

# It's So Much Easier Now

By Barbara Winter

Recently, I heard Robert Stephens, founder of The Geek Squad, speak about his humble beginnings. "In the absence of capital," he said, "creativity flourishes." I almost jumped up and cheered, "Hey, I am living proof of that!"

Shortly after I started my first business, I boldly sent a press release to the nearest large newspaper. To my astonishment, I promptly received a call from a reporter who said she'd love to interview me and wondered if she might come to my office. I quickly suggested I come to her office. After all, I didn't want to reveal my secret: I didn't have a proper office.



We early homebusiness owners worked largely undercover. Not only were we not taken very seriously, we also had to be extremely clever about finding ways and means to run our businesses. There were almost no resources other than a few books on building conventional, highly capitalized businesses. There were a few workshops and booklets available from the Small Business Administration, but I quickly learned from attending one of their programs that they didn't take solo entrepreneurs seriously, either.

I was in business for almost two years before I met another woman who was self-employed. There wasn't any Internet or e-mail, no personal computer or fax machine. Any books or seminars that might be considered motivational were targeted to corporate workers. No magazines or newsletters existed to share information that would help the joyfully jobless stay that way. I marvel that I survived. I'm not sure when things began to change, but I do recall feeling quite alone in this adventure for more than a dozen years.

Now hardly a day passes when I don't read about or meet someone who is happily working on their own. Late last year, Nick Williams sent me an article from a London newspaper with the headline, Huge Rise in Workers Who Go It Alone. The article stated that last year in the UK an estimated 300,000 people decided to abandon their jobs to go out on their own. That's an impressive number.

The US Census Bureau, in a report from the late 1990's, shared this affirming information: In the past, a homebased business was viewed as a side business operated primarily as a hobby or as a source of secondary income. The data contained in this study show that assertion to be inaccurate. The researcher's findings demonstrate how the home has become a hub of business activity, entrepreneurship, and business creation. Sole proprietorships, partnerships, and S corporations added \$2.9 trillion to the economy, with homebased firms contributing \$314 billion, or 11 percent. The SBA reports that every year there are dramatic increases in the numbers of homebusiness operations. Who knew we'd become so trendy?

All this activity has another consequence: as more of us go down this path and share what we've learned, it gets easier for the next round of self-bossers to step onto the trail we've been busily blazing. Magazines, books and Web sites offer more information than one person can possibly absorb. Best of all, much of this information is created by people who have run their own businesses and are passing along real life experience and advice, not dry business theory.

Technology, of course, has made an enormous contribution to the growth of businesses like mine. No longer dependent on our immediate area for customers, virtual businesses serve an unlimited marketplace.

It's also made it possible for anyone to set up shop on an island, in an RV, or remote mountaintop, if they choose. City dwellers do, of course, run small businesses, but those who prefer a quieter setting can have the best of both worlds a lively business in a bucolic setting.

Comedian Jon Stewart said, "The big break for me what when I decided this is my life." I think this new epidemic of self-employment is being driven by an increasing awareness that we can all create our own big break. In a political climate that increasingly discourages individuality and original thinking, in an economic climate that teeters on uncertainty, thoughtful people are seeking fresh options – options that honor their creativity, add meaning and purpose to their lives, and allow them to go as far as their imaginations will permit.

I am both humbled and proud to have played a small part in this renaissance. I also know that even if I d have remained alone in this homebased entrepreneurial life, I couldn't have gone back to working for someone else once I d tasted freedom and discovered the unsurpassed joy and adventure that comes only by taking responsibility for exercising my entrepreneurial muscles. I get deliriously excited thinking about future possibilities. Claude Whitmyer from the Center for Good Work nailed it when he said, "Is self-employment the ultimate right livelihood?" I think the answer is yes.

### **About the Author**

Barbara Winter, author of the bestselling book, *Making a Living Without a Job: Winning Ways for Creating Work That You Love*, is also a business owner, itinerant teacher, and self-employment advocate who found her own right livelihood after overcoming her early notions that work was meant to be drudgery. You can learn more by visiting her at [BarbaraWinter.com](http://BarbaraWinter.com) and be sure to check out the Making Dreams Happen audio program featuring Barbara Winter, Barbara Sher and Valerie Young at [ChangingCourse.com/makingdreamshappen.htm](http://ChangingCourse.com/makingdreamshappen.htm)