

# LadiesWhoLaunch - Terri Kennedy

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Talk about someone who had it all, then gave it up to have ... even more.

Terri Kennedy is a Harvard MBA with a Ph.D. in world religions. She is a health, fitness, and nutrition expert, as well as an artist and photographer. At one point, she was also a model and fashion school instructor.

In the early 1990s, Terri was the youngest vice president at MTV Networks' VH1, a workaholic rising star. Then came a life-threatening illness in the form of Crohn's disease. Being diagnosed and treated for an ulcerated digestive system became a near-death experience.

The disease changed Terri in every possible way. Through a years-long transformation, Terri moved, left her job, ended a long-term relationship with a live-in boyfriend, and launched a business, with incremental healing at each phase.

Today, she runs Power Living, a health and productivity management system that helps individuals, businesses, and communities reach and sustain their long-term goals. An in-demand speaker and author, Terri has also been covered widely in the press and profiled in Oprah's book *Live Your Best Life*.

**What we learned from Terri:** Practice what you preach. Be the living example to your customers and clients. Breathe, really. If not actual meditation, just slow down to take stock of your situation and place yourself in control.

## Lessons From the Edge

"Almost dying was the best thing that happened to me. It changed the direction of my life and led me to my calling. I was very successful as a media executive at MTV Networks and would have just continued. However, now I know that there was a greater plan. The illness woke me up and forced me to rebuild myself from the ground up—physically, mentally, and spiritually. I learned that transformation takes time and that anyone can rebuild if they take it step by step."

## Her Life's Calling

"Power Living as a brand and business came to me all at once. Since I saw the entire vision, the most challenging part was deciding where to start. I wrote a business plan and decided to begin at a place where I could learn the most."

## Why People Seek the Power

"People come to me to change their lives. I know that's broad, but that's the bottom line. They've heard about me in the media or through a friend. I have a lot of word-of-mouth referrals. Many of my clients work in corporate America and want

to change careers and/or start their own businesses. They know that I understand navigating the managerial ranks as well as the entrepreneurial world. They realize that they need more than just career counseling or business start-up advice. They learn how to articulate their dreams—what’s truly in their hearts, not what they think other people want from them. They learn how to transform their thinking and their habits to support a new life. Many people are attracted to the fact that I offer a truly holistic perspective on crafting a successful life informed by a multi-disciplinary approach.”

### **Passion to Profit**

“Know who you’re serving and why. Then, understand the cost/benefit in terms of your own time. You may have to shift your client mix or service tiers to achieve certain revenue goals. For example, you may have a certain percentage of individual clients because you simply enjoy the one-on-one interaction. However, you may need to have a larger percentage of group workshops or corporate clients who can provide a greater return on your time invested. Also, at some point in a service business, it’s important to create a passive stream of revenue that is not directly reliant on you showing up every day.”

### **Really Making a (Power) Living**

“In terms of growth, I started out doing primarily one-on-one counseling. Now I do more group workshops and events. I reach more people and generate more revenue. Over the years, my speaking fees have increased substantially. I started doing events for free to gain experience, now my fees are within a very healthy professional range. In other words, the value of my time and expertise has increased. I also have a lot of repeat business for events, e.g. annual conferences, retreats, etc.”

### **Next Steps**

“I’m now planning on launching my own retreat series. Now that I’ve created a platform and respected brand, I’m focusing on leveraging it in a range of DVDs/CDs, PWR-branded apparel and accessories, and widely syndicated content.”

### **Strategic Choices**

“From an operational standpoint, I try to keep the overhead as low as possible for as long as possible by using alliances and outsourcing. I also focus on PR as a marketing tool.”

### **Learning for Earnings**

“Since my business is about transformation, I first focused on one-on-one coaching and group workshops. I didn’t make a lot of money initially, but the learning was invaluable and it helped me build credibility in a new space.”

### **Busy But Balanced**

“I’m much more balanced now as an entrepreneur than I was a decade ago as VP at MTV Networks, yet I am just as busy. Now, yoga is my practice and reading is my passion, so that fuels me every day. I also practice what I preach, so I take time to reflect each morning and set my intention for the day, and then take time to review in the evening.”

### **Awards and Rewards**

“I just got word that I have been selected to serve on the national spokespersons panel for the American Heart Association. It is a group of nationally renowned scientists, physicians, and other experts selected to represent AHA in interviews with national media. It is a great honor.

I seem to be in award season right now, which is a blessing! I recently received the ‘Women Who Dare to Be Different’ Award from Congressman Ed Towns for my work in health literacy. My accomplishments were added to the Congressional Record. Right after that, I received the ‘Cheerios 2008 Sisters Saving Hearts’ Award for my work in promoting heart health, particularly among African Americans. I’m donating that \$5,000 grant to the American Heart Association Cultural Health Initiatives in New York City to do a heart health program in Harlem.”

### **The “Why”**

“All of these awards are special because they honor my ‘post-transformation’ phase and volunteer work. I love taking the attention that comes to me and using it to help other people.”

## Do What You Love ...

"You may also put some of your time aside for *seva*, or selfless service. The volunteer work not only can give you personal satisfaction, but can also lead to a wider network. I love working on behalf of the American Heart Association as an ambassador because their message is one of empowerment, which is the work I do with my own company."

## ... and Learn to Say "No"

"I've had to turn down a number of other 'opportunities' because they did not fit my brand or core values. Professor Michael Porter at Harvard Business School always says that the most important and hardest decision for an entrepreneur is what *not* to do. I've absolutely found this to be the case." (Terri has devoted an entire [Web page](#) to the significance of "no.")

## The Keys to the Castle

"I don't really view situations as 'going wrong' because I believe that everything is a learning vehicle. The key to any situation is to set clear expectations, be present, deliver what you promise, be truthful, and be teachable. If it doesn't go the way you intended, maybe your intention was off or you're not seeing the big picture. If you misspeak, then correct yourself right away. Keep your eyes wide open."

## Advice to Launchers

"As you launch into the world of entrepreneurship, be clear on what is driving you—why you're doing what you're doing. Hopefully, it's passion. When times seem uncertain, you'll be able to come back to the 'why' of it all. Also, learning how to pace yourself and remain focused are keys to long-term sustainability. We have a section on the Power Living Web site, [Your Own Biz](#), where you can learn more on this."

## Parting Thoughts ...

- "Success to me means ... getting paid to do what I love and having the freedom to do what I want when I want."
- "If I weren't doing this I would ... be a linguist and travel the world."
- "Every entrepreneur should ... love your work and make your love(life) work."
- "I care most about ... my family and making values-driven decisions."
- "I care least about ... what other people think I should do or look like."
- "A book I recommend is ... *The Little Me and THE GREAT ME* by Lou Austin. This was the first inspirational book my mom gave me when I was 4 years old."

This Featured Lady was profiled by Andrea Adleman, a Los Angeles freelance journalist.

<http://www.ladieswholaunch.com/magazine/terri-kennedy/1592>