

**Tom Boucher started his career as a server in a New Hampshire restaurant chain. When he was ready to take over the company 23 years later, he needed a fresh perspective on negotiations and leadership, and someone at his own level willing to debate strategies. He chose Debora McLaughlin and The Renegade Leader.**

## Case Study: Tom Boucher, CEO

by Sharon Bailly, TWP Marketing & Technical Communications

**“The biggest thing Debora gave me was courage—courage to pursue what I thought was best for me and the company...Our success continues in spite of the bumpy economy and revenues are growing; we are opening another restaurant concept this year called The Copper Door.”**

Tom Boucher,  
Great NH Restaurants

Every rise in an organization brings new opportunities and new stresses. Debora McLaughlin helps executives, business owners and managers discover and unleash the negotiating and leadership skills they need to keep reaching goal after goal after goal.

Debora McLaughlin, founder of The Renegade Leader, understands how easily leaders can lose sight of their business and personal objectives. She states, “Facing one crisis after another, leaders may feel too pressured to plan ahead, consider the motivations of other people or even take time to appreciate their own achievements. I show my clients how to proceed from a position of strength, not stress.” As a Certified Executive and Business Coach and internationally known consultant, with master’s degrees in both counseling and psychology, McLaughlin offers perspective and confidentiality to leaders at all levels of management as they transition into new roles.

Tom Boucher, CEO of Great New Hampshire Restaurants, faced the greatest crisis of his business life when he decided to buy the T-BONES & CACTUS JACK’s restaurant chain from the founding partners. “We had five attorneys and two accountants working on this, and they all said it was one of the most complicated and difficult deals of their careers. Debora McLaughlin was instrumental in the process. You need an accountant, you need an attorney and you need a coach. You need that outside perspective to see the situation from a 3000 foot level.”

For leaders negotiating their way through any changing environment, McLaughlin focuses on three strategies:

- Mapping out and taking accountability for goals
- Keeping positive, calm and productive—negotiating from strength
- Anticipating and adjusting for a change in relationships with employees and business associates

**“I achieved 90% of the goals I committed to with Debora. As a business owner, if a goal slides, who’s going to call you on it? You need someone like Debora.”**

Tom Boucher,  
Great NH Restaurants

By taking the first step, mapping out goals, a leader moves from worrying over the future to finding solutions, with a gain in both control and accountability. Boucher found the process to be both empowering and freeing: “Imagining what it would be like to accomplish the goals I had written down helped me create the road map for getting there.”

But every plan involves other people who can act in ways that seem obstructive and obtuse. Here, McLaughlin helps by objectively identifying the personalities involved, analyzing their viewpoint and keeping the leader calm and focused, so that even anger and frustration are channeled toward success.

For Boucher, the negotiations to buy T-BONES & CACTUS JACK’s also involved a poignant separation from his past. “I started out in the company as a server 25 years ago. I grew up in this company and grew it to where it is today, taking over the reigns of CEO some ten years ago. But I had ideas and strategies I wanted to pursue that the founding owners didn’t. They were in a different place in their careers. The biggest thing McLaughlin gave me was courage—the courage to pursue what I thought was right.”

The day the negotiations were completed and Boucher owned the company was, he states, the best day of his professional life. Yet, from that point on, he realized, he was calling the shots. Debora helped him balance confidence and strength with care and concern for his team. “I’m a pretty intense guy,” he admits. “If I’m giving feedback, it can come across as scolding. Debora reminded me that I can intimidate my team and it may not yield the results I’m seeking.”

He was so impressed with McLaughlin’s professionalism and perception, that he asked general manager Jason Rathbun to commit to working with her. “Jason is a bright guy,” Boucher states, “and he’s a nice guy, maybe too nice. He’s worked for us for 13 years and his leadership skills were developed from feedback from me and my partners. I thought it would be good for him to hear from a different perspective.”

With 6 managers and 75 employees reporting to him, Rathbun recognized that he had leadership issues. “I always thought of myself as a motivator. If you keep employees happy, they’ll be motivated. But standards were slipping. Debora showed me that we can have fun and still have consistency and high standards. The skills I’ve received from Debora don’t apply just to running a restaurant. Running a business is running a business, whether you’re managing an office, factory or restaurant.”

Speaking for both himself and Rathbun, Boucher states, “Debora McLaughlin reminds you of your own skills when you need them most. She keeps you believing in what you’re pursuing.”



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#### Debora McLaughlin’s Consulting Services:

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- Consulting
- Leadership training
- Team building
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