10 Reasons to Think Twice Before Opening a Yoga Studio. ~
Laura Dos Santos

Via Laura Dos Santos
on Sep 16, 2013

from FinancialTimes.com
There is a fine line between yogic principles and capitalism.

Maybe that line is not so fine at times—maybe it’s more like a football field—but I’m too ill-equipped with information to have that conversation right now.

Last I read, yoga is more than a $10 billion industry in the United States (given that data is usually a couple of years behind schedule, let’s assume it’s a bit more than that). By my very rough estimation, based solely on qualitative data, not nearly enough passionate people can afford to make a living from teaching.

Here is what I figure: Whole Foods Market is a $10 billion company. Seventy percent of Whole Foods employees are employed full time and likely making their living exclusively from working there.

I get that I’m comparing apples to chaturangas here, but something tells me that our industry could do better when it comes to the livelihood of our teachers.

With that said, a lot of the responsibility lies with the studio owners. They are scouting the markets, setting the pay structure and investing in making their business successful. Regardless of their studios’ profits, studio owners work incredibly hard. Unfortunately, hard work is in vain if you can’t pay your teachers a reasonable wage.

What I’m really saying is that the yoga industry in the U.S. doesn’t have it all figured out yet. We’re still working on cultivating our own yoga-conscious capitalism. The “working on it” part means that sometimes teachers get paid less than minimum wage (I’ve been there). But if you think that the solution to making money in this industry is opening a yoga studio, you are sorely mistaken.

Here are 10 reasons why you may not want to open your own studio:

1) You want to start making money. Yoga or no yoga, businesses don’t typically make money in the first few years. They operate out of basements, they take out loans. They don’t profit.

2) You have no capital. You think your overhead is so low that you don’t need capital. Or maybe you don’t even know what overhead and capital are. In short, you do need money to make money. So if you have no money, going into business is not for you.

3) You’ve just finished teacher training. Give yourself some time. Learn about the industry. Teach a few classes, develop a following. There are rare occasions where someone fresh out of college (or maybe high school) starts a business that really takes
off, but for the most part experience is an asset.

4) You’re already thinking about offering a Groupon. First of all, these extreme discount sites don’t create repeat business and yoga studios kind of depend on that. Second of all, how are you going to pay your teachers if you’re making a whopping $1.50 a class?

5) You want to work less. As a studio owner, you’re going to work more. A lot more. Nights. Weekends. Wee hours of the morning.

6) You’re non-confrontational to a fault. You’re going to have to be a leader, and sometimes that means telling people they are doing it wrong. People typically don’t deal well with constructive criticism, but you have to give it anyway so that your business will continue to improve.

7) You like yoga more than you like people. You are going to have to be behind that desk through sickness and health in times of plenty and in times of want. You are the face of that business and that face deals with a whole lot of people.

8) You’re impatient. It takes time and energy to build a community, usually years. Do you have years to do this?

9) You’re married or want to be married. Working 16-hour days is not so good for your relationship. Entrepreneurs have divorce rates even higher than that of the rest of the country. If you’re going to be successful, you likely have controlling, imbalanced and eccentric qualities. Once you own your business, these qualities will be magnified and the pool of people willing to love and cherish someone like that, is probably shrinking*. (*Not based on any actual evidence, please take with grain of salt.)

10) You just want to teach yoga. At this point you probably realize that if you’re going to open a studio, you’ll be doing a lot more than downward facing dog.