

# The Red Letter



I Give You My Words

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## On Omens & Signs, Plus Five

*I wish that I could fly / Into the sky / So very high / Just like a dragonfly / ... Oh I want to get away / I want to fly away...*  
- "Fly Away" by Lenny Kravitz

FredComm became a business on Feb. 2, 2004. My feelings at the time were hope and trepidation tempered with confidence. I also felt the omens and signs were on my side. Here's an item that appeared in the very first issue of The Red letter a month later:

Here's to rock 'n' roll rhapsodies, fortuitous fortune cookies and mythological maidens.

The evening after I informed my former employers I was leaving to go out on my own, I met with my first client. During the drive home, I heard two songs: Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird," and "Fly Away" by Lenny Kravitz.

Two weeks later, on my last day in the corporate world, the weekly employee social featured Chinese food. The note in my fortune cookie read: "*Be your own boss and resist the temptation to follow the leader.*" Whether that's a true fortune or just good advice is fodder for another issue of The Red Letter.

I launched my new venture on February 2. That date just happens to be the feast day of Brigid, the goddess of creative inspiration.

I don't usually put much stock in omens, but this is too much to ignore. Coincidences? Nah. Let's take them as signs of good things to come.

Good things did come. It's been five years, the fortune has been hanging in my office the entire time and I haven't opened another one since. I'm still my own boss, I still resist the temptation to follow the leader, Brigid still lays the muse on me when I need it, and I'm still flying like a free bird. Thanks for your business, thanks for reading, and thanks for letting me Give You My Words.

## Failure Is Not An Option

Depending on which statistics you pay attention to, and who is citing them, 50 to 85 percent of small businesses fail in the first five years.

The U.S. Small Business Administration, a pretty good source, says 50 percent fail within the first five years. Others say the figure is higher for home-based businesses (around 90 percent) and even higher for Web-based endeavors (95-98 percent). A widely cited Dun & Bradstreet study disputes all that, saying 4-6 percent of new businesses actually fail each year.

A little research did not yield a solid answer. No doubt there's a reliable figure out there somewhere, determined through good science and statistical analysis.

But who cares? Fact is, failure is not an option. Do your homework, put a strong plan in place, make sure you're adequately financed, work hard and do good work.

Most of all, believe.

*We encounter each other with words. – Elizabeth Alexander, American Poet*

*The Good Word*

### A Favorite From Oct. '05

A great way to look like a pompous fool is to misuse fancy words instead of correctly using common ones.

A good example is using "fortuitous" when "fortunate" is correct.

Fortunate means "lucky," while fortuitous means "by chance."

Something that is fortuitous can also be fortunate, but if it didn't happen by chance, it was merely fortunate.

Example: "It was fortunate that the plane had enough fuel to reach the alternate landing field.

The pilot's choice was fortuitous; the other fields were damaged."

So, if you're a regular reader you're just fortunate. If you're reading this by chance, it's both fortunate and fortuitous.

And I'm the only fool pompous enough to say so.