**A brown building with many windows

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**Adapting for Success: Andrea Olson’s Entrepreneurial Journey**

Entrepreneurship is a path filled with unexpected turns, bold decisions, and continuous learning. Andrea Olson’s journey is a testament to the power of adaptability, strategic thinking, and the willingness to embrace change. From launching a tech startup to navigating corporate leadership and ultimately forging her own consulting business, Andrea’s story offers valuable insights for aspiring business owners.

**A Passion for Business from the Start**

Andrea’s journey began with a strong foundation in marketing communications, complemented by a minor in psychology and an unexpected minor in religion. While college provided academic knowledge, her real education came in the field. Fresh out of school, she found herself at the dawn of the internet boom, designing for a print shop before co-founding her first business—a website development company.

With only $10,000 and a modest office, Andrea and her team started building websites from scratch, hand-coding in HTML and JavaScript. However, they quickly realized that website design alone wasn’t a sustainable model. Seeking scalability, they pivoted to developing a platform that allowed clients to edit their own websites—a pioneering move at the time. Their breakthrough came when Genesis Health System became the first client to use their platform, which later evolved into a specialized service for hospitals and healthcare systems.

**Pivoting and Finding New Opportunities**

After a decade in the startup space, Andrea faced a realization—while she loved the process of building a business, she wasn’t passionate about the industry itself. Wanting to broaden her experience, she transitioned into corporate leadership, taking a digital strategy role at a global manufacturing company. This shift was a stark contrast from the fast-paced startup world. Corporate bureaucracy, slower decision-making, and political roadblocks provided a new learning experience, teaching Andrea the complexities of managing large-scale operations.

Later, she joined a mid-sized manufacturing company, where she had more freedom to implement creative business strategies. Here, she found a valuable mentor who encouraged her to think beyond marketing and dive into business growth and organizational culture. This experience laid the groundwork for her next major transition—starting her own business consultancy.

**Launching a Business Built on Change**

Recognizing a gap in how companies approached growth and strategy, Andrea founded a consulting firm in 2015. Rather than calling it a traditional consultancy, she refers to it as a "change agency," helping businesses identify, implement, and sustain meaningful transformations.

Her firm initially focused on marketing projects but quickly evolved into broader business strategy and customer-centricity consulting. She discovered that many organizations, regardless of industry, struggled with three common challenges:

1. **Understanding Their Customers** – Many companies lost touch with their customers’ evolving needs and relied on outdated assumptions.
2. **Lack of Clear Strategy** – Growth was often reactionary rather than based on a well-defined, scalable plan.
3. **Cultural Resistance to Change** – Internal dynamics and rigid mindsets often hindered meaningful innovation.

By addressing these core issues, Andrea helps businesses not just survive but thrive in a competitive landscape.

**Lessons for Entrepreneurs**

Through her diverse experiences, Andrea has developed key insights for those looking to start or grow their own businesses:

1. **Adaptability is Key** – Business environments change rapidly. The ability to pivot and rethink strategies is crucial for long-term success.
2. **Learn Every Job** – Whether in a startup or a corporation, understanding multiple roles—from accounting to HR—builds resilience and strategic insight.
3. **Customer-Centric Thinking Wins** – Businesses that deeply understand and address customer needs will always have a competitive edge.
4. **Strategy is More than Goals** – A strategy isn’t just about setting targets; it’s about creating a framework that can flex and adapt over time.
5. **Relationships Matter** – Networking, mentorship, and collaboration play a huge role in entrepreneurial success.

**Looking Ahead**

Andrea’s consulting firm continues to grow, helping businesses refine their strategies and implement sustainable change. In addition to her consulting work, she teaches entrepreneurship at the University of Iowa, mentoring the next generation of business leaders.

Her journey—from bootstrapping a startup to leading corporate strategy and launching a successful business consultancy—illustrates that entrepreneurship isn’t a straight path. It’s about staying curious, embracing change, and continuously evolving. For those looking to take the leap into business ownership, Andrea’s story is proof that adaptability and strategic thinking can turn challenges into opportunities.