

How to work (if you must) with your spouse

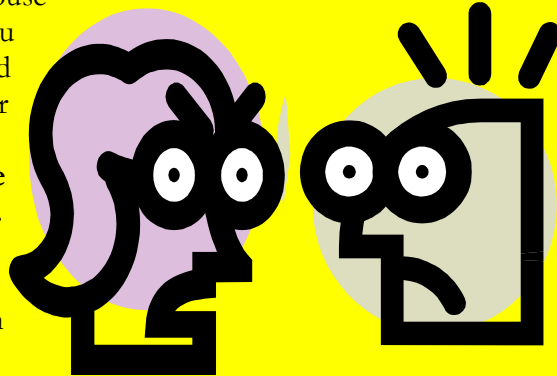
Consider the challenges of a straightforward business partnership, now think about the challenges of a marriage. Put them together, and ponder the multiplied difficulties....Quite.

Though there are no accurate statistics about what happens when spouses try to run a business together, expert estimates are grim.

Still interested? Well there is, potentially an upside. You could achieve tremendous personal growth. Confronted constantly by someone who knows you so well, at such close quarters, you're going to have an extraordinary opportunity to work on your flaws and develop as a person.

When it does work it can be glorious. But there are some things you need to put in place if it's to work

1. **Don't do it by accident.** Go into business with your spouse only if the two of you have mutually planned it, not because other options have failed.
2. **Acknowledge competitiveness.** Recognise that in a business you're always competing, even with your spouse.
3. **Be prepared for business to get personal.** Talking to a business partner who's also your spouse is different. You take stuff more personally—and your spouse is more honest with you which can be good and bad.
4. **Don't get stuck in typical gender roles.** At the office and at home, start with a clean sheet of paper.
5. **Establish a real separation between work and home.** Schedule quarterly long weekends with zero business. Take occasional separate vacations with the guys or gals. Go on actual dates with no business talk involved. Make rules.
6. **Fight the business's unfair pull.** Every entrepreneurial couple claims the relationship is their first priority—but then the phone rings. Learn not to answer it.
7. **Get a counselor or a coach.** It must be one who can sort through the business and the marriage simultaneously. A bonus: the simple act of deciding to use one is a powerful reminder of the marriage's priority.
8. **Keep asking the right questions.** Am I being true to myself? Am I helping my partner be true to himself or herself?



The payoff, for those who can make entrepreneurial coupling work, is that they learn that the business is just a vehicle to bigger and better things. Our business and careers are a means to fund what we set out and want to achieve in life.