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## Paths to Success: She Jump-Started Her Business ... How?

Written by [Faith Attaguile](#) on August 16, 2012 · [2 Comments](#)



I first met Stephanie Mundle at the power-packed 2012 Web Intensive in San Diego.

You could've heard a pin drop as she spoke during the Success Panel presentations. Her unique story about how she jump-started her business last year fascinated everyone.

But before I tell you what Stephanie did, let me tell you a little about who she is.

Because there's something about her ... a willingness to take the leap and embrace the risk ... that serves as a shining example to all of us.

### **Her nickname could be “What-Else-Can-I-Do?”**

A high school graduate at 16, Stephanie didn't go directly to college. Her parents urged her to “look around” for a year, to take time to figure out what she really wanted to do.

Wisely, she listened to them. She went out and experienced the real world. In fact, Stephanie got so involved in the real world, she happily took 13 years to get her undergrad biology degree.

During that time she worked several jobs, including quality control checks for Hiram Walker Distillery, a stint as a tax accountant, and work for a concrete company. Since then, she's owned an office equipment and computer rental company, a landscaping company, and a container nursery. She even cut grass at one point!

Stephanie talked a little about her experience-rich working career.

“My life is strange,” she mused. “Everything I do, I do for about 2 years. It takes around 6 months to learn something, a year to get good at it, and 6 months to give it away. So, in 35 years of working, I've done about 15 different jobs.

“I mean, if you find something you want to do for 40 years, great! Go for it! But not many people find that. They go deeper and deeper into the same rut instead of asking, ‘What else can I do?’”

And just about a year ago, Stephanie asked herself that very question ... once again. This time, she came up with copywriting.

## **Next Stop: Freelance Copywriter**

Stephanie wasn't exactly new to copywriting. She'd already studied advertising and marketing from the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

She'd done her own marketing when she owned her various businesses, and worked on marketing projects for others as well.

She also jumped at the chance to take AWAI's *Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*. Stephanie figures that was around 2004.

"Steve Slaunwhite edited my sales letter assignment," she chuckled. "It's a small world!"

At the AWAI Web Intensive, in March 2011, things really began clicking for her.

After listening to Jay White's presentation on autoresponders, she decided to focus on email copywriting. I asked why.

"I write very concisely," she answered. "I'm not a long sales letter person, I'm not salesy! To me, emails are more fun. They can be educational and their style is short and I like that. So I decided I was going to do autoresponders. After that, I focused on my area of interest — agriculture."

## **Crashing the Trade Show Party**

Stephanie had taken the first step and found her niche.

Now it was time to find clients, and trade shows seemed like a good first choice ...

"Trade shows were the best place to start for me," she noted. "Where else am I going to refine my market, get up-to-date with it, find out who's going, and what they're saying ... just get the feel of it? It was like total immersion, like going to France to learn French!"

In the past, Stephanie had attended many trade shows as an exhibitor, attendee, or assistant helping others set up their booths.

But, this was the first time she would be attending one as a copywriter.

Through research, she already knew about a trade show in Portland, only a 2-hour drive from her Seattle home. Having attended an earlier show there when she was a vendor, it was a natural to return as a copywriter. But the new show wasn't until August — two months away. That was too long a wait for Stephanie.

So she began looking at industry publications that listed trade shows her Dream Clients might attend. She also scoured the Internet checking out industry associations that sponsor shows.

Finally, Stephanie hit the jackpot! One of the largest trade shows in the country was coming up in Columbus, Ohio. Trouble was, she had only 10 days to prepare for it.

Realizing that, Stephanie sat back in her chair. Then she took a deep breath and declared, “So, okay. I’m doing this!” She went online to VistaPrint, designed her business cards, and ordered them with rush shipping. The cards came on a Friday. She flew out to Ohio the next day — exactly four months after her first 2011 Web Intensive.

“In the week I had leading up to the trade show, one of the things I did to calm myself down and get ready for the show was come up with my elevator speech,” she told me.

“It was something like, ‘What if I could show you a way to maintain contact with your customers on an ongoing basis so they’re thinking of you when they’re ready to buy?’”

Once she’d done that, Stephanie heaved a sigh of relief. Her pitch was ready. She had something to say! But she wasn’t finished yet.

### **She needed to do some discovery work.**

With an exhibitor list in hand, she checked out websites and identified products she was interested in. Then, she took the time to learn about them.

How large were these companies? Did they have a product she could get behind? Newsletters? Was their website engaging or did it need work? Did they show marketing savvy?

As she found the answers to these questions, Stephanie put together her Top 10 Dream Client List. These were companies she would want to talk to before anyone else.

### **“But why would *they* want to talk to *me*?”**

All the while, she worried about her “place” at the trade show. That negative voice we all have ... it nagged at her, too. “Do you even have a ‘right’ to go?” And, “Why on earth do you think anyone would want to talk with you once you arrive, anyway?”

It wasn’t about self-esteem. Instead she worried about “wasting their time,” knowing she wasn’t their primary target. Sound familiar?

But when Stephanie headed for Ohio, she set the negative thoughts aside and just went for it.

The first day of the trade show she was nervous and hardly talked to anyone. Instead, she wandered around the halls a lot, just absorbing the energy.

Telling me this, Stephanie grinned and said, “I was trying not to make eye contact.”

She hadn’t experienced a trade show as a copywriter before and needed to get her bearings ... Find the booths that attracted her both as a customer and a copywriter ... And discover the companies she might want to associate with over the long-term.

So she wandered up and down, back and forth, slowly figuring things out.

Finally, she decided it was time to make a move. She first approached the booths with attendants who looked bored and alone.

She'd start by striking up a conversation. She chatted about the weather, the show ... anything just to get comfortable talking to people.

"I didn't go with my card in hand, and the handshake, and all that," she said. "I would merely compliment them on their product or ask them about it, or just talk about the weather. Mostly chatty kinds of things, really. But my hand would be in my pocket, playing with my cards, so if they asked me what I did, I'd be ready."

### **What came next was a blockbuster.**

As luck would have it, the best contacts she got at this trade show were at the last two booths ... in the last hour ... of the last day.

"One client was a perfect symbiotic relationship," Stephanie noted. "They have autoresponder software and I was an autoresponder copywriter. I ended up speaking at their annual conference as a specialized copywriter. The other company was expanding and needed a lot of marketing and scientific materials written, and I've subsequently put together a number of scientific spec sheets for them."

But something else happened out of this experience.

Stephanie changed her focus from the very narrow horticulture niche to the agriculture industry.

"That first show changed everything," Stephanie told me. "It was well worth the cost. I could have flailed about for months or more if I hadn't gone there."

I asked her how much of what happened could be attributed to the pre-trade show homework she did.

"There was a learning curve, and it was important," she said. "But there was also blind luck ... being in the right place at the right time."

### **Her motto could be, "Just do it!"**

Attending that first trade show and putting herself out as a copywriter was a critical step in Stephanie's copywriting career. It gave her confidence and taught her how to make better use of her time at later trade shows.

Now, rather than nervously wandering around exhibitor halls when she attends a show, she spends her time talking with exhibitors on her Top 10 Dream Client List and connecting with new prospects.

Today, Stephanie's business is on a roll. She has:

- Steady client contracts for monthly newsletters.
- Big clients like HGTV!
- And new one-off clients from trade shows, always with the potential of becoming long-term clients.

The lesson in Stephanie's intriguing story?

Don't wait for tomorrow. Challenge yourself and take the risk today. Jump in and get your feet wet in the real world of your chosen niche.

Ask yourself, "What else can I do? What unique action can I take in my own niche to jump-start my business ... and put me on the path of a successful solopreneur?"

Figure that out and then ... *just do it!*

Like Stephanie did.

★★★★★ (3 votes, average: 4.67 out of 5)

## 2 Responses to "Paths to Success: She Jump-Started Her Business ... How?"

Read below or [add a comment...](#)



1. **Susan Liebold says:**

[August 17, 2012 at 9:27 am](#)

This article is very helpful to me. I have ideas, but struggle to put the process in order. This all makes sense to me and I really identify with Stephanie's feelings trying to start something new. My biggest challenge now to settle down and discern my niche. Thank you.

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2. **Marianne Foscarini says:**

[August 18, 2012 at 10:02 am](#)

Great article, Faith! I remember Stephanie well from the Web Intensive and she made the same impact on me. What impressed me the most was her willingness to "just do it." Thanks for the outline on how she did it. We can create our own opportunity in our own niche and just do it!