

How to Become a Successful Solo Professional

Guidance, Inspiration, Ideas

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3 Crucial Things to Know Before Going Solo

"You have your own business? Wow!!! I've always wanted to quit my job and go on my own... How did you get into it?"

This is the usual question I get from people I meet. Some are skeptical; others want to know how they can build something of their own.

While there is a thousand tips I could give about going solo, it all comes down to a single most important thought.

What do you WANT to do? What would you ENJOY working on?

If you can answer this question, you're 25% there. That is because being in business for yourself requires commitment that only a true PASSION can guarantee. How else could I have stay motivated for months without seeing any profits?

The next thought that comes to mind is can you really do it?

Do you have the KNOWLEDGE and the BACKGROUND in this field to start building your business right now?

It is always best to build your business on something you have a great interest, as well as expertise in. Otherwise you'll have to spend weeks, months or even years learning the new skills first. Wouldn't you rather use that time to start getting clients?

If you have a business idea that you enjoy and the background that you can use to make it work, then you're 50% there.

The other 50% are the most important factor in the start-up of a successful solo business.

REALLY go through with it. Don' t talk about it, don' t think about it, and don't delay it - just start doing it.

I know you' ve heard it a million times, and it sounds like a cliché. After watching this New Year' s eve' s "Dateline NBC" with the highlights of the most successful people of the year (actors, skaters, musicians, politicians) I am once again convinced that it takes a special ambitious personality and a "no-failure" attitude to rise over everyone else and succeed.

If you feel like saying "Some day I' ll do it", try to change it to "I am going to start my business next weekend". Then do it.

What You Must Do Before Quitting Your Job

As much as you want to quit your job now, you have to wait until you' re completely ready – both, emotionally and financially.

When I had some slow times at the start up of my business, I remember waking up in the morning and thanking God that I still had the security of my job. Then I would go to work, sit through the meetings, make the phone calls, and listen to my 3 supervisors decide what I was supposed to work on in the next few weeks. By the time I would get home, I was convinced I had to do quit that job before going insane.

The next morning I would wake up, thinking about my 2 small kids and bills to pay, and thanked God for still having my job – back and forth again - that' s how scary this decision was for me.

How did I finally do it?

I read a few books by some of the most reputable marketers, and put my knowledge to work. There are plenty of people on the Internet who complain of no profits, and even say that "Internet fortune" is myth. That is because they stop right before it could become profitable!

In the next 3 months my business income grew to the size of my salary. I felt confident. Well... almost. I was worried about the income fluctuations from month to month - sometimes I had 2 new clients a week, other times I had no clients for a whole month! I had to find some other way to supplement the slow times. Then I found it!

The key to a consistent and reliable income was to have multiple streams of cash flow.

If there were no new clients for a while, I would conduct paid workshops. When I couldn' t get enough people to register for the workshops, my e-book sales came to help. In fact, I found at least 18 different ways to make money with my knowledge!

By March 2002 my business earnings doubled (while I was working only 4 hours a day!) and I felt like I was ready to quit my job.

There was just one little problem. My family didn' t want me too, scaring me by the slow economy times (after the 9/11 event in the U.S.) and stories about people losing their jobs.

There was one single most important factor that gave me the final push and the confidence to say "good-bye" to my 3 bosses!

Do You Know Anybody Who's Self-Employed?

If you don' t have anybody in your family or circle of friends who are in business for themselves, it may be more difficult for you to make the decision of going solo.

I come from another country, where most people don' t ever think of starting a business. They' re just happy to have a government job and to be able to provide food and shelter for their families. Well, at least that' s how it was in Ukraine when I left it in 1992.

My family just couldn' t imagine living without a job, and were not about to support me in such a "crazy decision".

[In March of 2002 I got a new client.](#)

Nancy was a freelance writer, and had earned a living by publishing her articles in magazines for years before we met. In talking with her I found out that most of her family members and friends were self-employed. Her sister owned an antique bookshop, her best friend had a coaching practice, and her parents owned a hospitality business.

To Nancy the idea of self-employment wasn' t outrageous, unusual or "crazy". It was a natural way of living. In the next few weeks Nancy and I had become good friends and wrote and called each other a couple of times a day. She confirmed my worries about income fluctuations, but assured me that it' s what most solo professionals experience. (Jumping ahead, I know she was right - I made almost

\$4,000 in July, while barely \$1,500 in December!) But if you take a whole year' s income, I could see that the average is still good.

More and more I became comfortable with the idea of letting go of my paycheck, and focusing on my business. In April 2002 I called Nancy and announced that I had just quit my job and joined the rest of the independent professionals.

What's your plan "B"?

Being self-employed means completely relying on your ability to bring new clients and customers into your business every month. It may be a little scary at first, but once you see that your strategies work and your efforts pay off, you will begin having more faith in your business.

[So how can you become more confident and grow your solo business faster?](#)

Before going solo make sure that you have a plan "B". This simply means that you should have something to "fall back on" if it doesn' t work out the way you planned. How easy will it be for you to get another job? Will your spouse be able to support you while your business is at its start-up phase? Do you have some savings to last you a few months for rent, utilities and medical expenses?

I graduated from college and worked for 4 years in a local newspaper right after that. While I knew my job well, I didn' t really consider it irreplaceable. If you' ve worked in your company for many years, have an important title and are truly afraid of not being able to find a job like that again, then simply take a little more time to establish your business and grow your client base before letting it go.

Also remind yourself why you want to do this and whether it's worth the risk. To me staying with my 2-year old at home was more important, than anything else, even if I wouldn't be able to afford that new sofa bed I've always wanted.

While your situation may be very different from mine, the success factors of being a solo professional are still the same. But how can you assure that your business doesn't fail you after you quit your job?

Are You Afraid To Market Your Solo Business?

When people told me that I needed a business plan, I told them "But I am already doing my best! How much better can I do with a business plan?"

Then I understood that having a plan actually **SIMPLIFIES** and **FOCUSES** my business so that everything I do has a purpose.

The most confusing part of marketing a business is that there are literally hundreds of strategies you can use! Advertising, free publicity, self-publishing, joint ventures, newsletters, classified ads, mailing lists, cold calling, sequential follow-up, link exchanges, workshops, networking, booklets, brochures, awards, tele-seminars, message boards, discussion groups, search engines, banners, reprint rights, affiliate programs, and free information portals, just to name a few!

I tried them all, and jumped at every new opportunity to promote my business. Then I realized that only a few of these strategies are for me - they work and I actually enjoy using them!

Marketing is simply a big word for organizing your self-promotional activities so that they result in gaining new clients who want your services.

Early in my business I needed to get my name out so people would trust my advice. I used a strategy that would not be suitable or necessary for where my business is now.

Today, I have to use marketing methods that bring new leads and close each sale, as opposed to gaining name recognition in my target market.

If your goal is to reduce the number of hours your work, then you will also want to set up a passive income flow. Passive income not only brings cash flow into your business, but it accomplishes many other important things for you as a solo professional.

Here is how you can set up a passive income system and reduce the amount of marketing you have to do to get new clients.

Passive Income for Solo Professionals

As a professional you possess information or skills that other people are willing to pay for. You can use it to create an automatic cash flow system, also known as "passive income", and enjoy the freedom it can give you.

Passive income can also be used to supplement your salary if you're not ready to go solo at this time, and prepare your business financially for when you are.

What passive income means is simply putting a system in place that generates revenue with a minimum effort after the initial set up. Here is how you can do it.

1. Write a special report or an e-book of interest to your target audience.

Make sure it solves an important problem or addresses a hot issue that you have experience in dealing with.

2. Set up a web site with a great sales letter (you can write it yourself, or hire a copywriter) and an ability to process orders automatically. You can get a web designer to create a mini web site (or make one yourself), open an account with <http://www.ClickBank.com> and start processing orders immediately.

3. Announce your e-book to the Internet users by posting on forums where your target audience hangs out, writing and submitting free articles to publishers (with your link at the bottom), placing inexpensive classified ads in online newsletters, submitting your site to search engines, and finding joint venture partners that will send targeted traffic to your web site.

Once your web site is set up and you start marketing it, you should see results within weeks. As you can see, this is not a totally hands-off venture. However after the initial set up, you'll only have to work an hour a day or less to continue getting orders.

In addition to getting extra income, you will start building your credibility and getting your name out to your target clients. People who order your e-books may become interested in your coaching or consulting services. Other business owners who come across your web site may be interested in offering your e-book to their customers.

If you don' t think you can write a special report or an e-book, think again. You have the information to share with others - simply sit down and write everything you know about the subject on paper. Then give it to a professional writer to turn into an e-book.

Creating my first e-book was one of the most important factors in building and growing my business.

People started treating me with respect and recognition. I started getting joint venture proposals and requests for product testimonials and interviews. I was also able to build a 4,000+ mailing list in 2 years, starting from scratch. And a list is what you' ll be thankful for when you are ready to expand your business!

Just Because You're Good, Doesn't Mean You'll Get Clients

Do you ever notice how many talented people live on this planet? Musicians, artists, actors, dancers... Many of them are so good you wonder why they never make it to the top.

The same thing with personal care products - shampoos, lotions, shaving gels, etc. Some you can get at a grocery store for \$2-3, while others cost \$20-50. Are they that much better? May be a little... But what really matters is how much advertising and publicity a company does to get attention to their products. Or how much promotional activity a singer does to attract recording studio managers.

The truth is, you may be the BEST consultant in your field. But if nobody knows about it, you will not get any clients.

So the most important thing you must understand is that just because you' re good, doesn' t mean clients will line up for your expertise. You need to promote yourself. If you can REALLY understand that getting clients requires you to be pro-active, you' re ready to be successful.

Personally, I hate cold calling and have always tried to avoid it in my marketing strategy. If you don' t like calling people to sell your services, you will truly enjoy what the Internet can do for you!

The only time I speak to people on the telephone is when THEY want my help, and are already sold on my expertise. All I have to do now is confirm my ability to solve their problems. How is that for fun marketing!

How do you get prospects that are pre-sold on your expertise? You get a web site that shows your background, portfolio, testimonials from happy clients, the types of problems you help people solve, and your fees.

If your web site is easy to navigate, looks professional and proves that you' re good, you have an interested prospect! And, if you' re able to bring hundreds of visitors a week (or even a day!) to your web site, you' ll have a constant flow of clients.

Here are some of the most popular ways to bring targeted traffic to your web site:

- Search Engines submissions
- Publishing Free Newsletter
- Free e-book submitted to various directories
- Writing and submitting your free articles

- Posting on discussion forums
- Partnering up with other business owners and cross-promoting each other

All of this is really simple to do - I've learned how to market a business in weeks! Then I just had to find out which methods worked best and stick with those.



Are you ready to start a profitable solo business? Do you want to have a step-by-step blueprint to getting well-paying clients?

Association of Solo Professionals on the Web offers FREE weekly tips to its "ASPOW's Insider" subscribers. Get your subscription at <http://www.aspow.com>

Internet Business Ideas for Professionals

These ideas should help you brainstorm an idea of your own. Every idea can be developed into a product, a service, or a private access web site. Whatever you choose to do in your Internet business, remember to do a thorough research. Find out whether there is market for your product, how much they would be willing to pay for it, how many competitors you have, and of course, what you can do better than competition.

1. **Graphic Design** - design logos, flyers, banners, covers and web templates.
2. **Web Design** – create web sites for small business owners.
3. **Book Editor** - do you possess good English? Edit books and e-books (electronic books) for authors.
4. **E-commerce** - resell e-commerce packages offered by companies such as [Practice Pay Solutions](#) and [2-Checkout](#).

5. **Product Reviewer** - review products on a specific topic and mail your reviews to online publishers, and add them to your own web site.
6. **Stock Photography** - do you enjoy photography and have a digital camera? Create collections of photos, organize them by topic and sell or rent on your web site.
7. **Mom-To-Mom** - create activities for kids: printable crafts kits, recipes for cooking with children, 100 rainy day activities etc.
8. **Internet Business Directory of...** designers, photographers, consultants, etc. Charge for advertisement space, or a top directory listing.
9. **Home schooling Online** - gather all resources for parents of home-schooled children, class plans links, subjects and aids.
10. **Resume Service** - review or create resumes for people. Also, offer cover letters and job-searching advice.
11. **Health Condition Resource** - choose an illness or a medical condition you or a family member has experienced, and create a web site about it. Review books, recommend products, offer a newsletter, start an online shop just for people with this condition.
12. **Book Design** - create a layout and a design for books and other printed publications.
13. **Let' s Travel To...** choose your favorite travel destination and create a web site about it. Include best attractions and places of interest, traveling tips, historical background, famous people who lived there, etc.
14. **How To Become A...** - create a report or an electronic book on how to become a professional singer, dancer, chef, legal assistant, and anything else you have a background in.
15. **Business Cards** - design and print business cards. You may also do the design only, and outsource printing to a local shop.
16. **Article Writing** - become a freelance or "ghost" writer for people who are too busy or don' t have the skills to write.

- 17. "Top 50" Web Site** - choose a topic and create a web site that will list the Top 50 products or companies in this area. For example, Top 50 Homeschool Web Sites, Top 50 Online Golf Shops, Top 50 Web Designers, etc.
- 18. Copywriting** - similar to article writing, this services focuses on business writing. Ads, sales letters, follow-up letters etc.
- 19. Recipe Site** - create a recipe web site focused on a certain culture, cooking with certain foods, people with certain health conditions, etc. Allow your web site visitors to swap recipes and ideas.
- 20. Business Coaching** - do you have a background in a certain business or industry? Do you know how to help people to become more successful at their position or business? Offer coaching services to be conducted via e-mail, private chat room, or telephone.
- 21. PDF Conversions** - convert business documents, reports, and electronic e-books into PDF format using Adobe Acrobat (www.adobe.com).
- 22. Internet Commerce** - create a web site about doing business on the Internet. Everything from building a web site, registering domain to accepting credit cards and promoting online. While this is an already highly-saturated area, focusing on a certain type of web sites (e.g. crafts, gift shops, etc.) or on a certain angle of e-commerce (e.g. developing effective banners), will make your site more unique.
- 23. Desktop Publishing** - offer booklet, flyer, letterhead, envelope and other documents design.
- 24. Search Engine Placement** - offer search engine optimization and submission services for web site owners. Study optimization techniques and how to achieve the best results and improve web sites' search engine rankings. See www.searchenginewatch.com for more information.
- 25. Support Group** - are you passionate or have a background in a certain support group? Create your own support group for people on your web site. Offer a newsletter, weekly chats, a message board, and recommend helpful resources.

26. **Online Tutor** - are you good in a certain subject? Offer tutoring services on your web site, via e-mail or telephone.
27. **Marketing/Advertising services** - many entrepreneurs lack the time to promote their web sites. Become knowledgeable in this field and help them bring more traffic to their web sites, close more sales, get more leads etc.
28. **Flash Design** - learn how to create Flash, animated movies for web sites, and offer it as a service to web site owners.
29. **Online Personals** - create a web site that will become a match-making place for people. Charge people for placing ads, categorize ads by gender, age, culture, etc.
30. **Genealogy expert** - find long lost relatives or ancestors for people. Get the [Family Tree Guide](#) and it will teach you how to use the Internet to become an expert in finding ancestors.
31. **Greeting Card Service** - create a web site that people can use to send greeting cards. Focus your cards around a specific holiday, special kind of messages (e.g. family-oriented, life wisdom, famous quotes), or displaying world travel destinations.
32. **Virtual Assistant** - become a virtual assistant using any of your skills: telephone, computer, design, transcription, typing, customer service, and many more. See [International Virtual Assistants Association](#) to get started.
33. **Your Favorite Hobby** - turn your hobby into an online business. Do what you like to do, but online while making money. Examples are movies, bear collections, books, music etc.

Revenue Sources For Your Internet Business:

- Publish an online newsletter of interest to your visitors
- Sell advertising space on your web site for products related to your web site

- Charge for access to your membership web site filled with tips, articles and useful information
- Sell classified ad space in your online newsletter
- Offer consulting services to people seeking your expertise
- Conduct teleclasses (over the phone) on the topic of interest to your target audience
- Create electronic books putting your knowledge in words, then sell them on your web site



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