

Wearing two hats: Confessions of a part-timer



by Jan Knight, Bancroft Information Services, LLC

If you've been around AIP for any length of time, you'll know that our members are diverse. We come from different areas of the world and from different cultures and religions. We bring different educational backgrounds, political affiliations, domain expertise and varying years of experience to the table.

Just as our membership continues to be diverse, so do the reasons for becoming independent in the first place. And the reasons for some people to work less than full time in their independent businesses are also varied. Being a part-time, independent infopreneur isn't usually discussed much within our group, but AIP does not discriminate against those who choose to work that way.

So, why might we not talk about it? In my own humble opinion, I think that some people may fear they'll be treated as second-class citizens if they admit to working less than full time in their information business. They may fear being seen as not serious about their venture. They may feel their input will

not be viewed as pertinent to all members. Some may feel they just don't look like those other driven and successful members they see running committees, on the board, or giving presentations at conferences.

I believe the reasons for going part time are just as diverse as the reasons for going independent. Some are testing the waters while keeping their full-time job to see if they even want to make this brave jump. Some need to keep their part-time job for financial or insurance reasons. Others have personal reasons or have health issues that don't allow them to put in as many hours as they might prefer.

Hi, I'm Jan and I was a part timer for ten years!

I was always willing to 'fess up to the part-time nature of my business. Looking back, I'm not sure if it was just my naivety, thinking it didn't matter, or just my propensity to be honest. Either way I would stand up at the introductions at AIP conferences and tell everyone about

my business AND my part-time position at a university. I'd often talk with other AIP members about the two hats I wore if they were curious and asked about it.

I will admit though, when I was marketing myself or just talking about my business, I did not bring up that fact—nor did I ever see any reason to. Here's how I made it work for ten years before I went full time in 2011:

- I made sure I never took client calls at my campus desk. Legally and ethically, that's just not good. I'd find myself a quiet corner on stairwells or in lobbies of buildings around campus (or even in parking lots) when I needed to make a call. Sometimes I could be seen balancing my notebook on a garbage can in the only quiet place I could reach in time to make a call.
- In the local community, I was typically known for my business, except among my campus colleagues. Many knew, though, that I had "another gig" I loved and many were jealous.

- My LinkedIn profile highlighted my information business. This seemed fine to me. I didn't need to market my university position. I wasn't looking for a job of that type. And I did prefer that potential clients had a clear picture of me and my offerings.
- Managing client expectations is really no different for a part-timer as we all have other clients and projects we must balance. I tried to be as responsive to colleagues, clients, and potential clients as I would have been if I'd been sitting at a desk in my home office. I responded to voice mail as quickly as I could, suggesting a time to talk for a more in-depth conversation that just happened to coincide with my home office hours.
- My cell phone was my business phone and I used that most of the time when away from my desk.
- My wardrobe was sometimes a bit of a saga. Anybody who has trekked

around a university campus knows you rarely need to dress up and heels are just not practical. If I had a business lunch, I'd keep a jacket and dress shoes in the car. I did get to be known by others in my building as "the woman who dressed nicely."

- My ability to be somewhat flexible in my part-time job was crucial. The fact that I could take breaks when I wanted, take longer lunches, or come in late after a client meeting was essential to making this work. But it was still work! I worked both late and from home when necessary.
- Most important to me, I always thought of my own business as my "real job." The other 20 hours a week, however flexible they were, was time I spent at a job I did well and honored—but just didn't talk about much. My attitude toward my business was much more important than the number of hours I worked or when those hours were worked.

I'll be the first to admit that things can get crazy wearing two different work hats. Only once did I make the error of introducing myself in a university campus meeting as Jan Knight, the owner of Bancroft Information Services.

So, if you're a part-timer through choice or by necessity, be proud. AIIP is a diverse organization and there's room for you too.

Jan Knight is President of Bancroft Information Services based in Tucson, Arizona. Jan likes to say she provides insight to entrepreneurs from start-ups to grown-ups. Much of her work helps to



shape business plans, marketing strategies, business development, commercialization plans and funding requests.

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