

Mr. & Mrs. INC.



For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health... but what about in business and in bed?

Can a married couple have a successful relationship and business?

What possesses two people who have already pledged their troth to each other (what in the world is that, anyway?) to also join their fortunes?

BY SONDR GUFFEY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AARON LOCKWOOD



The Marinaccios have built a successful full-service insurance company that they moved from Chicago to Lakewood Ranch in 1998.

"It's a really polarizing statement," says Veronica Van Dyke, of DVD Consulting. "When I tell people that I work with my husband, their reaction is either 'ooh, I could never do that' or 'wow, that sounds terrific!' No one is just in the middle on this."

So is there a secret to making it work when work and home are almost the same? According to the couples we talked with, if there is a secret, it is to separate the two.

"People don't understand how we can be together all the time, but we're not really," says Ann Marie Marinaccio, chief financial officer of MGA Insurance. "In fact, we drive separately to work."

"Anything that has to do with work, we do at work," Ann Marie says, "which is really difficult, because I can never get in to see

him during the day!" This is a decision Lou and Ann Marie Marinaccio, and in fact most work-together couples we interviewed, made from the beginning: they leave work at work.

The Marinaccios have built a successful full-service insurance company that they moved from Chicago to Lakewood Ranch in 1998. In 2003, they built their home here too.

As busy as they are with work, they also take time for travel, golf, cultural activities and the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance. Lou also has a passion for helping entrepreneurs build and grow their businesses. "It's like seeing your kids do well," he says.

It was an entrepreneurial drive that led Doug Van Dyke to leave a 14-year career in banking to create a business that centers on coaching and strategic planning, and team development, all with an action plan involved.

"You have to focus on balance," says Van Dyke, who started DVD Consulting in 1997, before he met wife Veronica. "Otherwise we'd work or talk business 24/7." So the Van Dykes, like most successful work/marriage couples, have made rules. "After a certain time, there's no business talk and there's no business talk at dinner." Their children, Joshua, 7, and Noah, 5, help make sure that doesn't happen.

"It's a lot easier now than when we first started the business," Veronica says. "We've naturally settled into the roles."

"We know enough about what each other does, but not so much as to tell the other what to do," Doug agrees.

The Van Dykes complement each other well. Veronica, who joined Doug in the business about eight years ago, is a technology pro, with database, application and automation expertise. His specialty is coaching, training and strategic planning.

Doug likes to write, in fact he contributes a column to Lakewood Ranch's community newspaper, *Around the Ranch*. "Doug writes it, but I'm a great editor," Veronica says. "He has apostrophe issues."

After more than two decades of marriage and seven years in business together, Mary Beth and Jim Bos of MJB Consulting say that the biggest challenge they have off the job is that they do not have one.

"We have a very active and fulfilling life at this point, where family is number one," Mary Beth says. "Making time for staying healthy is a priority. Volunteering and being part of the community is important to us."

But there are things of which work-together couples should

be aware. For example, defining roles is paramount to any successful partnership, especially a business/marriage.

"We have become better at defining roles and getting comfortable with them," Mary Beth says. "Jim's mellowed. He's a better listener than he's ever been, and I've toughened up." Her husband agrees.

"We used to be competitive, but now we know and have clarified our roles," says Jim.

Practicality needs to be a priority as well. Before anyone thinks they should quit their jobs, grab their spouse and start a business, Mary Beth says, they should have enough money to operate for three to five years.

"It takes five years to pay yourself a salary," Jim says.

But above all, it helps to be passionate about what you do.

"Our coaching has certainly made us better as individuals, parents, and as a couple," Mary Beth says.

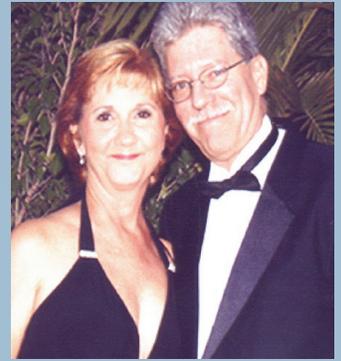
Their best advice for couples who work together?
Set goals—business and personal—review



The Van Dykes, who joined forces about eight years ago, complement each other's different strengths well.

Vanessa and Don Baugh

Owners of Vanessa Fine Jewelry, Main Street at Lakewood Ranch



"Speaking from the viewpoint of a husband and wife team, the secret for us is a healthy relationship. Without that you can't have a 'working' relationship to maintain balance. Your marriage has to be your number one priority. After more than 15 years of marriage and working together every day, it is easy because of the love and respect that is there. That's not to say that we don't have difficult times, but our commitment to each other and our faith gets us through. We are best friends and we already do everything else together, so working together is enjoyable and comes natural."



Mark Sharman and Sue Ashby

Owners of Perfect Neighbors

"Our relationship working and living together works particularly well. In the business we both maintain different roles. I work on the sales side of Perfect Neighbors while Mark is in control of operations. We support each other if the need arises, but mostly stay on our own side of the fence, if you see what I mean. With the start up of the business it has sometimes been hard to detach work and home life. We have quality 'off duty' time to enjoy each other's company and our shared passions of the arts, boating and enjoying the Florida lifestyle."

Jim and Stephanie Robinson

Proprietors of Bernie's Coffee & Tea, San Marco Plaza



"We only work together part time; Jim runs the store most days and I do the books. We both have our own strengths and weaknesses. I try to focus on what we do best. Jim is in tune with the staff and how they work and with the product we need to order. I am in tune with the money we spend and also am real big on making sure the store looks perfect, which Jim does but I am more fussy than him."

them yearly, learn to be comfortable and not competitive with each other, have fun, and have outside activities that each participates in individually.

As different as these couples are in personalities, business goals and styles, they share a significant characteristic. They all are very involved with their communities, especially when it comes to giving back.

It goes beyond just being nice and altruistic people, they are genuinely dedicated to making a positive impact wherever they are. Whether the YMCA, the Humane Society, the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance or children's activities, these are people who roll up their sleeves, raise money and make this an even greater place to live and work.

All of these couples agree: personal issues never enter their work mode. In fact, none even act like that's a consideration. Well, maybe... "The number one personal question we have at work," says Lou Marinaccio, is "Are we going out or are you cooking?"

As it turns out for all of them, the dinner question can be the real clincher. **LWR**



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Karen and Malcolm Ronney
Proprietors of MacAllisters Restaurant, Main Street at Lakewood Ranch

"Malcolm and I have worked together for more than 10 years now. The secret of our success, so far, has been defined roles within the workplace and the home. Malcolm has his duties at work that do not cross over with mine. The second rule is to have a sense of humor. The third, have a thick skin. We don't always agree and it would be unhealthy if we always did agree. I would love to say that the fourth rule is to leave work at work. A load of baloney! We talk work 24 /7!!! The last rule is to work hard, play hard. When we work, we are committed 100 percent and when we play we are committed 200 percent! We enjoy ourselves and we actually enjoy each other's company. People have said in the past we are like a double act when we are socializing. Life is too short to not have fun. My dad taught me that you go for everything."

Virginia Phillips and Al Roach
Proprietors of 20 Minutes to Fitness, Lake Osprey Shopping Village



"Relatively speaking, my wife Virginia and I are newlyweds, just completing our seventh anniversary this past July. So what is the secret to building a business and a strong, enduring and happy marriage? I'm not sure we know all the answers. In fact, I know we don't know all of the answers, but we are working on it. What we do know is that it starts with mutual respect, both from a personal and business standpoint. While this clearly is a key, it is not 'the' key for me. For me, it's quite simple, it's Virginia. She is the one that makes sure that it is about business and not about our marriage. We have our date nights, take periodic weekend days off, but the bottom line is we love each other and tell each other that every single day."