

"It was more than about starting a business, but it is about life, budgeting and keeping your finances in order," she said. In her speeches, Council urges people to write down their goals on a so-called wishboard and put in a place where they will see it every day, such as the refrigerator, television or couch. Council said placing the wishboard in highly visible places usually forces people to see whether they are working toward achieving their goals. Walthour bought Council's book and tapes.

Walthour said her mother and other patients were cared for at a local nursing home. She got the idea to open a living facility after seeing how her mother, who had diabetes, and other patients were cared for at a local nursing home. Walthour said her mother and other patients should have received better care.

In some instances, the message of a motivational speaker can help an entrepreneur focus a business plan. For Terri Fulwood, Council's advertising inspired her to go forward with her plans to start an advertising company, Adventure Advertising Specialists Inc. in Jacksonville. Before she started the company, she worked at Convergys.

Fulwood attended a speech given by Council in a November 1999 seminar. That was two months after she started her company but before she really got the business going. "I took notes and bought her book," Fulwood said. "But I never looked at my notes or read the book after the seminar. But one day I said to myself, I am going to take her stuff to work." So when I got to work, I put her tape in the cassette player and put on my head phones and listened to her while I worked. And when I went home I went through her book page by page. And after all of that, I decided it was time to walk out on faith. I said, 'What do I have to lose?'"

known motivational speakers. "These days you have to be able to captivate people and educate them at the same time," Reagan said. "We are in the business of helping people get ahead in their lives. The proliferation of motivational speakers is the result of people searching for what is right and good in life." Council's energy-charged speeches are a combination of biblical principles, everyday metaphors and practical exercises designed to develop the skills of goal-setting and accomplishment.

Another Jacksonville-based motivational speaker, E.J. McKnight, takes a similar approach with his messages. McKnight is a one-man operation who owns Standing Ovation, a Jacksonville motivational speaking company. Council and McKnight are among a vast number of people who have established motivational speaking companies to share their life experiences and advice with the world.

The messages of motivational speakers come in many forms. Some speakers even have nicknames or are associated with catchy slogans to attract interest. For instance, Council is the "Power Lady." The slogan "How to Turn Setbacks into a Comeback," is what Willie Jolley, a nationally known motivational speaker in Washington, D.C., uses as a theme. But even speakers and experts say there has to be a latent desire within people to accomplish something better for their lives.

For Walthour, it was the part in Council's speech when she discussed examples of self-made millionaires who started new businesses when they were age 50 and above. She said Colonel Sanders, the founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken, was among the many people named. Sanders was 65 years old when he created his secret recipe of 11 herbs and spices used to make fried chicken. "I said if they can do it, then I can do it," she said. "And my goal is not to make millions. I just want to help people." Walthour said the speech inspired her past the point of starting a new business.

Fulwood said she recently landed a large account with Goodrich, the company formerly known as B.F. Goodrich, to provide the company with wearable and promotional items, including T-shirts and caps. The items are indicative of the products she has produced for other companies and organizations. Fulwood said she easily related to Council when she discussed in her speech how she became a successful Realtor. "I did not think I would sell homes, but I thought that I could sell something that I knew about. She talked about goal-setting and how to find money to close a deal. I was receptive because this is not a person on TV, but someone who I could see for myself." Fulwood would not disclose revenue figures for her company but said she is now happier and making more money working for herself than she did working at Convergys.

Experience as a teacher Discussing how she rose from a rock-bottom life situation is a part of Council's motivational speech. "I came to Jacksonville, got divorced and was broke," Council said. "All I had was a television and a stereo that I acquired in the military. I did not invite anybody over because I did not have any furniture in my apartment. I did not starve. I ate turkey wings and grits. . . . I used to hide my car because I was did not want them to repossess it because I needed it to work when I became a Realtor." Council's streak of bad fortune turned and eventually she made enough money to pay for her car. For motivational speakers to share the high and low points of their lives seems to be important. Jolley said he would be hesitant to take the advice of any motivational speaker who eliminates failures. "I have messed up and have made mistakes and I would get a little cautious about people who make you think they are perfect and are without mistakes. That is just not realistic."

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