

**BUSINESS** BY KENDRA BLEVINS

## READY TO GROW

*Steven Ferguson aims to help local small-business owners find and maximize upon their strengths.*

**"BE A CEO,** not a prisoner to your business," says **Steven Ferguson**, owner of Oklahoma's franchise of The Growth Coach, a business-coaching firm that originated in Cincinnati, Ohio, and now has more than 140 markets across America. "What I hear most from people is that they are overworked and under paid, leaving them feeling miserable."

During his 20-year career with leadership in Fortune 500 companies, Ferguson travelled the country to work with and develop key employees. He provided objectives and developed business plans with them, and as it turned out, his coaching inspired many of them to pursue their dream jobs.

Soon he realized he wanted to help Tulsans achieve their goals as well.

"I was traveling all over the country, Monday through Friday, helping other communities and other families and I wanted to do that locally, to benefit my community," he says.

In 2009 Ferguson opened The Growth Coach in the Tulsa area and has been coaching Tulsa-area small-business owners to envision, plan and operate efficient small businesses.

One such business owner is **David Provenzano**, Ameri-prise personal financial adviser. He has been an adviser for 20 years and currently has a staff of three and about 140 key clients.

"One of the things that Steve is helping me do is grow key clients and build better systems so I can spend more time with them," Provenzano says.

Provenzano has known Ferguson for 25 years and says that he has helped him throughout his career with big-picture strategy planning, criti-

Steven Ferguson



cal thinking and simplifying his business processes to be more efficient.

"One thing that's important is that when you look at Steve's business, he's so much more than The Growth Coach; he's very well rounded and understands so much about people in businesses," he says. "He's very well equipped to take someone who's already successful and help give them what they want: to be more successful, to be happier or have more time off. He helps them to get to the next level."

According to the Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce, small business makes up 80 percent of the commerce in Tulsa, with 76 percent of all businesses in the metropolitan area having fewer than 10 employees. In all, small business comprises 32,979 businesses, with an impact of \$4.4 billion on the Tulsa economy. They provide 90,000 primary jobs, with a payroll of \$1.6 billion annually.

In his experience, Ferguson has found that business owners work \$10-an-hour jobs when their talents are worth \$200 an hour.

"That's what they should

be doing, the \$200-an-hour work that motivated them to open their business in the first place," he says.

That's Ferguson's major focus: motivation.

"If you really find out what motivates people, it's amazing what can happen," he says. "If you help people get to where they want to go, it helps you get to where you want to go. If you nurture and help people grow, they will want to work with you. You'll get top talent."

Ferguson doesn't tell his clients how to run their company. Rather, he guides them into successful and balanced lives by working with them to find their needs and motivations.

"On the first meeting, I ask them questions around life success before I get into the business," he says. "What fulfills you? What's your vision to your life? Are you having fun? It's the tombstone test: When you die, how do you want to be remembered?"

"Then we put it in writing. It's called a strategic planner. We look at the personal side: If you could spend more time with anybody, who would it be? What are your goals for the next 90 days? What are your top three talents and are you maximizing those?"

Ferguson finds out what motivates his clients and then helps to build the bridge from where they are now to where they want to be. ■

For more information, visit [thegrowthcoach.com/sferguson](http://thegrowthcoach.com/sferguson).