



Passionate Women

Maintaining Friendships while Entrepreneuring



Starting a business was an empowering time in my life—an opportunity for me to take ownership over the things I create. I was also able to share my skills and expertise with other business owners, to form connections based on my passions and talents. I knew as soon as I “officially” started that things would never be the same, and I was ready to see what that looked like!

Looking back, I had no clue just how much becoming an entrepreneur would change my life. Many of my friendships were formed before I made the jump into full-time entrepreneurship, but owning a business created massive changes in my social schedule. Before, every weekend was pretty much open for friend-time. Now I’m scheduling around meetings, deadlines, and locations. Though my time for fun is limited, I have found new ways to manage my social circles while remaining focused on the needs of my business.

Making the Jump

When transitioning into being my own boss, I was still working a 9-5, which meant no time for social events during the week. Though it was overwhelming to decline so many invitations, doing so really helped my friends transition into my new schedule. I would make exceptions for really important events, but last-minute hangouts weren’t possible.

In the beginning, it’s important that you *communicate your schedule* to your friends and help them understand why this is the best

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decision for you. Not everyone understands what goes into owning a business. Be patient when explaining why it takes you four hours to answer e-mails. Instead of complaining, focusing on the positive aspects of having your own business will help your friends understand why you're spending your Saturday night bookkeeping instead of going out with them.

If you need to vent the stresses of a new business, talk to friends who are career-focused or also entrepreneurs, or connect with women going through the same process. They will be able to empathize with you and offer helpful advice. If your strongest friendships are based on last-minute hangouts or coffee trips, you will need to be clear about the importance of scheduling dates ahead of time. Honesty and communication will help both of you transition more easily into your new schedule.

Accepting Change

When you're running a business, friendships are going to change. The lines between personal and business can cross easily and cause confusion, especially with the use of social media. Address these issues up front and with clear-cut boundaries. If a friend makes an inappropriate joke or tags you in every meme on

Facebook, lovingly tell them this is unacceptable. A good friendship will survive any conflict your request causes.

Brand management is hard, especially when friends don't understand your boundaries. I do a lot of social media work for my business and blog, and have made it a priority to establish brand standards. Unfortunately, not all of my friends understood, but this only reinforced my goal to keep my personal and business "social media" lives separate. I don't friend clients through my personal accounts unless we were close friends prior to the start of my business. I occasionally add blog buddies, but remain aware of what's being tagged/posted on my wall.

Ask for your friends' support when you make separate accounts for your business, and make sure they know what you need from them. No posts asking about grandma on your business page! If a friend can't accept the boundaries you've set, assess whether you need to let that friendship go. The plight of friendships is that a change in either person's circumstances brings the possibility for distance. Remain honest and open, but know that a friendship ending is normal and, though sad, is often the healthiest outcome.

Enjoying the Journey

One of the things that makes it easy for me to manage my friendships is that I'm good at what I do and I love what I do. I've never been happier than when I'm working on my business, no matter how challenging it gets. My friends can see that, and, in turn, are happy for me. Having supportive friends helps me prioritize my business, while still taking the time to manage my social life.

Juggling both business and friends can be a challenge, but the effort is worth it. If you've deemed a relationship worth maintaining, *find little ways to let them know you still care*, even in the midst of pursuing your business goals. Those friends that require more in-person social time will appreciate you taking whatever time you can to show them you're invested in the friendship.

Social relationships are vital to any woman's health, but now you have another relationship to add to the mix: you + your business. Treat this new relationship with the seriousness that you would a new partner or an additional commitment within an existing relationship, such as a friend who just became a mom. Your friends would not begrudge you time spent getting to know someone new or spending extra time with someone close to you, right? And you wouldn't expect them to be completely understanding if you didn't first communicate your needs and boundaries to them, right?

If the friendship is worth it, you'll be just as passionate about maintaining that connection as you are about establishing your business. Set (and communicate) clear boundaries; ask for the support you need; and remember to say thank you to the women who cheer you on while you become the entrepreneur you were meant to be.

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Small Things Count

Here are some things I do to make sure my friends know I care.

1

Give a Card

I love to give my friends cards, especially "just because" cards or to say thank you. A handwritten note of appreciation goes a long way. I love getting notes from my friends and I post them all over my office.

2

Text to Connect

I send love messages to my friends with quotes or things that I've been thinking of that remind me of them. If we haven't been able to meet in a while, a short text helps them know they're on my mind. Some people enjoy e-mails or voice messages, too.

3

Offer a Chat

Every now and again, ask if a friend is available for lunch or an afternoon coffee break and drive out to where she works. In turn, accept a friend's offer when she asks. We all know how it feels to have a tough week; sometimes all you need is time to chat it out.