



Katherine Austin

Katherine Austin, E-R.Y.T. and owner and founder of Bloomfield Hills, Mich.-based [Karma Yoga, Inc.](#), is a dedicated student of Ashtanga, Vinyasa, Anusara and Kundalini yoga. As a regular teacher and workshop presenter, she guides her students with a unique blend of strength, detail and compassion drawn from her own personal practice on and off the mat.

Certified in Ashtanga, Vinyasa yoga, and The Khalsa Way prenatal yoga, Katherine has studied with many leading instructors, including Shri K, Pattabhi Jois, Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa, Shiva Rea, Sharon Gannon and David Life, David Swenson, Tim Miller, Beryl Bender Birch and Jonny Kest. Katherine is also a teacher of The Natural Meditation Technique.

Karma Yoga offers Michigan's first Khalsa Way prenatal yoga class, as well as adult yoga, family yoga, yoga therapy, meditation, and yoga teacher training.

Katherine Austin - Most Recent Posts:

[Why Karma Yoga is Flourishing in Detroit](#)

POSTED: 6/28/2012

Why not?

To say that Detroit is not a good place for business to thrive is giving up, throwing in the towel, quitting. And people who succeed aren't quitters. It doesn't matter where you live or work; if you are dedicated and you answer to a higher calling – if your business is guided by something

greater than money or ego – you'll do well, plain and simple. This is the law of the universe.

We started with 24 classes a week when we opened eight years ago at the corner of Maple and Lahser Roads in Bloomfield Hills. Now, we have 50 classes a week with 3,000 students coming through my studio every month.

I had been teaching yoga locally for five years before I opened [Karma](#). I was walking a more traditional path of yoga – not just as an exercise, but a spiritual practice, and so I didn't really fit into the format of other studios in town.

After helping Peter Nielsen set up his yoga programs at local health clubs, I took the plunge and started looking for commercial space. I was 43, looking for something small. When I found the 1,500-square-foot space we currently have, many people tried to talk me out of it. They said that space was in a very strict zoning order with the township and I'd never get approved to put a yoga studio there.

A 1960 zoning ordinance restricted my space, which faces residential Lahser, to not intrude on the neighborhood with a strong business presence. When I presented my case to the Bloomfield Township board at a hearing, I said, "I have the quietest business in the world," and they let me in.

I've kept the letter of admission as proof that when it's right, anything is possible. And it comes easily.

That's the thing with business: when it's right, when it's your calling, it just works. I never tried to be huge or different or expensive. I simply had good intentions for a business that helps people improve their lives. And that mission has guided my growth.

The other key to our success has been maintaining perspective. To open a yoga studio, you need an empty room and a lemonade box with cash. You don't need a computer even to start! Keep it simple. Keep it about what it's about.

My staff grew organically. When word got out that I opening a studio, many colleagues called, offering to teach. Every one of us had some students who followed us to this new venue. We never poached students from a competitor – it's not the integrity I wanted to steep my business in.

Location is important, too. I opened in a neighborhood, where we created our own student clientele.

I don't see being in Detroit as a detriment to succeeding in business. You can't operate from fear; banish any notion of "there's not enough" or lack or limitation. There's no barrier to succeeding in Detroit – that's a figment of our collective imagination. The universe knows there's only abundance.

In fact, for my kind of business, this is a perfect place to be.

Our nation has been rapidly evolving for the past century, the speed of technology and innovation overtaking our ability to evolve as spiritual beings. That has created a disconnect; now it's time for us to alleviate the stress that comes with progress. Businesses that heal the disease that comes from overworking and not taking care of our selves will do well.

Detroiters are hungry for healing, resolution and evolution. That's yoga.

The Secret to Business Growth: Constant Creativity and a Commitment to Evolve

POSTED: 6/28/2012

Business growth comes from integrity. If you walk the walk, your business will too.

What I mean by that is we have to be well-rounded enough to take care of ourselves and our employees if we want our businesses to thrive.

Our souls are being guided into this new business era. There are meditations for alleviating stress, anxiety and depression and we all must enter into a daily practice of something bigger than trudging to work and trudging home, crossing things off to-do lists that never seem to disappear.

The past business model that was most prevalent in this country was very stress-producing. It was not a picture where employee health and wellness, and well-balanced lifestyle, were encouraged. It was get-the-job-done-and-go-home.

In Europe, it's completely different. New hires start with six weeks of vacation time every year and it grows from there. Some countries give new mothers a year of maternity leave.

Some U.S. companies are paving the way to a new reality and their businesses are profiting from it. Oprah, for instance, paid for all of her employees to be trained in transcendental meditation. She pays \$1,000 per employee per year for health and fitness. (One of her employees practices at my studio!)

Even Compuware put in a gym downtown; I used to teach yoga there for employees to take better care of themselves. Americans will have so much more creativity, better attendance and thus better overall financial gains, when every member of a team is respected, taken care of and supported.

There's nothing worse than an angry resentful employee who's sick and tired all the time. A business is a reflection of its owner.

Where are we headed with business in this country? The first step is one of deepening your own awareness, self-development and connection. Then the business will blossom.

Also, we each need to listen to our callings. We are all here to share our gifts and talents. After years of working with adults, I realized I had a bigger mission: to help heal whole families. This summer, [Karma Yoga](#) is launching prenatal yoga, parent-child yoga, family yoga – because I believe I'm being called to help in this way.

Continuing on my own creative path and being guided by inspiration helps my business to thrive.

It just keeps coming to me that if you learn to treat yourself with respect and dignity and love, then you'll do that with everyone around you and your business will show it.

Drop the manipulation and the fear. Embrace the sense that there is enough to go around and there always will be. And, the more you continue to shine and grow and evolve and study and learn and expand yourself, you'll inspire others to do the same. And your business will grow from it, too.

I encourage my staff to travel so they can grow, study and expand what they do. They bring it back and our business grows as a result.

Your world is always a reflection of who you are. We create our own reality. If we're out of control or chaotic, it reflects in your world. Your world is a mirror, a reflection of who you are. The business is the reflection of the person at the top. If you're greedy and demanding and aggressive, that is going to be your business.

You will attract into your world a mirror of what you're putting out. If you believe that.

I believe that. I believe everything is energy, and I believe this is the only path toward business success.

[A Spiritual Approach to Business](#)

POSTED: 6/28/2012

I start my day before the dawn, with a cup of hot tea and at least 20 minutes of meditation.

It's not because I own a yoga studio or teach yoga for a living. It's because if I didn't meditate, my business wouldn't succeed like it does and I wouldn't maintain my own equilibrium amid the ups and downs that define life.

Call it spirituality, call it yoga, call it what you will, but my business flows easily because of the daily practices and rituals I have instituted and stick to. They guide me and keep me focused on a higher purpose so I can be my best self- not focused on money or acquisitions or the need to grow bigger and have more people follow me.

I wasn't always like this. Years ago, before I really tuned in to what lurks beneath the physical practice of yoga, I lived in the ego just like many people do. That's when life was messy.

For me, the key to a successful business – and a successful life – is taking care of the self. That's

on all levels – physical (healthy body temple), emotional (in touch with feelings), mental (meditation) and spiritual (believe in something bigger than you). The tough times come from when we don't put that focus on self-care front and center – anything from not getting enough rest to lack of spiritual connection.

I stay present, in this moment in front of me, and that is a very manageable place to be. This is easier for me to do now. I know everything is always working for my highest good. As a business owner and someone who tries to live by the principles I teach, I believe there are three solid steps to running a business from a spiritual place. Here they are:

1. Get up every morning and make the first thing you do, personal time connecting to something bigger than you. Do not check email or use electronics first thing in the day. Sit quietly reading a spiritual book or a poem, meditate, do yoga. It doesn't have to be big or long. But it will make a huge difference in the way your day unfolds if you begin the day by spending a few minutes centering yourself, getting grounded in the here and now.
2. Secure a spiritual connection – in whatever form works for you. Your business will be more successful if you have some spiritual connection – be it to a higher power, the universe, God, energy, the divine – name it what you will. If you think you're in charge, it's never going to work out as well as you hope. "May I know the joy of being used by you."
3. Get selfless. In yogi-speak that's called Seva – selfless service. Engage in service work, give back in some way. At [Karma](#), every teacher gives some portion of their teaching income to Urban Farming (<http://www.urbanfarming.org/>). I also teach people to meditate. Service work is really important for humility. It gets you out of your small little self and your small world and oh my problems are so bad and all the things we can spin into – only then do we really make a difference. And you know, that's karma – what you put out there will come back to you.

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