

Relationship Advice: Keys to Growing a Business When the Marriage is Over

By [Amy Osmond Cook, Ph.D](#)

Hollywood certainly has its share of dramatic endings – relationship endings, that is. Stars like Laurence Fishburne, Fergie, Chris Pratt, Jennifer Hudson, and Danica Patrick, to name a few, were invested in a long-term [celebrity relationship](#) and either personally or professionally called it quits. But what happens when a couple's livelihood relies on maintaining a relationship after the marriage is over?

Christina and Tarek El Moussa can relate. After becoming household names as co-hosts of HGTV's hit reality TV show *Flip or Flop*, they publicly announced their [celebrity divorce](#) just over a year ago. Despite moving on in their personal lives, both are committed to working together to make their successful business grow.

Related Link: [Celebrity Divorce: Christina & Tarek El Moussa Announce Break-Up](#)

It's not uncommon for former partners to maintain a business relationship. There are an estimated [3.3 million businesses](#) in the U.S. that are jointly owned by spouses. In some cases, a partner buys out the remaining portion of the business. But in a growing number of cases, the former married couple opt to remain invested in the business long after the divorce is final.

"I worked with one business where, actually, [the ex-spouses] were better business partners and got along better after the divorce and stayed together within the business for a while," says [Dann Van Der Vliet](#), executive director of the Smith

Family Business Initiative at the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University. Van Der Vliet believes that, when the divorce relieves the anxiety in a relationship, the partners can focus on the strengths they contribute to the business.

Reality TV Stars Open Up About Celebrity Divorce & Share Relationship Advice

I talked with Christina and Tarek about their transition from a blended life to one that is now exclusively professional. They shared five rules they follow to maintain a positive and supportive professional relationship, even though they now lead separate personal lives:

1. Be professional: Part of their success derives from their ability to separate professional obligations from personal responsibilities. “We believe in this company, and that means keeping our personal lives separate,” Tarek explains. “When we’re on set, it’s like a different life than what we live outside of the set. When we’re doing our job, we’re doing our job.”

Related Link: [Relationship Advice: Is Your Job Killing Your Relationship?](#)

2. Focus on the ultimate goal: Whether it’s personal or business, staying focused on your goals can help minimize distractions. “Every day that we film, I remember why I’m there,” says Tarek. He says his priority is to support his kids and family. “Second, I remember how I worked my entire life to build this thing. I don’t want to throw it away because of a divorce. We are good at what we do,” he adds. “We love flipping houses, and we enjoy delivering a great TV show that helps change people’s lives.”

3. Put kids first: Tarek and Christina understand that it is in everyone's best interest to get along. "Children come first, and that means doing things that are best for them," says Christina. "In our children's case, it was in their best interest to do things together." Often that decision requires some sacrifice and adjustments on the parent's part.

4. Don't sweat the small stuff: When tensions are high, it seems everything is a big deal. Immediately after a divorce, no matter how amicable, there is going to be a transition period. "Take time apart in all areas to better understand what you want," says [Kate Taylor](#). "As you redefine your relationship, you should draw clear lines around your roles and responsibilities at work."

Christina quickly discovered that not everything is worth fighting about. "When you're not with that person, you're not entitled to have those disagreements anymore," she shares. "When Tarek and I first separated, if there was a disagreement, it was important that we walk away from it." When disagreements happen, her rule is: Don't react, because that is the moment when you need to think more clearly.

Related Link: [Relationship Advice: Six Ways to Keep Work and Life Demands in Balance](#)

5. Keep it fun: Tarek and Christina make sure to contribute to a positive work environment. Their professionalism means everyone feels happy and comfortable when they are at work. "We have a great crew," says Christina. "We've been friends with all of them for a long time. Because of that, it makes everything much easier because it's such a great workplace."

There are those who are skeptical that this type of relationship can work, but Christina is unfazed by the criticism. "Business is what we've always done best together. Tarek and I both agree that we work great together regardless of whether or not we are married," she explains. "We make a

great co-parenting team as well. There is nothing I would have done differently.”

For more information about and articles by our relationship expert Dr. Amy Osmond Cook, click [here](#).