



SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE

# How Sara Schreiner Transitioned From Overworked Manager To Visionary CEO



*“Change has to begin with you. Transition from valuing all you can do to treasuring all your team creates.”*

SARA SCHREINER  
The Sunshine Academy



## About Sara & Her Business

As an ambitious 20-year-old with dreams of doing something “big,” Sara Schreiner bought The Sunshine Academy in 2004. Today, she runs the early childhood education center in Laurel, MT, with her husband, Greg. Together, with their team, they deliver high-quality educational and after-school programs for toddlers through 5th graders.

### CHALLENGES

*“I had become the bottleneck in my center. If I didn’t get it done, it would get pushed.”*

As the highly-driven, passionate owner of The Sunshine Academy, Sara had no shortage of ideas for enhancing her school’s environment. She was determined to create the best center possible—one that brought joy and excitement to every student who walked through its doors.

However, bringing many of those ideas to life was a struggle. Sara believed that, as the center’s CEO, she needed to remain present for everyone, all the time. As a result, she didn’t delegate tasks or ask her staff to be accountable. If she didn’t do something, it was postponed.

Sara found herself so caught up in the busy day-to-day moments at her center—solving every problem and answering every question—she couldn’t implement her big picture vision.

Being constantly available made Sara feel needed and valuable, but it turned her into the ultimate operations bottleneck. It prevented her center’s growth and robbed her team of opportunities to problem-solve themselves.

Then, two key changes forced Sara to reevaluate her leadership role.

The birth of her daughter meant she could no longer be present for everyone at all times. Then, COVID hit, adding another layer of complication, as she was forced to physically step away from daily operations.

By late 2020, with a growing family and more time away from her center, Sara needed to redefine her role, find a better work-life balance, and create a healthier school culture.

She decided to join Schools of Excellence’s CEO Legacy Mastermind to connect with other owners and CEOs who could guide her on this journey.

## Challenges

- Overextended & creating an operations bottleneck at school
- New ideas for operations, training, & more were never implemented
- Planning for the future growth was postponed
- Inadequate time & energy for family life

## Solution

- Integrated School of Excellence mindset shifts & delegated more to team
- Made her staff more accountable for implementing new ideas
- Shifted toward long-term planning for school
- Implemented strategies to create balance between school & family priorities

## Results

- Stepped into a leadership role, allowing staff to handle day-to-day tasks
- Created more time for CEO priorities, such as visioning & goal setting
- Focused on activities that contributed to revenue growth
- Established better work hours so she could pick up her own kids from school

## SOLUTION

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*“People want to be heard. It’s not about me giving them the solution—it’s about me giving them the space to find their own solution.”*

When Sara joined Schools of Excellence in late 2020, she knew she needed tools and strategies to help her relinquish control and empower her team to take on more responsibility.

It wasn’t easy. She needed to shift her entire mindset to overcome feelings of unworthiness and worries about letting her team down. But Sara understood she wasn’t the only one in her center with solutions or advice, and she believed her school could experience incredible growth, if she got out of her team’s way. With the help of our her CEO Legacy Mastermind, Sara came to accept that things would still get done—often faster and more easily—without her involvement.

Sara leaned on other owners and CEOs inside the mastermind to reinvent her role in her school. They helped her approach difficult situations with her team in a new way—instead of offering up speedy solutions, she learned to slow down and practice intentional listening. This approach ultimately made her a more effective leader and held her team accountable for the day-to-day operations at the school.

Sara also did some deep mindset work to fully transition from manager to CEO. She got vulnerable, stopped trying to be perfect, and actually let her staff see her fail. This created a stronger team and made her staff members more transparent and coachable too.

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*“The CEO doesn’t have to always be present—but they do need to have the guiding vision for the center. The CEO facilitates the hopes and dreams not just of themselves, but of their team as well.”*

## RESULTS

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*“It’s a privilege to see how my team is rising to the occasion and then some.”*

Schools of Excellence’s CEO Legacy Mastermind gave Sara the support she was looking for to fully step into her leadership role as CEO. She learned to give herself permission to let go and not be present all the time, which in turn gave her team a chance to flex their problem-solving muscles. Her team has proven to be capable and accountable. They now take on more responsibility and have truly become a part of the center’s mission and vision.

Now when Sara walks into her center, she watches it function on its own—thanks to the miraculous work of her staff. These ordinary moments of teamwork at school are humbling to observe.

Sara’s time is freed up so she can be more productive than ever. She’s focusing on her big-picture vision, setting goals, and generating more revenue for her center. She’s now spending more time on the activities that will make the greatest impact. This newfound time also allows her to be more present for her family, which fills her cup as much as anything she’s ever done for her job. Sara can now pick her kids up from school—and instead of dropping them off and returning to work—she can enjoy the rest of the evening with them at home.

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*“I felt so much relief. I get to be part of something, but I’m not the be-all and end-all of my center. It’s about us. We are changing the world, one child at a time.”*



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