

# Second Wind

## *Building a Business On a Lifetime Passion*

By Danielle Bélec

**“W**hy do I dance? “I dance as a solution to the world as we know it. I choose dance as my way of participating.”

These words were my thoughts and feelings written when I was eighteen years old and decided I was going to become a dancer—recorded in a small spiral-bound pad. This event occurred over twenty years ago. At that time, I had limited knowledge about the dance profession and dance training. It did not matter. Passion and intellect held harmonic reign. I was going to dance! And with that determination I eventually moved to New York City to locate the best teachers. During my career, I performed and trained in Canada, the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom. In those early years, back when anything was possible, the spirit of one’s universe held so many choices!

When I chose to end my dance career some fifteen years later due to physical injury and for personal reasons, I left a completely consuming life for an uncertain future.

Upon ending daily rehearsing and performing, I began university where I spent the next seven years. I remember my muscles shaking in bed from a lack of exercise after long days of sitting and responding to new kinds of deadlines and expectations. Even today, I tend to absentmindedly yield to the desire to stretch, full-body, at any moment in the day. I loved university, a new kind of intensity and intellectual pursuit. I received my B.A. from University of Toronto in Literary Studies and Health Sciences and my M.A. from York University in Dance and Movement Education. While a graduate student, I concurrently engaged in post-graduate studies in Laban Movement Analysis® at the Université du Quebec a Montreal and became a Certified Movement Analyst in conjunction with the Laban Institute of Movement Studies in New York.

I also trained in The Pilates Method throughout these years, first as a dancer with the support of the Ontario Arts Council in 1985 at the Alan Herdman Studio in England and in 1987 at Jean Claude West’s studio in



Danielle Bélec with a client at her studio in Mississauga, Ontario.

New York (now located in San Francisco). Later, after dance, I became a certified Pilates instructor through the Stott studio. Over the years, I began synthesizing all that I had learned during and after dance, building a private practice in my home studio while continuing to take courses which included pain-management, osteopathy, and advanced Pilates. I also taught in various venues including developing mind-body Yoga and Pilates programs for the University of Toronto Department of Athletics and Recreation, and instructing children in the schools in movement and dance training.

Gradually, a merging of methods began to occur. As I analyzed my own work, I realized how movement therapy, rehabilitation, dance, and physical conditioning were inherently supporting one another. I decided to systematically gather and shape my work into something that other people could study and use in their own physical profession. I gave my work a name. It is called Integrated Movement Therapies (IMT)™. IMT is a synthesis of complementary approaches to movement education, rehabilitation, pain-management, and body-mind fitness based on the work of Rudolf Laban (1879–1958)

and Irmgard Bartenieff (1900–1981) respectively called Laban Movement Analysis® and the Bartenieff Fundamentals®. IMT is also influenced by all that has shaped my physical history including years of sports, dance, and the practice of T'ai Chi and yoga, as well as studies in various somatic and therapeutic disciplines which I investigated throughout my dance career and thereafter. I am a Certified Pilates Instructor, Certified Movement Analyst (CMA), I.S.M.E.T.A.—Registered Movement Therapist®, Yoga instructor, CranioSacral Therapy practitioner, founder of Integrated Movement Therapies (IMT)™ and former professional dancer with a Masters degree in Dance (Movement Education and the Creative Process).

Today, I am the owner and Director of Second Wind™ Pilates Plus™ Studio. Second Wind™ is a Pilates studio as well as a center for education in the therapeutic aspects of functional and expressive movement studies. The studio offers programming in The Pilates Method and Integrated Movement Therapies (IMT)™. The Pilates Method is an approach to body conditioning that develops deep core strength, balanced flexibility, endurance, and movement coor-

dination for optimal fitness. Through Pilates and IMT, our instructors work with clients who range from 9 to 75 years old in the areas of strength, range of motion, flexibility, muscular and fasciae strain, postural alignment, injury rehabilitation, and neuromuscular re-patterning. The goal of Second Wind is to facilitate efficiency and freedom of movement with the aim of creating well-aligned, pain-free, and physically active individuals.

I opened Second Wind™ Pilates Plus™ Studio in The Fitness Institute in Mississauga, Ontario approximately two years ago following two years of developing Pilates for their health club. Second Wind Health and Fitness Inc, the mother company of the studio, began as a registered business in 1992 and was incorporated in February 1999.

I began the process of opening Second Wind™ Pilates Plus™ studio first by finding the right location and second by writing a business plan. Location is, of course, important, and The Fitness Institute seemed like a good place to expand my business. The process of contract negotiations for studio space, plus renovations, the business plan, financing the business, and marketing spanned approximately nine months.

Although I tried to write most of my business plan myself to articulate my vision clearly, I eventually hired the University of

Toronto Business School's Impact Consulting Group, run by MBA graduate students, to help me draft a professional business plan. With this document in hand, I approached various banks for a business line of credit. Concurrently, I searched for a contractor to begin renovations. Also overlapping this process was my search for a graphic designer

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and printing company for logo design, color selection, letterhead, etc., and the completion of contract negotiations for which I hired a lawyer.

To learn more about advertising, I took a short community college course in basic marketing principles and was fortunate to be introduced to the head of communications of a large telecommunications firm. Over lunch, she generously outlined what I needed to understand for my business. After interviewing marketing consultants, surveying the community my studio was locating in and consulting with my clients that lived in this community, I decided to do the marketing

myself. The wonder of small business is that, decide or not, you will probably do everything yourself in the beginning! This is the best way to start because you will learn the ins and outs of each aspect of your business, knowledge that will enable you to shape your vision into the future.

Throughout the incubation phase of the studio, I found myself asking everyone questions about the nature of business. My CEO clients, male and female, shared the basics with me in ways that were simple and logical. By doing so, they gave me confidence and energy, and fueled my courage and determination. We spoke much about business ethics, clarity of intent, faith in yourself and your work, simplicity of approach, quality of content and delivery—all experiences and concepts I could easily transfer from other aspects of my professional life. I remember one very special client sitting up from the floor at the end our session demanding that I get a pen and paper to record what he had to say about business. His list of fifteen items became my bible for the next year of practice and it continues to inform and guide me today. For instance: 1) There is no such thing as 'business'; business is about relationships 2) Trust your instincts about business, especially in the incubation phase, 3) For all decisions, look at 15 options for each, 4) No debt, 5) Business integrity—build and maintain it.

The last one was 'Dream, Dream, Dream!' Do not be afraid to ask questions and remember to listen.

The last project that I completed prior to opening Second Wind™ Pilates Plus™ Studio was to train instructors in my method. I began our first certification course in January 1998 for which I wrote and compiled five manuals for Pilates, IMT, Postural Assessment, Functional Anatomy, and the course readings. My intention was to develop teachers who would have the same technical and philosophical approach to the teaching as I had in order to establish quality and consistency in Second Wind™ Instruction. My goal and joy in creating a Pilates Plus™ certification program is to help individuals achieve their physical and personal potential through conscious movement and to contribute to the expanding horizons of fitness and mind-body education. Today, our on-site and guest certification courses cover the areas of Pilates, Integrated Movement therapies (IMT)™, introduction to personal training principles, and osteopathic and physiotherapeutic approaches to biomechanics. Graduates from Second Wind™ certification courses are now eligible for continuing education units from Ontario Fitness Council, Canadian Personal Trainers Network, and Ontario Massage Therapy Association.

Upon opening Second Wind™ Pilates

Plus™ Studio in September 1999, I mailed 1000 flyers to the community members inviting them to a week of free classes. The turn out was more than I imagined. During the first 1½ years of business, myself, my sister, and a close colleague ran the studio. Today, we have six part-time staff, including a co-director of the Certification programming that is taking the work to new heights. Most importantly, we are still growing and still dreaming!

My business development was not a linear pathway nor always obvious. If I was to offer advice to those of you who are working towards now running your own business, it would be first, to acquire as much knowledge as one can where ever one can about business and banking practice. Second, and just as important, remember to follow the lead of your heart, to be touched by the many moods and yearnings of your spirit, and in the words of Mother Teresa: "In times of hardship, to do it anyway." And when you think you are losing your marbles, you aren't. Remember you're just running a small business! **FTC**

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