

Entrepreneurship Offers New Career Opportunities—But Not For The Faint Of Heart!

11/17/2017 06:27 am ET

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Steve Mariotti is the founder of the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) and an advocate for entrepreneurs worldwide.

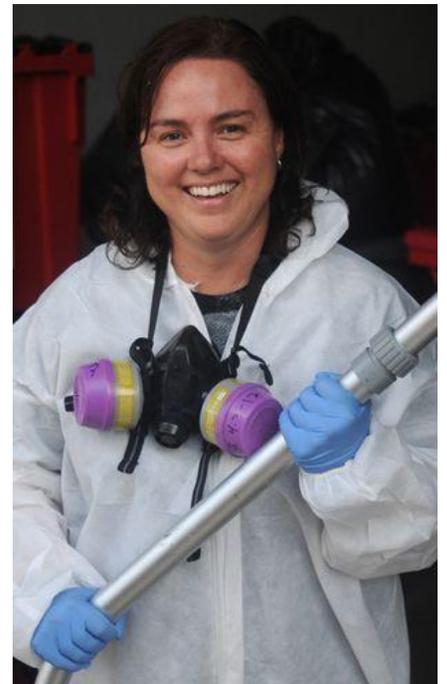
Interview with Laura Spaulding-Koppel, Founder and CEO of Spaulding Decon

While entrepreneurship offers the kind of freedom and flexibility that many professionals are looking for, most people aren't willing to give up the job security of their current jobs for a career on their own. In today's economy, we are seeing a well-documented shift in the lifespan of a career or time with an employer.

According to [LinkedIn](#), over a 20 year period, "people who graduated between 1986 and 1990 averaged more than 1.6 jobs, and people who graduated between 2006 and 2010 averaged nearly 2.85 jobs."

Gone are the days when you rose the ranks in one company before retiring. So how does entrepreneurship play into all of this?

That's what Laura Spaulding-Koppel found out when she left her career in law enforcement, moved across the country, and launched her own start up. Originally in the military, Spaulding-Koppel had spent many years working on crime prevention and investigation. During that time, she witnessed firsthand the burden on families and victims that crimes can leave and she saw a real business opportunity to help these people clean up the messes crimes make.



Soon, Laura launched Spaulding Decon, a clean-up service company. Every year since its founding, Laura's business has doubled its sales and continues to meet a high demand for its services.

I asked Laura to share what inspired this career shift and her tips for others who may be thinking about making a similar leap.

Steve Mariotti: You began your career as a military law enforcement officer, and went on to serve as an officer in the Kansas City Police Department. How did your experiences as a police officer lead you towards specializing in environmental cleanup?



Laura Spaulding-Koppel: My experience at the KCPD is what inspired me to start my own business in environmental cleanup. I began my career at the department as a patrol officer. In this role, I responded to an emergency call that led me to the scene of a double homicide at a family's home. Shocked and grieving the loss of a loved one, the family assumed that law enforcement would clean up the mess. I was disappointed to learn that crime scene cleanup was something that homeowners were responsible for. As a result, I personally worked with the family to clean up the mess.

After this experience, I started providing crime scene cleanup services to homeowners in the Kansas City area as a "side hustle." It wasn't about the money for me, I wanted to help individuals coping with a loss of a loved so they didn't have to worry about cleaning up the mess in their home. From that

point on, I began thinking about starting my own business in crime scene cleanup.

SM: What pushed you to it into a full-time business?



LS-K: I eventually left the KCPD to work at a police department in a smaller town. I wanted to pursue my work in crime scene cleanup alongside my job at the department. However, unlike others, this department would not allow me operate a business alongside my full-time job. I had to choose between my job as cop and my burgeoning business. I believed in my business idea and myself, and made the decision to relocate to Tampa and launch Spaulding Decon.

SM: What were some of the hurdles you faced in initially launching Spaulding Decon?

LS-K: Like many small business owners, I definitely faced my fair share of hurdles when I launched Spaulding Decon. It was extremely difficult for me to find a bank that would give me a loan for my business. When no one would give me a business loan, I got creative and asked for a home repair loan to get my windows fixed. My windows didn't get fixed, but I was able to use this money to launch Spaulding Decon. Like any new business, I could not expect returns for the first few years. Without an additional source of income, and even a permanent place to live, I put everything that I had into it. However my efforts paid off, Spaulding Decon has doubled its sales figures each year since 2006.



SM: Besides crime scene clean up, what else do you all do?

LS-K: During my time at the Kansas City Police Department, I was promoted to narcotics detective. My job was primarily focused on one big drug epidemic – meth use. At the time, the state of Missouri led the nation in the number of drug busts involving meth. I worked to investigate and bust operating meth labs in the area. However, I faced a problem – a major lack of meth lab cleanup services in the area. From this moment on, I began thinking about offering a meth lab cleanup service.

After launching Spaulding Decon, I decided to add meth lab cleanup to our overall list of services. Meth lab cleanup has proved to be a lucrative business, boosting sales and creating multiple revenue streams for us. At the same time, it is rewarding for us to help families ensure they are living in a safe and clean environment. I decided to add hoarding cleanup, mold removal and a real estate/construction arm to our list of services shortly thereafter.



SM: Finally, what advice would you give to emerging entrepreneurs looking to build a business in a niche market such as the one you are in?

LS-K: My advice to emerging entrepreneurs would be to never take no for an answer. Even when all you're hearing is no, you have to be your own yes-man or yes-woman. You have to believe in yourself when others don't, and always persevere. Even when times were tough, I refused to give up and my business took off.