

Jane.



7 Evergreen Strategies from a Lifestyle Entrepreneur – *aka Artist*



Introduction

Who exactly is a lifestyle entrepreneur? It's someone who infuses their profession with passion. It's not about a job or even a career, it's a lifestyle.

That belief has supported me in my journey – an incredibly rich life as an artist, speaker, author, coach, and now artist again. Two decades ago, a wise consultant assured me that anyone interested in my art would be curious about my coaching work. And vice versa, those who heard me speak about business lessons would be interested in my art. Why should I compartmentalize? There is no need to hide your gifts for fear that the public may pigeonhole you.

She was right, and this advice continues to reassure me that we each have many talents. Today, there's Jane, the coach, the author, the speaker and the artist. 2020 was the year I returned to art. How grateful I was to rely on lessons I had learned that have served me well in each of my roles.

The world is changing fast and every industry is different, yet the strategies I will be sharing with you in this report are truly evergreen. Take it from a lifestyle entrepreneur with 40+ years of learning, testing, tweaking and oftentimes relearning what it takes to combine passion and determination into a lifestyle that works for you right now.



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Don't quit before the miracle.

At least once a year, I get ready to pack it all in, give up, shut the doors on my business, and get a job collecting tolls on the highway. This usually happens after my phone gets quiet. Then I notice that my bank account is getting lower, and I find myself scrolling through Facebook and Instagram to see what stone I have left unturned. Just as I am about to look for opportunities on LinkedIn, at the last moment I am saved. An opportunity I sought months before or a referral from a year earlier contacts me.

This roller coaster of emotions has been with me all my life. Most of my entrepreneurial friends tell me they go through something similar every year. It's a good thing we have one another—we can call each other up and say, "Don't quit before the miracle. You can count on it. The miracle always comes through. Allow the universe to manifest."



Opportunity

“Transition is the moment that contains grace, the wherewithal to endure, the miracle.”

One summer when the world seemed to have gone on vacation and my monthly revenue was lagging, the phone rang. A lead I had followed up on months before to coach a leadership team resulted in the decision to move ahead immediately. I get prospects all the time who solicit my information but are not quite ready to begin the coaching process. The timing and extent of this opportunity were beyond my wildest dreams. The first month's fee for this assignment was exactly what I needed to earn for all of July. It was manna from heaven.

These painful stretches, when we're not sure how long we can endure, remind me of childbearing. Being an entrepreneur is occasionally like being pregnant. During my first pregnancy, the Lamaze instructor told us about the stages of delivery—labor, transition, birth. I had heard plenty about labor and birth but nothing about transition. "Transition," our instructor informed us, "is the hardest part of the process. It's painful and there is little time to rest between the contractions. Thankfully, it is also the briefest part, although it doesn't feel that way."

Transition is the stage when the labor room nurses get cursed at and mothers say, "I can't do this." Sounds a lot like what I go through when I can't see my next opportunity over the horizon. I want to quit, it's painful, and I'm angry. The advice to women in labor, other than doing pelvic tilts, also applies to anxious business owners: concentrate on relaxing, use visualization, and stay focused on the goal. In other words, have faith and carry on.

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- Don't quit before the miracle

Action is the antidote for analysis paralysis.

The Internet is a blessing and a curse for business owners. The good news is you can discover how unique your business idea or product offering is. The bad news is you can also find out how not unique it is. The better news is it really doesn't matter. There is room for everyone—if you take action.



One of my clients had an appealing and humanitarian concept for an online business involving products as well as community building. After spending hours online, she discovered many look-alike companies. In her words, "I freaked out!" Wisely, she shared her feelings with supportive peers who consoled and counseled her. "It's called 'competition' and you can handle it," they advised.

Take Action

Another colleague told me how many hours she had been spending researching her business ideas on the Web. She was thorough and sincere and had accumulated mountains of knowledge about her industry. She studied the market up, down, and sideways. She knows her competitive advantage and her target audience. But her income had stalled. I gave her one word of advice: "Act!"



What both of these small-business owners experienced is analysis paralysis—the frozen state of inaction that comes from information overload. When this is your diagnosis, here's what I prescribe: Get crystal clear about what you need to know and create a deadline for your decision making.

For example, when selecting a printer for a project, I developed a list of specifications I was checking for. I limited the search to ten companies for comparison. I allowed myself one hour a day for three days (or a similar formula) to accumulate the data. I knew that once I received information from these printers, I'd have a good enough idea of the market. I committed to taking action by a specific date and enlisted a goal buddy to hold me accountable.

Get clear, figure out how many or how much by when, and take action. Voila—you're out of paralysis and moving forward.

- Action is the antidote for analysis paralysis

What you call “it” matters.

While I was in Charleston, South Carolina, one weekend, I wandered into an inviting shop called Worthwhile. There was a beautifully detailed white cotton shirtwaist in the window that caught my eye and drew me in. I suspected the price tag would be pretty detailed, too. I was right. It was \$429.

I told the salesgirl how charmed I was by the dress. “Oh, that piece is designed by Gary Graham. We have several more pieces by him in the back.”

Piece. As opposed to dress. Somehow it elevated it. I was no longer looking at clothing. I was viewing art. It altered the experience. I was drawn in, as to a museum show. I couldn’t get it out of my head, although the pricing and small-size-only availability cured that urge.



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The takeaway from this incident was the brilliance and simplicity of a trained sales staff and quality copywriting. A writer had developed the formidable skill of turning something that goes on your back into an experience for the shopper. Part of the overhead of a designer like Graham is paying for that service. No wonder the “piece” was so expensive.

Not long after the Charleston lesson, it was driven home again that customers will niche our business in their minds with a single word or phrase. We business owners can help control what that word is. Witness the magnificent catalog I received from Mitchells, a high-end store in Westport, CT near my town that was celebrating fifty years in business. Mitchells carries Armani, Ralph Lauren, Jimmy Choo, and many other elite designers. The store is elegant, the prices high. The sales staff is abundant and ever-present. Shopping there is up-close and personal. You know you’re in good hands.

The Mitchell family is respected and loved in the community. What one word did they choose to represent themselves? Hugs! Hugs? Yes. Their catalog cover said in the boldest type: 50 Years of Hugs.

Jack Mitchell wrote the book *Hug Your Customers* a few years ago to rave reviews and sold-out editions. He now lectures worldwide on the subject of customer care. The family’s stories of personal service are legendary.

If you’d asked me what word I would use to describe Mitchells, I’m sure I would have come up with something different. But I so admire how the family positioned themselves that I have continued to spread their word. That’s the best marketing there is—getting others to tell your story for you.

- What you call “it” matters

Doing nothing by appointment is essential and energizing.

One assignment I had during my coaching certification program was to sit for one hour and do nothing. I chose to bring my collapsible chair to Compo Beach on Long Island Sound for this hour of nothingness. It was chilly, so I had a blanket wrapped over my body. The tide was low and coming in.

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“There is opportunity in everything that is happening to you right now, where you are, with what you have.”



Within a few minutes of disorientation—how does one do nothing? — I began to observe what was going on in the nothingness of sitting. I started watching the gulls. One would swoop down, pick up a clamshell in its beak, fly up, and drop it to the ground. When it broke open, the bird would swallow the contents—mission accomplished.

I noticed that the activity would be repeated two or three times if the shell wasn't immediately compliant. The bird simply swooped down again, retrieved the same shell, flew up, and dropped it again. After a couple of tries without success, it moved on to another shell. It was a force of nature. No judgment. Just... NEXT.

Even in that time of doing nothing, I noticed my brain assessing, judging, making sense out of what was in front of me. I applied it to myself and my clients. How refreshing, natural, and healthy to observe what's working, what feeds you, and when to let go. There's always a NEXT. Keep moving. Keep doing what you do. And when the tide flows in, move on to the next activity for the day.

The outcome of that assignment for me was connecting with nature, giving my mind a healthy distraction, and not having any responsibility for what was happening in front of me. I left the beach with a renewed sense of energy and optimism.

- Doing nothing by appointment is essential and energizing

Pay attention to what you *do* about your newest passion.

Walking to the subway, I was in the middle of listening to the podcast *How I Built This*, interested in hearing the origin story of *Rent the Runway*. I don't have to make myself listen to this podcast. It was exactly what I wanted to be doing at that moment. It was entertainment, not work.

No matter where I am, I have my Bose headphones with me or a magazine downloaded to my iPhone. I crave accumulating knowledge about why and how entrepreneurs operate.

Teaching others about lifestyle entrepreneurship is a pleasure, not a burden. So, it wasn't a surprise that after 30 years of painting Ukrainian Easter eggs, I chose to completely shut down my studio and focus on building my coaching business. Painting eggs was no longer my passion.

“How to know if it's your passion: while you're pursuing it, nothing else exists.”



But then, surprise! Art showed up in my life again.

Before we were ordered to stay home and quarantine, I had the distinct pleasure and privilege of studying the art of penny rug making with the esteemed artist, Liz Alpert Fay. I started my first one during the session at the Guilford Art Center the weekend before they had to close their doors. Liz gave us socially-distanced participants each a kit of pattern pieces, swatches of felted wool and enough inspiration for this artist to soar.

During the crazy year that was 2020, this new art form is what got me out of bed in the morning. The thrill of the colors, the touch of the soft wool, the beauty of the Perle cotton thread, and the ability to compose using these simple structures. And I have enjoyed every aspect from designing the pillow in PowerPoint, selecting from my growing wool collection, matching these to my growing collection of threads I've collected, sorting through an expanding supply of beads, buttons and sequins, and setting up my new Etsy store.

I'm doing it.

I've always watched what people do more closely than I've listened to what they say. I hold myself to the same test. When I hear myself or anyone else say, "I really want to ..." I observe to see if there's some behavior to back up that dream. Otherwise, I recognize it as more of a fantasy than a goal.

- Pay attention to what you *do* about your newest passion



Learn from the masters.



During my career, I have met a few extraordinary people who have inspired and encouraged me along the entrepreneurial road. They are my beacons as I forge ahead. I've been around long enough as a business owner to know this truth: trading money for expertise is a smart move.

Now that I'm starting a brand-new artistic endeavor, I needed a new set of experts to learn from. I began by hiring Donna Cash to tell me all the secrets of the pillow industry, and did she deliver! We met by zoom, of course, as she is in Georgia, I'm in NYC, and there's still a pandemic raging.

A reader of one of my recent blog posts had pointed me to Donna. From that link I went to Donna's impressive website and found that she offers a plethora of ways to learn about her highly successful and celebrated corner of the home dec industry.

I can measure how valuable our session was by the degree of enthusiasm it generated in me. I am chomping at the bit to meet The Trim Queen, Barry Dixon – an internationally renowned designer she referenced, and the Zipper Lady. I know these men and women will become my new best friends as I swim out further into the sea of pillow-making.

There is much to consider – the size and loft of my pillow inserts, the weight of the invisible zipper, the thread count of the insert cover, whether to use poly-clusters, pure wool or a combination of down and feathers and, if the last option, what percentages of each. Little did I know when I sewed my first design that a new world was opening to me.

Translate this to your latest endeavor. How excited are you to meet the stars of your chosen field? What is your appetite for learning? Are you willing to go to any lengths to discover the best way to share your talent or ideas?



- Learn from the masters

Commitment outperforms beginner's luck.

I had a blinding flash of the obvious last week when one of my master-mind trio suggested I apply my well-seasoned coaching skills to my own new venture: creating one-of-a-kind penny rug pillows and wall-hangings. As Homer Simpson would say, "Doh!"

Somehow, I had the magical thinking that it would spontaneously materialize; be born out of me like an ancient goddess. The immediate feedback to my Instagram images, sincere enthusiasm from family and friends, and my own desire convinced me that this time, the business would simply emerge, full-blown, out of my talent as an artist.

Not so fast...

At my first craft show in 1973, strangers came up to my booth and paid me cash for my batik eggs. A well-tailored woman approached my display, said she was the Special Events Director from Bloomingdales, and would I conduct a workshop the following spring. My belief at that time? It's so easy to make money selling your art.

English translation: Beginner's luck!

Decades later I re-experienced that beginner's luck with a flood of interest, a quick commission, donations of beads, buttons, even an offer of a sewing machine. It's now my job to decide what to do with all of this. How big do I want to grow my textile business? How much should my pillows and wall-hangings sell for? How many can I make in a week, a month, a year? Who is my audience? Do I want to hire help?



After that mastermind session, I sat down with my CEO (aka me) and created a mind map for what would be required to launch. I contemplated my vision, defined my market, enumerated what help I would need to enlist, and took several steps in that direction.

Before I made this Big Girl leap, though, I had to have an attitude adjustment. That involved a power greater than myself, who I invited into the process. Even after all these years of entrepreneurship, I wanted it to be easy, self-revelatory and immediately profitable. I wanted to do it all on my own. I didn't want to ask for help. I wanted to magically be thrust into the limelight, sought after and praised.

But the truth is, what I really want is to handle these beautiful wools, to make meditative stitches to hold them together, and to apply beads and buttons to embellish the patterns. I want to be supported taking those steps. A large commission would destroy that simplicity.

A quote I live by is Goethe's: That the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves to. I needed to make the decision and to begin.

I committed by hiring someone to help me set up an Etsy site, a photographer to capture studio and product shots, a designer to make me a new logo for this part of my business, and a data expert to help me find vendors more efficiently. In other words, I invested in myself.

Even more to the point, I've defined my vision: I sell 4 penny rugs (pillows and/or wall hangings) a month to appreciative collectors worldwide for an amount that allows me to maintain an uncomplicated lifestyle of beauty, ease and contribution. It takes help to make that happen. I stand willing and able to launch this dream.

“Time management is a muscle, not a gift.”

Jane.

- Commitment outperforms beginner's luck

Meet Jane Pollak

After over 40 years as an artist and 20 years as a coach, Jane has transformed and energized the lives of hundreds of fellow artists, creative professionals, and lifestyle entrepreneurs. She's inspired thousands more through her extensive writing and speaking.

Highlights at a glance:

- Highly successful life and business coach since 2002
- Certified Professional Co-Active Coach (CPCC) since 2006
- Author of three books: *Too Much of Not Enough*, *Soul Proprietor: 101 Lessons From a Lifestyle Entrepreneur* and *Decorating Eggs: Exquisite Designs with Wax & Dye*
- Mother, Grandmother, Ex-wife (38-year marriage)
- Profiled by the New York Times
- Appearances on NBC's *The Today Show*, *The CBS Evening News*, and *TEDxMillRiver*



As a child, Jane began drawing images on the basement walls of her family home. A friend labeled her the Cave Painter of White Plains, New York. Her early passion for form and color led to studying at the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design, Studio Art at Mount Holyoke College.

Jane enjoyed an award-winning career in the Craft Movement for three decades where she brought the ancient art form of pysanky, Ukrainian Easter eggs, to national recognition. Her exquisite pieces were featured in by national media, commissioned by the White House and Steve Jobs, and archived by The Smithsonian.

After many years as a leading artist, Jane realized she had an audience who wanted to learn how she did it – how to turn a passion into a thriving business. With the same determination and attention to detail,

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Meet Jane Pollak

Jane became an international speaker, author, and coach, sharing inspirational and practical lessons.

Most recently, Jane was unexpectedly reinspired to create art again. She's reapplying her business savvy as she pursues her new passion, crafting traditional wool appliqué Penny Rugs with a richly hued and contemporary palette. Each of her pillows and wall-hangings is custom-made by hand with a unique aesthetic and sensibility.

Do you want to explore your options as a lifestyle entrepreneur?
Let's talk! Please reach out to me to schedule a time.

janepollak.com

