

## Shifting into Self-Employment or Starting a Business: *Nine Golden Nuggets from Women Who've Made it Work*



### 1. *Business plan, plan, plan*

Every new business benefits from having a plan before it starts, regardless of whether you're looking for external funding (a business plan is essential then). It helps you gauge whether your business will be a success as well as keeping you focussed on your goals. **Small tip, significant impact:** Read the advice and download useful tools and templates at [www.startups.co.uk](http://www.startups.co.uk)

### 2. *Create connections before you leap*

Referrals are by the far the best way to build a profitable business quickly. Are you LinkedIn? Do you have warm leads into your target client base? What relevant 'networking' events have you been to lately? Building a network to feed your business takes time and it pays to do this before making the leap into self-employment. **Small tip, significant impact:** Generate a handful of genuine testimonials for your product or service before you 'officially' launch.

### 3. *Be aspirin to clients' headaches*

When you've got a headache you reach for aspirin. What headaches or desires have your ideal customers got that you can soothe or fulfil? The best way to find out is to ask - use surveys or simply ask and listen or observe their behaviour to find out. **Small tip, significant impact:** Market yourself in terms of the problem or 'headache' you can solve for your clients.

### 4. *Have a vision, prioritise your goals*

Have a compelling vision of where you want to be in 5 years time. Working backwards, consider what you need to do each year, month, week to get you there. Most people over estimate what they can achieve in a year and underestimate what they can do in five. **Small tip, significant impact:** Plan your priorities for the week ahead, every week, making sure they tie in with your long term vision.

## 5. *Make marketing revolve around your ideal clients*

You can market yourself to anyone but you can't successfully market yourself to everyone. Who *is* your ideal customer? Different groups of people have different needs and are motivated by different things. Segment your market into different types of potential customers and decide which niche you want to occupy. **Small tip, significant impact:** Keep your ideal client in mind (a real person is all the more powerful) when you plan marketing activities and write promotional materials.

## 6. *Keep an eye on "The Competition"*

Do you know who's successfully attracting your would-be-client-base and why? Knowing who you're competing with and what your customers think about them is really valuable information because it helps you hone *your* business. **Small tip, significant impact:** Adopt the attitude that it's good to see, hear and sample the competition to keep your business thriving but be brave in sticking to your marketing guns if you've done your homework.

## 7. *Build a supportive community*

'Mastermind groups' are a way to harness collective wisdom, explore and test business ideas and maintain a buoyed-up feeling about your businesses. A small group of motivated people coming together regularly can move mountains, provided you take the actions you talked about! **Small tip, significant impact:** When you meet another business mind you click with why not suggest a 1-1 and grow it from there. I attribute my publishing deal to doing just this.

## 8. *Anticipate the impact of the transition*

Even significant life events you perceive as desirable and driven by yourself are associated with a period of worry/anxiety/wishing you'd never done it around 3-9 months after the 'event' took place. Knowledge is power so by being aware there'll be a slump after the initial honeymoon period of working for yourself, you can get through it more quickly. **Small tip, significant impact:** Consider what tactics you can use to motivate yourself through the sticky patch before the change begins – your mastermind group could be a help.

## 9. *Positivity, Proactivity & Persistence*

Psychologist Richard Wiseman studied 'lucky' and 'unlucky' people and found the crucial difference is the way the two groups notice, respond to or create opportunities. Profitable, sustainable businesses are built on perseverance, positivity and proactivity. As the US comic actor Milton Berne once said "*If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.*" **Small tip, significant impact:** Regularly remind yourself why you started your business and what you're passionate about – it drives the personable persistence that will pay off eventually.