

How To Create Your Own Luck: The “You Never Know” Approach for Turning Serendipity into Success.

By Susan RoAne

Have you ever met someone, listened to their story and thought to yourself, “That person has all the luck.” You may even have asked how she or he came to be in such a fabulous situation whether it’s a career, a relationship or perfect loft apartment only to hear the response, “ I was just lucky”. Yes, Lady Luck often gets credit for the wonderful events in our lives. But if we carefully analyze the situation, we learn that luck has little to do with the successful result. What matters are the actions taken by the lucky person and those they wisely chose to avoid.

“Lucky” people often have what I call, “You Never Know” experiences. How often do we hear that expression as a reason to attend a business event, go to a friend’s friend’s party or take a class in a subject that interests us? My grandmother and mother said it often as a reason to do something, a form of encouragement and the offer of hope that something special will be the result.

. These people who have experiences of coincidence, happenstance and timing were to a one--- OPEN. In fact, those that are open seem to have many experiences. With great respect and affection, I combined two phrases and call them the You Never Know -It –Alls and they are our role models.

Many lucky people experience situations that were unexpected and evolved from moments of serendipity that they saw as opportunities. Sometimes they embraced positive feedback or good advice or just struck up a conversation with a stranger at a fundraiser or on a plane. Rather than being immobilized by the rhetorical question “Why?”, they are the people who shrug, and say, “Why not?” and forge ahead. They are everywhere.

How to BE OPEN To “ You Never Know” Experiences so that you CREATE YOUR OWN LUCK:

1. **DECIDE to be more open.** When you see people who have interesting experiences, laugh a lot, have stories to tell, notice how open they are. Even if you are not, the first step is to **WANT** to be more open. Intention is everything.
2. **OBSERVE the open people** you meet and assess what they do and don’t do, what they say and don’t say and **IMITATE** those positive behaviors

3. **ASK yourself the time-honored question:** What is the worst thing that could happen? Most often it isn't even close to bad... much less the worst.
4. **Be willing to apply the USUAL traits** of those who turn serendipity into success. (Pay attention to issues, interests, preferences and your passion. Work smart and hard. Cultivate a positive attitude. Take calculated risks. Communicate clearly. Develop a realistic outlook that embraces possibility. Have a vision that is bolstered by great follow-through).
5. **Talk to strangers.** I first revealed this counterintuitive trait in *How To Work a Room*® and it is the best way to increase possibility, coincidence, serendipity and luck in our lives. Why? Well, in the words of my grandmother, "You never know!" That means whom they know, what they know or where it will lead you.
6. **Make small talk.** While many people scoff at the meaningless aspect of small talk, for the people who create their own luck, it's often as a result of small talk that led to bigger talk where they learned information, heard of options, and were presented with opportunities. They found out they had something in common and that created a connection that formed the foundation of a business or social relationship and on-going communication.
7. **Eavesdrop as well as listen.** While being an excellent listener serves people well, you can increase your opportunities by eavesdropping. Sometimes you will overhear something that sparks an action plan. You may learn that the company is looking to expand their in-house graphic department. Once you verify it through your network, you sign up for an advanced class at the local community college. As a result, that you are prepared to step up to the plate.
8. **Drop names.** While it is something we were taught not to do, dropping names is a counterintuitive trait of people who turn serendipity into success. It doesn't mean that you list the well-known, well- to -do, the celebrities, politicians or captains of industry with whom you have lunched. What it means is that you ask if a person you know from a company knows an old friend who used to work for that company. Or if you find out the person with whom you are speaking is from Butte if they have ever been to Billings, which you have visited. Once a person or place or favorite team or sport or school or movie or a food preference (mine is deep dish pizza in Chicago) in common has been established, there is a connection and the conversation becomes more interesting and meaningful.
9. **Exit gracefully to avoid burning bridges.** Whether we are leaving a job, a relationship, a career or just a room, having a positive parting allows us to return, even briefly, without hard feelings, bitterness or embarrassment. Sometimes the opportunity that we parlay into our good luck comes from a source that may be an 'ex'... boss, beau, landlord, spouse, friend or co-worker. Because we left well, those we left were left with their dignity.

10. **Say YES, when you want to say no.** Many experts in time management advise us to say NO in order to keep our time to ourselves. The 'You Never Know It Alls' who had many of life's lucky experiences did the opposite. When their plate was full, they said 'yes' anyway. When asked by an older woman in her church for a ride to Bible study, Anna Maria Bertacchi said yes --- even though she didn't attend that class. The result was a loving friendship from a woman who financially helped Anna Maria finish college. Her degree allowed Anna Maria to obtain her current position that has allowed her to travel to Europe and be part of an exciting international world. IF she had said "no", Anna Maria would not have been so very "lucky".

How To Create Your Own Luck contains stories of people who started businesses which began as a result of a coincidence (kismet, destiny, fate); other stories will highlight how careers evolved or jobs are uncovered. And there are stories of discoveries, inventions and happy accidents that have met a measure of success. All of the stories have the 'You Never Know' theme that is part of our lexicon and is the perfect explanation for what seems to be the inexplicable, the 'meant to be' or 'not meant to be' events of life. Each anecdote reflects, not only the results of the serendipitous moments, but also the actions and traits utilized when the opportunity appeared..

And what's luck got to do with it?
According to oft-repeated ancient Chinese philosophy, luck is when preparation meets opportunity. We create our own luck when we are prepared to see the opportunities and willing to take action. Contrary to the old cliché, opportunity does not 'knock' at our door but it surrounds us. We just need to be open ---like the You Never Know-It-Alls --- who provide a guideline, a game plan and great inspiration so that the rest of us can do it, too!

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