrella.

Today, individuals and companies partner with ConneXion Hub for six-month or year-long increments, and select 'a la carte' out of the available avenues for being connected, marketed, and promoted with others. They might choose introductions, leads, and connections, or they might opt to get access to the social media networks Dawn has developed over many years. Other options include business networking lunchand-learns, speaking opportunities, vendor table opportunities, 'Connecting With a Twist' evening networking events, or partner-only boutiques, which come in three different formats. Partners can also choose to be featured in Dawn's online magazine, in her newsletter, or on her website. Keenly aware of the viewership and impact of video in the business world, she also launched the 'Connect Live' show to showcase businesses. "Through professionally videoed interviews, the show enables owners to tell their story, explaining their services and solutions and what makes their business unique," Dawn says. "These are live to tape, with the option to take questions or testimonials from callers, or to live-broadcast to clients' Facebook and YouTube sites. Clients leave TV broadcasts with four web be repurposed for a variety of marketing sites," Dawn is further adding to her 'offerings' by partnering with Microsoft to help get the company's IT educational materials out into the marketplace.

In this way, ConneXion Hub works with small to medium-size businesses typically between \$200,000 and \$10 million in revenue, and across all industry sectors. "I believe that business is best built through connections, engagement, and relationships. When businesses plug in to my multi-platform, multi-touch 'machine,' leverage my eighteen years of networking and relationships in this area to work for them, therefore compounding their marketing efforts without any time input from themselves," she affirms. "Many businesses I work traditionally market to their own network, and therefore their exposure is limited to those in their orbit or connection space. With ConneXion Hub, they're exposed to, and engaged with, an additional huge and diverse body of connections that's constantly growing, in a number of very strategic, systematic, and highly effective ways."

Through this rather unique methodology for enabling businesses to connect, market, and

grow, ConneXion Hub is as independent of rules and convention as its founder has always been. Even as a little girl growing up in England, Dawn's childhood was shaped in part by the profound frustration she felt when her father would always tell her to go help her mother in the kitchen. "My two older brothers were right there and equally capable, but because I was the girl, he always told me to do it," she recounts. "It's fascinating to me that this was my world at the time, and I didn't know any differently - yet it simply seemed instinctively and inherently wrong. There were a lot of arguments around this discrepancy when I was growing up. I believe that was defining because it helped me grow into a very strong woman with a keen awareness of right and wrong or simply of fairness — in the circumstances."

Born in South England as the youngest of three children, Dawn grew up in Petersfield, a large town in Hampshire County. Her father worked as a District Sales Manager for a national domestic, commercial, and industrial ventilation solutions company, while her mother was a Regional Sales Manager for Avon cosmetics, recruiting and managing over two hundred sales representatives across her region. Their homebased careers allowed for flexibility, and they passed up promotion opportunities in the interest of not uprooting their children and lifestyle. "Looking back, I'm so appreciative that we did a lot together as a family," Dawn says. "I remember a lot of day trips and vacations, and even something so basic as always sitting down together for meals as a family. I really appreciate that I was taught and brought up with the right values, ethics, and behaviors."

Dawn also grew up with an innate passion for art and creativity, her main interest both in school and at home. When her family watched TV together, she always had to be busy creating something. When it came to sports and adventures, she tried to keep up with her brothers, but being the youngest and a girl, she usually came up short. Still, it never dampened her spirits. "Anytime we played sports, they'd usually turn it into a battle or a fight, and I'd often end up getting hurt or losing," she says. "But I remember never feeling defeated. My father was very encouraging about me just joining in and doing my best. I think it gave me an enduring fighting spirit, and when I fall down in life, I simply just get back on up! And because I couldn't beat them physically, I learned

to beat them verbally instead. That's got to have advantages in life, surely!" she laughs.

Though they were never wealthy, Dawn's parents made a point of taking the children to lots of theater performances and shows, and Dawn dreamed of being a dancer one day. "I always had the strong urge and feeling that I wanted to be on the stage, not in the audience," she remembers. But she didn't like her ballet lessons, and though she wanted to be musical, she unfortunately didn't like the violin, the only instrument her parents could afford at the time. But she stuck with it, reaching Grade 4 and playing in the school orchestra for several years.

As Dawn got older, she got various summer jobs, including at IBM headquarters in Portsmouth, England. After completing secondary school and college, the equivalent of high school in America, she went on to Swansea University in Wales, where she decided to focus on Psychology due to her fascination in human behavior. "I had no idea what I wanted to do and considered pursuing art, but my parents cautioned me against it because they thought it was too risky for a stable future," she says. "Looking back, I do wish I had followed my passion for the arts or dancing. But as it turns out, running your own company certainly involves a lot of creativity."

Upon graduating in 1985, Dawn decided to gain a few more active and creative skills. She got certified in therapeutic massage and as a nutritionist, and she also wanted to learn to ski, so she spent the next year working as a cook at a ski resort in France and then on a Greek Island. Then, having always dreamed of living in the big city, she moved to London and landed a job as an IT Recruiter. The field aligned perfectly with her love of people, matchmaking, and connecting, yet she couldn't shake the feeling that there was more to discover. She wanted to explore the world. "I had an undying desire to experience different cultures and how other people live-a yearning that has helped drive and define me ever since," she says. "I ended up meeting a friend of a friend for coffee, and after over three hours of nonstop talking, we decided to travel the world together."

With that, Dawn spent almost two years backpacking from country to country, having the time of her life. After exploring Egypt, India, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia, and Australia, they settled in Sydney, Australia, and got jobs at global conglomerates, travel companies,

restaurants, and bars. She loved being immersed in so many cultures around the world, appreciating life and how others live. One particular awakening and realization, though, will never leave her. It occurred during the last two months of her time in Australia, when her middle brother, John, was a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force preparing to go fight in the Iraq War. One day, as Dawn walked to her job as usual in Sydney, she happened to pass a telephone booth and was struck with the strongest and most inexplicable urge to call her parents in England. So she did, knowing she'd be late for work. She was surprised when her oldest brother, who was married and didn't live there, answered the phone. "What are you doing there?" she asked. He responded, "John's just been shot down."

Dawn will never forget how she fell to the floor of the phone booth, the world blurring and spinning around her. "I had no idea that I had such emotions for my brother," she says. "We'd never been close. In fact, he was always the annoying one growing up. For the first time in my life, I felt and realized how deep-set and strong blood ties are. From that moment on, I never took my family for granted again, because in the end, they're what matters most. I started to see my parents and grandparents as people, not just elders, and I also realized the finality of life. I've focused on learning more about the lives they led, and valuing aspects I never saw before. My maternal grandmother, especially, was a vibrant woman who didn't have an easy life, and I feel and believe she's watching over me. I've also come to be so incredibly grateful that I have the caring, endearing, loving qualities of my mother, paired with the strong, disciplinarian, straight-shooter qualities of my father. They brought me up with the right ethics and values, and I carry those qualities with me in all areas of life-in work, in play, in how I treat my clients, and in how I operate my business."

Miraculously, after 42 days of imprisonment and torture, Dawn's brother was released, prompting her return to England in 1991. She went back into IT recruitment, but by that point, she craved something new. When a Sales Trainer came in to train her team, Dawn was instantly drawn to the profession. She left to join that woman's company as a National Sales Trainer, soon mastering the skills and knowledge base so well that she could design and deliver rigorous, engaging 8-hour training courses. She then landed

a position with an International IT recruitment firm in 1996. "I was thrilled to find myself the Global Sales Training Director for their 22 offices around the world, and set up their entire sales training department," she says.

All the while, Dawn harbored a burgeoning interest in working in television. On her frequent business trips to the U.S., she saw that America was her best bet for making that happen—not only because there were more channels, but because of the culture itself. "I truly believed, and still do believe, that America is the land of opportunity," she says. "Here, people give you a chance."

With her company, Dawn was offered a Regional Director position in either Atlanta, Boston, or DC. She chose DC because it was closest to home, and as she quadrupled the office's sales, she got headshots and began guest-hosting on local cable shows. After a year, however, the industry took a nosedive, and her company wanted to her back to Europe. "That was a defining moment for me because I had moved my entire life here to follow my dream," she says. "I was determined to stay and make it work. I had no idea how I was going to do it, but I wasn't going back to England."

Dawn knew it wouldn't be easy, but her challenge was made exponentially harder when she then found out that she was exempt from getting a work visa in TV since she had no prior experience. So she decided to instead pursue sales training in a TV/video production company - one more step closer to her goal. With the opportunity to work in that environment, she focused on gaining significant experience on and off camera in her spare time-especially as a host and segment producer interviewing C-Suite executives in fast growing companies, creating segments that aired on ABC and Tech TV. She also joined a one-year coaching course taught by Tony Robbins-an experience she found incredibly enriching. "I was especially compelled when he said, 'All that you need is within you now!" she recounts. "So often through life, we look outside of ourselves for the answers or resources we need. When you take the time to look inside yourself, you realize there's a hell of a lot more than what you're accessing. That was a pretty powerful realization."

By that time, Dawn had found her way to Atlantic Video, where she worked fully immersed in a larger TV production environment. Finally, in late 2008, she landed her Green Card—just in time before the company closed soon afterwards. "It wasn't clear to me how to break into a hosting and presenter role in TV at that point," she says. "But coaching came naturally to me, and I saw that as a dynamic way to make a difference in people's lives. So I decided to see what I could do with that and started my own business."

At that time, Dawn had little idea how to start a company or run a business, so she sought advisors and signed up for courses that might light the way. In one such class, she remembers the presenter declared that anyone planning to undertake such an endeavor should be ready to give up their nights, weekends, and 'life as they know it!' "I remember thinking, 'Ha – that won't be me!" Dawn laughs. "But as it turned out, everything she said was right. Had I known then what I know now, I would have gotten more help earlier. I always try to do everything on my own, which I suppose is a great quality in a lot of respects, but it also has its downfalls."

Now, as a business owner, entrepreneur, leader, and mentor, Dawn is happy to seek outside resources and expertise to help resolve any problem that arises. Focused on charting optimal paths forward, she also embraces the constantlychanging landscape that comes with ownership and leadership. "Running your own small business, and managing people, means you have to wear every hat and be responsible for every aspect," she explains. "Decisions have to be made and action has to be taken. You have to be your own constant motivator, picking yourself up when things don't go so well and patting yourself on the back when they do. It can be tough and lonely. But you are in control. You have no one to report to. You can decide how you want it to be and the changes you want to make, which is very exhilarating and empowering!"

Dawn also marvels at how life finds a way to come full-circle and realize the dreams we thought we put aside. Thanks to her 'Connect Live' show, she was recently asked to host a similar show for other channels. "Every day is one more step toward realizing my dreams," she affirms. She also uses her 'platforms' of connecting and communicating with many to address the limitations experienced by others in her community. Dawn works to support Devotion for Children, the National Kidney Foundation, and the Red Cross, and plans to get more involved in

efforts to combat human trafficking, a major human rights tragedy that pervades the Northern Virginia region.

When advising young people entering the working world today, Dawn points to the power of believing in yourself and following your passion. "If you've got a burning desire to go after something, go for it," she says. "Don't let other people put you down. There are plenty of people out there who will want to help and mentor you. Don't let anyone talk you into doing something just for money, because unhappiness isn't worth any amount of money. As you consider your career, it's far more important to focus on how you can follow that passion or desire using your own unique gifts."

Beyond that, Dawn has always felt an urge to make more of an impact in the wider community. "I think it's human nature to want to have an impact and make a difference," she says. "I've always had the urge to make people's lives better by telling them what I've learned so they don't have to go through the hardship I went through to learn it. Any knowledge I acquire, I've wanted to shout it from the rooftop so others can acquire that knowledge, use it to make their lives

easier, and then pay it forward. I know that my coaching made a huge difference in people's lives. Now, in a way, ConneXion Hub is one big rooftop for people to use to inform others about how they can help them. And thanks to that 'one more step' that helped me face my fear of heights, it's a rooftop I'm proud to stand on top of."

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