

Solopreneur Checklist

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“What do I need to do to start my business?”

I've often been asked for a checklist of what someone needs to do in order to start a business.

While I think much of a business launch is in your head – involving a change of attitude from employee to entrepreneur – here's is **a list of everything** new solopreneurs need to do before they can consider themselves **in business**.

___ Find an **accountability buddy**, mentor or friend you can talk with regularly who can help you stay focused on your goals.

___ Conduct at least five successful **informational conversations** (a.k.a. reality-check interviews) with people who represent your market. Find out what they *need, value and will pay for*.

___ Write several **vignettes** that describe successful engagements (or your anticipated engagements), articulating the value you offer your clients.

___ Decide what your **hourly rate** will be, remembering that you probably won't be telling your clients that rate.

___ Identify the **professional associations** and other groups your prospective clients belong to.

Join and become active in at least one, with a goal of X number of referrals or clients within one year.

___ Identify where your clients go for **professional development**, and find the most strategic way to contribute to their learning, through public speaking, writing a column, serving on a member-facing committee, etc.

___ Decide on a **business name**. If it indicates a specialization (e.g., “Knowledge Management Associates”), be sure you confirm the perceived value through informational conversations with your market.

___ Decide on a **business structure** – sole proprietor, LLC, partnership, corporation, etc. – and file the necessary documents and set up the necessary accounts with whatever agencies regulate you or for which you collect taxes.

___ Register a **domain** for your business and start using your business email address (me@my-domain.com).

___ Write a **marketing plan**, based on what you learned from your conversations and research.

___ Set **outcome-oriented metrics** for your goals for your first year.

of paying clients or projects, revenue, etc.

___ Get high-quality **business cards** printed.

___ Find an **attorney**, an **accountant** and a **business coach** who understand solopreneurs' concerns.

___ Set up your **accounting system** (based on tax reporting needs and how your business works).

Set up business checking and savings accounts; have a debit/credit card solely for business expenses.

___ Set up a **monthly savings plan** so you have the funds to attend the annual **AIPP conference**.

My business wouldn't be where it is today without the connections and knowledge I've gained from the annual conference.

___ Create a basic **web site**, using the language you learned through informational conversations to convey the most value to your market. Focus on outcome and value, not a list of services.

___ Set up **social media profiles** where your clients are most likely to find you, including LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Establish a schedule to post updates on all your accounts.

___ **Reach out** to as many of your colleagues from your last job as possible. Using one of your vignettes, introduce your new business and ask for referrals.

___ Identify the **professional association** your colleagues belong to; join and become active.

___ Evaluate your current **computer setup**. You will probably need a full-featured laptop with a current operating system, high-quality monitor, comfortable keyboard and mouse, and scanner/printer.

___ Evaluate your current **phone set-up**. Have one phone dedicated to your business. Using a mobile phone as your business line means you can be reached wherever you are.

___ Evaluate the reliability and speed of your office **internet connection**, and upgrade if necessary.

___ Set up your **office space** in a location with adequate light, enough room to work comfortably, and a place for basic office supplies, files and equipment.

___ **Start your marketing** approaches, knowing that you will always have several marketing efforts going on simultaneously – blogging AND lining up speaking engagements AND going to local client networking events, for example.

___ Check out Mary Ellen's [20 Ways to Kick-Start Your Marketing](#).

___ Plan for a **strategic review** in six months. What's working? Should you pivot your focus?

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Hi, I'm Mary Ellen, and my passion is enabling people to create really fun, profitable businesses!

Check out what I do at

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I look forward to working with you to create a business doing what you love!