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11 Things I Wish I Knew When I Started My Business

A lot of people like to fool you and say that you're not smart if you never went to college, but common sense rules over everything. That's what I learned from selling crack. -Snoop Dogg

My name is Stephanie St. Claire, and I am an unfunded entrepreneur. I've been in business for three years, after engaging in my own personal and tenuous renaissance (uh... divorce) and rediscovering my Divine Core Purpose. In other words, I grew a pair of ladyballs and started living the life I always wanted to while making money doing it.

But there was a LOT to learn, and some of those things weren't covered in *Who Moved My Cheese*.



neur has to earn on their "journey."

Here are 11 things I wish I knew when I started my business. I hope they will save you some time, but at the very least, some anguish because — experience is a good teacher here — the sodium from your tears acts as a corrosive melting agent on all brands of premium ice cream, but otherwise, makes a superb saline for your dirty martini. Cry over a cup, oh fathom-

less bird of preneurial gumption!

ONE. Running the business is your first priority. Your success (and financial stability) will come from expertly running your business — not teaching yoga, life coaching, writing copy, or making jewelry. In other words, you will spend 15% of the time doing what you love (your gift . . . in my case coaching and writing) and 85% of the time marketing, administering, selling, strategizing your business, and answering a ton of email. Survival will totally hinge on how quickly you adopt this role of business owner first, creator of pretty things, second.

This sucked for me because I wanted nothing to do with running a business. I just wanted to be a writer and a life coach who wrote and coached all day. I didn't get it.

TWO. Ready to meet your soul mate? It's you. Entrepreneurship is the most life changing relationship (like marriage or parenthood) that a person can have. You will be confronted overandoverandover with your fears, your insecurities, your crappy excuses, your limitations, your justifications, your lousy integrity, and your inefficient time management. The standard you held yourself to in the work-a-day world was good enough then, but it won't be good enough to run your own business. And you will learn to accept yourself through all this because in order to get up every day and create, you have to. Somehow through that process of acceptance, while you're busy put-

Continued on page 5



Throw these four rockstars into a blender, and you'll have a composite sketch of me in the first three months of my business:

Glitter was literally shooting out of my eye sockets as I quit my PR firm job and started my own business. Full of optimism, living in New York City, and surrounded by a tribe of friends who were also launching businesses, art, and gigs, I felt it was the perfect time to make the bold move to entrepreneurship. I was now officially Living My Dream and Working For Myself which meant that I was In Charge of My Financial Destiny and Captain of My Promising Future.

Luckily my initial hyper-optimism buoyed me whilst, oscillating between euphoria and despair, I was slowly but systematically forced off The Magic School Bus and onto the S.S. Battleship Long Haul.

I was a quick and eager learner, but despite the hours of webinar watching, countless Friday nights pumping out website copy, and teaching myself everything I could about HTML, there were just some things I didn't get. I had to fall on my butt to procure the "masters degree in life survival" every entrepre-



2013/2014 program

Program is subject to change

Location	Windows on the Green Westwood Country Club 772 North Forest • Williamsville NY 14221	Time	5:30 p.m. Networking 6:00 p.m. Dinner
Cost	\$30 member • \$ 40 guest	RSVP	Cancellation 48 hrs in advance.

make your dinner reservation online at: www.nawbowny.org

Include your full name, telephone number, dinner choice (guests include name of NAWBO member who invited you). Mail pre-payment (check payable to NAWBO) to: NAWBO, P.O. Box 1165, Orchard Park NY 14127.

We now accept paypal: log onto our website and follow prompts for payment.

Questions? Contact our chapter administrator, Jeanne Hellert, at 238-2461 or nawbowny@gmail.com.

Please RSVP by 3:00 p.m. on the Friday the week before the Wednesday night meeting

Please note: meeting date!!

thursday, december 12, 2013

Holiday Networking Get-Together

Please bring a guest to our **networking meeting with ABWA WNY Charter Chapter** (American Business Women's Association)! Mari McNeil will be singing jazz favorites from The Great American Songbook – the songs of Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra, plus a few you might not know.



wednesday, january 8, 2014

Keeping it Simple - Keeping it Real: A Practical Approach to Strategic Planning for Your Business

Having a vision of what your business will become and mapping for the course ahead ensures your venture will remain competitive and relevant. Many businesses fight their way through the strategic planning process only to produce an onerous document that sits on the shelf never to be looked at again. In this session we will explore a simpler way to those results in a "living plan" that will engage and align your team while focusing on accountability and execution of your team's vision. Presented by **Tom Ulbrich**, executive director, **UB Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership**.

Would you like to host one of our monthly Breakfast Briefs?

NAWBO Buffalo Niagara will be offering monthly morning meetings entitled Breakfast Briefs. This group will gather the third (or fourth) Thursday morning each month as a networking platform, a learning venue, and an opportunity to share business experience. a chapter member will "host" the monthly meeting by committing to a particular month. The host member is allotted a 30 minute window to speak about their business and to deliver information that is useful to other women business owners. We've set up a 30 minute window for network too! Location will be the Pancake House, 5479 main Street in Williamsville (members pay for their own breakfast) or at the business location of the "hosting" member where host will supply a continental breakfast.

If you are interested in hosting a Breakfast Brief, please contact committee chair Nicole Fiorella at nicole@fiorellasearchgroup.com.

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NAWBO Buffalo Niagara is the premier organization for women business owners who aspire to accomplish growth, education, and connections.

nawbo

The National Association of Women Business Owners propels women entrepreneurs into economic, social, and political spheres of power worldwide by:

- **Strengthening** the wealth creating capacity of our members and promoting economic development within the entrepreneurial community
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- **Building** strategic alliances, coalitions, and affiliations
- **Transforming** public policy and influencing opinion makers

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Email submissions: whiterabbitdesign@roadrunner.com

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WOMANink is a monthly information service for the NAWBO Buffalo Niagara Chapter's members and other women business owners. Published 10 times per year (no issues published in July and August). Circulation: September and February issues approximately 750; and remaining months, approximately 140. Payment must accompany all advertisement requests. *WOMANink* reserves the right to refuse to publish any advertisement.

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welcome new member!



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NAWBO Buffalo Niagara

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Our Mission

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¹According to statistics released by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for total approved loans through the SBA's 7(a) lending program during the federal fiscal year ending 9/30/2010. ©2011 M&T Bank. Member FDIC.

business fyi, continued

ting yourself out there in spite of your flaws, your weaknesses will transform and you will fall in love with yourself. Not in the over-hyped "SELF LOVE 2012" way, but in a quiet way that sneaks up on you after witnessing a thousand splinter-sized moments of transcending the baser aspects of yourself.

THREE. Your trajectory for success will take as long as everyone else's, even though you're special and brilliant. I heard the "two-year rule" when I started my biz, but I was confident I could do it in six months. I believed with every fiber of my glittery, go-gettin' heart that my work ethic (15-hour days/seven days a week), along with my talent, skills, and personal magic, I could rip a path to accelerated success because also, this was A Leap of Faith and I was Living in My Divine Authenticity and that was worth some express lane juju points from Heaven.

Jesus had other plans.
See #4.

FOUR. Running out of money is a common part of the journey. You won't expect it, because you prepared for the long haul. You secured a business loan, or got some investors, or sold your house (cough, cough), or have one year's worth of savings and you have

planned accordingly.

But then all of the sudden, midst the puffy clouds and blue skies, your little twin engine Entrepenairplane will sputter, the needle on the gas gauge unexpectedly plummeting to zero, and you will have only one choice... land your plane on the wild, abandoned air strip called Bank Balance: Fourteen Dollars. And this will be the LAST PLACE you ever thought you'd crash land, cuz didn't you pass this test on No More Sephora Island?

Well.

The good news is this is a rite of passage that will launch you into the League of Business Badassery in which, once you are out of the money hellhole, you will be unstoppable. You've been to the baddest prison there is, you looked down the barrel of your worst fear, and you stood your ground. You didn't quit. You got up the next day, and you wrote your next post, created your next offering, and answered the email with zero dollars in your bank account.

There is nothing more beautiful than running out of money and realizing that you are doing your work because you've got the guts to stand in the face of no agreement and push through when there is no evidence of security. You really, truly love what you do, and you'd do it for free if you had to.

Irony is a sassy bitch, isn't she?

FIVE. Build a hybrid stream of income.

Take a second job if it will give you peace of mind. Please don't be a jackass like I was and make it mean that you're failing at your business. I was so resistant to "dividing my focus" or taking any action which I interpreted as undermining my commitment to being a successful writer and coach. Do you see the hellish mousetrap that was? I really thought that by making a Plan B I was telling the Universe I wasn't 100% serious about my success. Don't even get me started with my crazy aversion to Plan Bs. I created a worse problem by allowing financial stress to gut me of my sanity.

If having a steady stream of part-time income would be in service to your peace of mind, DO IT.

I finally came to terms with the fact that I was being obnoxiously naïve about how money, peace, survival, and timing all work together and I got a second job. By doing this, I supernaturalized my own path to freedom and self-sustainability. And since I wasn't freaking out about money anymore, I liberated more creative real estate in my brain to apply toward my business.

SIX. Read Steven Pressfield's *Do the Work*. The biggest challenge you will deal with

Continued on page 6

in running a business is your own resistance. Period, end of story. Before you study anything about marketing, social media, money, or time management, read this book. You'll be treated to gems like this:

Our enemy is not lack of preparation; it's not the difficulty of the project, or the state of the marketplace, or the emptiness of our bank account. The enemy is resistance. The enemy is our chattering brain, which, if we give it so much as a nanosecond, will start producing excuses, alibis, transparent self-justifications, and a million reasons why he can't/shouldn't/won't do what we know we need to do.

A professional distances herself from her instrument. The pro stands at one remove from her instrument – meaning her person, her body, her voice, her talent; the physical, mental, emotional, and psychological being she uses in her work. She does not identify with this instrument. It is simply what God gave her, what she has to work with. She assesses it coolly, impersonally, objectively.

*Does Madonna walk around the house in cone bras and come-f*k-me bustiers? She's too busy planning D-Day. Madonna does not identify with "Madonna." Madonna employs "Madonna."*

SEVEN. Spend less time researching, more time doing. Researching/studying/reading other people's blogs is a form of resistance. In order to get clarity, you must act. Clarity does not come by learning more, it comes by jumping in with your instincts and putting yourself out there, even if you don't know exactly what you're doing.

Block out the distractions (turn off the phone, Facebook, and Gmail) and take inspired action that feels fun, easy, and exciting. This will rattle your inner Perfectionist Catholic German Drill Sergeant, because you have been taught that succeeding requires you to do boring, tedious

crap that's difficult. Sometimes you'll have to do boring stuff (prep your tax receipts) but when working your business, make it fun and exciting or you will end up indulging in resistance behaviors.

EIGHT. Only say yes to clients/collaborative projects that are HELL YESSES. Scrutinize any joint project carefully and qualify the person you are doing the project with (even if they are your friend and you LOVE them). Get everything in writing before you embark on the project, with a clear division of labor and deadline dates. You will most likely be splitting the profits, so have two numbers in your head: The \$ number you would LIKE to make, and the \$ number you NEED to make in order to pay for your time. Set the first financial deadline early to make your NEED number so that you both have the freedom to walk away if the project isn't going to be profitable. Have a transition strategy in mind so in case that happens and one of you wants to continue on with the project, there is a way to pass the baton gracefully.

Summed up: COMMUNICATE ABOUT EVERYTHING, even though you're friends, even though you love each other, even though you trust each other, even though you've worked together at XYZ Company, because projects have a way of going sideways and making everyone a little custodial and overreactive.

NINE. You must devote time to becoming a brilliant marketer. MUST. I know you just want to spend all your days making hipster sarsaparilla-scented mustache wax, or needle pointing edgy throw pillows for Etsy, or writing your YA zombie novel, or life coaching women to stratospheric success, but if you don't spend time marketing you will not make money.

This was my biggest weakness when I started because I thought marketing = slimy sales letters with big arrows and opt-in boxes and I

Continued on page 7

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