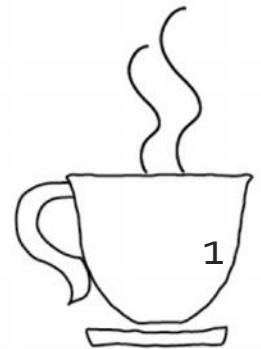
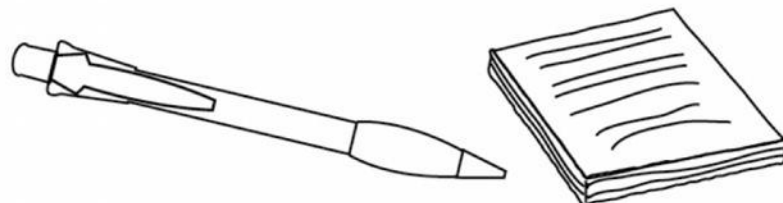
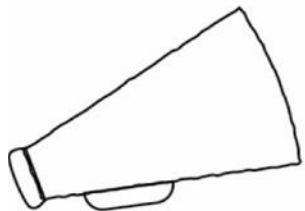


# From Zero to Clients: Starting (or re-starting) your word-of-mouth referral machine

**Mary Ellen Bates**

**Reluctant-Entrepreneur.com**





# Mary Ellen Bates

## Reluctant-Entrepreneur.com



# What we'll cover

**The secret to word-of-mouth success**

**The 5 word-of-mouth essentials**

**Talking with your colleagues**

**Working your existing network**

**Getting testimonials**



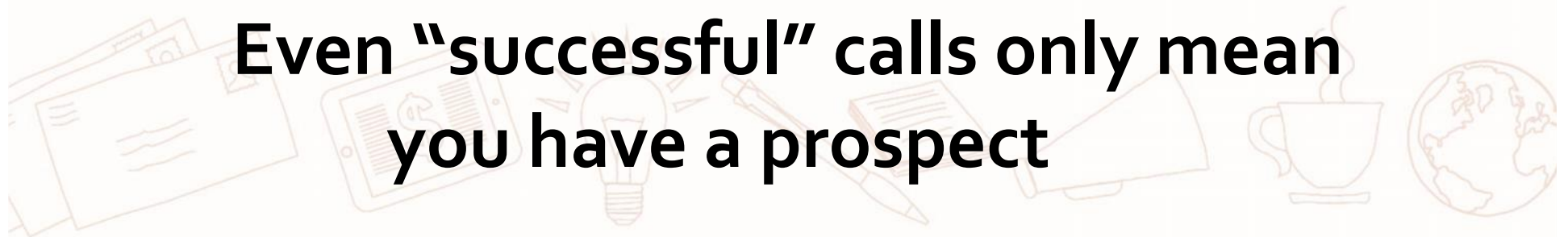
# But first, why I hate cold-marketing

**People don't buy professional services from a cold call**

**You invest time on low-% efforts**

**You only have 1 chance**

**Even "successful" calls only mean you have a prospect**



For more on this, see  
*Resources for Solopreneurs* at  
**Reluctant-Entrepreneur.com**



# The Reluctant Entrepreneur

Making a living doing what you love



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[Courses For Solopreneurs](#)

[Resources for Solopreneurs](#)

[What's in the book?](#)

[Who's Mary Ellen Bates?](#)

## Resources for Solopreneurs

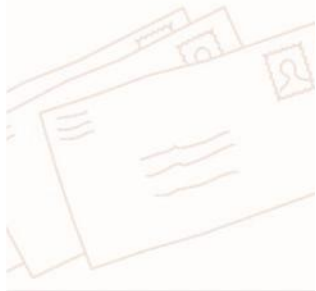
Here are some of the resources I have found or developed for my coaching clients and online courses that I think you'll find helpful.



[Friends Don't Let Friends Cold-Call](#) This article explains why I believe cold-calling is a waste of time for solopreneurs and what I suggest you do instead.



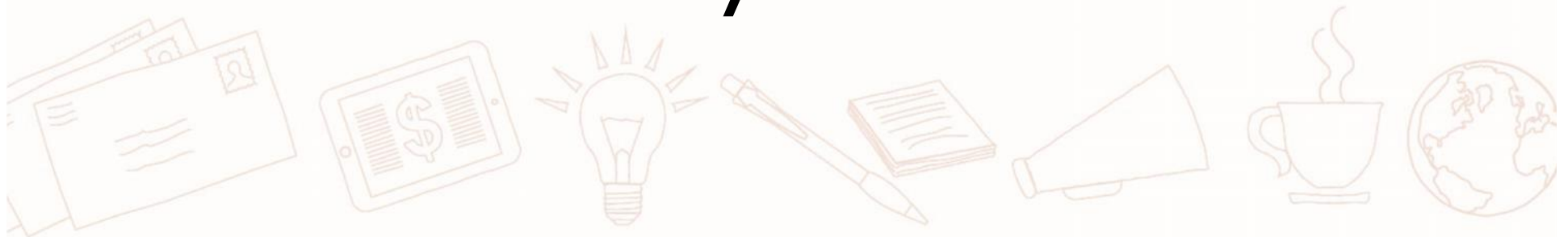
[How to Conduct Reality-Check Interviews](#) Use this tool to learn what your clients *really* want and value, not what you are 100% absolutely positive that you already know they want and need. Trust me... you *don't* know.



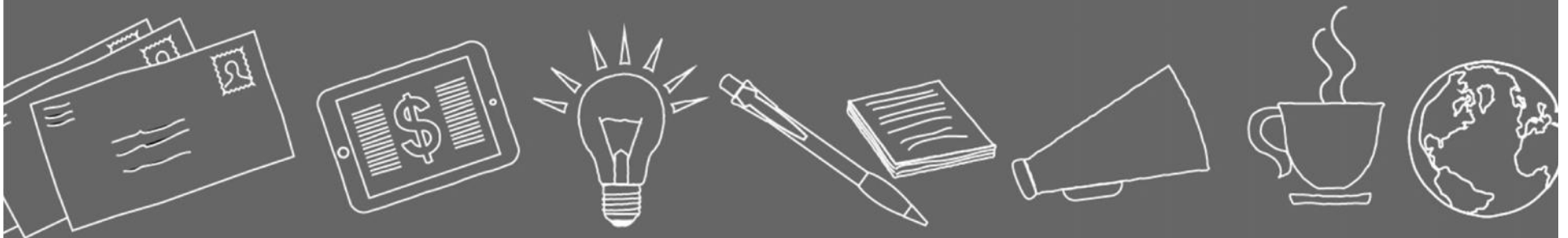
# The secret to word-of-mouth success

**You can't just hope it happens**

**You have to be so memorable  
that people can't help but  
mention you to others**



# The 5 Word-of-Mouth Essentials





# 1. WRITE

**Content matters!**

**See yourself as a thought leader**

**Write where your clients read**

**E.g., column for assn blog or newsletter**

**Ask clients what they read!**

**Short & frequent better than a tome**



## 2. SPEAK

**Content matters!**

**Offer value, not a sales pitch**

**Talk to groups of *likely clients***

**Start local, aim for national/int'l**

**Need practice?**

**Meetups, Toastmasters**



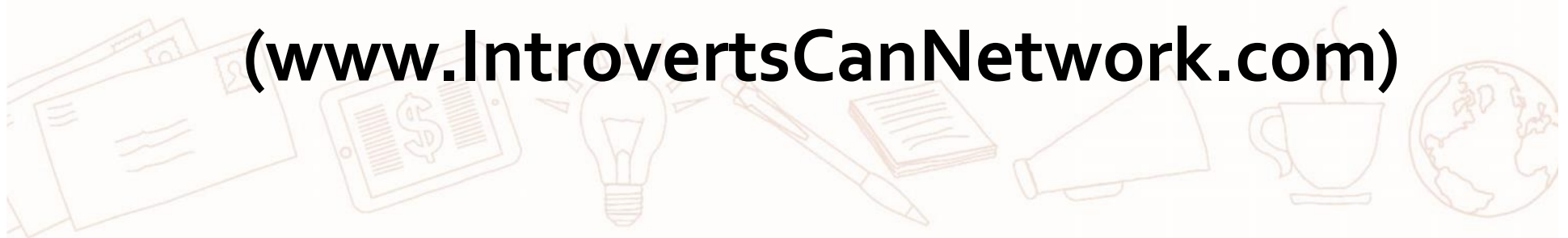
# 3. Go F2F

**Listening matters!**

**Two ears, one mouth**

**Networking events, prof meetings**

**([www.IntrovertsCanNetwork.com](http://www.IntrovertsCanNetwork.com))**

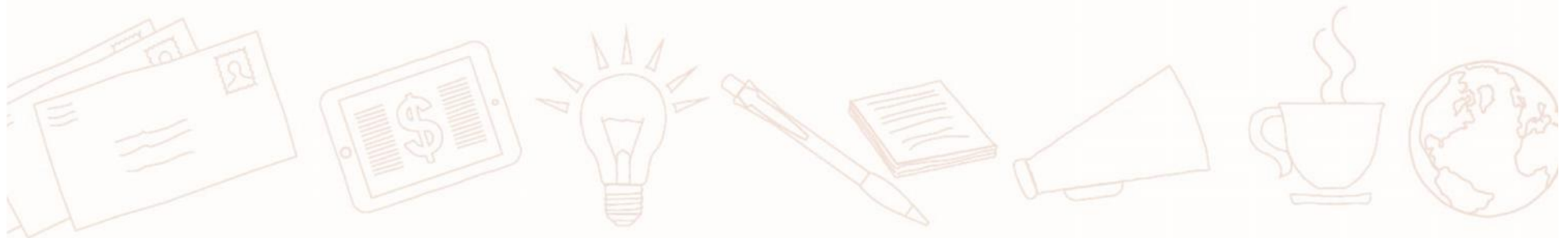


### 3. Go F2F

**Promise yourself to find out 5  
people's biggest concerns**

**Collect business cards & *follow up***

**Connect in all social media, invite to  
subscribe to newsletter**



# 3. Go F2F

**Reach out to your local network**

**Just coffee – nothing formal**

**NOT sales pitch, just get to know**

**Ask what you can do to help them**



# 4. VOLUNTEER

**Caring matters!**

**Benefit the organization, not you**

**Join groups your clients belong to**

**Find way to *demonstrate* your value**

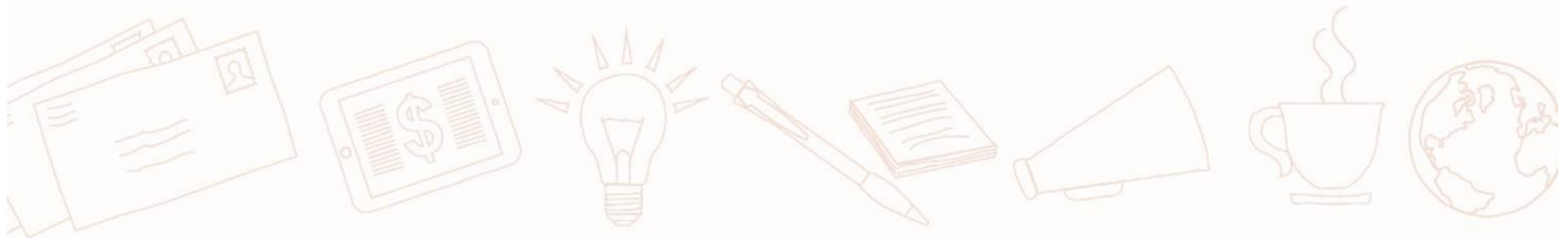


# 4. VOLUNTEER

**Volunteer for strategic, member-facing role**

**New Members, not Bylaws**

**Contact president, ask how to use your skills to best benefit**



# 5. GET SOCIAL

**Quality matters!**

**Show your insights, personality**

**Use multiple channels**

**Blog AND Twitter AND Facebook**

**Tailor messages to each audience**





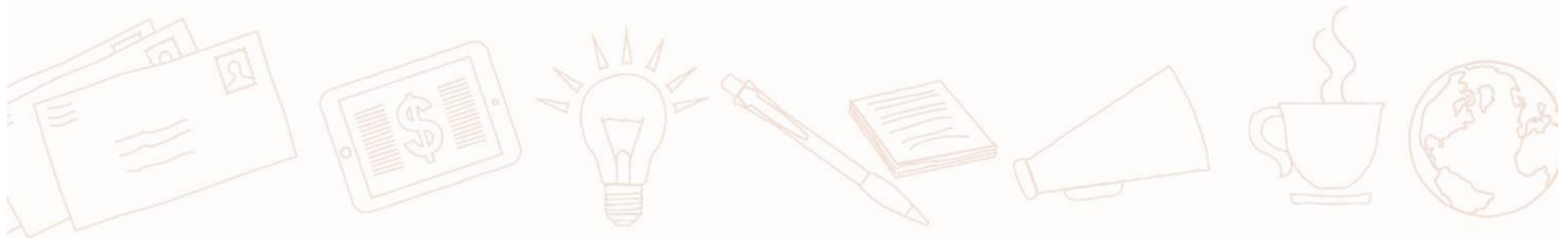
# 5. GET SOCIAL

## Share

**Retweet, comment, guest blog**

**Understand privacy settings**

**Be smart, not paranoid**



(and, of course...)

**Do amazing work**

**Keep your promises**

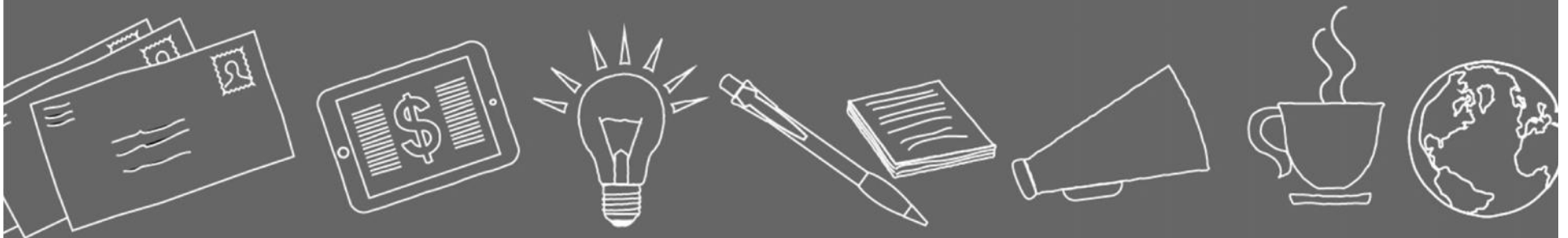
**Always follow through**

**Care about the client's outcome**

**Be nice to work with**



# Talking With Your Colleagues



# Talking with your colleagues

Colleagues are resources, not competitors

Organize a local Meetup

Find a mentor

Ask if you can talk once a month



# Talking with your colleagues

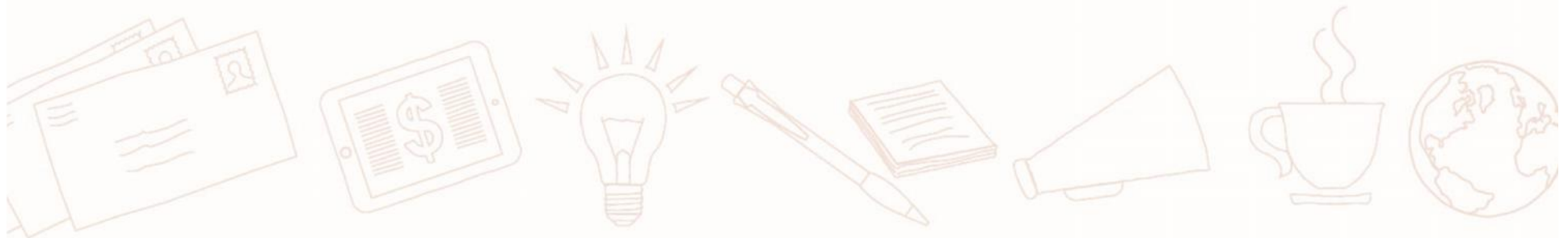
**Reach out to colleagues, ask for:**

**Pointers, advice, lessons learned**

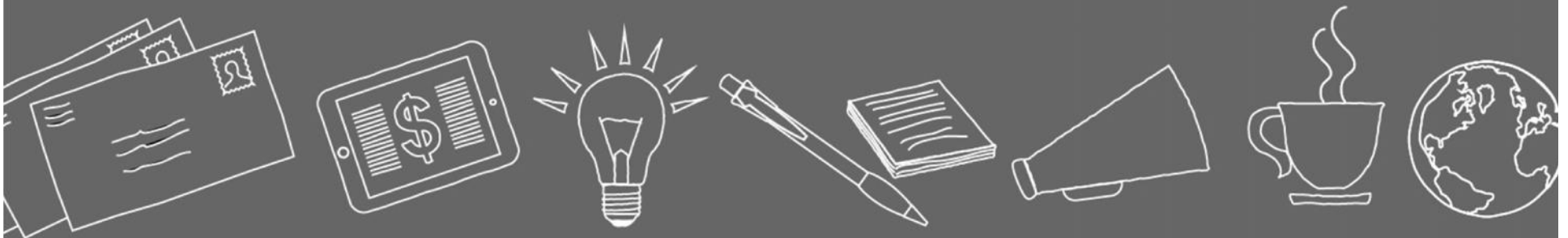
**Best associations to join**

**Who they would like to be referred to**

**An interview with them for your blog**



# Working Your (existing) Network



# Working your network

**Reach out to:**

***Everyone* from your last job**

**All your friends and family members**

**Members of your community  
(neighbors, faith group, non-profit)**

**Really, everyone!**



# Working your network

**Tell them what you do *in one no-jargon sentence***

**Point to your social media, blog, web site**

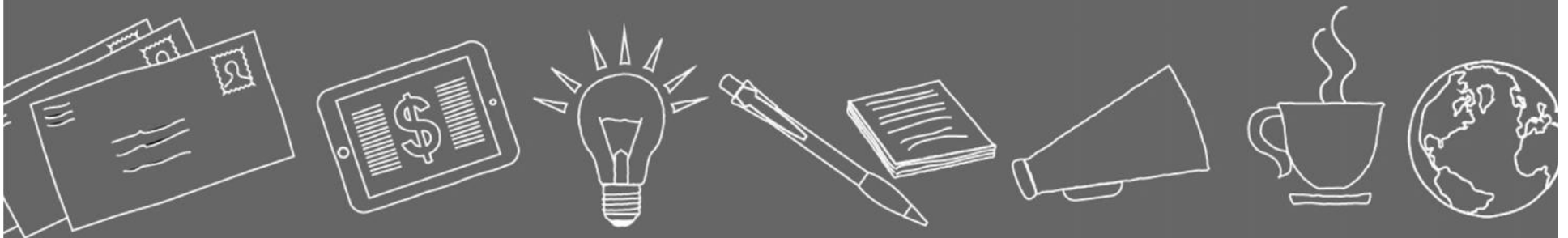
**Always use your business email**

**Ask for referrals**





# Getting Testimonials



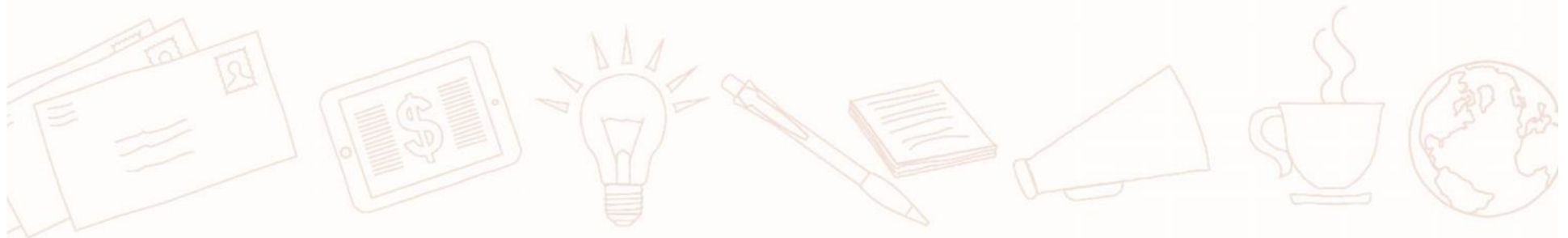
# Getting testimonials

**Ask former colleagues**

**Give them talking points**

**Focus on what clients would value**

**Ask for LinkedIn recommendations  
and skill endorsements**



# Getting testimonials

## Questions to elicit great blurbs:

**“The best part about working with Mary Ellen is \_\_\_\_\_”**

**“Mary Ellen’s deliverables help us \_\_\_\_\_”**

**[hat tip to Marcy Phelps, [phelpsresearch.com](http://phelpsresearch.com)]**

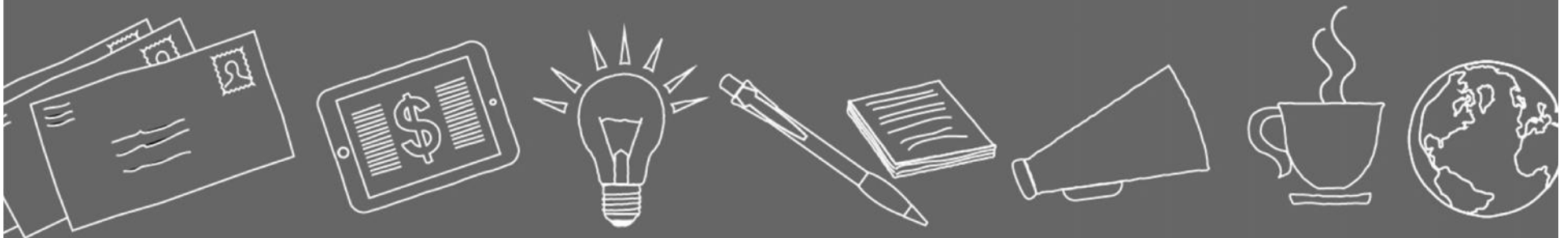


# The secret to word-of-mouth success

**You have to be SO MEMORABLE  
that people CAN'T HELP but  
mention you to others**



# Now what?



# Next steps:

**Conduct informational interviews**

**ID your niche**

**Write up a marketing plan**

**Just do it!**



# More Resources

Take my course, *Getting Your First Five Clients*

See [reluctant-entrepreneur.com/resources](http://reluctant-entrepreneur.com/resources)  
for solopreneur tools

Subscribe to *Thoughts From a Reluctant Entrepreneur* at [reluctant-entrepreneur.com](http://reluctant-entrepreneur.com)

