

The Text Doctor[®]

CICSIG Women-owned business survey

Number of submissions (45)

Number of questions answered (399)

Average Answer Selection (0.18)

Received: Thursday, December 08, 2005 to Tuesday, December 13, 2005

as of Wednesday, December 21, 2005 @ 11:56:02 AM

Filtered by: Questions

All

1. Why did you become an independent (as a women-owned business)?

- 1) Because I wanted the freedom to provide my professional expertise in a manner that benefitted users the most. I found that working in a corporate culture, you can impart only some of your expertise as you are bound by company rules and regulations. I wanted to affect the most people with good, usable products as possible.
- 2) Entrepreneurial spirit, flexibility for family needs, desire to "do my own thing"
- 3) * Standard job descriptions tend to be too narrow for me
* I can work in a variety of fields
* I have more time with my school-aged kids
- 4) I decided that opportunities as a business owner were better than the opportunities in corporate life.
- 5) By accident - relocated for job that turned out not to exist, was asked to do some work by a former co-worker, and it grew from there.
- 6) I figured if I was going to work 60 hours per week, it might as well be for my own business. In addition, I was starting a family, so the increased time flexibility was very attractive.
- 7) Was laid off. Was tired of the corporate attitudes about many things, including women (having been a very young, female middle manager in a male-dominated company), budgets, supporting subordinates, etc.
- 8) Because I'm a woman?

Some businesses and government agencies find that useful, but I'm a woman running a business, so it was just natural.
- 9) Because I was laid off from my full-time, permanent job, but also because I wanted to

have a more flexible schedule for caring for my child and taking care of other things I wanted to do.

- 10) I was tired of being forced to do more with fewer resources every year. (Prior to launching my freelance career I supervised a tech pubs department for a manufacturer.)

I work alone (sole proprietorship); I don't know whether that meets your criteria for "woman-owned business".
- 11) I underwent three layoffs in four years as a captive employee. I had had enough and needed to be more in control of my own destiny. In addition, I recognized that I was unhappy working in a corporate environment where being a "team player" was valued more than being productive. I derive my energy from my home and its animal inhabitants. Working off site robs me of energy. So working from home was the priority.
- 12) I was tired of working for small software companies for little money and being treated as a non-entity.
- 13)
 1. I like to be my own boss; I hate to be managed and/or micromanaged.
 2. I like the uncertainty of the work. I know I'll always have my "bread and butter" projects, but it's the new and fun stuff I look forward to working on the most.
 3. I can, within reason, make my own hours.
 4. I have more time to surf the Web and learn about new technologies such as DITA.
 5. I've been able to devote more time to involvement in STC and SIGs.
 6. I'm able to increase my time spent networking.
 7. My mother is at the age where she needs someone nearby to take her to a doctor appointment, help with shopping, etc.
 8. I've been able to go back to school and complete my masters' degree (online).
 9. I'm really good at being a long-distance worker. I'm organized, love what I'm doing, have a great background that serves a lot of people, and have good contacts from every regular job I've ever had.
 10. More vacation time!
 11. I've learned a lot of technical things on my own - for example, setting up my wi-fi, networking my servers, etc.
- 14) I was tired of being laid off and, at the time, contract work was all I could find. Once I began contract work, I found I loved the freedom and the change from working in one place doing a limited number of things.
- 15) Topped out. Opted for downsizing rather than a reduced role at a time when there were few senior or even seniorish positions available. Was offered Management track career/business counselling and chose the small business route.
- 16) I am a very self-directed worker, and thought I would enjoy no longer reporting with a hierarchy. Reporting to clients is fine with me, but I direct my work completely.
- 17) Thirteen years ago I hit the glass ceiling as an engineer. My last assignment with the EPC company was as their marketing director, where I found I (1) liked writing about engineering more than I liked doing it, and (2) much preferred being the project manager than a peon.
- 18) Flexibility for raising children; then I grew to like the flexibility!

- 19) Basically I was burned out at the company where I was working and was growing tired of updating the same manuals again and again. Also, I was looking for a flexible schedule and the ability to make as much money as I wanted to; since I didn't care to go into management, I felt the corporate world was very limiting for me.
- 20) I was part of a reduction in force, and the opportunity presented itself and now I love doing it because I can work with who I want, when I want, and I can do it all and still be able to get my son off to school and be home when he gets out of school.
- 21) I wasn't able to fulfill my creative vision through my current position. I wanted the freedom to focus on the skills I enjoyed most. I also wanted more control over my schedule. Although my husband and I work together, we decided to make the business woman-owned. I am fully involved in the technical and marketing sides of the business. Plus, it has been helpful in government bids and making us stand out among other similar businesses.
- 22) I got tired of working for someone else and knowing I could do it better. I realized that I caused more problems being an employee than I was allowed to solve - just by being vocal.

I also realized that I could earn more \$\$ and respect by being a consultant than by being an employee. I also liked having control over the direction of my career from the standpoint of business projects, tools to learn and use, etc. I have had far more variety in all areas of work by being independent than I could have as an employee.

Basically, "I'm not employee material."

- 23) Had worked for 10 years for a high-tech, very large consulting firm and developed a solid network. When the company closed the office in my area and offered me a position at another location that was about 1.5 hr. commute each way, I declined. I already knew I knew how to get clients and run my own business.
- 24) With four young kids at home, I needed flexible part time work. When I was job hunting, only full time positions were available in hi-tech. Becoming independent gave me the option of working part time at home and setting my own hours. This worked for the first years, but as my volume of work grew I often spent more time working than I would have liked.
- 25) To have an opportunity to learn more technologies than were being used in my corporate position: Flash, XML, and so forth.
- 26) I saw it as an opportunity to be more productive because I would be less affected by company internal politics. I also wanted my schedule to be tied to project completion needs and less to the clock. I discussed doing this with independents I knew for three years before I was more or less forced to take the plunge because I was downsized.
- 27) More flexibility with my time.
Do something I'm passionate about.
Be my own boss.
- 28) Variety of work. I prefer short contracts on a variety of projects. Being able to work from home is a huge factor.

- 29) I was laid off twice in a row and the economy (back in 2000) was starting to spiral downward. An opportunity to start my own business appeared unexpectedly from my state (as an alternative to collecting unemployment). Since I had been growing discontented with working for clueless people and thinking about going solo, this opportunity seemed too good to pass up.
- 30) I wanted the freedom of contracting so I could work around daughter's school schedule and husband's travel schedule. I also wanted more control over my financial compensation, as well as the kind of projects I work on and how long I got "trapped" in them.
- 31) Because I'd been growing tired-er and tired-er of the corporate way of life. Because the company I worked for was moving to a far-away city and eliminating my job. Because I no longer had any dependents living at home and depending on my regular salary and benefits.
- 32) I had to become an independent for particular jobs. The first was in England 40 years ago.
- 33) Because I didn't like working for people who kept making stupid mistakes. I didn't like that my advice was not taken into consideration because I am a young writer. I knew I had more to offer and I wanted to challenge myself.
- 34) It provided me flexibility with my time and with my project choices.
- 35) Necessity. Children whom I needed to support.
- 36) There were too many politics to deal with when I worked for another company. I think I'm the best boss I've ever had.
- 37) I wanted more flexibility over my own hours.
- 38) In the mid-80s, I didn't feel that women had the same opportunities in management that men did, and decided the best way to make management-level wages was to become an independent contractor. I also come from an entrepreneurial family, so my mindset already leaned towards self-employment.
- 39) For the financial freedom and better tax breaks
- 40) I wanted to continue my career outside the corporate world as I had lost my job several times.
- 41) My last employer laid me off, and after a fruitless job search, I struck out on my own. I never touted myself as a woman-owned business; I just happen to be female.
- 42) Became seriously burned out on being a manager in the corporate environment. Wanted to do something where I was responsible for just me and no one else. Also needed a better boss -- me! :-)

- 43) Flexibility that it offers to work from home; variation in people, assignments and workplaces; less need to become invested in company politics
- 44) My partner declined to take the financial risk. I found myself starting the business 100% woman owned quite by accident.
- 45) Dead end career path; not doing the kind of work I want to do. Also tired of having to implement stupid decisions of other people. I'd rather make my own stupid decisions.

2. Who helped you succeed as a women-owned business (besides yourself, of course!)?

- 1) One of my peers in STC and other former coworkers and colleagues that are either still in corporations as managers, or started their own independent businesses.
- 2) Friends, other self-employed people, my clients
- 3) A supportive husband, friends (male and female), people I have met through networking.
- 4) An excellent network of former coworkers.
My supportive spouse.
- 5) Spouse - provided support and steady salary and benefits
Mentor - friends and colleagues who run a 2 person business similar to mine, and offer advice and encouragement.
- 6) My husband, who is also a technical writer.
- 7) Specific person: Betsy Frick

Organizations/programs: Women Entrepreneur (WE) program at St. Louis Community College (think that was the institution), STC
- 8) My husband supported me before I began my business while I was caring for children full time. Then he supported my business start up.
- 9) My network of friends, co-workers, and previous supervisors.
- 10) my family and members of my STC chapter
- 11) I had no mentors. I had a couple of lucky breaks getting contracts that taught me a lot. My parents instilled the values in me as a child that are responsible for my work ethic, my self-confidence, and my determination to get whatever I want.
- 12) My business partners. Also took some seminars through the local SBA and Chamber. I had a couple mentors from previous jobs and kept close contact with them, especially early on.

- 13) (I'm a medical and technical writer.)
 1. A doctor I worked for asked me to quit my fulltime position at a major magazine publisher and work exclusively for him. It's been a great relationship: the networking possibilities, the trips to NY to visit his practice and observe surgery, the ability to travel to conferences that he pays for and writes off.
 2. My mother, who initially loaned me some money to upgrade my hardware and software.
 3. Contacts I maintain at places I used to work.
- 14) My network has helped me stay steadily employed over the last two years. I have to broadcast when I want to take time off so my customers know far enough in advance to plan projects with my vacation in mind.
- 15) Immediate family support for my hours and project pushes. Other acquaintances who were looking to do the same without the counselling/training I was getting. I was funneling information, so I had to think about it more.
- 16) My network of connections that I made while working in a company. When that company dissolved, those folks scattered to new jobs in other companies, all of whom became clients at some point. Networks work!
- 17) My husband, who has been tremendously supportive during several downtimes and during a complete makeover of the business (I'm now a web developer/programmer). A female colleague in another province, with whom I attended a post-grad certificate program in Interactive Multimedia and with whom I work on a couple of projects a year. She was also a tech writer before moving into web development, although she has accepted full-time employment.
- 18) Word-of-mouth referrals and strong recommendations from clients and other writers I worked with. Not specific to being a woman-owned business.
- 19) I have a husband and a couple friends who are very encouraging. My father always had his own business and he pushed me for years before I started my own business (I wished I'd listened to you sooner, Dad!)and was very helpful as I set up my office and marketing tools. And some of the first clients were folks I was in contact with while still a captive employee and they encouraged me to go out on my own, so I could help them mostly!
- 20) My customers who believe in me, appreciate my work, and pass my name on. My husband and my son by helping me during crunch times.
- 21) Online resources and other individuals in business helped me to learn about everything from marketing on the Web to networking in person.
- 22) I've had various clients who have supported me over the years, each of which contributed in a meaningful way. Probably clients gave me more encouragement and confidence than fellow business owners or other women, believe it or not.
- 23) Other business women who I had worked with became clients.
- 24) I really think I succeeded due to my capabilities. Doing a good job brought me more customers and kept the old ones coming back.

- 25) My husband by being supportive of the idea.
- 26) Several STC friends and others in other organizations who were already independent or worked for companies who used independents. I received and continue to receive referrals from these folks. They are mostly women, but there are a few men in the group as well. I now have contacts through other networking efforts, too.
- 27) Members of the professional organizations that I belong to.
A friend and mentor who owns her own business.
- 28) Small Business Development Program, Business mentor/advisor, fellow women small business owners are also a big support, resources at Small BUbusiness centers.
- 29) Mostly other women. I had, through the state program, access to professionals who were there to help me get my business off the ground. Once that was accomplished, I started networking and found that women were more inclined to help other women succeed and become successful.
- 30) * my now-best friend (also an independent: I met her in an early contract and she advised me about incorporating)
* my accountant
* my husband
- 31) Former co-workers who had moved on to other corporations in the area and who were happy to recommend me; informal mentors; colleagues in STC who offered encouragement; STC's CIC SIG, which started up at about the time I went independent -- by leading the local group for many years, I could tap into the knowledge and experience of others.
- 32) The most help I had as an independent was from a woman who was an executive with a company where both of us were originally employed. She later hired me as an independent for a company where she was a corporate executive.
- 33) My business partner and mentor, Suzanne Guess. She was the only person who told me that yes I was an expert (compared to other non-tech comm professionals). She gave me confidence that I had the skills and the drive to succeed.
- 34) Working for my father since I was a child taught me all the fundamental business skills that I needed. My father gave me a lot of business to start with and a few years later I ended up giving a lot of business back to him!
- 35) another woman, my mentor, under whom I apprenticed before going solo
- 36) My husband was very supportive and he works with me now keeping the computers going, updating our website, and pitching in to write and edit when needed. I also bounce all of my ideas off him before jumping in to what might sometimes be stupid decisions.
- 37) No one person, but rather many people over the years. They did not help me because I am a woman-owned business, though, but because I offered a service they found to be

valuable.

- 38) A good friend who eventually became like a mentor to me. She and I were co-workers (employees) at a fairly large company. She then married a man who was an independent consultant and had other consultants as employees, and of course became an independent herself. Several years later, she heard about a contract position that matched my skills exactly, recommended me, told me what to charge for my billing rate, and proofed my contract - all for no charge. For the next several years, she gave me tips on possible positions, advised me on my rate, and proofed my contracts - she was amazing. I no longer need much support from her in business, but we've remained supportive in each other's personal lives.
- 39) My cousin, David, who helped set me up as a California Corporation, and my friends who give me business referrals, and past clients.
- 40) A wonderful course at the St. Petersburg, Florida Chamber of Commerce. Also a few people I have met while networking.
- 41) Friends mostly; some sent work my way. Also, my husband became, and remains, my tech support.
- 42) My network of friends, family, and former co-workers -- primarily women!
- 43) My husband has been a big help as have former colleagues.
- 44) My husband. I also had commission money from the previous job as director of sales and marketing. Actually, I probably owe all the knowledge I had to the owner of the company I worked for, and planned to partner with. I didn't think so at the time (I was pretty angry), but things worked out for the best. He went bankrupt, and my company survived.
- 45) No one really helped me. It was a matter of developing the confidence. That confidence was developed, in part, because of my 2-yr term as STC - Central Iowa chapter president. We were part of the pilot group to recharter. I set a big goal for our chapter, and got it done. Instead of following along with projects, I was the driver. We succeeded in the recharter process and our programs are benefitting members.

3. How many years have you been in business?

- 1) Four (4) years.
- 2) 18 years
- 3) One.
- 4) 8
- 5) 15

- 6) Five.
- 7) 12+
- 8) 15
- 9) 1.5
- 10) 11
- 11) 10 years
- 12) 9 years
- 13) I've been in the tech writing/editing business for about 20 years. I've always done some type of freelance work with all my regular jobs, but I think I've worked about 8 years simply as a business of my own.
- 14) Two years as an independent contractor; 16 years as a tech writer
- 15) Four years.
- 16) 15 years
- 17) Since 1992.
- 18) 24
- 19) 8 years
- 20) Five
- 21) 2.5 years
- 22) 8 years here; was a subcontractor in a different town for 4 years - but I don't know if I considered myself to have a business at that point.
- 23) 6 years.
- 24) I've been doing technical communications for over 15 years and have been independent for 10 years.
- 25) three years.

- 26) 10--Do you believe it? I sometimes don't. The party is in early February.
- 27) 1
- 28) Two.
- 29) Just over four.
- 30) almost 5 years
- 31) I'm in my 15th year!
- 32) I've worked independently off and on for 40 years. I've had to go captive for several jobs, but I always go back to being independent.
- 33) Well it has been about 7 months now...technically we were legal 10 months ago but didn't start full time until months after we legally established our businesses.
- 34) Ten years working professionally. 6 years on my own or freelancing while working other jobs.
- 35) 15+
- 36) 9
- 37) 16
- 38) About 15 years, with two "employee" periods of about 18 months each. I much prefer independent!
- 39) 6 years, 9 months.
- 40) 6 months
- 41) 20
- 42) Since 1993 -- 12 years and counting.
- 43) 4
- 44) 7.5 years!
- 45) Less than one year.

4. What do you think was your biggest obstacle to success (related to gender)?

- 1) Not being taken seriously, especially in the male-dominated cultures in which I worked. My greatest obstacles were overcome by demonstrating professionalism, intelligence, good solutions to complicated problems, and providing consistent work that was appropriate for the task(s). Also, managing people successfully and giving credit to my team members allowed others to gain more respect for me and my work.
- 2) I don't think anything about being a female has been an obstacle at all. In fact, I think it has been beneficial.
- 3) I don't always ask for more money when I should. I list this as gender-related because articles say it is, though I don't know that with certainty.
- 4) I have encountered two bankers who were deeply uncomfortable with me -- one very early on tried to pressure me into adding my husband as a corporate officer.

In a few cases, clients have tried to bully or intimidate me. I'm not sure that's gender-related -- maybe they try it with all their vendors.

- 5)
- 6) Certain clients (thankfully, not many), are happy to work with me on projects, but when it comes to making the deal (discussing terms, etc.), they try to go through my male employees.
- 7) Finding contacts and networking groups where I truly feel comfortable.
- 8) It's difficult to handle all the responsibilities of a wife, mother, and daughter while devoting oneself to a demanding business. I've lost work and passed over jobs because of the needs of my family.

Of course, I think this is probably not such a problem for the younger generation who seem to share responsibilities more than my generation.

- 9) I can't think of any that are related to gender.
- 10) not being part of the "good old boys" network
- 11) Learning how to communicate with clients. I am naturally assertive and outspoken. These traits in a man are highly valued. In a woman, they are a handicap.
- 12)
- 13) I prefer to lock myself in a room, turn on the stereo and put my head down and work. It was hard adjusting to a need to get referrals, sometimes do boring and/or repetitive work, at times deal with some major jerks, etc. Money was also an issue - it's scary to go from what you think you can make vs. what you know you are making.
- 14) I think the biggest obstacle is getting jobs in manufacturing. Most of my experience is in accounting and software docs. Employers don't want to take the chance that I could

write about manufacturing even though I think the principles are the same.

- 15) Probably my lack of exuberance in sales and marketing. I network on a small scale. I wouldn't blame it on gender. Next biggest is gender related, I think. I'm not all out pushing for business success. I try to balance my business efforts with the flex that's supposed to come from owning a business so that I'm there for my family (husband and two pre-teen girls.)
- 16) Some people tend not to perceive women as being technically adept. But that wasn't my biggest obstacle in success, just the only one related to gender. I happen to be very technically adept, and by asking pointed questions, could usually get a client to understand that I could handle most anything.
- 17) Getting funding. I've never needed a substantial loan, but even getting a business line of credit was much more difficult for me than it was for my male colleagues, so they tell me.
- 18) Not knowing when to charge more.
- 19) Some folks still see us as glorified typists. If I hear "I just need you to make this pretty" I may scream. I wonder if this happens to male technical writers.....
- 20) Not enough time.
- 21) Having people understand that I am technically-minded. Some people have assumed that my husband is the only techie in the business.
- 22) Being taken seriously at first. Actually, I think I gave up some of my femininity to make it in a man's world. I've realized in the past few years the uniqueness women bring to the table and have tried to incorporate the "feminine way" into my business dealings more and more.
- 23) I have not encountered any unsurmountable obstacles.
- 24) People often underestimate my technical abilities because I'm a woman. However, once I get started things usually straighten out.
- 25) Having male customers see the value in my expertise at writing, designing, and arranging online material.
- 26) I think I started the business at a good time because the "dilletante" perception of a freelancer was no longer as predominant as it was during the 1980s and earlier. Most of the people I knew who were independents in the 1980s dealt with the perception that they were "just working a bit to keep their hand in" while they stayed at home to raise the kids, and their husbands really made the money. But I don't believe I ran into that at all. Of course, most people knew I did not have kids. And, by the mid-1990s, with all the downsizings, more people were going independent in many fields.
- 27) I don't believe I have any obstacles that are related to gender. My biggest obstacle is finding enough time to do everything I want/need to do.

- 28) None so far.
- 29) Getting men to understand that technical writing does not mean that I am a secretary and that it is a challenging profession that requires knowledge and expertise.
- 30) my age
- 31) I can't think of an obstacle related to gender. I'm pretty assertive and work well with the boys.
- 32) Forty years ago, almost all technical writers were men. I have lost jobs where I've been told by the company president that it came down to me and a man, and he hired the man because he thought a man would have the confidence of his engineers over a woman. Now, there are more women, but the perception is still that men are better for the heavy work.
- 33) My age combined with my gender has been an obstacle. That and I am *extremely* outspoken. I guess I tend to be very aggressive in a business environment. That's not a quality that males are used to from young women. I was working at a company that was heavily dominated by males. My ways of handling business didn't go over well with them. My obstacle was realizing that there wasn't something wrong with me. I had to learn how not to be threatening but still be assertive. A lot of times I don't feel like people take me seriously because of my age. I'm still dealing with that obstacle. People are more accepting of young male prodigies. Young female hotshots are more rare. (not to say that I am either a prodigy or a hot shot) It's a matter of being taken seriously.
- 34) I suffer from too much patience, youth and good looks which bias my employers. Twice I have been hired with great doubt that a pretty young woman can be so capable and twice both employers have revealed later their dilemma and apologized for their doubts.
- 35)
- 36) Getting people to take a blonde curly haired woman seriously, I also think some businesses are apt to offer to pay men more money for the same projects.
- 37) Taking time off from my "career" - or rather, reducing my workload to 3 or 4 days a month - when I first had my children.
- 38) The "good ol' boy" mentality, which is a real factor in the area in which I live (Dallas, Texas) and in my chosen work area (technical writing in engineering departments rather than technical publications or training).
- 39)
- 40) None that are gender related.
- 41) I haven't encountered any obstacles that I could categorize as gender-related.
- 42) I cannot think of any gender-based obstacles. I believe that the lack of respect or

understanding for the field of tech writing has been an obstacle, but that's rather gender neutral.

- 43) My tendency for self-effacement: I don't ask for what I am worth.
- 44) All the years leading up to this. I worked in male environments for 10 years prior to working solidly in this business, during the 70's and early 80's. It was formative! I was lucky to have solid backing all through the early 2000-2005 years. I think people feel if you've survived to that point, you've 'earned' some help.
- 45) Financing--I didn't feel that we were taken seriously until we walked into the bank with a very big contract in hand.

5. Where do you go for advice?

- 1) Mainly, four of my peers, three of whom are in STC and another former coworker that is a high-level manager in the corporation in which she works.
- 2) STC colleagues, other self-employed people, friends
- 3) * Online, including web sites and lists that I'm on.
* Friends who serve as advisors.
* I feel that I could use more and better advice.
- 4) Coworkers within my business.
Husband.
Trusted colleagues and friends within the industry.
Friends who are outside our industry, but professionals within their field.
I'll listen to anyone's advice!
- 5) STC CIC colleagues, other independents in related fields. I go to the internet for information, but to people for advice.
- 6) The STC Independents SIG, other small business owners.
- 7) STC colleagues. Used to be WE alumni when I was in MO.
- 8) Association of Professional Communication Consultants

Several sharp business men and women that I know well in the area
- 9) Fellow writers, e-mail lists (STC and other), my other local affiliations of writers and WBON (Women Business Owner's Network).
- 10) fellow independents
- 11) The STC CIC listserv.

- 12) I've joined some business organizations which can be helpful. Also, I network at various organizations and ask people I meet for advice.
- 13) The CIC SIG list has been great, as has their Web site. I also have a "designated" person for each area I might need help with: for example, a fellow technical expert, a marketing writer, a friend who is great with graphics, a co-worker who is willing to edit things in exchange for some babysitting or a sub-contracted assignment.
- 14) STC Consultant & Independent Contractor SIG Discussion List and my network of STC friends.
- 15) I had a great mentor when I started, actually two, but they're both in another city and very focused on their businesses. Now I try to read a wide variety of information sources on the web (stc lists, business sites). I also joined the local high tech business support association for a year and will likely rejoin next year. This year, my schedule didn't mesh well with attending morning business hour meetings. I pursue conversations about business, balance, sales and marketing with a variety of people in my life.
- 16) I use listservs, and I have a couple of good macro writers I always turn to for help. For business advice, I've gleaned what I could from conferences. My accountant has been enormously helpful in helping make the business work structurally for me. I also belong to a consortium of indexers that has a list only read by the members (no clients on the list.) That list helps us discuss issues we can't raise elsewhere.
- 17) For busines advice? I belong to the Alberta Entrepreneurs Association (and sit on the board). Edmonton also has a terrific government-run business resource called The Busines Link.

For web development advice? A series of newsgroups, many of which are sponsored by Macromedia and which I sincerely hope survive the merge with Adobe. I have also attended a conference called TODCON (The Other Dreamweaver CONference), and have made professional contacts there.
- 18) Email lists - STC and other. Friends and associates who are in similar businesses.
- 19) 1) my husband 2) Friends in the biz
- 20) Past co-workers, current colleagues who are also self-employed, my husband (who is self-employed), my family.
- 21) Other independents, books, seminars/conferences, and newsletters.
- 22) I have a few women business friends that I talk to. Otherwise, I go within.
- 23) My husband, my bread-and-butter client (successful scientific, woman-owned small business), my STC friends that I lunch with once a month, a couple of the leaders in the Management SIG, a couple of Unitarians that manage large tech. pubs. departments, my bookkeeper (my daughter), my broker.

- 24) Women's networking groups, the online community of technical writers, and of course my husband.
- 25) The CIC special interest group or other private online communities, wherever seems appropriate for that particular issue.
- 26) STC and other friends who had been independent for a number of years. We formed an informal group in the mid-1990s called the Society of Writing Consultants to provide each other with advice and also to refer work. We met fairly regularly until about two years ago. I think we ran out of subject matter and got too busy--but we still keep in touch when we have questions or referrals via email.
- 27) Professional organizations I belong to.
My friend and mentor.
- 28) Fellow women business owners, the few listserves I'm on are a big help, my business mentor.
- 29) My friend, Marge, who also is a female business owner, although her business is not in the technical arena.
- 30) other women independents (esp. my best friend), my husband, my hairdresser :-)
- 31) On business? To the CIC SIG email discussion group, to our local CIC SIG group, to another organization (APCC) that has a listserv, to individual colleagues who are independents, and occasionally to publications such as Intercom.
- 32) I go to the STC members of my Aloha Chapter and to the members of the STC lone writers and consultants sigs.
- 33) To Suzanne first since she knows me the best.
Otherwise I just hop online and start reading anything I can get my hands on.
- 34) I talk to my father. He didn't raise me to be gender-aware so that I would never feel different than a man in the business world. I soon discovered the gender problems on my own while being sexually harassed and disrespected. My father has suffered a lot of age and ethnic origin discrimination himself so we have a lot to talk about.
- 35) my father
- 36) My husband, my marketing people, and my peers.
- 37) STC colleagues and SIG lists as needed.
- 38) Several friends - interestingly, all female - who are also independent contractors.
- 39) I seek advice from colleagues and friends, and tax advice from my certified tax preparer.

- 40) My husband, my friends, a few people I have met while networking.
- 41) That depends. I have a couple of friends who used to be agents; they help me scope out proposals. I consult my husband's contract lawyer when necessary.
- 42) 1 - STC lists!
2 - Other independents I know personally.
- 43) My husband is an advisor.
- 44) Other women. My CPA, my accountant. My husband usually has a perspective that is opposite what my 'gut' tells me, so I seek validation of my instincts through other women. STC, and my friends at STC.
- 45) Colleagues, and I'm also a student at the School of Hard Knocks. :)

6. What advice would you give to a woman considering forming an independent business?

- 1) Find a mentor. Do your homework and make sure that you have a market niche that will work for you and you love what you do. Create a business plan. Find other women AND men who will support what you do.
- 2) Be passionate about what you are doing. Don't just do it because it makes sense for other people in your life. I'm self-employed for both for both of these reasons. But without the passion, I wouldn't have been able to stick with it.
- 3) * There are many women independent business owners and a lot of available resources. You are not alone.
* Keep in contact with people from your past. They are a resource too. (This only works if they were constructive people, of course.)
* Figure out what you're not good at (e.g., networking, keeping books) and either get better at it or find someone to help you out.
- 4) 1. If you can't sell, don't do it.
2. Unless you have an excellent network, don't do it.
3. Get the rest of your life in order. That is:
a. Make sure that your significant other is supportive.
b. Make sure your finances can survive the startup phase.
c. Get your health insurance in order.
d. Think about how you want to integrate your business with other obligations (family, friends, hobbies, interests).
4. Be creative and flexible.
- 5) Realize that you're going to spend about 1/3 of your time doing the work, and spend 1/3 getting the work, and 1/3 taking care of the work (billing, taxes, etc.)
- 6) It is much, much harder than you think it will be. But it has allowed me time flexibility with my children (attending daytime events at their school, staying home with them when they are ill, etc.).

Find a first-rate attorney and CPA! Whatever money you spend on these services will be well worth it. Hiring professionals to keep you from making expensive legal and accounting mistakes is the best money you can spend.

- 7) Learn about business. Find a mentor.
- 8) If you have a passion, follow it. But network, don't try to be all things to all people. Analyze your strengths and capitalize on them.

Network and build relationships.

You'll have to work unbelievable hours to get started, but then you can begin to reserve time for yourself. Schedule regular appointments with yourself for down time and honor them.

When you make a mistake, do whatever you can to make it right, then learn from it, and move on. Don't waste the energy of agonizing over mistakes or failures. Expect to make mistakes.

Love people, look for their strengths and help them capitalize on them.

- 9)
- 10) Be realistic about your projected cash flow. Don't launch a business without a cash cushion. Be aware that big companies are frequently slow to pay small businesses.
- 11) If you are naturally outgoing and gregarious, be alert to signs of depression if you work alone from a home office. Not all women's personalities are suited for isolated working conditions.
- 12) Use your contacts. Don't be afraid to ask people for advice. Join organizations that help you develop professionally. For example, I joined Society for Human Resource Management which helps a lot with dealing with employees.
- 13)
 1. Have a plan and a budget. Everything from the hours you'll work on assignments vs. hours required finding work to how much you paid for those rubberbands and file folders. Keep all receipts.
 2. Get an accountant; don't try to handle the money aspects on your own.
 3. Send out at least 20 e-mails a week that either serve as a "don't forget I'm here..." to "just keeping in touch; here's an article that might help you with that project on XYZ that you're handling..."
 4. Don't panic. If you have the skills, are an enthusiastic worker, have maintained good working relationships with former employers/co-workers, and like change, you'll do fine. If you hate changes, worry about money all the time, don't have a designated area for your office, and don't like meeting new people and making "cold" calls, you won't succeed.
- 14) Be sure to have your benefits (health, life, retirement, e&o insurance) covered before becoming independent. They are an expensive part of business and you can't live without them. You might tempt fate and try to do without insurance, but the stress you'll have if you do need it will not be worth it. I know some writers who work for less than I do because they don't have insurance covered. That's okay since I still stay employed

and don't have that added stress.

- 15)
 1. Work through the research and financial evaluation required to put together a business plan. You learn things about yourself and your proposed business through the process.
 2. Part of it is ensuring that you have goals laid out with milestones or check points. Think ahead about what you consider "success", "hanging in", and "failure".
 3. Identify what would cause you to consider the whole thing failure enough to give up. Second guess when you hit a dry spot is hellish.
 4. Make sure you have people around who are knowledgeable or interested in business building. I've found that they don't have to be experts if they are well-read, and quick-minded. I take ideas from lots of people during the oddest discussions sometimes.

- 16) Ask who will be minding the storefront if you are ill or there is a problem preventing you from working. We all need to ask ourselves this. There aren't any great solutions.

- 17) Spend the time to create a killer business plan.

Don't listen to the nay-sayers.

Watch the balance of personal life / professional life; it's easy to get out of whack.

Do a lot of business networking.

- 18) Learn all of the hidden tasks and costs that underlie any project, and don't underestimate them!

- 19) Make sure you either have some funds set aside for the down time or another means of support. Network, network, network. Make sure you can work alone and will stick to a task, even if the mall and the Lifetime Movie Network beckons.....

- 20) Go for it.

- 21) Be confident in yourself and your abilities. If you aren't, people will smell it on you! By the same token, make sure you're not in over your head and doing things that you aren't qualified to do. Also, don't be afraid to compete in the same environment as similar businesses that are owned by men.

- 22) Be clear on your goals and on your reasons for going into business for yourself. Have a reserve of funds, just in case. Have a good plan. Trust.

- 23) Go for it.

- 24) Go for it! As an aside... when you start out, spend some money on serious looking clothes, a good PDA, and a nice leather briefcase. Being organized and making a good impression on clients makes things easier. I also suggest looking into a good accountant or tax advisor. This can save tons of time and money. Ask around and interview people. If things go well, this will be an important and long lasting relationship.

- 25) Get outside every day and run.
Learn QuickBooks or pay an accountant.
Stay on top of new technologies.

Read a non-fiction book to do with your business every month.
If you provide services, tell yourself that every day---"I am here to serve, not make a buck." The bucks will come.

- 26) -Work in a "regular" job for several years so you understand the business environment and thus, can better serve your eventual clients.
-If you need a regular paycheck, i.e., can't handle the ups and downs of independent work because you have three kids who need orthodontia (or similar situation), DON'T DO IT.
-Be realistic about money and setting fees. Ask about local levels. Remember that about 40% of what you earn goes out the door in taxes. You pay the full 14% of your net for Social Security.

Betsy--Two colleagues and I did a presentation on this for an STC conference several years ago, called "Report from the Self-Employment Trenches." We submitted things for the Proceedings. If you cannot find it, let me know, and I can send you something.

- 27) - Do lots of research, then do more research on the type of business you want to go into.
- Seek support through professional organizations, small business associations, web sites related to women-owned business.
- Write a solid business plan.
- Be flexible.
- Understand that you will continually need to reinvent yourself to keep ahead of the competition.
- Start part-time if you can't afford to give up your 'day job'
- If you have a family, make sure you discuss your business ideas with your family.
- 28) Take a small business development course, one that makes you write a business plan. Then write a business plan! Learn about accounting/bookkeeping as it relates to your business. Read and research a lot before you begin. Have fun, be adaptable and know that you'll be working more than 40 hours a week!
- 29) Plan. The more you have planned (including writing a business plan) the better-prepared you are.
Market. Treat what you do as a business and not just as a job. While you can make money using third parties to source work for you, you are handing over control of your destiny to someone else whose interests are not necessarily in your best interests. Meet and greet. Get out and network. While it may not be in your comfort zone, people buy from (and refer to) people they know.
Say no. Don't be afraid to say no if something doesn't feel right or be afraid to fire a client that isn't working out for you.
- 30) ***** INCORPORATE *****
** get a trustworthy, non-greedy accountant who can help you set up your books and run your payroll.
** ensure you have good solid health insurance coverage.
** pay out business "expenses" before paying yourself a salary.
** pace your salary to allow reserving some of your revenues for "dry" periods
***** NETWORK *****
** purchase general liability insurance and keep it current, as it may be required by potential clients.

- 31) Go for it! Read the CIC SIG online book. Get a lawyer and an accountant. Join a peer

organization and several professional organizations that your potential customers belong to.

- 32) Do not be afraid to ask for help from your peers. Tell the truth when asked about your expertise. Bring samples of your work, but do not let prospective clients keep the samples. Bid the job a bit higher than you really expect. Often, the company won't even dicker with you over it.
- 33) Go for it!
Just plan things out very well. Save your money, crunch the numbers and don't go out on your own until you have a client or a good nest egg.
- 34) a) Femininity is a strong asset that must not be confused with sexuality. Dress code is half the battle in business and you can retain your femininity without compromising who you are. Men's suits are their armor and we need ours.
b) Always ask for a deposit and don't mother clients who are willing to listen to you or your advice. As a woman you can get away with much more hard honest talk with male clients because they will listen without being threatened. That is a very strong position to hold.
c) If you feel that your opinion or you as a person are not being respected, tell your client and if he/she doesn't understand, walk away: there is more business to be had elsewhere.
d) Women with a strong attitude threaten other women as much as men: don't forget that you are a woman when you're dealing with other clients and place them in a peer, apprentice or mentor position (whichever is appropriate) in a nurturing and accepting manner. Women are competitive with each other in passive/aggressive ways that are not easy to detect.
- 35) Go for it.
- 36) Go for it, but be willing to work very hard. No business is easy.
- 37) It isn't nearly as lucrative as you think, because you don't get paid for all the time you take off. Also, make sure to set boundaries with people from your personal life who may want to take advantage of your business freedom ("oh, could you run this errand for me? would you please reschedule your meetings? chat with me for a couple of hours? meet so-and-so at the airport? After all, you don't have a "real" job!")
- 38) Go for it! I'd also give - and have given - practical advice such as rates and job contacts.
- 39) Weigh the pros and cons of becoming incorporated. Make certain that you can handle or hire someone capable to deal with the additional paperwork.
- 40) Have patience. Learn as much as you can. Know that the first year is tough. Ask people for help. Try to meet lots of different kinds of people.
- 41) Your gender is irrelevant. Just go for it.
- 42) 1 - Create some form of business plan - not for the banks, but for yourself! Use the structure to force yourself to think through and plan for things like funding, marketing,

taxes, insurance, etc.

2 - Find a mentor, preferably someone who is already independent, to ask lots of questions.

3 - Network, network, network! Join groups. Talk to family, friends, and current/former co-workers.

- 43) Decide what level you want to succeed at. That is, do you want to be a single-person shop or do you want to grow and expand to have multiple projects with employees, etc. These are two very different ways of being in business.
- 44) Think twice. It's tough. It's really lonely. And at many points there is just you to take a stand and defend it against all other perspectives. Finally, be prepared to be wrong sometimes, and accept responsibility for your errors. It's painful, but you do grow through it. After a while, it gets to be fun.
- 45) Have a rock solid business plan before you start looking for clients and financing.

7. Are you certified as a Woman-Owned Enterprise (more than 51% of your business is controlled by a woman?)

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7) At the federal level
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)
- 11)
- 12)
- 13) At the local level, At the federal level

14)

15)

16)

17)

18)

19)

20)

21)

22)

23)

24)

25)

26) At the local level

27)

28)

29)

30)

31) At the local level, At the state level

32) At the state level

33) At the local level

34)

35)

36) At the local level, At the state level, At the federal level

37) At the state level, At the federal level

38)

39)

40)

41) At the local level, At the state level

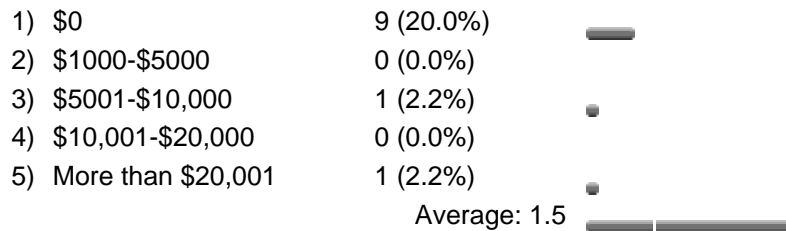
42)

43) At the local level

44) At the local level

45)

8. If you are certified, how much business have you received as a result of your certification (over the life of your certification)?



9. Is there anything else you'd like to say about having a woman-owned business?

1) I have not become certified as a woman-owned business, because I haven't yet felt it necessary, but there wasn't an option for that in question 7.

2)

3) I've been very honest about my success as self-employed business woman. Frankly, I can do what I do because my husband does what he does. (Sounds sexist but is very true in my case.) My medical insurance is covered by his job and his salary has been steady and more than dependable. Otherwise, it would have been much more challenging to succeed and would have required much more courage to be independent. Plus, my hourly rate would have had to be much higher.

4)

- 5) ALL freelancers and small business owners, men and women, must be comfortable with uncertainty. If you aren't, don't quit your day job.
- 6) My state makes it very difficult to become certified as a woman-owned business and I've been advised at workshops that it is not worth the hassle. They lump women in the ethnic minority category. I would be interested in STC-sponsored learning opportunities to learn how to get on the federal vendor schedule and to help acquire certification.
- 7) A lot of business women like to do business with other women. Take advantage of that by networking with them. Also, put together as strong a team as you can. Find people who are good at what they do (accountants, benefits, insurance, etc.) and use them! Decide what you want out of the business and work towards that. You want this to be fun.
- 8) It's been great and I love the freedom and variety. I do miss the people and company outings, but not so much that I want to go back right now. I tend to work for 5 years at a company, then go out on my own using the knowledge I've just gained, then I go back to working for a company, then out on my own, etc. It just seems to work for me that way. I also have a secondary job that I can devote as much or little time to as I want - it's a job taking tech support calls from a major communications company. I get paid in minutes at the end of each week. I don't have to do it for the money, but it's fun and something to do in between the real work! And I get a nice little surprise at the end of the week!
- 9)
- 10) For tax and employment reasons we made the business a family affair, though I have controlling interest.

I love having a business and doing my own thing. I also like the whole process of getting a business off the ground. I'm currently outlining a business plan for another business not related to writing. I ran the idea by some SME's and will be doing the research and fin juggling to determine what it would take to get it off the ground. I have no intention of giving up my current business, I'll split my time. I'm pursuing partners for the second business. I realized when I found this potential opportunity, that I'd been looking for something for the last 2 years or so. Go figure.

Have fun.

- 11) I couldn't go back to any other way of working. Sure, it is a lot of work, and there are too many times when I have too much work, and times when I don't have enough. But I feel free, I don't feel possessed by my business.
- 12) I'm in Canada not in the US, so the certification as a Woman-Owned Business does not apply to me.
- 13) I think of myself as self-employed, but I don't focus on being woman-owned. Although it's integral to who I am, I don't consider myself any differently from any other small business.
- 14) I'd love to see women support one another more on a professional level, much like men

do with the Rotary, the Elks, etc.

- 15) I would like to be certified and I would like to get business because of it. I just don't know how to go about it.
- 16) It is a pet peeve of mine to see women set up a woman-owned business when they aren't as knowledgeable about the core competencies of the business. I know several women who own highly technical businesses, but their partner is the one that has the bulk of the knowledge in that area. They are basically setting it up for the fringe benefits. I think that diminishes the value of woman-owned businesses and makes it more difficult for us to be taken seriously.
- 17) I don't really see myself as being that different from a man in business. Some men are more aggressive about their business than others; so are some women. At this point, I'm just "me."
- 18) I would not consider going back to working as a captured employee.
- 19) Believe in yourself. If you feel equal to any man, you will be.
- 20) It's fun! :) I love it.
- 21) Some clients have had me sign forms saying that I am a woman-owned business for their reports on their use of minority and woman-owned vendors. I don't know whether this relates to the certification questions above. I have never submitted forms directly to the local, state, or federal gov re this subject.
- 22)
- 23)
- 24) Male or female, being in charge of your own destiny may be scary but may be the best thing you could ever do. Nothing ventured, nothing gained... :-)
- 25) ** best move I ever made **
However, you MUST have confidence in yourself and not be afraid to go after contracts. also, ***NETWORK*** with other professionals (independent and otherwise)
- 26) Beware of overspending on advertising, getting on special website "hit" lists, your office, and anything else, especially if you intend to be a one-person operation.
- 27) I haven't traded on being a woman-owned business, although I can say that I feel compelled to be heads above the competition on any job that I do.
- 28) Not sure if we're certified but we are 100% female owned.

Owning my own business is the best thing I've ever done. It's been my dream forever. I can't believe I am lucky enough to have started this as a 23 year old. It is almost surreal!!

I did an interview for Verlane Edwards on this topic earlier this year. It was either her Master's or Doctorate thesis. I can send you her email if you'd like to speak with her.
- JoAnna Springsteen jluvsu2@gmail.com

- 29) It is very hard to venture out there alone at any age or gender. Men fall victim to false comraderie and handshakes and women fall victim to flattery and false promises. You should always be aware of your gender and even more important, the gender of others. If you are assertive and also have the gift of empathy and loyalty, your business will thrive. I am proud to have my own business and I am also proud that my father empowered me to do so rather than sheltering me from the possibility. If you have daughters, nieces or female students, employ them and mentor them. If you are very successful, consider interns and talk to local schools and colleges to young people as a woman business owner. Enlighten some men and boys on the way.
- 30)
- 31) Some male employees I've had think that I have trouble letting go of any control of any part of the business. Well, it is my business, afterall.
- 32)
- 33) It's one of the best business moves that I ever made.
- 34)
- 35) I have only recently become certified at the local and state level; it is too early to tell if there's any advantage. I detest having to go through the red tape to get a few extra points on a government proposal, but without them, I'll fail for sure.
- 36) Good luck and remember to enjoy the ride!
- 37) There are a lot of opportunities but there is also a lot of work required to pursue them.
- 38) I didn't really want to start a business by myself. If I were to have a choice, I'd still have chosen not to take this path. Now that I have taken it, though, through the accident of life, I've learned a lot. I've learned a lot about myself. I'm much stronger, although perhaps not as likeable! I have let go of always seeking to be liked, and I've been forced to let go of always needing to be 'right.' I've learned that there are choices, and many choices aren't necessary 'good' they just 'are.' These are big lessons. Moreover, I learn every day. I 'paid my dues,' and I have fun, now.

Note: Woman certification hasn't directly added revenue to my business, but it has enhanced some companies' views of my offerings. It forms a check box that can be checked in the event my company is up against one that is predominantly male. For that reason, I keep it at the local level, and I keep it up to date.

39)

