



# **Solopreneurs in a COVID-19 World**

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# **Mary Ellen's Solopreneur Basic Principles**

**Build your business around clients who NEED, VALUE  
and can PAY WELL for your services**

**ATTRACT clients; don't chase after them**

**Clients pay you for OUTCOME, not ACTIVITY**



# What keeps us from finding clients?

**The Tale of the *Chili & Ice Cream Shop***

**Lesson: We don't see our blind spots**

**The Tale of *Why I Write White Papers***

**Lesson: We don't know our clients' key metrics**



# Reality-check conversations!

**15-minute listening sessions with people who represent *who you think your market is now***

**Not sales calls — you're learning how you'll be changing your business**

**(More info on these at [is.gd/equdov](https://is.gd/equdov))**



# Reality-check conversations!

## Your goals:

To learn what you don't know about your market

To have *all* your assumptions challenged

To find out what they need, value and will pay well for *now*

To understand their desired outcomes

Become a truly client-driven company



# **Holding your reality-check conversation**

**Promise to take <15 minutes**

**Have open-ended questions ready**

**What has you most concerned these days?**

**What has surprised you most about {your market} this year?**

**What's your biggest goal for this year?**

**What's the biggest obstacle to meeting that goal?**

**What's the buzz in {your market}?**



# Holding your reality-check conversation

**ALWAYS** find out the general size of their project budgets

*So roughly what would you spend on this kind of project?*

*How many zeros would a project like this usually have?*



## Then what?

**After 5 or 6 conversations:**

**What surprised you?**

**What is your market's biggest needs now?**

**What needs aren't being addressed?**

***Where else can your skills and interests be useful?***





# Then what?

**How can you be irreplaceable?**

**Where can you be a niche, not a commodity?**

**Where can you add unique value?**

***What is your market just now realizing it needs?***



# Think about your market's SWOT

Find their pain points – their W and T

Find their unmet goals – their O

What's the payoff if the problem is solved?

**What happens if the problem *isn't* fixed?**

(See recording of August 3rd JCFPL webinar on market research for small businesses)



## Focus on outcomes

Your customers don't care what it took for you to make something. They care about what it does for them (Seth Godin)

**What are your market's important outcomes now?**



# It's like selling your house...

**The buyer's POV is what matters**

**Quality upkeep shows**

**Streamline, be frictionless**

**What the buyer values matters**





# Attract clients — don't chase them

## Own your expertise!

Your deep knowledge or expertise... not credentials

That aspect of your work that you *love*

## Own your vision!

**WHY** do your clients pay you? How do you rock their world?



# Attract clients — don't chase them

**Create intellectual capital with your expertise, vision**

**Share perspective, stories, *your voice***

**LinkedIn (really!), blog, interviews, columns**

**Webinars, host Zoom meetups**



## **Build a skill *if it's necessary***

**Clearly connected to attracting clients**

**Videoconferencing comfort and tools**

**Public speaking skills (and practice)**

**Build through volunteering**

**Professional assn, local Chamber, non-profit, or  
personal interest**



## **Build a skill *if it's necessary***

### **Keep professional skills current**

**Current tech in your clients' field**

**Improve format for reports, deliverables**

**Web site basics, social media marketing, etc.**

**~20 hours or less (more than that, hire the expertise)**

**Learn with Lynda.com (through JCFPL)**





# Embrace uncertainty

**Forget the comfort zone, forget the "stretch zone"**

**Forget 5-year plans**

**Embrace the 12-week year (See [12weekyear.com](https://12weekyear.com))**

**Tangible, measurable, meaningful, strategic**



# **Livin' the 12-week year these days**

**Best goal you can envision for a year from now**

**What tactics *in general* will be needed?**

**What actions have to be done in the next 12 weeks?**

**How will success be measured?**

**Every 3 months, adjust**



# **Watch for collaborations**

## **Newly valued solopreneur skills:**

**Flexibility, agility, curiosity**

**Client-focused outside perspective**

## **Time to volunteer?**

**If it's member- or public-facing**

**If you can highlight professional skills**



## **5 Tips for Pivoting Like a Pro**

- 1. Focus on outcomes of your work; talk about WHY, not HOW or WHAT**
- 2. Make yourself frictionless, whatever the situation**  
**You're never your client's only option**



## **5 Tips for Pivoting Like an Pro**

- 3. Diversify! Cultivate champions, never take a client for granted**
- 4. Always be thinking about where you need to pivot**
- 5. Become comfortable with uncertainty**



# Where to find Mary Ellen

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