

This business resource guide teaches the entrepreneurial woman when, where, why and how to ask for the help she needs, in order to reach her business goals and dreams, while always trusting herself and her intuition.

Ask Others, Trust Yourself: The Entrepreneurial Woman's Key to Success

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ASK OTHERS, TRUST YOURSELF

The Entrepreneurial Woman's Key to Success

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Introduction

I've always encouraged people to pursue their business dreams. Actually, it took me some time to accept the fact that some people never thought of the possibility of being an entrepreneur or could be overwhelmed by the thought of starting their own business, and may prefer to work for somebody else. Since you are reading this book, you are already pursuing your entrepreneurial goals or at least getting closer to making it happen. Congratulations! As you know from experience, running a business is challenging but amazingly rewarding. Being a small business owner can be lonely sometimes, but it doesn't have to be.

The idea for this book came to me after years editing my e-magazine, WomenandBiz.com, working at not-for-profit economic development organizations and offering business assistance to women. I soon realized that many women, when starting their businesses, had little or no clue about the types of business assistance available to them, or even that they could

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ask for help. This book is for those women who are about to start a business, or have been in business for one day or many years, and want to make sure their business succeeds. I will share my experience as a woman running my business, interviewing female business owners, helping to build my family's business, as well as my years of experience coaching other women about running theirs. My original plan was to prepare a directory of the associations and organizations that provide free or low-cost services to women, but the idea grew into this more complete guide. Not only is it important to know where to go, it is important to ask crucial questions, to work with professionals you trust, to have a support group, and to know when to pursue the suggestions you receive. You will learn more about who you are and you will have the tools you need to listen to your intuition and trust yourself.

This book will explain how you can ask for help without feeling powerless. Your strength in fact will allow you to realize that not having all the answers is okay. Asking for help takes courage and wisdom. You need courage to admit to yourself and others that you don't have all the answers. You need wisdom to decide which actions to take. You have to be prepared to accept or refuse the advice you receive, and to

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discern what works and what doesn't. You might be asking, "If I don't know the answer, how do I know which advice to follow?" That's a perfectly valid question, and I will address that in this book as well.

You will also learn when the best time is to ask for help. Yes, you guessed it... NOW! You might be thinking, "Why would I ask for help, especially now?" There is always a case to be made for asking for help. If your business is thriving and growing, it might be time to review your strategies and to ensure that business growth continues; if you have reached a plateau, it might be time to reinvent yourself; if you are in a lot of debt, it might be time to re-evaluate your approach. No matter what your situation, asking questions can help you get at least one step closer to your goal.

This book will show you what questions to ask and, most important, how to listen. After coaching many female business owners, I've realized that often they don't even know that their issues reach beyond what they originally thought. These lessons will help you to stay open to the variety of questions that might be raised by your coach; he/she will make sure you are covering all the loose ends.

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I will also provide you with specific questions to ask the professionals you might need to consult with as you grow. Finally, I offer you a list of resources that can help you take the next step.

CHAPTER 1

Self-Inquiry

Before you think about asking for help, I invite you to do a self-inquiry. Through questions and self-awareness, you will learn to investigate and examine your own feelings and intuition. There are probably more answers within you that can help you succeed than you'll find in any book, from any expert, or through any other resource.

It might be that you have only thought about launching a business, or it might be that you already have a business but envision making millions of dollars and you are stuck. There is nothing wrong with either picture, but it's important to find out where you stand and to think about your goals. Do you want to make a living, or do you want to thrive and succeed beyond that point? Is the purpose of the business to change the world?

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Would you like to be able to retire early? Do you want to keep working on your business forever?

There are no right or wrong answers, and even when you figure out what you really want at this point, your opinions and needs may change down the road. The business environment may change, as the market changes, your clients might want different things, and the competition might get fierce. When competitors take a large portion of your market, you can't keep doing what you've always done. On the other hand your lifestyle, priorities and family needs may change as well. When your family grows or your parents age, they will require more of your time, and you might need to readjust.

Here are some self-inquiry questions I found useful when working with women business owners. You might have thought of them before, but take some time to check in again, and see if your answers have changed.

- What is my vision for this business a year from now; two years from now; five, ten years from now?
- What is my vision for my life and my family's life?

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Are the two previous visions aligned? If they are, great! If not, which one could you revise to satisfy your needs and wants?

- How do I feel about my business today? Is it everything I dreamed of or is it draining me?
- What is my life's purpose? Is this business aligned with it? Or would this business help me fulfill my life's purpose by providing me the financial security I need to pursue it?
- How happy am I to work on this business? Would I rather be doing something else?
- Would it be fine to work 24/7? Or would I rather create a business that gives me the flexibility to only work part-time?
- Do I want to keep control of my business? Or would I like to have partners and share the responsibilities and profits?
- Would I like to build it, and then sell it in a few years?

Feel free to add your own questions.

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Reasons you started your business (T or F)

- T F I wanted to create a job for myself and make a living.
- T F I wanted to generate extra income while still keeping my full time job.
- T F I wanted to be my own boss and never have to work for anybody else again.
- T F I'm going to give this business a try, but if it doesn't work, the doors are still open at my last job.
- T F I want to have unlimited money coming in, and live an abundant and prosperous life always.
- T F This business allows me to practice all my talents and creativity.

The above statements will help you learn more about yourself, your commitment to your business, and your intentions.

Keep your answers handy; they will be helpful when you need to make crucial business decisions. You can always ask for help before reaching final conclusions to the questions above. But by looking at the big picture, you will know the level of help you need.

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If you have no idea of your vision, describe your ideal day, and what it would look like. Or look for signs in your current life. When do you feel the most alive? What do you enjoy most about your average day? The clearer you can get about your vision, the better and easier it is to build your business and get where you want to go.

Being True to Yourself

While dealing with the self-inquiry process, make sure to use a method that works for you. When a friend of mine had to choose between a new job offer and a growth opportunity at his current job, I suggested that he find a quiet place to reflect on it, to meditate and listen to the voice within. How he would do that, and which meditation strategy he would use, was ultimately up to him. Later, he told me that the meditation gave him a clearer sense of the best course of action. As long as you don't resist the process, allow yourself to learn on your own terms, and give yourself the freedom to choose what's best and move forward when you are ready, you will be able to find the method of self-inquiry that helps you achieve your goals. The book *The Seeker's Guide: Making Your Life a Spiritual*

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Adventure, by Elizabeth Lesser, offers many meditation techniques to help you get started, or go deeper with your current meditation practice. (This is also an excellent book for anyone seeking spiritual growth).

Since I've been writing, I read about other writers' methods of writing. Some people write until they reach 1,000 words each day, others first think about what they are going to write for days before writing, others write until they reach two pages a day, and still others prepare folders for each chapter and fill them with their research before starting to write.

We are all unique individuals with our own personalities, histories, and ways of being. When faced with many options, some people give each method a try to see what works best for them. Some people like to wait and look for signs. If they hear about the same system again and again, they pursue it. Others are willing to invest head on without being sure of the consequences, and some will do nothing. Which one are you? As long as you are not prone to doing nothing, you will be able to move forward, even if a method you try doesn't lead anywhere.

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In the discovery process, patience is important. It might take a while until you can see tangible results in your business, and going back and forth trying different strategies might not help either. You can choose to stick to a method for six months, and then reassess the situation. But if the method is not working for you, or the business is getting worse with no signs of improvement, it might be best to change your strategy immediately.

Through the process of self-inquiry, make sure to be kind to yourself. Running your own business can be lonely, and there isn't much recognition. I recommend that you take the time to celebrate every discovery, every deal, every success, every challenge you overcome, every opportunity. Don't wait for others to notice how great you are. You are great now, as you are—acknowledge it.

Inner Wisdom

Your inner wisdom is an undeniably strong source of inspiration. It doesn't matter where you're from, what your background is or what education you have. Inner wisdom can be

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very strong, and everyone has it. It might take a while to uncover it, or to use it to its full potential, but it can be done.

When making a crucial decision, check in with yourself. See how the course of action you choose resonates with you. Ask yourself and ask somebody else. Even do a little research and investigation on your own, to make sure that the advice you are receiving is accurate. If it still makes sense, then go for it. Do not allow yourself to be caught up in the hype of someone telling you how wonderful things can be, and make a quick decision to follow their advice. Otherwise you might forget to take a few minutes to look inside yourself and figure out if this is the right path.

Here are a few ways to find answers from within. Find a quiet place to meditate, sit down and relax, keep your feet flat on the ground to remain grounded and alert. Take a few deep breaths and concentrate on inhaling and exhaling. Then think about the situation you are facing, and ask yourself one or a few of these questions:

- What is the real problem?
- How can I best solve this issue?

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- What is the best option for me?
- Who should I consult with, if anyone?
- How do any of these options move me closer to my goals?

To deal with tough questions, you may also consider journaling, creating a vision board, drawing, taking your mind off the situation or visualizing solutions for the issues you are facing. With journaling, vision boards and drawing you can work on what comes to mind without censoring yourself or thinking too much about whether it makes sense. After you're done—sometimes it takes a few days to complete this step—you can review what you've done and look for signs of what you consider the most important step to follow. If for any reason you were not satisfied with the writing you did, you can pick up from where you left off and continue at another time. Eventually your ego stays quiet and your true self will show you the way. Other options include taking your mind off the situation, by singing, exercising, practicing yoga or dancing. Doing these things may help you clear your mind, and may allow you to be open to receiving an “A-HA” moment. Visualizing allows you to focus on what you want to create.

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Make sure to take your time, so that you don't end up focusing on what you don't want.

The method you use depends on your personality, and if you have no idea which one is best for you, that might be the first question you need to ask yourself. "Would I like to journal about this situation? Would I like to create a vision board? Would I like to draw?" You also need to be brave to read what you wrote, to interpret your drawings, to see beyond the pictures you chose for your vision board. You could ask someone else to tell you what he or she sees on your vision board or drawing, since his or her perception can be enlightening.

If you are able to take a few minutes a day to connect with your heart and intuition, the answers you are seeking might come to you. What are you feeling that could make a difference in your business right now? Don't get discouraged if the answers don't come to you the first time you try. That happens. I suggest that you change the question to an easier one, and pursue answers to that question first as a way to practice.

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You can concentrate on just one issue, or you can explore different issues. Usually I choose one issue that I'm having problems with. I start exploring the surface of the issue, but as I continue to journal or draw or use any other strategy, I end up going deeper and deeper into the problem and the final question and answer, even though it might not be the one that I first envisioned, will bring me the inspiration I need.

Can you ever get the wrong answers? Of course! If you are not in tune with your inner self, your internal voices will keep trying to protect you and will try anything possible to prevent a change in the status quo, or to make you avoid "mistakes". The answers you receive from within might not actually be the wrong answers; they might be the answers you are ready to face at this time. By focusing your attention in how you feel about the answers that are coming up, you will start noticing if there is any resistance to them and/or if they are the "wrong" answers for you to pursue. Stay true to your needs and be kind to yourself. Don't beat yourself up if you choose not to follow your intuition, or if you ignore the signs and decide to face deeper issues in the future. The energy spent blaming yourself could be used instead to take corrective action and make better

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decisions in the future, by learning to better understand and follow your intuition.

No method is bulletproof. Therefore, the more you research, the more people you trust and talk to, the more you listen to your inner wisdom, the more likely you will be directed to your best option at the moment. The most important thing is to take action. If you just think about your issues without doing anything, your ego, or other voices inside of you, might take over, dominate the conversation, and stop you from taking a real step forward.

Deciding to take action is not easy, but similar to working with a therapist, discussing the issues is just the first step. After seeing a therapist you have to take action with the new insights you've received, and live a different way, try different things in order to feel the changes. Remember to keep this in mind when asking for business help too. You are responsible for your own business growth, you are not handing the success and destiny of your business to anyone else. It is always up to you to get things done, even if getting things done means hiring someone who knows how to do it. It is still your decision to hire a skilled

professional. Remember to trust yourself at all times and to take action.

Knowing Yourself

Once you know in your core that you are in charge of your life and business, and nobody else can influence how you feel or act without your consent, you will be better prepared to receive the help you need. How do you get to that mindset? By keeping the focus within yourself. You can learn breathing exercises, you can meditate, and you can follow the self-inquiry exercises discussed earlier in this chapter.

As your business grows and you yourself are changing and facing different challenges, or going deeper within yourself in order to learn, the questions will change. Be open to asking yourself different, and more specific questions, such as these ones suggested by one of my mentors, the consultant Karen Watt, MA:

- If you are not feeling peaceful/joyful or when challenging feelings arise, what are your feelings trying to tell you?
- How often do you feel this way?

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- What is the pattern you keep recreating and why?
- What are your behaviors that are contributing to the pattern?
- If you didn't act this way, how would you act differently?
- What would happen if everything remained the same? How would you feel?
- What change in behavior would give you a different result or change how you feel about the situation?
- What can you do today to start changing the way you think about the situation and the way you act?
- What specific steps can you take?

Ms. Watt also suggests that when stuck or when you need to go deeper, different questions might be more appropriate:

- What is the question you are avoiding asking yourself?
- What question would deepen your understanding of the situation?
- How can you live with the question and tolerate the ambiguity of not knowing the answer immediately to garner the full understanding of the situation?

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Take some time to ask yourself these questions, and be open to what may come up. You might not want to face your patterns and own ways to handle pressure, but once you know they exist, it is your choice to continue your behavior or to make a change that can improve your life. Even if you don't see any issues with your own patterns, by consciously focusing on yourself and on how you act in certain situations, you will be able to move forward and to become the best you can be.

One of the advantages of becoming more knowledgeable of who you are, and of your triggers, is that you become aware of having certain reactions to your coach or mentor.

- If you feel the need always to be right every time someone disagrees with you, or has a different opinion about your next step, you might feel threatened and angry, and might miss out on a great business opportunity.
- If you feel the need to be loveable by agreeing with everyone, you might be ignoring your own feelings and intuition, and might end up doing something that isn't really true to yourself or your values and not so good for your business.

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- If you are not sure of what you want or need, you might have a tendency to follow someone else's advice, without fully analyzing it.

To get a sense of your triggers or how you relate with others, ask yourself: How do I feel/act/behave in relation to other people? Being conscious of your style is only one step in this process. Since you've been behaving a certain way most of your life, it isn't easy to break this pattern. With effort and daily exercises you can become aware of the pattern so that you can act in a different way. If you are the person I described who needs to always be right, the next time someone disagrees with you, stop for a moment and realize that it's not a matter of right or wrong but a difference of opinion. This might prevent you from feeling so compelled to put your foot down and stop listening.

Visualization

You can use visualization techniques in all areas of your

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business. Once you focus on finding the answers, the solutions, the key personnel, the funds—your results—will materialize effortlessly.

The answers to your business questions exist either within you, within someone you know, or within someone they know. One example of visualization might be to visualize someone who can help you. Even after searching for the right person, if you can't find anyone willing to help you, you can take a break from your search, just sit still, relax and visualize who the right person might be. You can focus your attention on the skill set and experience you're looking for. Continue to look and stay open to finding the right person. It might be that that one person who you didn't think of asking is the one with the answer for you. You will notice that the more you focus, the more quickly this person will show up for you.

As you develop your visualization skills, you will be able to manifest the results you need, or the person you need to help you with a particular project. For example, someone might just mention a project he/she worked on in the past, or someone new you meet at a networking event or trip might be able to help you. This is the alignment you are looking for and the universe

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will respond. In different times of my life, through visualization or trust, I manifested the exact person I needed to be in touch with. Don't forget that sometimes you might end up encountering some people who aren't the best fit, so it is critical to stay alert.

Things to remember before asking for help:

- Inquire within.
- Be honest and true to yourself.
- Listen to your inner wisdom.
- Journal, draw, create a vision board, and get clear about your intentions.
- Visualize the desired outcomes.
- Check in with yourself at all times.

This business resource guide teaches the entrepreneurial woman when, where, why and how to ask for the help she needs, in order to reach her business goals and dreams, while always trusting herself and her intuition.

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