

DUDE,  
SERIOUSLY,  
GO SOLO. THINK BIG!

Separating Fact  
From Fiction.

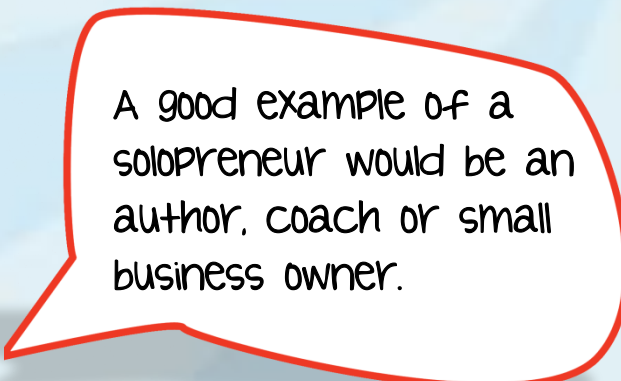


WRITTEN BY SUSAN P. ASCHER

# SO YOU WANT TO BE A SOLOPRENEUR?

Well I am here to shed some light on just what it means, not just by definition, but **IN REALITY!** In this quick, simple e-book we will separate fact from fiction to send you on your way to solopreneur success.

First let's understand the difference between an entrepreneur and a solopreneur. I have been both and while both require many of the same qualities for success, they are different in one main way. An entrepreneur starts a company with the idea of building something to sell. A solopreneur has a product, service or idea that they want to brand and /or differentiate. Examples of great entrepreneurs are Steve Jobs and Martha Stewart. Entrepreneurs eventually hire employees, the company grows, and at some point, they will have something to sell.



A good example of a solopreneur would be an author, coach or small business owner.

A solopreneur on the other hand, has an idea which differentiates what they do from the rest of the pack. Sometimes they turn into entrepreneurs, but many are perfectly happy to answer only to themselves, leaving the challenges of building a company and retaining employees behind to

focus on themselves and their service or product. A good example of a solopreneur would be an author, coach or small business person.

To see just how far this phenomenon has come, let's have a look at a new study that reports that there were 17.7 million independent workers in the

United States in 2013, up 5 percent from 2012 and 10 percent from 2011. The current number of people in the workforce is about 155 million, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, meaning that 8.6 percent of all workers are “solopreneurs”. This independent workforce is expected to grow to 24 million by 2018. By 2020, the report estimates that about half of the entire workforce will have been independent at some point in their lives. Will you be one of them?

The **REAL** questions are: Why do you want to become a solopreneur? How will you fund your business? What tools do you need to get started? Do you like networking and selling as much as you like to work on your own? Are you a good manager of your time? Do you want to build your business around your life, or your life around your business?

**Let's get started!**

\* \* \* \* \*

**FICTION: YOU LIKE TO WORK ALONE.**

**FACT: BUT IT GETS LONELY.**

Definition of Solopreneur from The Macmillan Dictionary: a business owner who works and runs their business **ALONE**. Root word of solopreneur: **SOLO**.

Working alone has its merits. You control your own schedule. You are in charge of your businesses' processes. You may have an assistant or contractors working with you, but you have no employees.

So how do you make sure that “no wo/man is an island?”

I was at a conference once, and the speaker mentioned the concept of “52 cups of coffee”. She was a master networker and her message was, if we have one cup of coffee a week we will grow our network exponentially by ending a year with having had 52 meetings.

I have taken that concept even further, and schedule **THREE** cups of coffee a week. Sometimes it’s coffee. Sometimes it’s lunch. Sometimes it’s a networking event.

But for sure, I schedule a meeting with a new contact, client, or potential client **AT LEAST** three times a week. This keeps me connected and in touch with the outside world. It also keeps me in **PROFESSIONAL MODE**.

While a lot of the solopreneurs I work with tell me they love the fact that they can work in their pajamas, that is something I don’t recommend as a steady diet. Of course, there may be days that you can elect to do so, but if you are adhering to the “3 cups of coffee a week strategy”, getting dressed and out the door keeps you connected and building your professional network.

I also stay in touch with my contacts via email, often with a tip, notice of an upcoming event at which I will be presenting, or an article of interest.

Bottom line, these activities take the loneliness out of being alone. But don’t misunderstand, once you have chosen the path of solopreneurship, you have made the decision to go it alone. On the other hand, keeping connected through networking and the “3 cups of coffee a week” theory, you will never feel lonely!



**FICTION: YOU MAY THINK YOU OWN YOUR TIME.**

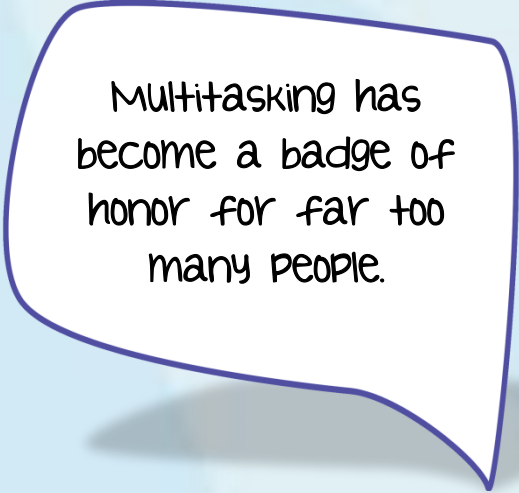
**FACT: BUT YOUR TIME IS NOT YOUR OWN.**

Now that you have left the cozy corporate world where everything is done for you, or if you are super brave and are taking your first foray into the business world on your own, let's look at that Myth of all Myths: **TIME MANAGEMENT IS AN OXYMORON!**

I have compiled a list of just 7 quick tips to help you manage your time.

### 1. MULTITASK. BUT ONLY WHEN IT MAKES SENSE.

Multitasking is a myth! Unfortunately, it has become a badge of honor for far too many people. The truth of the matter is that most of us are not good at it. And often, it wreaks havoc on our ability to focus and get anything done at all. Some multitasking is a no brainer. Even reading your email while talking on the phone is a challenge for the average person, because it is easy to miss a detail and lose concentration when you are busy trying to do more than one thing at a time. Part of being a great CEO or solopreneur is the ability to prioritize.



Multitasking has become a badge of honor for far too many people.

Where is it written that we have to be internet ninjas and respond to an email in a nanosecond? Or make someone else's emergency our priority? Decide what takes precedence. More often than not, this overused phrase called multitasking is such a catch word in today's business environment that it has become an essential part of getting nothing done at all.

If poorly executed, multitasking can do more harm than good. Checking emails while talking on the phone is fine, yes, but if you're involved in a serious task with a deadline, you need to devote your full concentration to it. Deciding which tasks are critical and which are not is part of being a successful CEO/soloprenuer.

## 2. DON'T JUST SCHEDULE BREAKS: TAKE THEM!

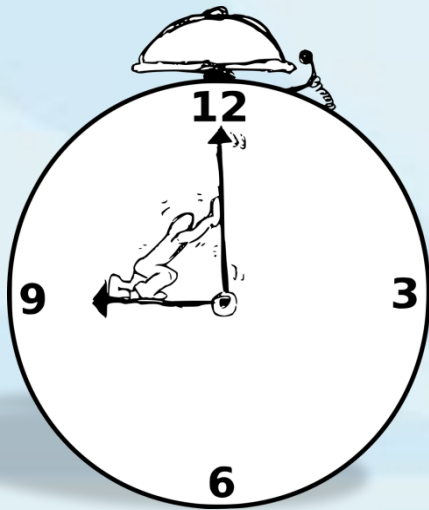
In order to re-create and re-energize, we have to not only schedule, but also, take breaks. Get up, stretch, call a friend, but for goodness sakes, take a break! Stepping away for a few minutes allows you to re-focus your mind and benefits your business too!

## 3. MAKE LISTS

Some of us make our lists at the end of the day for the next day. Others wake up first thing and make their lists before the day starts. Doesn't matter. Just know that the most successful solopreneurs, or executives of any kind, get a clear picture of what their day will look like if they make a list. Better yet, try to estimate how much time will be spent on each task or meeting. Outlook, Google Calendar or Evernote (to name only a few) are fine, but an actual **LIST** puts your day into perspective. Then you will know how much time to devote to new business, old business, or sometimes, even monkey business (i.e. **FUN**).

## 4. PRIORITIES

Know when you are best at getting things done. Me? I **LOVE** the early morning hours...like from 6-gam. No phone calls to take, no interruptions, just me, a great cup of coffee and my priorities!



## 5. MANAGE YOUR TIME: IF YOU DON'T, NO ONE ELSE WILL

Don't let people interrupt your day with offers that are not important to you. If a friend wants to have lunch, set a 60 minute hard stop. You are entitled to a break, but have to be mindful of **YOUR** time. When planning a client meeting, confirm your arrival time and how long you intend on being there. If you ask for thirty minutes, start closing the meeting after 25.

Nobody wants to work with someone who isn't busy, a hangeronner, or a drone. Remember: be brief, be brilliant and be gone!

## 6. REMEMBER TO EXERCISE

The best advice I ever got was to take care of myself before I take care of my family, my relationships or my business. Think about it. The mind/body connection is an extraordinary one. Google it for more info if you aren't yet aware of its importance in keeping mentally or physical fit. For me, it's Pilates three times a week and a 45 minute walk five times a week. Sprinkle in some weights and my addiction to golf, and I find myself sleeping better, feeling great, and taking care of **ME** so that I can take care of everybody and everything else!

## 7. JUST DO IT!

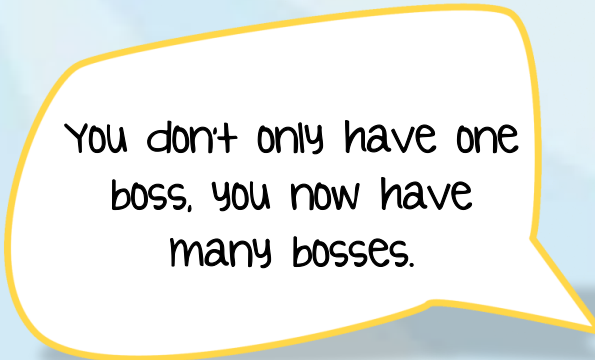
**PRACTICE** these time management strategies every day and I promise you, you will become a rock-star solopreneur. Work hard and play smart. Take time for you so that you can be there for your family, your friends, and certainly, your clients!

**FICTION: YOU ARE YOUR OWN BOSS.**

**FACT: YOUR CLIENTS ARE THE PEOPLE YOU ANSWER TO!**

Remember when you had a job working for “the man” or “the woman”? Your main responsibility was to perform the tasks they assigned you. If there was a problem, they let you know. Usually it was never such a big problem, or you figured it out, or better yet, you came through with flying colors.

But now, in the brave new world of Solopreneurship, you don't only have **ONE** boss, you have (hopefully because you are becoming successful) **MANY** bosses.



You don't only have one boss, you now have many bosses.

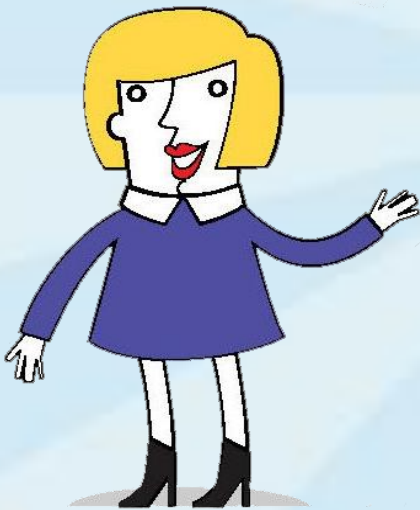
Some of them want results in a nanosecond. Others are painful perfectionists. No matter their personal styles, their company's mission, or their individual quirks, congratulations! They are your new bosses, and every one of them have their own agenda.



Your job is to stay visible, confirm your mission, follow up until the job is done, and make sure you get it right the first time. It will be the best reference for continued business for you, the solopreneur!

## FICTION: ONLY EXTROVERTS CAN BE SUCCESSFUL SOLOPRENEURS.

## FACT: YOU NEED TO BE AN EXTROVERT & AN INTROVERT TO BE SUCCESSFUL.



The opposite of an introvert is an extrovert. An extrovert finds energy in interactions with others. Introverts sometimes avoid large groups of people, feeling more energized by time alone.

Here is where it can get confusing. We as solopreneurs **HAVE** to be somewhat extroverted. We have to show up. Make introductions. Win friends. Influence people. All in the name of producing, writing business, making a sale. You name it. We have to do it, and it requires the energy of an extrovert. Easy for the extrovert. Not so much for the introvert. But, we have to be introverts too! Introverts tend to be better listeners. And better listeners often find hidden clues to making their clients happier and more satisfied. Regardless of which way you roll, you are going to have to be a little bit of both!

Well, ain't that grand? So now we have done all the things we are supposed to do to get the order, the client, the assignment, and now comes the moment of truth: we have to **EXECUTE** and **DELIVER**.

So all the wonderful tenets of extroversion now require us to look inward and get the job done! If you are more of an extrovert, who likes to go out and get the business, well, you're going to have to stifle yourself and get to the task at hand. Writing the program, designing the dress, or actually delivering what you promised.

For you, Mr. or Ms. Introvert, you are about to enter your comfort zone. Whatever personality you are, solopreneurship requires you are both in order to be successful!!!

**FICTION: YOU HAVE TO BE LASER  
FOCUSED ON YOUR GOALS.**

**FACT: YOU WON'T ACCOMPLISH GOALS  
WITHOUT THE ABILITY TO MULTI-TASK.**

Ok. So you just got your first big break!

You're a recruiter who landed their first assignment, a realtor who landed their first listing, or a jewelry designer who got their first big order from Bloomies!

**NOW WHAT?**

Let's take the recruiter, since I spent a few 25 years in the field.

You finally broke down the door to Client XYZ and landed the assignment. Only problem is, the type of candidate they are seeking is like finding a needle in a haystack.

But you are stoked and so you start the dance of multi-tasking: culling through your current database, posting on social media, sharing with your co-workers, and networking like a banshee.

This while keeping your eye on the ball of the other assignments which are still up in the air, going on client meetings, doing a live radio interview with your local CBS station, and bringing closure to another assignment which low balled your candidate.

Yes folks, this is the life of a solopreneur. You may be lucky enough to have an assistant who can do the behind the scenes administrivia, but the life of a solopreneur requires that you keep your eye on many balls, because if you don't? Who will?

**FICTION: HARD WORK IS ALL IT TAKES.**

**FACT: WORKING HARD DOES NOT  
EQUATE TO WORKING SMART.**

Entrepreneur magazine had an article about Mike Rowe, host of the popular Discovery Channel series Dirty Jobs. It highlighted the dichotomy of how we portray work in America -- in one corner, the romantic, blue-collar ideal of

"working harder," and in the other, the urban, Blackberry-toting notion of "working smarter."

A successful solopreneur doesn't frame "hard" or "smart" as a choice. The reality is, we have to do both. Studies show that most CEOs have an average wake up time at 6:15 in the morning, with many starting their days at 5am, when it is quiet and they can concentrate before the day gets going.

Show me a successful anybody and I will show you someone who not only works long hours (hard), but also knows how to capitalize on technology, partnerships, the value of multi-tasking and their own intuition to make their job/work easier (smart). Working hard thrives on the Law of Diminishing Returns.



Working smart involves a whole lot more. Things like:

- ✓ Soft skills
- ✓ Time management skills
- ✓ Being in the right place at the right time
- ✓ Being a go giver before being a go getter
- ✓ Being positive
- ✓ Saying no to unprofitable opportunities
- ✓ Being bold every day
- ✓ Innovating and differentiating
- ✓ Leveraging other people's time and sometimes money
- ✓ Networking, networking, and networking
- ✓ Aligning yourself with influential people
- ✓ Knowing when to cut your losses
- ✓ Being nimble



**FICTION: MY BUSINESS WILL GROW ON ITS OWN.**

**FACT: IF YOU DON'T INVEST IN YOU AND YOUR COMPANY, NO ONE ELSE WILL.**

(Excerpted from my second book *Dude, Seriously, Get Your Ask in Gear!*)

If you have ever worked for a large company, you probably have lots of training, education and mentorship programs available to you. These are things like lunch and learns on topics relevant to your functional area of expertise, continuing education to keep you current in your field, or off-site seminars given by associations which drive networking and community relations. They could be dedicated to a specific group, like a women's initiatives curricula, or they could be programs related to health and wellness.

Whatever they might be called, your company has made the investment in you and your co-workers, by offering programs to benefit you, and ultimately them. While some might be required, others are "optional". It doesn't matter what they are called, the company has decided to make the investment in its employees, for the benefit not only of the organization, but more importantly, for the engagement and benefit of the employee. Smart employee, smart company. Happy employee, happy company. Healthy employee, healthy company.

I bet a lot of you reading this who work for large organizations have almost come to expect these kinds of perks.

But what if you are a solopreneur, entrepreneur, wealth manager, realtor, sales consultant, or professional services firm partner? Maybe you are responsible for individual contribution or a business owner trying to get to the next level. No matter what our level or title, sometimes we just have to pony up and invest in ourselves. Because if **WE** don't, who will?

Yes, the world has changed. We are all doing more with less. But one thing is for sure. We can't do it all by ourselves, or even effectively, if we don't invest in technology, self-improvement, networking events, association dues for organizations relevant to our businesses, a business coach, and the list goes on.



So ask yourself: what am I doing right? What could I do better? Where is the gap? And how do I close that gap? What will next week's, month's, or quarter's goals be? And more importantly, what investments are required to get me there?

Will they require time? Or money? Or both?

What returns do I seek? In what time frame?

I learned a long time ago, that if I don't invest in me and the company, nobody else will. To be a successful solopreneur, you need to make the investments that will continue to build your company.

So sit down. Figure out what you are good at, and where your time is best spent. Man (or woman) up, dig into your pocket, and pony up. Remember, if you won't, surely no one else will.

## FICTION: FEAR CAN HURT YOU & YOUR BUSINESS.

## FACT: FEAR IS YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND.

Hard to believe, right? Whether you are working for someone, have people working **FOR** you, or are a solopreneur, fear is always a factor. The big difference though, when you are a solopreneur, there is no one there to share your fear.

Hey, I am not going to lie. There are times when I am afraid to call a client or send an email, because I want the outcome to be a positive one, and I am not sure it will be.

Or I can be afraid I might not get the client I have been courting for the last year. Or maybe I won't have enough people show up at my next Culinary Connections event. Or the client I have might go out of business and not renew my contract. So many things to fear.

But viewing fear in a positive light **PROPELS ME FORWARD AND MAKES ME MAKE SOMETHING POSITIVE HAPPEN!!!**

So regardless of what it is we fear, we need to take what we think is a negative emotion, and turn it into a positive. We need to be **ACTIVE** with our fear. Take your fear and **EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES.**

What I am suggesting here, is a different approach to fear. Embrace fear! Befriend fear! And turn all that negativity you expect from her into the thing that propels you forward. And this quote, from one of the greatest coaches out there: "Everything you want is on the other side of fear". - Jack Canfield

The bottom line folks, is that the choice is yours. You can master your fears, or you can let them master you. You can let the positive emotion of action outweigh the negativity of fear. And finally you can make something happen, or you can wait for something to happen to you.

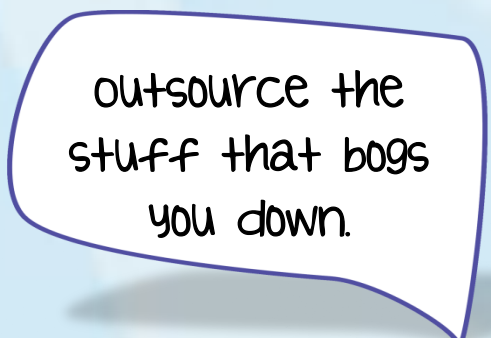
**NOW GO GET'EM!**

**FICTION: I CAN WEAR ALL HATS AT ALL TIMES.**

**FACT: YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE GREAT AT EVERYTHING AND YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE.**

Simply translated, stick to your core competency. Yeah, the reason you decided to go solo. Stick to the thing you do best. And outsource the stuff that bogs you down. Yeah. Even solopreneurs outsource. Just like big companies do. Keep at what you do best and leave the admistrivia to someone else.

Need a logo? Can't afford a big ad agency? Check out Fiverr.com. 5, 10 or maybe 25 bucks will get you a creative genius who can do it for you in 24 hours. Stick to what you do best and leave the artwork to someone who does it 24/7.



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you down.



Maybe you are a realtor who is great at listing houses but all thumbs when it comes to posting your cache all over social media. Spend a few bucks and turn it over to someone who will take the burden off of you and let you focus on what you are supposed to be doing: selling houses.

Maybe you want to/need to /should get out there and do some public speaking. It could bring in new clients, give you some free PR, or better yet, frame you as an expert. Except: you're scared. You don't know where to start. It's not your thing. Well, get out there and find someone who can write a speech for you, coach you on public speaking, and help you do what you need to do to get your message out.

In a nut shell, know what you don't know and be the expert in the niche you are developing.

**FICTION: BUILD THE PLANE & THEN FLY IT.**

**FACT: BUILD THE PLANE WHILE YOU ARE FLYING IT.**

**OK. OK.** I know it seems like an idiotic phrase. But this Silicon Valley mantra basically means that you have to invent (and re-invent) your business even as it is up and running.

So when a client asks you if you can do something (and you have never done it) decide if you can figure out how to get it done. Even if we have never done something before, we may just have to take a leap of faith and like the famous Nike tagline: **JUST DO IT!**

Richard Branson, the CEO of Virgin Airlines actually started selling tickets to his airline before he had any planes! How did he get around it? He chartered a plane, stuck his logo on it, and boom! He was in business! Talk about building the plane while flying it!

Taking imperfect action always wins over analysis paralysis. Trying something which is out of your comfort zone builds confidence. Taking a leap of faith and the associated risk is what successful businesses are all about.

I will never forget my very first coaching gig. I had made a powerful and informative presentation to the CEO of a major health care provider on how my strong suit as a coach was teamwork and collaboration. I viewed it as more of a “practice round” for all future presentations, never really thinking that I would hear back from him.

Lo and behold, just 10 days later, I received a call from the head of Human Resources telling me they had upwards of 500 associates who needed coaching in raising the bar in teamwork and collaboration. I panicked and said **YES!**

Now all I had to do was come up with a four hour program to captivate, engage and develop the best teams possible for my new client. That in addition to figuring out what to include in my engagement letter, how to price, and what to deliver. It wasn't easy, but after I landed that assignment, doors opened that I could have never imagined.

So the moral of the story for all you solos out there: there will always be something that comes up that you have never done before (yet). But with drive, determination and a little bit of luck (that crossroad where chance and opportunity meet), you'll be flying the plane and on your way to successful solopreneurship!

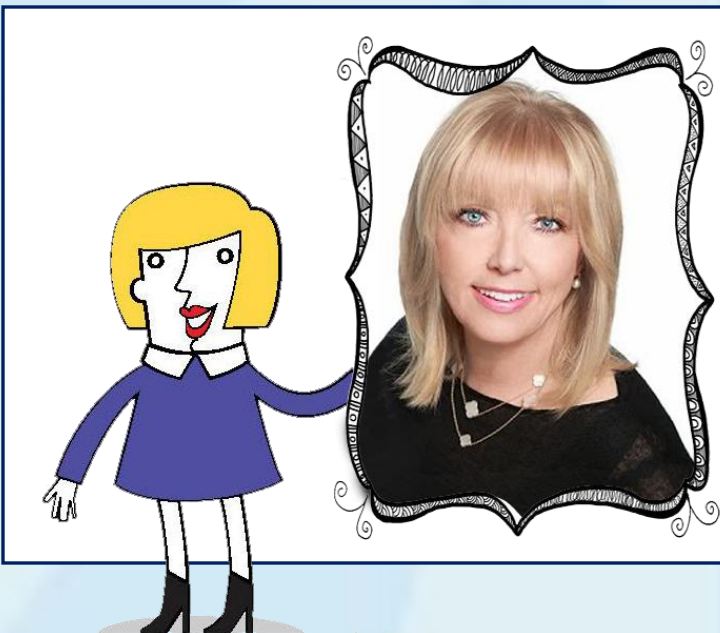
# ABOUT SUSAN P. ASCHER


Susan P. Ascher is President and CEO of The Ascher Group, an award winning national consulting firm, Founder of The Sphere of Excellence in Communication™, Course Connections and Culinary Connections.

Susan's training and coaching programs have helped countless corporations and individuals raise the bar in communication, leadership development, teamwork, and client relations. She has coached individuals and teams for clients ranging from the Fortune 50 to emerging growth companies, as well as healthcare organizations, non-profits, and numerous nationally ranked colleges and universities.

Susan is the author of ***Dude, Seriously, It's NOT All About You!***, humorous rant on how communication and protocol have forever changed how we connect and interact with coworkers, friends and family in The New Millennium. Her second book ***Dude, Seriously, Get Your ASK In Gear!*** is a compilation of the things we must ask ourselves to consider if we are to be successful leaders in the rapidly changing landscape of the internet age. It is due out this spring.

Susan is a sought after national media resource. She has been interviewed on Bloomberg, ABC, NBC, CNBC, CNN, News 12 and My9TV, and is a frequent commentator on TV 8 in Vail, Colorado. She has been published in *Forbes Magazine*, *Crain's New York Business*, *The Star-Ledger*, *NJBIZ* and *New Jersey & Company*.



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