

# Marketing Media & Money



3rd Q. / 2018

**9** Ways to Fire Up  
Your Follow Up

**SELL**... The Other  
4-Letter Word

**Why Your  
Story is  
Important**

**How to Publish  
Great Content  
Without Writing  
a Word**

*From Prospect to Paycheck*

**The  
Ultimate  
Event  
Planning  
Checklist**

**10** *Easy*  
**Steps to Time  
Block Your Way  
Back to Life**

*Meet...* **Jane M. Powers, Author of Speak  
With Confidence Sell with Authority**

# Let's FIRE You Up!

This quarter's issue, we're tackling a four letter word...no, not that kind of four letter word...

The word? S-E-L-L

It strikes fear into many of our hearts. The mere idea of having to "sell" ourselves or what we do. But it doesn't need to. From asking for the sale to **firing** up your follow up, and turning prospects into paychecks, we're covering it in this issue of *Marketing, Money & Media*.

Start by diving into Jane M. Power's article, **Sell: The Other 4-Letter Word**, then flip over to my best tactics for converting your connections to happy new clients in **9 Ways to Fire Up Your Follow Up**.

Then flip through our virtual pages and learn skills and strategies to power up your business:

- How to stay safe and prevent your business tech from be hijacked
- Keys to leveraging change to grow your business
- What you can learn from the psychology that powers successful startups
- The ultimate event planning checklist for a smooth, profitable event
- Your guide to writing a non-crappy book
- 10 easy steps to a scheduling method that allows you to take back your life
- How to escape the 'content treadmill' and create great content without writing a word

And more - because as always, this straight-shooting magazine goes beyond the theory and gives you the step by step nitty-gritty that gets you results!



Now, flip on over and embrace your inner salesperson! Patty "Let's Get **Fired** Up & Follow Up" Farmer, Editor *Marketing, Media & Money Magazine*

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# Marketing Media & Money

## Inside this issue...

**Marketing Tip** by Patty Farmer.....4

9 Ways to Fire Up Your Follow Up by Patty Farmer.....6-7

SELL: The Other 4 Letter Word by Jane M. Powers.....10-11

**On the Cover...**Up Close and Personal with Jane M. Powers.....12-14

**Media Tip** by Patty Farmer.....15

I'm a Speaker, Not a Blogger: How to Publish Great Content Without Writing a Word by M. Shaffer.16-17

Another Lesson From the Ranch by Jane Bradley.....18-19

Selling Change: 5 Keys to Leveraging What's New for What Matters by Kathi C. Laughman..... 20-21

The Psychology behind the Start up by Megan Davies.....22-23

Why "Your Story" is Important by Sam Newton.....24-25

10 Easy Steps to Time Block Your Way Back to Life by Michelle DeNio.....26-27

**Money Tip** by Patty Farmer.....28-29

From Prospect to Paycheck by Leasha West.....30-31

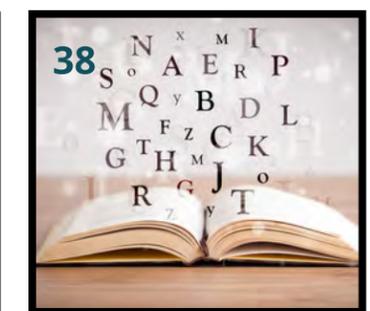
How to Prevent Your Business Tech from Being Hijacked by Jen McFarland.....32-33

The Key to Elevating Your Woman Owned Business by Lisa Schnitzer.....34-35

Taxes 2018: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly by Amanda Davis.....36-37

How to Write a Non-Crappy Book by James Ranson.....38-39

The Ultimate Event Planning Checklist by Shelly Rice.....40-43



# Marketing Tip

Consistently create video content on all your social media channels. If you're using social advertising, especially for a local or B2C market, make sure that video is part of your content marketing strategy. -patty farmer



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# 9 Ways to Fire Up Your Follow Up

*by patty farmer*

In most, if not all industries, events whether live or virtual are a great way to meet potential clients and make new business connections. However, once you have made the initial contact at an event, then what? When the event is over, everyone goes back to the cities or life they came from and to their routines. So, how do you keep connected and build that connection into a long lasting business relationship? It is all about the follow up.

I am going to share with you 10 ways that you can follow up, stay connected and build relationships after that initial networking exchange of information.

## The Top 9 Ways to Follow Up After Meeting at an Event

### #1 - Follow up with an email or a hand-written card

Just a brief email or hand-written note saying you enjoyed meeting them and be sure to make a reference to a talking point you had a conversation about; the speaker or the topic of one of the sessions. This will help continue that conversation and also remind them of who you were in case they have forgotten.

### #2 - Send or suggest a resource

In your initial follow up email or, better yet, in a later one, you can send them the link to a blog, webinar or another resource on the topic you discussed at the event. This shows them you listened, remembered and took the next step to provide additional information they may need.

### #3 - Invite for virtual coffee/phone call

If your email conversation continues, that is a great time to invite them to have a phone call, Skype or Zoom to discuss things further in a more relaxed method.

### #4 - Connect on social media sites

Everyone these days has a profile on at least one social media site. Find theirs (usually on their website or business card) and connect with them. It only takes a minute and you can learn a lot about what their likes, dislikes, online groups they frequent, books they read, and events they attend all from simply connecting with them on social media.

**#5 - Like their Business Page or join their group on LinkedIn and Facebook...** Connecting to their business page on Facebook is usually preferred for a business connection unless they specifically ask you to connect with their personal profile page. Liking their business Facebook page as well as their business Facebook page as well as their LinkedIn profile will help you keep up to date on what is happening with them in business as well as giving you additional avenues to continue building that relationship. If they moderate a Facebook group and it is a fit for your business this is a great place to connect.

### #6 - Comment on their blog or invite them to guest blog on yours

If they have a blog on their site, be sure to read and comment on it shortly after your initial meeting. Make a reference to the conversation you had at the event if it is relevant to the topic of the blog and you are adding value or credibility for them. If it is a fit, invite them to contribute to a guest post on your blog.

### #7 - Join in on a Twitterchat, Facebook live or Webinar

If they host, participate in or referenced a Twitterchat, Facebook Live or a Webinar that they like and is relevant to your business as well, connect to it and participate with comments, etc. Or, if you have one to suggest to them based on your conversation then send it to them via a tweet.

### #8 - Do an introduction

During your initial conversation did they mention a need that one of your connections could help meet? Then introduce them to each other via social media or email. Helping solve a need is a sure fire way to solidify any business relationship.

### #9 - Give a referral

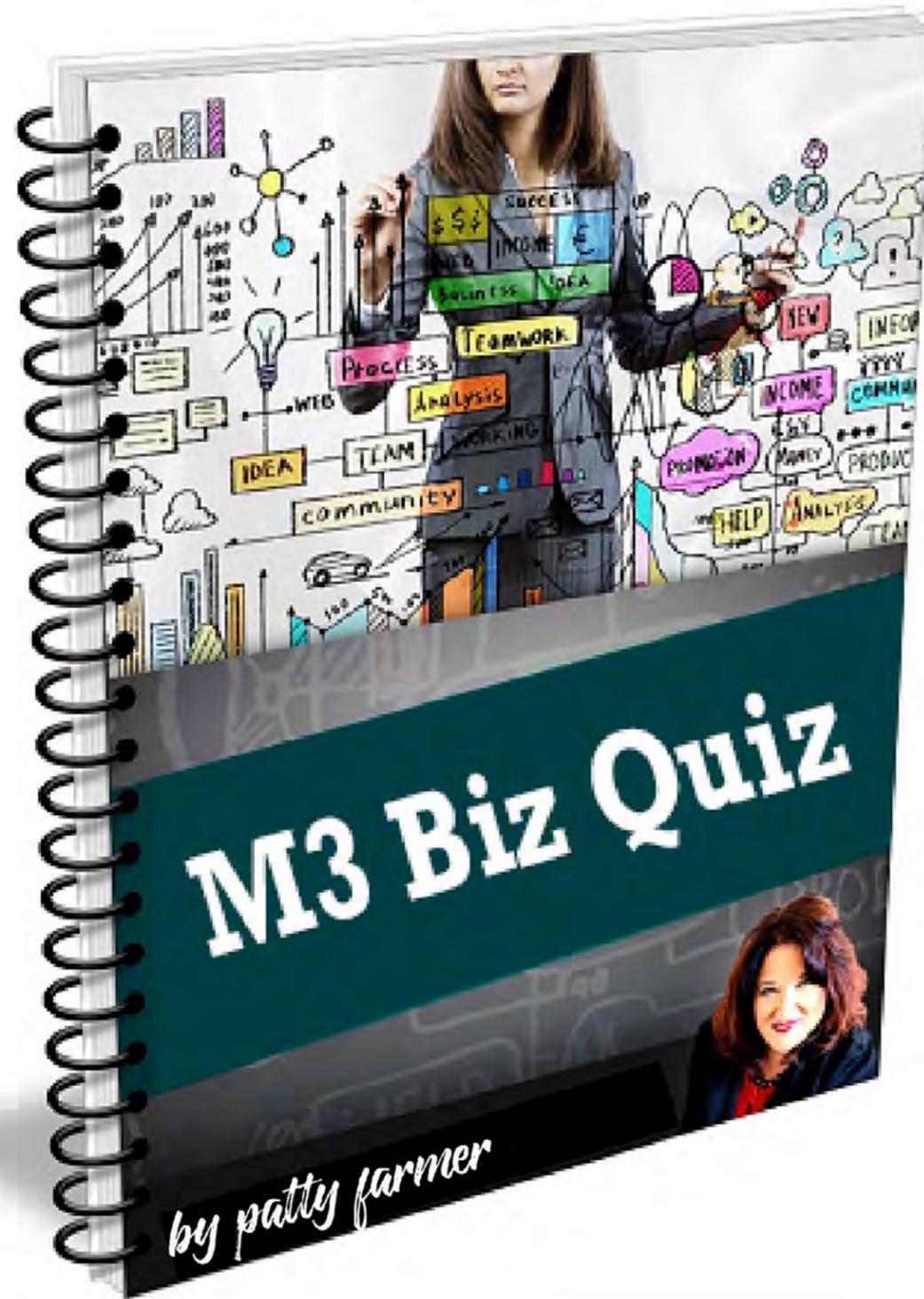
Is their product or service something that one of your connections might need or be interested in learning more about? This is another great reason to do an introduction via email or social media. You will help your new connection with a potential new customer and your previous connection by filling a need they may have. This is a definite win-win!

Following up after an initial meeting is essential in building business relationships. These 9 follow up tips and options can be used alone or in combination to solidify and grow an initial meeting into a long lasting relationship that is beneficial to both you and your connection.

“The only difference between a contact and a contract is the **R**, and the **R** stands for relationships.” ~ @PattyFarmer

**Patty Farmer** is a Marketing & Media Strategist, International Speaker, Radio Host, Event Producer, & Best Selling Author specializing in Marketing & Business Growth Strategies and works with lifestyle entrepreneurs and speakers to attract and convert their ideal clients 24/7 so they can make a bigger impact in the world, and even bigger deposits in their bank account. **Let's Connect:** [PattyFarmer.com](http://PattyFarmer.com) Facebook LinkedIn Instagram Twitter





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**I will assess 7 key areas of your business to discover exactly where you're excelling, where you need to make changes, and your next steps for business growth. -patty farmer**

*Click [HERE](#) to Listen to Patty's Podcast*

# Sell: The Other 4 Letter Word

by Jane M. Powers

Love it? Hate it? When it comes to selling, there doesn't seem to be an in-between. Closing the deal? *Love it!* Without question, we love to close deals. It's a no-brainer. The more you close, the more money you make. You can sell all day long, but if you are not closing, you are out of business. Whether you love it or hate it, you have to sell. So why not do it with authority?

Selling is the key component to everything we do in business. You need to sell every day to generate ongoing, sustainable leads and revenue. It is paramount to business growth and expansion. People who dislike selling can get frustrated and sometimes avoid selling all together. Some feel that selling is awkward, sleazy, and inauthentic. But the fact is, your success in business is directly proportional to your ability to sell: yourself, your services, and your ideas.

How do you sell with authority when you hate selling or even mildly dislike it? First, look at sales from a different perspective. Sales is about helping people. Every time you make a sale, you're helping a person experience the transformation they seek. Selling is simply offering your knowledge, expertise, and services to rescue someone from his or her problem or dilemma. Never underestimate the level of pain or frustration your ideal client is experiencing.

Powerful decisions come from information, awareness, and understanding. It is your job to make prospects aware of their pain or problem and help them clearly understand your solution. In every sales situation, I ask these three questions:

1. What is working?
2. What is not working?
3. What would you love to be working?

## It's three straightforward questions which lead you to CONNECT:

**C: Connect.** First and foremost, express appreciation of your prospects' attention. Remember, you are looking for a fit, not a sale. You are qualifying them and positioning yourself as the expert. It is a two-way conversation: they are listening for a solution and you are listening for the match. Build rapport.

**O: Open.** Help your prospects become aware of their pain or problem and what they want or need to change. Ask leading questions to help them pinpoint the problem. This is where you need to spend the most time. Demonstrating the gap between where they are and where they want to be is a service to them, because it helps them step into awareness and to make a decision.

**N: Needs.** Review their needs and assess what fits for them as a customer or client. Determine if you can help. Reflect the pain or problem, validate where they are, and entice them to see where they could be. The bridge consists of all the benefits they will reap as a result of buying from you.

*Selling with authority means making your prospects aware of the problem and bridging the gap between their pain and the solution they desire.*



**N: New Possibilities.** What is possible for your prospects? This is your opportunity to offer a vision of what could be. Help them imagine the next success they will experience when they implement your solutions and resources.

Bridge the gap between pain and desire with this transition, "I would love to introduce you to a resource that will help you with. . ." The next step is to tie the benefits back to the pain. Bring value! It's important not to disclose the price until you have a yes. Price should never be the deciding factor for the buyer to purchase your product or service. The yes must be based on the value and benefits only. A yes based on price does not build strong business relationships and it compromises loyalty. A no should be based on a genuine lack of need for what you offer, not the sales price.

*Price should never be the deciding factor for the buyer to purchase your product or service.*

**C: Coach.** Let the benefits do all the work. Tie the benefits to your prospects' pain. This will help them accept the offer. *Be prepared.* This is where objections will arise. Remember, this step is not to provide coaching to the point of relief for the prospect.

**T: Take Action.** Close the deal. Let them decide either way, yes or no. Assure them that you will support either decision. Sometimes the decision is *not now*. If so, leave the door open for a follow-up connection. If they are a yes, put them into immediate action.

CONNECT moves you through the conversation with the right focus: the buyer. If you can't solve a problem, you don't have a sale.

Love it? Hate it? Sales becomes easy and natural when you CONNECT. You will sell with authority when you listen, ask open-ended questions, and CONNECT with the utmost care for the prospect's pain and need. Be the expert and provide value in everything you do. Learn more about selling with authority at [www.yourspeakersuccesskit.com](http://www.yourspeakersuccesskit.com) where we will put into action CONNECT and other success strategies.

Using her straightforward, big-hearted style, **Jane M. Powers** guides thousands to connect, capture, and close their prospects with her CODE to Close Sales System. Entrepreneurs hire Jane to speak with confidence and sell with authority, so they can generate a sustainable sales funnel to easily close ideal clients.



# Up Close and Personal with *Jane M. Powers*

## What does success mean to you?

Success to me is walking in the world with peaceful state of mind and knowing that I have made a difference. At one time I believed success was about the houses, cars, money, and being #1. The sobering reality is that no one cares about the “stuff”. I had the “stuff” and I wasn’t happy. I had no other frame of reference. My life was about surviving, and I simply translated that into business. Today, I know there is no greater success than living in deep love and gratitude for life. Some days, I am SO successful, while others not so much and that is perfectly alright.

## What would your advice be to a brand-new speaker, business owner and/or entrepreneur?

Do not forget about what matters most in life, YOU. It is so easy to get caught up in the race to achieve the 6, 7, 8-figure business. Growing a business takes structures and support. Specialize in one thing and do that one thing so well, no one can even compare. I see so many new entrepreneurs trying to do too many things in their business. To stand out in the world, you must be YOU. Speak, sell, serve, and stand out with your own unique voice. The biggest mistake many newcomers make in the world is trying to run with the “big dogs”. Stay on the porch and become crazy successful at that ONE thing before you try and run with others.

## What was your ah ha moment that inspired you to become a speaker/entrepreneur/biz owner?

It was 1987 and I hired Glenna Salsbury to speak at an event I was hosting. I was in my 20’s and had a J.O.B. The second she hit the stage, I swore to myself, I am going to do that one day. I fell in love with the idea of speaking. I knew I had a message in me that needed to be shared. I am so grateful that I get to speak to grow my business as a speaking and sales coach. It is a win-win.

## What are some of the changes business owners/entrepreneurs, in your opinion, need to make to be successful in today's business environment?

Stop trying to do it all. In my book, *Speak with Confidence. Sell with Authority*, I dedicate an entire chapter to NOT being a copycat. There are so many people in the world trying to be and do business just like the uber successful people do. There is a huge difference between modeling and mimicking. Modeling is the process of innovating others ideas. You can duplicate systems and structures but too many are mimicking exactly someone else’s delivery, brands, or talks. Standing out requires you to step into your own genius and P.O.V (point of view). I watch “Next Food Network Star” and the winners always have a solid P.O.V. Know who you are and what you stand for in your work.



## If you could have lunch with any CEO who would it be and why?

Jeff Bezos, of course! Why? This man started with one thing, books, and achieved incredible success. He knew how to focus his time and efforts. I am always nudging myself back on track to focus my time and energy. Too often, I want to serve all my “fabulous” ideas and get distracted away from that one thing. Also, Jeff appears down to Earth and real, which is vitally important to me.

## What is your big ‘WHY’ that prevents you from giving up when times get tough?

I believe the ‘WHY’ behind my business is two-fold. One aspect of my ‘WHY’ is to help people find their voice. Speaking and selling are powerful ways to find your voice and share your truth. It is a great way to stand up for what you believe and change lives. I want people to find their voice because in their voice, I believe they find their power. Then, they are able to Speak with Confidence and Sell with Authority.

The second one is what I call the ‘WHY behind the WHY’. I grew up in a complicated family and you didn’t dare speak up or shine. I learned at a very young age to survive the system. I developed a burning desire to find my voice and go against the family system. I continue to do the work I do, so I am never silenced again. I believe everyone has a ‘WHY behind the WHY’. It is vital to your success to find the hidden motivator.

## What keeps you awake at night?

Hormones! Oh, you mean in business? Like many, I set the bar of my accomplishments pretty high. I have always been driven to achieve and finish what I start. That drive can lend itself to creating pressure and stress which runs through my mind. I learned long ago to set up disciplines around my business and life. I stop work at 6:30pm at the latest and never look at email or any form of messages after that time. If I fall off the wagon, I know my mind will have me racing into the night.

## What is the lesson that took you the longest to learn?

I believe I am a lifelong student, as they say. Every time I think I have learned the most important lesson, another one appears. BUT- if I had to pick one that I learned and am still working my way through to mastery is STOP being plagued by “comparanoia”. It is the habitual addiction to comparing yourself to others. My dear friend and mentor, Glenna Salsbury, used to tell me all the time; “You will never be less than you were yesterday, you will never be more than tomorrow, you are perfect in this day.” I know there is always someone more successful than me and I will always be more successful than another. I have learned to celebrate each day and everything I have accomplished. Do I have it perfect? Lord, NO! I continue working on it.

## What are you doing right now that you’re scared of, but you’re doing it anyway?

I am dreadfully afraid of the world of online anything, so I am launching an online product. I have been on hundreds of stages and have a very lucrative business based on my Speak to Sell model. I hate the unknown and I have little to no knowledge of the world of launching and launch buckets. I swear I thought when people asked me to “launch”, they were saying LUNCH. I was all in!

### What was the biggest obstacle, blind spot or roadblock you had to overcome?

My sense of worthiness. I have been selling for over 30 years. You name it, I can sell it. The day I started selling for myself, I was frozen. I had to discover and claim my worth in order to charge the prices I felt reflected the value I was giving. I was very clear that I would never grow my business unless I could identify and own my confidence around my worth.

### If you could go back and talk to your 25-year-old self, what would you tell yourself to do FIRST?

Stand and face your fears. Stop believing what you were told and do what you love. Fear and belief in other's judgement kept me from taking any risks. I played it safe. I got the job and bought the house. That's what "you" do. You settle for life because there is nothing better out there. CRAZY! Do not waste another minute in doubt and fear, it will stunt your success and growth. Take a risk. I was making \$43,000 and wrote a check for \$30,000 when I decided to become a coach. I didn't look back and it paid off in multiples.

### What are a few books you recommend every business owner read?

Without a doubt, a must read. . . *Speak with Confidence. Sell with Authority* by ME. I would not steer you wrong.

I love the book, *The One Thing* by Gary Keller. He talks about doing one thing by which doing that one thing, all else becomes easy.

I also love Joseph Murphy's, *Power of the Subconscious Mind* because I love mind study and the power of changing your thoughts to create results. I have studied the greats in the world of the subconscious mind and know that has resulted in my success.

### What do you love most about your business TODAY?

I love seeing the way that speaking and selling changes people's lives. One of my clients, Heidi Mount, was scared to death to step on stage. She never wanted to speak in any form but everyone kept telling her she had to in order to be successful. I worked with Heidi and her first "stage" was a podcast interview. She was terrible! At the end of the cast, she called me and said, "I sucked so bad. So bad, that I just got an \$18,000 contract!" She then went on to speak to 300 people. The money is great but more importantly, what that did for Heidi cannot be measured in the bank account. So, to answer your question, I love to see people come to life and unleash their inner "World Class Speaker".

### What's next for you?

I am thrilled to host my 3-Day Live Event, Let's Talk Impact, September 6, 7, & 8 in Phoenix AZ. I would love to invite anyone to join me at the event as my guest. Go to the top-secret guest registration at [www.letstalkimpact.com](http://www.letstalkimpact.com) I will be teaching my Speak to Profit™ formula as well as INTROmercial™ and sales techniques to help you grow your business and make a bigger difference in the world.

**GIFT:** I have revamped my Speaker Success Kit that will help you find where to go to speak and what to say to get booked. Go to [www.yourspeakersuccesskit.com](http://www.yourspeakersuccesskit.com)

# Media Tip

Try Newsjacking (the art & science of injecting your ideas into a breaking news story). When there is news in your marketplace, reporters and analysts are looking for experts to comment on the story and this is a great way to generate media coverage, get sales leads, and add new customers for free! -patty farmer



Follow Patty on Twitter @PattyFarmer

# I'm a Speaker, not a Blogger: How to Publish Great Content Without Writing a Word

by Michelle Shaeffer

Have you ever said to yourself, "I'm a speaker, not a blogger!" and then sighed in frustration looking at a blank screen? Content marketing works. But it requires content... so, check out these simple ways to publish excellent content to share, without writing a word.

Here are 3 totally legal ways to "swipe" content - with them, you can create valuable blog content for your readers in 15 minutes or less (and no cops waiting for you afterwards, just so long as you always give credit).

## Swipe It Strategy #1: Swipe Your Own Content

What do you already have that you can use as a blog post, or turn into a post with some editing?

**Written Content:** emails you've sent to your list, articles you've shared on other sites, your FAQ page, instruction sheets, forum posts, autoresponder series, ebook (for sale or free), short reports, press releases, interviews

**Video Content:** videos of you on camera, screenflows or slideshows, webinars you've presented, footage from events you've spoken at.



**Audio Content:** audio blogs, teleseminars, short audio tip series

**Social Networking Content:** Facebook fan page content or status, Facebook group posts/replies, Tweets, LinkedIn discussions

## Swipe It Strategy #2: Swipe Someone Else's Content

Be sure to only swipe and publish content from others with their permission. Many people have given permission for their content to be shared--they want you to swipe it and republish.

**For example:**

**YouTube or TED Talks** - Lots of great videos worth sharing are waiting on YouTube and TedTalks. Choose one that your readers would find value in and share it along with a few of your own thoughts.

**Ezine Articles** - Search sites like EzineArticles.com for topics or people to feature on your blog. Start by searching for your topic and you'll find lots of possible blog posts just waiting for you to share.

**Infographics and Visuals** - You can embed infographics from sites like Visual.ly or AllTop, or find slideshows to share at SlideShare.

## Swipe It Strategy #3: Spotlight!

Who do you find yourself repeatedly recommending or referencing for your audience or clients? Spotlight them on your blog. Go check out their YouTube channel or blog to see if there are videos or content they've given permission to share. Or, if they've published a book, do a quick review where you share your favorite two or three lessons or tips from the book and then encourage your blog readers to get their own copy of the book.

All of the strategies above will help you get content published to your blog - FAST - even if you're not a "blogger" and you'd rather be on stage.

**Michelle Shaeffer** is a blogger, speaker, writer, marketing consultant and human psychology junkie. She's the creator of the HookLine Dynamic app, author of *Words That Feel: The Lingo Dynamics Manifesto*, and is currently working on her book, *The Art of Actually Giving a Damn: Rise of the Empath Entrepreneur*.



# Another Lesson from the Ranch

*by Jane Bradley*

## A question we often ask ourselves...

"Do I have what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur?" In this lesson from the ranch you will find four questions that will help you will answer that question for yourself.

The mythology of the American West and the pioneers who rode out to find their fortune has captured the hearts and minds of many of us. These brave men and women were rich and poor - were well educated and were illiterate. They all had one common goal; they wanted to live out their own dreams in their own way and to write their own life stories.

What characteristics did it take? What possessed those brave souls to believe that they could make it in an unknown new world? Because I am a direct descendant of these homesteading pioneers I have spent much of my life contemplating these questions. And because I have always been a serious and successful entrepreneur I have drawn some parallels between the risk takers of old and today's business adventures.

Answering the following questions will help you know if you have the right stuff to succeed in the wild and woolly world of today's entrepreneur.

### **1. Do you have a well-defined dream and vision? Can you articulate and transform it into an action plan?**

Pioneers of old knew why they were heading out to face unknown terrors in order to build something of value for themselves and their families. They clearly knew what they wanted to do and be. Farmers, ranchers, miners, shop owners, preachers and teachers to name only a few. Each person setting out for the new world of the West had a clear vision of why they were going. They prepared for the trip; they took the necessary tools to insure their success.

### **2. Are you a dedicated problem solver with a fire in your belly to make things better?**

There were daily problems to be faced and overcome by our pioneer forefathers with very little and sometimes no outside support. This is also true for today's entrepreneurs. Can you face and overcome problems by steady-handed planning and dedication to your vision?

**3. Are you resourceful and persistent?** There were no cell phones and no local hardware stores when these early settlers set out to conquer the West. They had what they brought with them and what they could make along the way. Resourcefulness was necessary to survive. It would have been very easy to give up - to quit. Persistence is not an option for today's entrepreneurs - it is a must.



### **4. Are you a people-person willing to work with others for common goals?**

We have all seen movies of wagon trains setting out for the west. History classes were filled with the names of the trail blazers and settlers of the west. One thing they all had in common: they did not try to do it alone. They understood the value of a team, of working with others to make their trip in safety and with the added benefit of their combined efforts. If you are a loner and do not understand the value of a team then your chances for success are greatly diminished.

I own a very large black cast-iron pot. It has been repurposed into a work of art and resides in my back yard. This pot was first owned by my great-grand mother. They made the trip west together in a wagon. My pot was used for making lye soap, bathing babies, boiling water to wash clothes and to cook large quantities of pinto beans. I treasure this pot (now a work of art).

Sometimes I turn off my cell phone, leave the comfort of my climate-controlled office and go into my back yard to sit and enjoy my work of art – the black pot. I think of all the hardships endured by my entrepreneurial family and how much I have loved living the life of a serial entrepreneur.

I hope answering these four questions gives you the clarity you need and the fire in your belly to start living your dreams and writing your own story.

**Jane Bradley** - Growing up in the disappearing tradition of ranching taught Jane valuable lessons. Starting as a successful studio artist/gallery owner to, President of a pro football team playing in the NFL, to speaker and teacher, and NOW: [SMARTSPIDER.NET](http://SMARTSPIDER.NET) - An online directory for professionals and professional services. These are lessons learned from the ranch.



# Selling Change: 5 Keys to Leveraging What's New for What Matters

by Kathi C. Laughman

What business are you truly in? What are you really selling? These are questions we must ask and answer before we can fully understand the value we are bringing to the marketplace and yes, to the world.

What we see on the surface of a product catalog or price list is not the real story. What I have found from studying many different companies over my 30+ years in the supply chain industry is that what everyone is selling at the end of the day is the same. We sell change. We invite clients to make a change.

Recently I came across an article by Andy Raskin, a strategy consultant that focuses on helping companies find their true story. He shared this thought: *"The greatest pitches start by naming a change in the world."* I agree.

One of my favorite examples of this comes from TOMS. Their **One for One** purpose statement is crystal clear:

*"Through your purchases, TOMS help provide shoes, sight, water, safe birth and bullying prevention services to people in need."*

TOMS is not in the shoe business, they are in the business of changing lives and helping people in need. They are about creating change. They finance that change by selling shoes but that's not their purpose. Understanding that basic principle from the onset helps us better relate to how our message is going to be received and how we can move together with our customers and audiences into change.



Consider these 5 keys to master your own sales change-scape:

**Key #1 – Know what matters right now.** To your client, to you and to your partners in the transaction. If the change doesn't support what matters, in the end it's not going to merit the risk of change. The status quo will be fine if you don't start here. What matters right now?

**Key #2 – To be comfortable with change, we need to understand it's context. It's up to us to create a context for change.** We're the new piece in their puzzle. We must help them see how what we are bringing to the table integrates into what they have now. What part of their business will be impacted? Will it save time? Create agility to scale? What will the change we are proposing make possible for them?

**Key #3 – Never underestimate transparency.** Where are the risks? What should they weigh and balance? Where has this change morphed into something different from the initial profile for others? Those stories are invaluable for establishing trust. How are you sharing those risks?

**Key #4 – Recognize that the most essential change we are asking of them is the investment of limited resources.** Time, money, energy – all forms of capital. If they do this – what will that mean? Help them to find the trade-offs. Sometimes the return on investment is not about top line numbers, it's about the bottom line. How will competing resources turn into complimentary investments? This is another place where story lines and transparency are a proving ground.

**Key #5 – We started out with knowing what matters now. The final key is this: Know what is going to matter next.** This is where your applied expertise matters. You are watching the horizon for them. By helping position your customer to their next, you move into your own. It also helps to address the inevitable question of why now.

How will you know if you've fully embraced this approach for moving your clients into what's new for what matters?

Your vision is about what you are committed to making possible and real in the world. What are you changing?

You represent the change you bring into every interaction and conversation with clients. You engage them so that they recognize the value of that mission. They see how it impacts them. They recognize opportunities for their own work.

What business are you truly in? What are you really selling? Start there.

Most importantly, as Jack Welch, author and former CEO of General Electric tells us: *"Change before you have to."* Create a new model that makes the existing one obsolete. Then leverage what's new for what matters. For yourself and those you serve.

**Kathi C. Laughman** specializes in creating value from the unexpected. She is the founder of The Mackenzie Circle LLC where she guides business leaders to the questions that leverage resilience for achieving unparalleled results. Kathi is also an inspirational speaker, best-selling author, and member of the Forbes Coaches Council.



# The Psychology Behind the Start-up *by Megan Davies*

Too often in business we get caught up in crippling battles within our own minds. These battles within our minds, our 'inner psyche' are what will inevitably dictate whether we succeed or fail. We constantly hold ourselves back, whether we realize it or not, by Comparing Ourselves... Suffering from FOMO (Fear of missing out) ... Fear of not doing enough... Fear we're not enough... Thinking there is someone better... smarter... more talented... Fear that no matter how hard you try, it just might not ever be good enough.

We're constantly inundated with information and constant pop-ups showing these sudden 'overnight successes'... You know, the ones who show up in your news feed once and suddenly you see them everywhere and can't help but thinking that's where you should be or wishing that's where you were.

But here's the thing we not be taking into consideration. When we work ourselves up into a tizzy because we're not there – YET, are we stopping to consider how they got there?

You didn't see the decade long (maybe longer) struggle they lived through trying to one day 'make it big' and the battles they endured leading up to it. In almost every one of these 'success stories' you see, they have all had to overcome these primary psychological factors to gain momentum and really grow their start-ups.

**They are Mindful of their Mindset** – This should go without saying, but to me, it has been the most critical. There are days I remember back to starting my first successful business, when my well meaning friends and family politely tried to tell me – “You should really give it a rest” “Are you sure that's what you really want to do” “there's already people doing the same thing, and they've been around a lot longer...” or my personal favorites – “Isn't it a little more practical for you to just get a job, there's a lot more security”... or... “You have kids at home, you should be thinking of them” ... Well, my friends, in starting my first successful business, this is exactly what motivated me to keep going. I developed such a crystal-clear clarity in my mind that I could see success and financial freedom easily within my grasp and knew my children would be the core reason I couldn't let myself fail. It was that solid belief in myself, and knowing that there was no way that I could fail that kept me going on the difficult days... The days I wanted to throw in the towel and give up. And it is your mindset that will either raise you up to the top or allow you to sink. Get clear in your mindset and on your why and you have already won half the battle. Here's my biggest piece of advice here – no matter what – if you want it – DON'T EVER GIVE UP!

**They Have Learned How to Forget their Past** - We have all experienced failures. I am certainly no exception... It's no accident that I mentioned, in the mindset piece above, regarding my first 'successful business' because up until that point, I had failed, More than a couple times. I held myself back from re-entering the market as an entrepreneur until I finally let go of my past. I changed my thinking and determined failures are never losses... they are wins. Every failure teaches you... it builds you up and makes you stronger and wiser than you were. Don't ever take a failure as the end... take it as the stepping stone you needed to achieve your greatest win and then -- Go for it! Because you have the strength within you to be so much more, you just have to decide to do it!



**They Stop trying to be PERFECT!** No matter what happens... No matter how many i's you dot or t's you cross, something in your business will always go wrong. Don't get hung up on getting every single detail mastered before you launch. No matter how perfect your plans are something will always go wrong. Launch something now and adapt to changes in the market so you can come out on top and WIN! Not having every single item perfect will allow you to quickly change and adapt to what your market really needs so you quickly become the 'GO TO' everyone wants to be working with.

**They Understand the importance of The Compound Effect** – Look, Rome wasn't build in a day and neither is your business. It takes small daily goals and routines that help propel you forward. There are no gimmicks. No magic bullet. *It is small actionable steps EVERYDAY that keep you on the path to success.*

**They Build Amazing Relationships** - Relationships in business, and life, are what will always set you apart from being 'just another business' to being 'THE Business' everyone wants to work with. People don't do business with businesses they do business with people. Build your relationships and you will always grow your business. Do not ever underestimate the points above. Success is within your reach, master the items above and you will win every time. You got this!

**Megan Davies** is a heart-centered serial entrepreneur who has created and grown multiple, multi-six figure businesses. Working with brands like Disney, Paramount, NASA, Coca-Cola, Shell and many more, she offers more than 15 years of experience-based knowledge in Sales, Marketing & Business helping YOU build a business and a life you love.



## Why “Your Story” is Important *by Sam Newton*

I didn't give it much thought as a child when my Mom and Dad would tell me how they had to walk a mile in the hills with holes in their shoes to get to the school house when I would complain about having to get up and go myself. There was a story for every question and an answer was wrapped around a story as the reason I should or shouldn't do something.

The people who impressed me the most were the ones that could captivate me with a story. Going to church as a boy was a way to get out of the house and take in a tale of warning or praise. We all have been taught in the same way our ancestors were, with story. What about teachers in school that put you to sleep or work presentations delivered by the boring slide readers who would make you want to escape or look into your phone? Now more than ever it is story that is shaping messages in business, personal advancement, and on-line. It takes more than just an announcement of a service or product to get any attention or traction. Just going through a list of features and benefits is boring and does not get any attention without the attachment of emotion. How do we attach emotion? Through personal story you design the perception you want to project on the ownership of that service, product or the benefits of working with you.

So why is your personal story important now? It has always been a part of who you are and has been formed by your experiences and environments you have lived in. Your story is the creation of your own mind and has been edited and rewritten many times. How you decide to tell your stories and to whom about life, experience, views or to apply persuasion is changing at light speed. You no longer have to set a meeting or schedule a phone call or send a letter. Much of today's information sharing is shallow and without much emotion. The text message, email or post is usually light on content and is more of a statement or reaction.

With so many of these lifeless statements and sharing of feelings we become numb to the purpose or impact of them. You are blasted by thousands of messages, impressions, pictures and pitches every single day. What does it take for one of the messages or statements to stick? Your personal story!

Who are you targeting with all of your communication, posts, tweets, and statements? Are you telling stories that could help or hinder you the next time you need to influence others? Will your on-line story match with who you are at the meeting or while visiting a client? The story you are telling needs to be managed, groomed, and designed to be congruent with who you are and what you want to achieve in life and business. I learned having worked in the broadcasting industry as a radio personality, manager, talent coach, and commercial production specialist that getting to the point with emotion is key.

According to a 2015 study by Microsoft, the average human attention span has fallen from 12 seconds in 2000 to below 8 seconds today. You have about 8 seconds to capture someone's attention and try to convert or convince them to continue listening to “Your Story”. Just reporting facts or opinions without it tied to a personal story about you, your cause or product is not only hard to stick but even harder to gain a buy-in. When I start telling you my story you naturally start thinking of your own. If I can identify a need and how I was able to answer that need you will start to identify your need and if my message is going to be accepted or rejected.



What is holding you back from telling your story is that you have devalued it. You think no one would be interested in your life experience or that it was boring. You could not be further from the truth. While you are holding that screen that has reduced your attention span you are constantly looking for stimulation. Your story can be the one event that pushed you to take action or make a change in your life. Your story is needed to persuade others to do the same. Without your personal account to why we should take action the message is lost. Your story is important to show your expertise in your profession. Your story is the proof you know what you're talking about and that your point is worthy of thought.

Decide to share and develop your skills with organizations like Toastmasters, The National Speakers Association, or a communication coach. Accept the fact that your own experiences are valuable and by building the skills to share them you will be able to grow professionally and personally. It's the moment you discovered what works or how you overcame a low point in your life that leads you to help others.

**Sam Newton** is a radio broadcaster, Distinguished Toastmaster, and entrepreneur, using his voice for over thirty years to share his messages all over the world. As a voice artist, communication coach and public speaker, Sam breaks down barriers through the use of personal story to define and promote brands.  
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# 10 Easy Steps to Time Block Your Way Back to Life

by Michelle DeNio

Time Blocking your schedule for the week will not only keep you more on task, but it will increase your productivity and get you out of the office and back to life faster. Instead of a never-ending “to-do” list, you are setting aside “blocks” of time to complete certain tasks. Each block is extremely focused and task oriented.

**Here are 10 easy steps to help you get started.**

**#1- Schedule Time to Time Block** - This one is self-explanatory. If you don't take the time to sit down and organize your list of “must-do's into time blocks,” it is easy to get overwhelmed with everything on your plate. Putting tasks into time blocks helps you stay in control of your schedule.

**#2-Use an Online Calendar/App** - Google Calendar is an easy way to do this. However, find one that works for you. The online calendar holds you accountable because it is always with you, is easy to reference, and can even be shared with others.

**#3-Schedule Your Most Important Tasks for When You Are Most Productive** - Everyone has a peak time when they know they are most productive. Take advantage of your personal peak times by scheduling high priority tasks for these hours and leave the simple tasks for your slower times.

**#4-Set Notifications/Reminders** - Here's another reason the online calendar is extremely helpful. Setting notifications and reminders will ensure you move to the next task when the time is allotted. If you time block an entire day in the office, it is easy to lose track of time and work on something much longer than planned or get distracted.

**#5-Make a List and Include Details** - If you are time blocking several days/weeks in advance, this is especially crucial. For example, if you block 2 hours to complete a new product launch, make a list inside of that time block with everything you will need to complete that task; materials, electronic files, phone numbers, emails, etc. The more detail you can have in your time blocks, the more efficiently you will be able to work.

**#6-Color Code your Blocks** - Create a schedule of colors for different types of events and tasks. You can color the entire block or just color code the titles, but this will give you a good visual of which tasks you should be working on and help you decide if you need more/less time for anything. Example; Green=Money Making activities (prospecting, client calls, follow up); Purple = Personal Appointments; Orange=Office/Admin Related Tasks (bookkeeping, emails, content creation)

## #7-Schedule Breaks/Downtime -

You do not need to block every minute of your calendar. Schedule 15-minute breaks after each block before you move on to the next one. Color code these areas grey or black so nothing can be put in these times. Schedule downtime for yourself to exercise, stretch, refill your water, etc. Don't neglect self-care.



**#8-Get Rid of Distractions** - Turn your phone to Do Not Disturb, silent, and turn your notifications off. It has been proven that the distractions from technology are killing our productivity. You do not need to answer every email the second it arrives, nor do you need to be on social media all day. Remove as many distractions as possible.

**#9-Set Boundaries** - Do not let your schedule control you. Set boundaries. Set your “work” hours based on your most productive times, family needs, etc and stay on task during those times. Schedule days off that you do not block any time for client appointments or work activities.

**#10-Be Flexible** - Life happens! Emergencies come up; deadlines arise. You must expect some unpredictability in your time blocks. You may have a whole day scheduled and get a call that you need to go pick up your sick child from school, or you may schedule one hour for a client call and two hours later, the call ends. You don't want to time block every minute of your week - leave time open for when things “pop up”.

Your schedule and calendar will never be perfect, but you can help yourself out by having a plan put in place and do your best to stick to it. When you do all the above steps, you will quickly see that as the weeks go on, you will need to schedule less and less time for certain activities and tasks. You will be more productive in less time, giving you more time to get back to your life doing what you love and not feeling overwhelmed by your never ending “to-do” list.

**Michelle DeNio** is a Business Strategist who works with entrepreneurs and business owners to create profitable strategies and systems to help them build their bottom line.

She looks at your business from all angles to develop a strategy custom designed for you and your business.

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Create visual content that you can use to promote your core content on social media with visual storytelling. With so much content out there, it's important to create visuals that catch attention and encourage your followers to make a decision and take action. - patty farmer



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# From Prospect to Paycheck

by Leasha West

Call me “old school” but all the digital conveniences have not yet taken over selling... it’s still a human-to-human process. And it’s going to stay that way for a while. With the rise of automation, relationship selling has taken a back seat; however, I believe we’ve swung the pendulum a little too far and have virtually forgotten about the importance of human relationships in selling.

Over the last ten years, there’s been momentous diversion to the automation, metrics, and the mechanics of selling rather than preserving the softer side of sales - the “relationship” with the buyer. Keep in mind, relationship selling is powered by the fundamentals: building a rapport, earning a buyer’s trust, understanding their needs and wants and providing old-fashioned customer service. When I refer to ‘old-fashioned customer service’, this doesn’t mean sending a 7-touch email cadence or following them on Twitter, but genuinely connecting on a human level.

According to the *State of Sales Survey* conducted by LinkedIn in 2017, the #1 factor in making a purchase was TRUST in the salesperson. That’s right, it wasn’t the product, price or the company that determined the sale - but trust. Remember, consumers have been burned by dealing with the snakes and fakes of society. Due to their past experiences, it’s an uphill battle to gain their trust. On the seller’s side, LOYALTY is the secret ingredient for establishing a devoted clientele. So why aren’t we focused on building relationships? Let’s swing the pendulum back and humanize the sales repertoire and watch the softer side of sales catapult your bottom line.

## To cultivate trust, here are 3 actions to help you connect:

**1. Ditch the script.** Opt instead for a natural conversation instead of the rehearsed pitch. People quickly recognize canned responses and memorized cues which immediately label you as disingenuous. Relax, your authenticity will be refreshing.

**2. Find commonality.** Think about the last time you talked to a stranger and learned that you had a similar background or shared experience. Didn’t you automatically trust them, even though you knew nothing about that person? Affinity breeds likeness and once that happens - down go the defenses.

**3. Remember the remarkable.** Actively listen and make a point of remembering and recording important parts of your conversations. Making references in future interactions will demonstrate that you pay attention and boost the trust-o-meter.

Bottom line, trust isn’t being handed out like it used to, you must work at earning every ounce of it. Armed with these trust hacks, go back to the basics and practice relationship selling. Avoid the smallest hint of deception, incompetence or malfeasance, or you’ll be banished from your prospect forever.

Now for the best part. The most effective strategy for building a loyal clientele is to harness the power of exclusivity by becoming highly selective regarding the clients with whom you choose to work. As a result, you’ll quickly discover the psychological phenomenon of covert persuasion when someone wants to feel part of a *selective* and *exclusive* group.



Why do people want to belong to a private club? Fancy words like elite, preferred or platinum that enhance loyalty through programs with special privileges? Or clubs that offer *genuine* exclusivity - the ones that only admit members of a socially restricted group that offer the ultimate luxury, privacy and prestige? Despite defying the limits of political correctness, these clubs succeed in creating an aura so alluring that people line up and wait for extended periods to join and pay exorbitant membership dues. Also noteworthy is that such clubs grow their membership strictly from referrals. The underlying motivation of these respective members is that - people want to feel special! If you work with everyone, no one feels special. Be exclusive!

So how do you generate the same appeal that the world’s private clubs do? Allow me to walk you through my personal process of client selection and how you can begin crafting your own exclusivity protocol to attract your ideal clients.

At my firm, during our first meeting with a prospect, we get acquainted and conduct a 4 Key Test to determine if it makes sense for us to work together.

- 1. Chemistry Test:** As a rule, I don’t work with people I don’t like, and you shouldn’t either. Decide if you have the chemistry to work together for the long run.
- 2. Goal Test:** Ask questions about their goals. Are they achievable? If not, I would rather not help them fail.
- 3. Worth Test:** Prospects must meet certain income and asset criteria.
- 4. Value Test:** If I can’t add value to what they’re already doing, there’s no reason to make any changes.

Shifting to an exclusivity approach provides a framework for lasting client loyalty, an endless supply of referrals and puts you in demand. Trust me on that.

**Leasha West** is the CEO of West Insurance & Financial Group, a Marine Corps Veteran and member of Forbes Finance Council.

As an International Speaker and best-selling author, she is recognized as one of the nation's leading experts in retirement planning and insurance. Connect with Leasha: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)



# How to Prevent Your Business Tech from Being Hijacked

by Jen McFarland

I work with powerful women. Women who own 6-figure businesses. Women who are decisive professionals steeped in expertise. They take action. They get more done in a day than some companies do in a week. Until they talk to me. I ask a simple question: can you tell me about the technology tools and apps supporting your business?



The color drains from their cheeks. They fall silent. Some get physically smaller and closed off. What follows is an exasperated litany of issues, frustrations, and confusion. Utter disempowerment. Other emotions I witness include anger, frustration, and a complete disconnection from the technology supporting my client's business.

These emotional responses toward technology are a recipe for disaster. It puts the business (and the business owner) at risk of having their technology hijacked. There's nothing worse than realizing you can't run your business because of a dispute with a tech provider.

## Warning Signs Your Business Technology Might Be at Risk of a Hijacking

**1. Mindset** - Fight those inner gremlins that tell you-you're not the boss of your business tech projects.

When you get a haircut, I hope you take the initiative to say to the stylist "No way!" when they try to sell you on a purple Mohawk (unless that's what you want). When you get your house painted, I doubt you let the painter choose the color. You're the boss. You're paying for a service to support your products and services. You hold all the cards. When you're hiring someone to provide technology services the number one thing you need to look for is whether you can talk to the person.

If you don't understand what they're talking about during the preliminary screening that's a bad sign. Great tech professionals listen, and they make it their business to provide clear communication. Don't correctly (so you know what to look for).

**2. Plan** - Keep your business vision and mission up to date. Be clear about your business trajectory over the next 3 to 5 year period.

Then ask a lot of questions about whether the technology you're using today supports your long-term goals. Why will everything work? Why not? What will it cost to change? What am I giving up if you decide against making changes?

When you know where you are today, it will guide you to make informed future decisions, help you create a budget, and map out milestones for when you need to make a change. You prioritize your goals. Prioritize your tech projects to align with your business goals.

**3. Accountability** - Hold your service providers accountable, so you know at a high-level what's going on.

## Here's what to ask from your service providers:

- A list of the programs used, costs, and primary use of the program.
- Documentation to support program uses, including signs that something may not be operating correctly (so you know what to look for).
- Resources for documenting processes: [Funnelytics](#) is a free program your provider can use for mapping out your sales funnels; free versions of Trello and Asana work well for mapping out processes. Be sure you are the one who opens these accounts - then give your providers access to add their procedures.

## 4. Account Ownership

Make sure that you own the tech accounts. Your website is a great place to start. You might be thinking, no way, my best friend created my site, I've got this covered. During my work, I've seen a few nightmare scenarios. Where things were great until one day it wasn't so great anymore.

In one case, a client lost her domain, email, and website – all her blog posts, contacts, everything – because the developer who owned all her accounts got angry and stopped communicating. A hijacked website can kill a business. I think they're still in court. And this was a friend. Domain companies look at who owns the domain. They don't care if you let your service provider buy it for you. They care about who pays the bills and what name is listed. Period.

## Here are the top signs that you have account ownership:

- You pay the bills directly & You have administrative account access
- You know the passwords
- Your service agreement allows you to change programs/platforms, work with any other provider, and details what you do (and don't own)

## 5. Security

 - Protect your website and all company data

Use security software on your site (e.g., Sucuri, SiteLock, CloudFlare). Make sure business information is backed up in case of a computer failure (e.g., CrashPlan, BackBlaze, Carbonite).

Use password protection and management to secure your accounts (e.g., LastPass, Dashlane, 1Password) & use unique passwords for each account. You've got this. Go forth, lead, and protect your digital assets.

**Jen McFarland** is a technology strategist and project turnaround artist. Her company, Foster Growth, helps businesses make better technology decisions. Her superpowers are listening, evaluating problems, and finding direct, simple solutions. Jen's approach delivers substantial results like 250% increases in web traffic and a 98% reduction in data entry. <https://fostergrowth.tech>



# The Key to Elevating Your Woman Owned Business

by Lisa Schnitzer



Attention women owned businesses ...choosing to apply for certification through a national council can give you a big step up in elevating your business. If you qualify for the Women Owned Business Certification I urge you to check out several state and national certifications that women owned businesses can become certified in. Since I have been in business I have become very familiar with the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) which is a non-profit organization (the largest certifier) located in strategic areas around the country, whose certification also links to the Women Owned Small Business federal contracting program. Those who qualify, can apply for an additional certification if they are minority owned. These options for showcasing your business as a woman owned entity are not widely discussed, but believe me, this is a winner's circle you need to be in! The logos you are allowed to use after certification are identifiers that cause people to look and think twice about your special business status.

The value from obtaining one of these certifications can change and expose a business to amazing contacts and opportunities on local and national levels. The process can take several months but is worth the detail involved to become certified. There is a lot of paperwork including financial information and business structure documentation that needs to be gathered, organized and then filed through an online portal.

The vetting process is thorough and detailed because they are asking questions to ascertain that your business is viable and documented. There is no judgment on profitability in this process. Most certifications require annual renewals, which are much less time intensive. Being in the database is only the beginning of the connections that can be made. The Women's Business Councils are dedicated to helping promote the businesses that are vetted, and one of the best advantages of going through this process is meeting the corporate partners who are involved.

Just about any major corporation you can think of, is a corporate member through national certifications. Most large corporations have programs to allot a certain amount of business to women and minority owned businesses. Their link to the certification Council links you back when you are certified and are in their database.

If your product or service needs large exposure with major companies, this is an amazing way to jump into the bidding process. Not to mention that networking amongst your fellow certified women owned businesses is another strong connection to success in commerce. These smart, savvy business owners want to do business with each other. The more involved you want to be in the committees, local and national sessions, the more exposure your company will get. Major corporations and the government trust these governing bodies who go through and painstakingly process your applications, making sure you are who you say you are, and you do what you say you do.

The ability to collaborate with other women you meet is a bonus to being creative in how your business serves other member businesses. Local, regional and national meeting arenas open endless opportunities for meeting the right partners. There are educational programs that are available as well. Opportunities exist in every format.

If government contracts are what whets your appetite, this gives you a leg up in the bidding arena. The potential for bidding on government jobs could be what changes the trajectory of your business. If you want to be "seen", as in your online presence in the database, this can call attention to your business during searches for the right businesses to fill their requests.

If the idea sounds exciting, but the process sounds scary, my company can step in and take the lead. As a business consultant, I offer my service to women who qualify and want to proceed with the process. My goal is to carefully and thoroughly navigate these steps for you to completion of the certification application. Details are important in this process and details are my passion. I recognize the importance of this very prestigious certification for your company. You can find me at [www.InGoodHandsTx.com](http://www.InGoodHandsTx.com).

**Lisa Schnitzer** is a mobile office manager and business consultant in Austin, Texas. Her expertise in restoring efficiency to your office and workflow projects is her passion. Whether your business is a start-up, or in growth mode, she drills down to the core of what needs to be done and implements a solution.  
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# Taxes 2018: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly by Amanda Davis

The new tax reform bill is now law, and taxpayers can expect a lot of changes to take place in 2018. As with most things in life, there is good, there is bad, and with this tax bill there is even some ugly. Let's dive in.

## In the "Good" category we have:

**Increased standard deduction.** This deduction has been increased by almost double for all categories of filers. If you normally do not itemize your deductions (file Schedule A), then this is a good thing.

**Increased Child Tax Credit.** This credit has been increased to \$2,000 per qualified child and raises the income limits from \$75k to \$200k for taxpayers filing single and from \$110k to \$400k for taxpayers filing jointly. For taxpayers with qualifying children, this is a good change.

Many small businesses that file as pass-through (including Sole Proprietorships, Partnerships, LLC's, and S-Corporations) may be eligible to deduct up to 20% of their qualified business income. There are some income and business type limitations for this deduction, but overall this is one of the more promising changes to come out of the new law.

## In the "Bad" category we have:

**No more personal exemptions.** The biggest move that the tax reform bill made was to take away personal exemptions, which generally allowed taxpayers to reduce their taxable income by \$4,050 per person. Many policymakers argued that the personal exemption was essentially merged into the standard deduction, but this may not be large enough to compensate for the loss of the personal exemptions for all taxpayers.

**New tax brackets.** This is not bad per se, in fact it is designed to simplify taxes. We added this to the bad category because it is something you need to pay attention to. If you are employed then this is something you may want to act on, if you have not done so already. There are new withholding forms (W-4) to update for your paycheck. Be sure you fill out a new form and that your company has updated their payroll system for the new laws. If you work for a larger company, then this was likely done earlier in the year. If you work for a smaller business, then it would be good to have that conversation with your employer.

Itemized deductions have some major changes to consider. Those changes include but are not limited to the following:

- Mortgage interest deduction is limited to the amount of interest paid towards \$750k of principal indebtedness. This was reduced from \$1m under the old law. This means that if you buy a home for more than \$750k then not all of the interest you pay during the year is deductible. This is on new home purchases, taxpayers that have an existing mortgage over \$750k & below \$1m will be grandfathered in under the old law.
- Most casualty and theft losses will no longer be deductible.
- Tax preparation fees will no longer be deductible
- Moving deductions will no longer be deductible.

## In the "Ugly" category we have:

**Alimony payments made under divorce agreements executed after December 31, 2018 will no longer be deductible under the new law.** Conversely, recipients of the same alimony payments will no longer have to include them in taxable income.



The meals and entertainment deduction have significant changes. To break it down for you, in 2018 and going forward entertainment expenses are no longer deductible. Meals, however, are up for debate. Historically meals were lumped in with entertainment expenses and were 50% deductible for income tax purposes. Under the new law this may be eliminated along with the entertainment deduction. Many professionals do subscribe to a different school of thought, that meals will still be allowed at a 50% deduction. We may not have a definitive answer until the 2018 tax filings have begun. Speak with your tax professional to learn more.

Home office deduction for employees is eliminated for 2018. If you use your home office to work for your employer, you will lose that deduction under the 2018 law. This could be significant for many taxpayers. This is yet another eliminated benefit to the taxpayer that was designed to be absorbed under the increased standard deduction. If you are self-employed then the home office deduction will still be available to you under the new law.

Considering all the changes to the tax law, it makes sense to schedule some time to speak with your tax professional before year end about your upcoming tax position. Ask them if there is anything you can do to reduce your taxes owed or even possibly increase any refund you may be expecting. At the very least you will better understand the outcome that awaits you next Tax Day.

At Business Solutions by Design we're thrilled to assist you and your creative business, non-profit organizations and small business with your accounting and financial needs. Owner & founder **Amanda Davis**, an active and engaging community member, avid small business advocate and canine aficionado. She brings an impressive 9 years of professional tax, bookkeeping, and accounting experience.



# How to Write a Non-Crappy Book *by James M. Ranson*

If you're an entrepreneur, business owner, industry expert or other thought leader, you probably know the benefits of writing a book: broader brand visibility, bigger email lists, more speaking and consulting gigs, better client acquisition, wider media exposure...the list goes on.



But there's a catch..

A book *can* do all those things and more for your business...if it's a high-quality book that your audience wants to read. But if it's a crappy book that doesn't give that audience much value, the very readers you want to embrace it will toss it in the trash.

And while many would-be business authors would love to write a book just to have one, far fewer are willing to put in the effort to write one that will stand out above the marketplace of mediocrity.

Writing a book is much more complex than simply sitting down to type out a hundred pages of text. It takes self-awareness, preparation, dedication, and focus, not to mention time and money. If you're ready to put all those things into it, you'll likely write a book you can leverage to grow and sustain your business for decades to come. If not, you'll get a flash in the pan at best.

So, if you think writing a book might be a good move for your business, start by asking yourself the following questions.

## **Am I committed to writing a book I'm proud of?**

The moment you decide that writing a book you're proud of is priority one, everything shifts. You stop being in a hurry. You stop cutting corners to save money. You stop getting distracted. And you stop making excuses. With this commitment, your book goes from a throwaway project to a foundational business asset.

## **Why does this book need to exist?**

What will this book do for people that other books don't already do? How will it change your audience's lives? What message does it have that your readers need to hear? How is that message distinct from other messages in your industry? What story do you burn to tell your readers, and how will that story benefit them? If your book doesn't have a clear reason to exist (beyond "I want to write this!"), don't write it.

## **What do I want this book to do for my business?**

A book you'll use to grow your email list is not the same as a book you'll use to close sales or a book you'll sell from the stage. Even if they're on the same topic, those are three different books with three different writing approaches. Knowing what you want the book to do for you will determine what kind of book you write. Not knowing will lead to a haphazard book that tries to do everything and accomplishes nothing.

## **Who is this book for?**

If you don't know who you're talking to, you'll never get those people to do what you want. Get super clear on who your audience is, then find ways to write about your expertise that eases that audience's pain. (Pro tip: also figure out who your book *isn't* for—and don't be afraid to politely alienate those people. The more people you aren't for, the more the people you *are* for will love you.)

## **What right do I have to write this book?**

Authority comes from experience and research. So, to write a book about something, you either need years of experience in that area or to have done exhaustive research on it. Preferably both. And let's be clear: the authority must come first. Writing the book doesn't give it to you, having it gives you the right to write the book.

## **Is my business ready for a book?**

A book is not a shortcut out of survival mode. If you're working 50-60 hours a week and making under \$5,000/month, don't write a book. At best, you'll cut all kinds of corners and write a crappy book that doesn't help your business. At worst, the business will collapse while you're trying to write. Wait until you're working 30-40 hours and making \$10,000+/month. Your future business will thank you.

## **Who will help me make this book the best it can be?**

Simply being good at running your business doesn't make you good at writing a book about your business. Don't try to do it alone. At the very least, you need the best editor you can afford. A good cover designer and formatter is also vital (*never* make your own cover). A book coach, ghostwriter, or publishing specialist may also be helpful. If you aren't willing to plan and budget for working with these professionals, don't write a book.

Asking yourself questions like these will make the difference between writing a crappy book that hurts

**James M. Ranson**, aka The Master Wordsmith, is a Wall-Street-Journal-bestselling editor, book coach and ghostwriter who has helped over 200 entrepreneurs and thought leaders grow their businesses by writing high-quality books. For exclusive previews of his upcoming book *Don't Write A Crappy Book!*



## The Ultimate Event Planning Checklist

by Shelly Rice

The key to producing a successful and profitable business event is all about the planning and good planning starts with a detailed checklist of things to do. Even the "best event idea in the world" will fail, if it's not well planned.

**Here's how to create YOUR personalized Ultimate Event Planning Checklist...**

**Pre-Planning:** This first step may sound a bit archaic with all of the technology at our fingertips but technology is no match for your imagination or your dreams. I suggest scheduling a couple of uninterrupted hours with yourself, a pad of paper and pen. This means, NO phones, NO internet, NO music, NO kids, NO spouse, NO friends, NO TV, NO distractions what-so-ever.

The next step is fun...lean back and close your eyes...Imagine it's the day of your event. What does the room look like? Who's in the room and how many people are there? Are they dressed in casual or business attire? What are you wearing? Are your attendees sitting classroom style, at round tables or are they standing and networking? Are there vendors tables? Are there sponsors in the room? Is there music? Who's managing the event? Is there a reception area? Is there food or a beverage station? Are there speakers? If so, what are they talking about? What is the purpose of this event? Is it a one-day, two-day or three-day event? What types of activities are happening? Dream big, dream in color and do not limit yourself.

Now, open your eyes it's time to turn your dreams into a plan of action. Ask yourself questions about your pending event and answer the questions in as much detail as possible, without editing yourself. Do not worry about putting your questions & answers in order, you can edit later.

### Sample Q & A:

- **What is my ultimate goal/purpose for hosting this event?** *New Clients? Exposure? Connections? Money? Status? Product Launch? Book Signing?*
- **When do I want to host the event?** **HOT TIP-** *If you think you need 3 months of planning, double that - give yourself 6 months. You will thank me for this later!*
- **Where will it take place, locally or in a destination city and what are my venue options?** *Hotel, banquet hall, museum, mansion, local landmark, retreat facility, the beach, a private venue, conference center, restaurant, etc.* **HOT TIP-** *www.Cvent.com is a great resource for finding venues.*
- **Who is this event for? Who is my ideal prospect? What do I want my attendees to gain/benefit from attending.**
- **What is my ideal duration of the event?** *Half day, full day, two days, three days, a week?*

Who?



What?



Where?



Why?



When?



How?



- **Who are my potential sponsors, speakers, vendors, staff, partners, collaborators, etc?**
- **Money? What is my budget? How much do I want to profit from the event?**

**Who is my competition? What other events are taking place the day, week and month of my event? HOT TIP-** Before you decide on a date, check community calendars, newspapers, social media calendars, Eventbrite.com, Facebook events, local chambers and calendars of local, established event planners to make sure you're not in competition with any local major happenings.

Continue to ask yourself, who, what, where, why, when and how about every aspect of the event and once you're out of questions, it's time to plan your checklist. Take all of your notes and start putting things into order of what you need to do and when you want them done by. The more time you give yourself, the better. Keep in mind as you build your list and your plan your event, things will change, you will think of new ideas, collaborators may have suggestions or contributions and you may want to add/omit things. That's okay! Be flexible, embrace change and keep a good attitude.

With proper planning, you can produce a successful and profitable live business event and fill a room with dozens, hundreds and even thousands of ideal prospects. A successful event can literally catapult your business to new levels, increase your income bracket and elevate your status in the business world.

**For fun, let's pretend you're in the fashion industry and you want to host an event..here's what your ultimate checklist might look like:**

### 6-8 Months Before - Your list...

**Define your event goal and purpose:** **My goal** is to produce a successful and profitable conference for women in the fashion industry. This will be a 2 1/2 day conference, starting with a mixer on Friday night and ending on Sunday afternoon with a fashion show featuring the latest trends and styles. I'm going to host this in Los Angeles at a high-end hotel. I plan to have 200 attendees. My prospects are women who make \$100K+ a year. They are professional stylists, image consultants, specialty boutique owners, salon owners, spa owners and designers.

## 6-8 Months Before Continued

The event will feature industry expert speakers & business-growth breakout sessions. Potential topics: new styles & trends, seasonal colors, classic fashion, accessories, hot, new designers, marketing, branding, fashion-week, increasing sales, publicity, online sales, blogging, fashion shows, pop-up sales, customer retention, list building, etc...

- Research locations & pick a venue (Valet, shuttle & under \$200 a night)
- For a complimentary copy of my Ultimate Checklist for Finding the Perfect Venue - send a request to: Shelly@ShellyRice.com
- Research event planning tools & apps
- Determine budget
- Determine theme
- Name the event - **HOT TIP - GO BOLD!**
- Determine time line, hours, agenda
- List of potential event features
- Potential speaker list
- Potential sponsor list
- Potential vendor list
- Potential staff, collaborators, partners list
- Potential attendee list
- Determine event pricing



## 4-6 Months Before

- Research speaker contracts - draft one that suits your needs.
- Put a call out for speakers, ask for their speaker sheets, videos of them speaking and references
- Will the speakers be paid? Are speakers allowed to sell from the stage? **HOT TIP - HAVE RULES ABOUT SELLING!** The last thing you want is a reputation for hosting a giant pitch fest! Will the speakers pay you? There are no rules about this, it's YOUR event, create your event, your way and then find speakers/collators who fit your model.
- Design your floor plan (The hotel event coordinator can send samples)
- Update agenda - It's probably changed by now
- Check your 6-8 month list and make sure you've completed everything
- Determine AV needs
- Plan catering and beverage stations
- Recruit team members, volunteers, staff, collaborators, determine who will do what and when
- Check list of what is needed for fashion show
- Create your website & add your event to Eventbrite, Facebook and local/national community calendars

## 4-6 Months Before Continued

- Sell vendor spots - give your current clients first opportunity for this!
- Reach out to potential sponsors and ask their permission to send a sponsorship proposal. **HOT TIP** - Start with current clients and people who know, like and trust you. Give your inner circle the first opportunity to benefit from your event and even **HOTTER TIP** - do not tell sponsors what they will get from sponsoring your event...instead, ask them what would they like? You can point out benefits but asking them what they want is golden!
- Add speakers, sponsors and collaborators to your website & marketing info
- Create official event hashtags
- Create a marketing plan on how you're going to fill your event and get started marketing and selling....a couple of suggestions:

**#1: Divide your prospect list into 2 categories:** Prospects to call and prospects to contact in other ways....such as email, advertising, U.S. mail and social media. There are a million articles out there with tips on putting butts into seats, and if you want butts in seats, hit up Google, however, if you want your ideal prospects in those seats pick up the phone and personally invite your prospects to the event. It works!

**#2: Reach out to fashion industry experts:** bloggers, pod casts, radio shows, and periodicals and ask to write for them and/or be interviewed-this is great exposure!

## 1-3 Months Before

- Lock up your photographers, entertainment, printing/program, agendas, order signage, awards, centerpieces, badges, lanyards, door prizes, speaker gifts, decor, models, emcee, event manager, helpers, make up artists, etc....
- Create your floor plan - If you're at a hotel, your event coordinator can help you
- Send out press releases
- Create pre-written, consistent and personalized tweets & postings for your vendors, speakers and sponsors to share on social media
- Buy Facebook ads and pay to boost your Facebook event page, it works!
- Keep selling seats - do not wait til the end to fill your event. Procrastination causes panic and if you panic, you'll be tempted to give away and/or reduce your ticket prices. Don't do it! Selling seats should be your #1 priority.
- Double check your to do list and see if you've missed anything.

## Final Check List

I would need about 20 pages to create a step-by-step check list with all of the other things you're going to need to do to produce a successful event, but as long as you keep asking yourself Who? What? Where? Why? When? and How? during the planning process and as long as you allow yourself plenty of time, you can produce a great event. Need help? Call me: 870.321.9667. I've produced over 1,250 well attended and profitable live business events and I'm happy to be a resource for you.



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