

# SWING VOTE



[Interviews](#)

[Commentaries](#)

[Special Features](#)

[Downloads](#)

[Recipes](#)

January 25, 2011



**Tom Kaufman**  
President,  
The Next Chapter Expo™

### **EDITOR'S NOTE:**

The first annual "Next Chapter Expo" will be held May 14, 2011 in Denver at the Wings Over the Rockies Museum to find solutions for individuals dealing with divorce and separation.

As interesting as the Expo itself, is also the journey pragmatic MBA holder Tom Kaufman took to put his personal capital on the line, define his best intentions and "heart of a teacher" philosophy to bring this niche market to exhibitors who will offer, as his logo states, "Comfort -- Resources -- Planning". The Next Chapter Expo (TNCE) is a win-win for businesses to tap into. This is a unique and burgeoning economic hub for individuals in crisis to find honest and professional resources and solutions to best maximize the cost of tuning up their lives and surviving one of life's most stressful situations.

We are happy to feature Mr. Kaufman in this issue.

Gloria Johnston, Managing Editor

### **The Tom Kaufman Interview**

**By Jude DeLorca**  
**Photos by Jude DeLorca**

**Swing Vote:** How did you come up with this idea of an expo to find solutions and resources for divorced or separated individuals?

**Kaufman:** There are a lot of great resources out there and no one has put together a venue of businesses and professionals for this niche market. The Expo is a really tangible forum for businesses to reach out and touch this economic hub in a very real way. This will be the first live event where small businesses or solo practitioners with modest marketing budgets can deliver their services to this unique market sector; these businesses offering services to newly, or about-to-be divorced, really haven't had a real cohesive venue to showcase their services. It is the first year being presented and I have no doubts it will build each subsequent year and we'll be able to grow this to accommodate our clients. Research shows that people file for divorce after the major holidays, and generally in the spring. Our May 14th "The Next Chapter Expo" should be well timed to coincide with high interest and need. We plan to repeat the Expo in Colorado Springs, with another one May 2012 back in Denver and then expand to other large urban centers. The idea is to have an Expo every six months where the population warrants it and services, professions and businesses will provide optimum value to the Expo attendee.



**Swing Vote:** The first Expo is scheduled for next May 14, 2011 here in Denver?

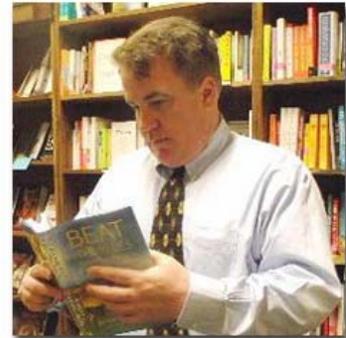
**Kaufman:** Yes, just a one-day event on that Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. at the Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum over in Lowry. We are looking to have children's activities and possibly daycare for post-divorce single parents so they can attend and bring children. The Museum will also remain open and has excellent exhibits, activities and aircraft, where older children can be kept occupied. Our goal for the Expo is to support positive beliefs; we will not present or promote a dwelling on the negative cycle of life. If bad things happened in the relationship, we aren't here to dwell on those, but fix them, and find solutions to move you forward in a positive direction. It's for people who want to help themselves but don't know where to turn to, and want to talk to a live human being. I think we've gotten too far away from that in our society. It's going back to that small hometown feel -- I can talk to somebody and say, "Here are my concerns."

**Swing Vote:** You perceive the Expo to be "with heart" -- people to talk to personally, like before therapists, a good friend, your grandmother, your dog ... not running your fingers down the Yellow Pages for a stranger?

**Kaufman:** Exactly. We even have a couple of pet exhibitors. If you need a new companion, maybe someone who doesn't talk back but is a better listener -- maybe a solution is a pet. But also we know dating is a big aspect to get out there, have support groups and social interaction, be active; there will be exhibitors who can offer ideas on how to do that. It doesn't have to be "dating," but more like "Let's get out, be social, and interact with others." Something that creates a passion or hobby.

**Swing Vote:** There is an altruistic nature to what you are doing; it's not just business. You have an MBA from Northern Arizona University and you've contributed in the non-profit sector, most notably with Easter Seals. How does that all mesh?

**Kaufman:** Ah, Easter Seals has been a huge commitment for me. It started with a kick-ball league and at the end of the season they would take us up to the Easter Seals camp. If you want to feel the impact, you go directly to the source. We raised a lot of money, but had a lot of fun in recreational sports. Once you get up to the camp and see what the kids are able to do and actually achieve in the one week they're given to really live -- supported by a full medical staff, they can zip-line, horseback ride, Ultimate Frisbee, all the resources to have these mentally and physically challenged kids feel alive. It gives them a week of freedom and their parents a week to rest from what is often 24-7 care for their child and financial hardships. It touches your heart to see these kids be able to act like normal kids in normal activities, which without Easter Seals would be a very high-cost recreational facility, which most parents would not be able to afford.



**Swing Vote:** Is there a bit of an analogy between what you bring to the kids through Easter Seals and what you are bringing people of divorce and separation, a glimpse into how to structure their future to their personal benefit?

**Kaufman:** Well, I have given to Easter Seals in both time and money; this Expo is a business venture. The exhibitors are in business, but I ask all of those who will participate to "have the heart of a teacher" -- in that sense the analogy holds.

**Swing Vote:** Tell us more about having the "heart of a teacher." What does that mean to you?

**Kaufman:** It's a term I'm endeared to. Yes, everyone's in business, and yes, there is a profit to be made. However, to deal with businesses and professionals who are fair, willing to take care of you, but not take advantage, want to "do good" -- one can tell the difference -- you see it, you feel it. You can see it even in a couple who may not be in love with each other, they tend to put their child's needs first, and care about being fair. It's about good intentions, it's almost a sixth sense, people see it, kids feel it -- it all comes together. I want to enhance that, and create a more positive atmosphere, aura for the anxiety of people facing change.

**Swing Vote:** Your philosophy is the underlying foundation for The Next Chapter Expo?

**Kaufman:** We've taken the concept for the Expo out to the marketplace and received great feedback. Everybody seems to love the concept and relates to it. Ironically, everybody seems to be affected by it or have a story, their own or others'. So we want to add services and products that give back to the community and share this philosophy to everyone's benefit. Maybe create an opportunity for someone who needs the information, someone on a restricted budget who needs to deal with good people. It may be as practical as how to rebuild your credit or choose a child counselor or maybe it's a reward system of giving yourself that truffle or a new pair of shoes -- the small incentive to balance stress.

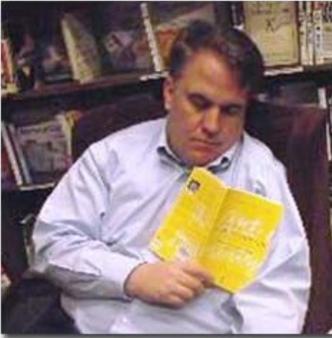


**Swing Vote:** Your The Next Chapter Expo is a little different, it's about offering solutions, not just a business-based expo to sell things. Can you describe your unique concept please?

**Kaufman:** Correct. Solutions, education, resources, trying to unwind from a marriage or partnership -- it's very easy to get married, but to unwind can be difficult without knowing the available resources; some of which will work for them, and some of them won't. It isn't just the couple often, it affects multiple people. It's the children, family, friends, and employers depending on how intertwined they all are. How to unwind all that, protect the children in a divorce and make them the priority. Also the Expo is to give people a viable solution to "What should I do before the process and during the process?"

TNCE is all about emerging or coming out of a divorce strong and whole -- any long-term relationship, any relationship of any gender.

**Swing Vote:** So your Expo will be geared to any gender relationship and will there be resources and materials to encompass that?



**Kaufman:** Definitely yes. Whether traditional marriage or relationship, or same sex marriage or relationship of any combination thereof -- any separation or divorce is traumatic. The Expo's resources will cover all needs. Research indicates that attendees might be as high as 60 percent or 70 percent female, since most females are better networkers and will reach out for help and information more easily than their male counterparts. We are striving to have more male and same sex resources out there to tip those percentages more evenly. In any relationship ending, you tend to lose both your best friend and you lose your lover, so how does one not get turned upside down, then there's a financial twist to it, an emotional twist, a psychological twist, so how do you come out of it healthy? Our job, it's like being a doctor. A bad decision was made here, so there's a problem to solve -- how to find the solutions. There's a ton of information on the Internet but you generally can't interact with anyone in real time. The Expo will be geared to making those conversations happen.

**Swing Vote:** The Expo will be shaped to one-on-one conversations?

**Kaufman:** Yes, and additionally we are doing it "convention style." We'll have over thirty break-out rooms, or workshop sessions of forty-five minutes where exhibitors will be giving talks, lectures, debunking the myths, and dispensing practical advice as in what to look for in a divorce attorney, what to look for in a child psychologist -- ways to prevent the process being a rocky road. It's really an educational concept to prepare the person. Then after that, really it becomes an educational seminar, they can go back to the exhibitor booth, get additional specific information in detail directed at their own needs and concerns. A person usually doesn't know what or who they're going to need at the beginning of the process. We give a forum to learn to pre-screen, role-play and advise what can be done in a situation that a person wouldn't normally know would be an issue until it's landed on them. Most important is at the end of the presentations, an open Q & A with a professional will help open up discussions, i.e. when high emotions are in play how to temper them or how to deal with co-parenting, how to set common goals for everyone's benefit or how to keep an eye on legal fees and attorney's time.

**Swing Vote:** Denver is approximately one-third Latino or Hispanic, much of that Spanish-speaking. Will you be offering any businesses or services specifically to address this population or have any translated materials?

**Kaufman:** Life change affects all cultures and races; we certainly don't discriminate against sex, gender, religion, race or culture in our presentation of materials. We will look to the inclusion of the Hispanic sector at the Expo and possibly a translator for future events. We welcome any bi-lingual professionals, and recognize Denver embraces a great deal of diversity. Also we would welcome any of the Asian community businesses, services and professionals to be represented as historically the cultures are more reticent in voicing personal, family issues and the Expo would be an excellent opportunity to gather information. The Expo is for everyone who is hurting, seeking help, needing good counsel and resources; anyone looking to make a change -- we are reaching out to everyone.

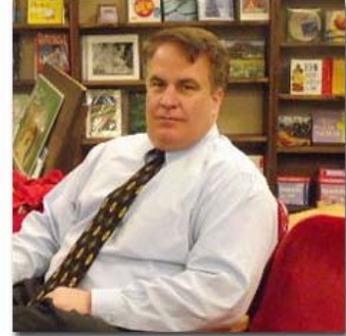


**Swing Vote:** You did extensive research. Did the statistics you uncovered surprise you?

**Kaufman:** They did surprise me; higher than I expected. One particular eye-opener was that the more marriages for a person, the higher the divorce rate rose. So as a nation across the board, we have an over fifty percent divorce rate of all marriages. I've had friends who are going through the marriage decision and taking it very lightly, with an attitude of, "I'll do this, if it doesn't work, I'll just get a divorce," where thirty years ago that didn't happen. It was more like, "I'm getting married one time and I'm going to stick with it through thick and thin." That being said, there are extenuating circumstances that don't always make it right to stick with someone for a lifetime, but the scary thing is that you see that level of commitment has dropped a lot. On second marriages, it goes up into the sixty percentile and a low seventy percentile for a third marriage that ends in divorce.

**Swing Vote:** Did the higher divorce rate in second and third marriages particularly catch you off guard? Why do you think people do not seem to learn from the mistake of a first marriage?

**Kaufman:** Very much so. Everyone relates to their own stories. I've got two great-grandmothers whose spouses passed on. They wound up living in one house together yet alone with each other, which was great from my family viewpoint -- we could visit two grandmothers in one stop. However, that adversely impacted my direct grandmother. She saw that situation growing up and said she didn't want to live alone and wound up marrying the first guy that came along after her first divorce for fear of being alone and for financial security. Turned out he wasn't a very nice guy and I believe she should have divorced him or left him. He actually wound up almost beating her to a pulp in her hospital bed. My family had to smuggle her out to Arizona in order to get her away from him. Other times we do things for the wrong reason, an emotional reason. Emotions and logic, like oil and water, don't ever mix. We're human, we're going to go through these things and make mistakes. However, what makes us better is we can choose to stop and correct them -- we can turn to the next chapter and make it right for ourselves. Some fail to do that; as I've seen those who get set in their ways, and that's why the whole emergence of The Next Chapter Expo is so important -- let's make sure you're on the right track and will find happiness the next time, if you so choose to engage in another long-term relationship or marriage.



**Swing Vote:** How do you see the struggling economy and devalued real estate's impact on marriage and divorce?

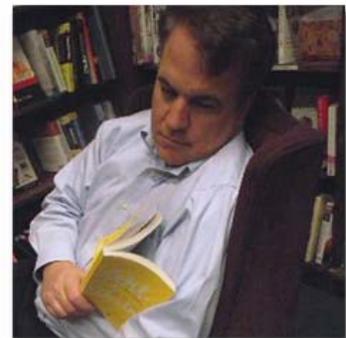
**Kaufman:** Certainly a person's credit has been affected as real estate values have dropped, homes in jeopardy, people co-habiting longer to keep a roof over their respective heads, children coming back to live with parents (and grandparents), extended family situations. I perceive that when real estate recovers, people who were not happy with each other in the first place will be moving out. With the predicted positive job growth in Colorado in 2011, unhappy people will be moving on in their lives, and more divorce. Finances are the number one reason for divorce. All that ties in with what we are offering -- an opportunity to be able to plan and do it in the right fashion when the time is right. I can't say this enough -- *"in a positive fashion."*

**Swing Vote:** Among the many professionals in the Expo, what is the range?

**Kaufman:** We are looking to host everyone from cosmetic surgeons, child psychologists, family help centers, public services, financial planning advisors, tax experts, fashion image remakes, make-up and skin care experts, spa and exercise centers, nutritionists, counselor for specific single parent issues, chiropractors, day care centers, prepared meals, weekend getaways and so many more. Also very important, we're creating a table for non-profits, city, county and state resources addressing alcoholism, domestic abuse, food stamps, support groups and civil rights issues. People may know they exist, but don't know how to contact them or if they have to qualify, what are the parameters? There will be a donation raffle on the table, one of these will have the total dollars donated. It's just another way of giving back.

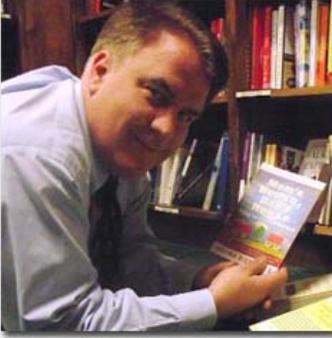
**Swing Vote:** You have many inspirational quotations on your website, do you personally believe "The doors we open and close each day, decide the lives we live?"

**Kaufman:** Very much so. Attitude is everything. It's what you do, how you live; it's not necessarily the end result, much like making it to the title fight in a boxing match. It's not that you're there, but what you do along the way to get there which defines us. It's the same with a major life change -- how do you handle that process? Do you keep a positive frame of mind, do you look for the good, or dwell on the negative of it? If you look for the bad, you will find it in anything you undergo or undertake. We all have flaws, we all make errors. But let's focus on making this a better place for everyone.



**Swing Vote:** How did you become so wise?

**Kaufman:** Not sure I'm any more wise than the next person, just acting on what I perceive is a need in the market. It's just that divorce has become so rampant since about the mid 1970s. Prior, the stigma of divorce in society was that you were told to stay away from the divorcee, "that person is not talked to in the neighborhood ...", but it has switched. Divorce has affected every family, friends. It impacts and ripples through everyone's lives now. You see some couples where they were more thought out in the process of separation, and others that just got bitter. I think the world needs to be a more positive place. One way to start is get a "tune-up for life." You made one mistake. We don't want to dwell on that mistake, but want to move you forward to a better place with more happiness in your life.



**Swing Vote:** We've talked about the interior needs a great deal, what about the exterior "tune up"? Will that be addressed at the Expo?

**Kaufman:** Absolutely. When you've been in a bad marriage or relationship, you may have let yourself go a bit and your spouse may not have been responsive to letting you know. We'd like to have fashion consultants and make-up and hair stylists for show and demonstration -- some of the resources to provide a better self-image. Particularly important if you were a stay-at-home parent is how to get back out there and reengage and look and feel your best.

**Swing Vote:** What other resources are you looking for to include at the Expo?

**Kaufman:** We are looking for good resources for self-storage and second-hand cars and transportation, as well as certified financial planners and real estate professionals that specialize in divorcing individuals, even an excellent clothing consignment shop. We want to be creative and offer a wide range of survival resources.

**Swing Vote:** Your great logo consists of the key words "Comfort" "Resources" "Planning." We've discussed some of those ideas, would you like to add more about "planning?"

**Kaufman:** Yes, we encourage everyone to have a game plan. Look out there and see what's going to happen before it gets thrown in your lap. You're already emotionally distressed. If you know what's coming, it will be easier to anticipate how to best deal with it. If you don't have a plan, you'll just get tossed in the waves or blind-sided, and we're trying to eliminate that. Many of our exhibitors offer the take-aways you will need. Go to lectures, the talks, the seminars, and absorb the take-aways, so you actually leave empowered with answers to questions you didn't even know you had before you walked



through the Expo's doors. I have always been a big advocate of reinvesting back into your career. I've been through many life change and self-help seminars and when you break them all down, every one of them say "make a plan." Break it down, be willing to change, make a goal and make steps toward it. So, TNCE's logo -- three words encompass that -- make a game plan, be flexible on it, find out where your comfort zones are at, get to the goal that's going to make you happy. And it's unique for every person.

**Swing Vote:** Have those three words or concepts been valuable to you in your life and career?

**Kaufman:** Oh yes. I relate to the "comfort" a great deal, not only as a reward system from my own career, but having fun in life. Commercial real estate has vast swings, I've seen it all. It's always about finding the balance, the comfort zone. If it's a task I don't necessarily want to do, but has to be done -- get it out of the way, and reward myself could be as small as a bon-bon or new shoes or my favorite has been once a knock-out leather chair I coveted for my office. So yes, always kept in touch with "comfort" and I am also a big advocate of "planning." You have to know where you want to go. Sometimes I've seen people back into it -- find out what you *don't* want to do, and what is left is what you do. It's a longer style strategy but that works too.

**Swing Vote:** There is definitely an underlying philosophy to all you do. I expect your exhibitors will be well chosen to maximize the benefits for the attendees?

**Kaufman:** That's our intention. Back to the concept of "heart of the teacher." It's a bit elusive, but tap into that resource idea -- having those types of exhibitors that want to make a difference. We're not trying to sell anybody; we're just trying to match wants and needs. We're keeping the entry fee to 10.00 dollars per person for the whole day, includes everything and the Wings Over the Rockies aircraft exhibits as well.

**Swing Vote:** I noticed you have different tiers of exhibitor booths that are very reasonable. How does one contact you to reserve a booth and discuss the details?

**Kaufman:** We have one of the most reasonable offerings out there for exhibitors and the particular niche market we are reaching is unique. We will be looking for quality exhibitors. The minimum booths are 10 feet by 10 feet. In addition, the museum has great break-out rooms. Definitely offering great value to our exhibitors; we want them to continue with us from Expo to Expo. Those who join us on the original Expo on May

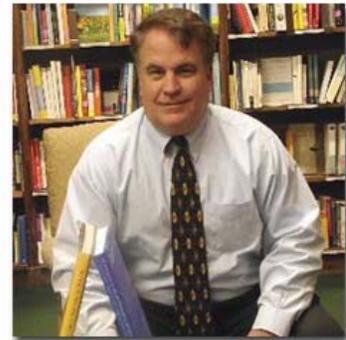


14th will have a "preferred status" on pricing for the next Expo. We are looking to build a long-standing exhibitor base. We are being very aggressive with our marketing.

For information or to register go to our website, [www.thenextchapterexpo.com](http://www.thenextchapterexpo.com). The site has all the pricing information, booth sizes and a registration form. Just fill it in or you can send the registration by mail, or just give me a call at 720-366-4172. However, in order to be in the exhibit catalog, registration should be received by no later than March 14th. We will work with an early-bird registration fee reduction a bit prior to February 10th. We're keeping a quality and balance standard by capping the major categories to five like exhibitors, and minor categories to three. That will promote quality over quantity. Also an added benefit for the exhibitors is a special reception from hall closing at 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. -- a great opportunity to cross-market, relax, trade information and have some fun from the day; beer, wine, hors d'oeuvres. Finally, we are putting sponsors' packages together, benefits include same day talks with the media, gift bag sponsors, and exhibitor interaction. The sponsors will get a good bang for their buck, I'm confident. With the quality list of exhibitors for this niche market, we will have quality sponsors advertising.

**Swing Vote:** Did you personally come up with The Next Chapter? It's very cool.

**Kaufman:** I batted around the concept for quite awhile. It morphed from a type of New Year's resolution, from tried out "Tune Up For Life" to "The Next Chapter." It just felt like the right verbiage. Your current situation is the old chapter coming to an end, and you want to start with something new -- so that theme really hit home. People are looking for someone to believe in them, and someone to give them an opportunity to do something a little different. The Expo is laying the platform for them. They still have to act and be accountable, but here are the tools. Each solution will be different. We're not going to solve every problem the first time out, but we're going to work with people to at least get them the tools to help solve their own individual problem. As for the exhibitors, it's a great venue with a unique niche market. When you look at the dollars spent within three years of a divorce -- it's huge on personal growth, physical fitness, real estate, mortgage, banking, and huge amounts of money. It's like moving out on your own the first time. You have to recreate almost every wheel. It's an economic hub to tap into and hopefully create relevance and affect change for that "tune up" for attendees' lives.

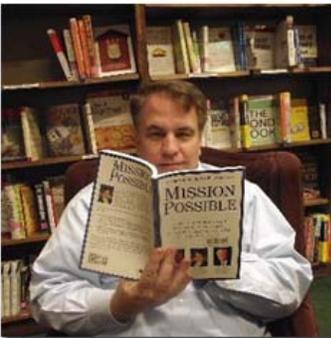


**Swing Vote:** Does the Expo address the loss of spouse from being a widow or widower?

**Kaufman:** The Expo is expected to grow in areas of coverage determined by the market. However, this is still a very young expo and we would like to cover all aspects of separation, but we are still developing the concept and might not have as much coverage in this area for the May event as we would like. We understand this is a very difficult situation to address and hope that we can provide adequate support for this area, but may need to add additional resources in this area as we grow. As always, we are always looking to enhance the needs of those undergoing this change in relationship status and we adjust the Expo towards our attendees' needs.

**Swing Vote:** Have you found a great deal of divorce within your age group, going back to reunions and finding the statistics for divorce has hit your friends?

**Kaufman:** I've always been the neighborhood psychologist where everyone comes and talks to me. In my age group, you saw a lot of kids marrying right after high school or right after graduating from college. They thought that was the next phase, the thing you did in life. I don't know in depth they did pre-screening for a life partner, but you go back to a ten year reunion, then a twenty year reunion and you realize these people are all single again. What happened? Could a difference have been made if they had attended an Expo like this one, thought it out better, prescreened it -- would it have led to being happier longer, or a better long-term partner? I can't answer that, but we are focused on an effort to help reduce or minimize the effects of not addressing the issue.



**Swing Vote:** This Expo can give them the tools to examine a mistake, correct it, and move forward?

**Kaufman:** Exactly -- by combining quality professionals and services which truly have "the heart of a teacher," we can target the fundamentals of Comfort, Resources and

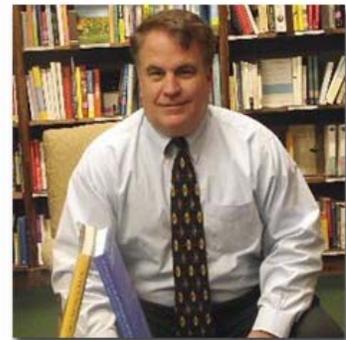
Planning.

**Swing Vote:** And for the last question -- everyone's going to want to know if you've been married or divorced!

**Kaufman:** The ironic part of this is I haven't been divorced. I actually come from a family where my parents have been married almost fifty years. But I've been affected by divorce, as in my grandmother, and most all of my friends have been. The statistics speak for themselves and this is a problem worth helping to solve. You could say in some ways this Expo is a way for someone to better prescreen the spouse, or to find out what's important for yourself.

**Swing Vote:** Did you personally come up with The Next Chapter? It's very cool.

**Kaufman:** I batted around the concept for quite awhile. It morphed from a type of New Year's resolution, from tried out "Tune Up For Life" to "The Next Chapter." It just felt like the right verbiage. Your current situation is the old chapter coming to an end, and you want to start with something new -- so that theme really hit home. People are looking for someone to believe in them, and someone to give them an opportunity to do something a little different. The Expo is laying the platform for them. They still have to act and be accountable, but here are the tools. Each solution will be different. We're not going to solve every problem the first time out, but we're going to work with people to at least get them the tools to help solve their own individual problem. As for the exhibitors, it's a great venue with a unique niche market. When you look at the dollars spent within three years of a divorce -- it's huge on personal growth, physical fitness, real estate, mortgage, banking, and huge amounts of money. It's like moving out on your own the first time. You have to recreate almost every wheel. It's an economic hub to tap into and hopefully create relevance and affect change for that "tune up" for attendees' lives.

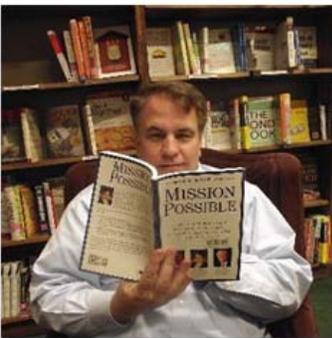


**Swing Vote:** Does the Expo address the loss of spouse from being a widow or widower?

**Kaufman:** The Expo is expected to grow in areas of coverage determined by the market. However, this is still a very young expo and we would like to cover all aspects of separation, but we are still developing the concept and might not have as much coverage in this area for the May event as we would like. We understand this is a very difficult situation to address and hope that we can provide adequate support for this area, but may need to add additional resources in this area as we grow. As always, we are always looking to enhance the needs of those undergoing this change in relationship status and we adjust the Expo towards our attendees' needs.

**Swing Vote:** Have you found a great deal of divorce within your age group, going back to reunions and finding the statistics for divorce has hit your friends?

**Kaufman:** I've always been the neighborhood psychologist where everyone comes and talks to me. In my age group, you saw a lot of kids marrying right after high school or right after graduating from college. They thought that was the next phase, the thing you did in life. I don't know in depth they did pre-screening for a life partner, but you go back to a ten year reunion, then a twenty year reunion and you realize these people are all single again. What happened? Could a difference have been made if they had attended an Expo like this one, thought it out better, prescreened it -- would it have led to being happier longer, or a better long-term partner? I can't answer that, but we are focused on an effort to help reduce or minimize the effects of not addressing the issue.



**Swing Vote:** This Expo can give them the tools to examine a mistake, correct it, and move forward?

**Kaufman:** Exactly -- by combining quality professionals and services which truly have "the heart of a teacher," we can target the fundamentals of Comfort, Resources and Planning.

**Swing Vote:** And for the last question -- everyone's going to want to know if you've been married or divorced!

**Kaufman:** The ironic part of this is I haven't been divorced. I actually come from a family where my parents have been married almost fifty years. But I've been affected by divorce, as in my grandmother, and most all of my friends have been. The statistics speak for themselves and this is a problem worth helping to solve. You could say in some ways this Expo is a way for someone to better prescreen the spouse, or to find out what's important for yourself.