



# Three Women Entrepreneurs Who Are Crushing It

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**KEYWORDS:** Entrepreneurship, Women, small business.

## ***Kathy Goughenour grew her virtual training business.***

*This article is part of America's Entrepreneurs, a Next Avenue initiative made possible by the [Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation](https://www.schulzefamilyfoundation.org/) (<https://www.schulzefamilyfoundation.org/>) and [EIX](https://eiexchange.com/). (<https://eiexchange.com/>)*

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reported last summer that female-owned small businesses were "disproportionately affected by the coronavirus pandemic and corresponding economic crisis." The prediction for growth and revenue looked depressing. But these three women, all over 50, bucked the statistics by embracing digital technology and pivoting their businesses.

During the pandemic, they didn't just survive, they thrived — as you'll see in our interviews with them, below. The entrepreneurs are:

**Kathy Goughenour**, an entrepreneur in the St. Louis area, who grew her 13-year-old [Expert VA Training](https://www.expertvatraining.com/) (<https://www.expertvatraining.com/>) virtual assistant business to one bringing in over \$1 million.

"I was told I laughed and smiled way too much. I had to be less joyful to succeed?"

**Sandra Guibord**, a former model and actress on daytime soaps, who expanded her [Sandra's Wine Life](https://www.sandraswinelife.com/) (<https://www.sandraswinelife.com/>) business (based out of New York City and Ridgefield, Conn.) with virtual seminars, attracting clients from private wealth firms

and financial institutions.

Previously, she founded the international tech even platform HMG Strategy, with her ex-husband.

**Kathy Cano-Murillo**, the Phoenix-based, Latina founder of the [Crafty Chica](https://craftychica.com/) (<https://craftychica.com/>) lifestyle brand, who became an even bigger influencer. Her company — which sells "Mexi-style" wall art, block prints, T-shirts, candles, earrings, pins, mugs and books — recently celebrated a million views on TikTok.

## **Tell me what motivated you to start your business.**

**Kathy Goughenour:** After 18 years working at a Fortune 500 [telecommunications] company, I stopped getting promoted. I was told I laughed and smiled way too much. I had to be less joyful to succeed? Life was too short.

I started a business of my own and now I wear tiaras at meetings.

With my VA (virtual assistant) business, I soon earned twice my marketing manager income. As of 2020, I earned 20 times that income.

I'm laughing all the way to the bank now.

**Sandra Guibord:** In 2000, I started a wine education and consulting business, Sandra's Wine Life. I saw a large market of wine consumers underserved by the wine industry: both the everyday wine enthusiast who liked entertaining family and friends, and the corporate executive.

I wrote on wine, became the food and beverage editor of a magazine and created a women's wine club. I then sold my half of a multimillion-dollar tech event company and focused solely on Sandra's Wine Life to help people have confidence and fun exploring wines.



**Kathy Cano-Murillo:** I started my [craft] business as a [side hustle](https://www.nextavenue.org/side-hustle-that-fills-need/) in 2001 when crafts had a resurgence among younger people. I've always been a maker, and wanted to create a space for the Latino community.

I had worked as a newspaper reporter for The Arizona Republic and syndicated craft columnist; In 2007, I focused full-time on my business.

My content filled a niche — and this was even before influencer marketing. I've been busy ever since.

## Can you share your biggest challenge and biggest success?

**Kathy Goughenour:** My biggest challenge was learning to take risks. I wish I had risked spending more money earlier on marketing and on professional development — specifically business coaching. My business grew the fastest it's ever grown when I invested in a fabulous [business coach](https://www.nextavenue.org/dont-get-scammed-online-business-coaches/).

"I've grown my business a hundred percent conducting virtual presentations."

The biggest success? That's helping hundreds of women become confident in their abilities and achieve success on their own terms. They've learned how to create profitable VA businesses. They've traveled the world, bought dream houses and paid for college educations for their children.

**Sandra Guibord:** My big challenge has been dealing with various state laws about wine shipping. While hosting events around the country, I've had to source my wines from multiple suppliers. But that has also grown my network extensively.

My biggest success: the Turkish government and Wine Alliance hired my company exclusively to introduce Turkish wines to America.

**Kathy Cano-Murillo:** It's challenging to keep coming up with new ideas that are fresh and relevant, but I love challenges!

My biggest success is my career overall — the fact it has grown steadily for 20 years.

## How did you fare in the pandemic?

**Kathy Goughenour:** The VA industry skyrocketed during COVID. The women in my program shared that they earned an average of 130 percent more in 2020 than in 2019. My VA training and coaching business also grew to a million dollars from seven hundred thousand dollars in 2019. Based on my research, I believe this industry will flourish and having an online presence is now crucial to that growth.

**Sandra Guibord:** Virtual Wine Seminars have been a wonderful success during the pandemic. I've grown my business 100 percent conducting virtual presentations. I pivoted from my traditional in-person format to online presentations quickly.

Without golf or theater, virtual wine tastings became a valuable way for financial institutions to reach out to their customers. I work with big financial companies and nonprofits like TD Bank, Citicorp and The Red Cross. The intimate and interactive experiences are incredibly rewarding.

**Kathy Cano-Murillo:** My brand fared well. It was about reading the room and contributing during the pandemic. I paid attention to what people were interested in and how I could serve. That meant producing DIY content for them to do with family or with friends, virtually. Projects like face masks for beginning sewers, Day of the Dead Barbies and scrapbook paper mini-journals.

I've always made social media a big part of my business plan. During the pandemic, I organized an online craft night on Instagram that united all kinds of personalities. We now have eighty thousand Facebook followers. And I've had a few viral TikToks.

## Any advice for other women

## entrepreneurs?

**Kathy Goughenour:** Be sure that prospective clients have the budget to pay; see the value in hiring them and have an ongoing need.

Women should also adopt a more positive mindset. No more bumping your head up against the glass ceiling and being passed over for promotions or better pay. No more cheerleading for everyone around you to move ahead while you hang back and refill the chip bowl.

**Sandra Guibord:** Don't be shy about partnering and developing your network.

A big event and catering company provided food to match my wine pairings. "Why aren't we working together?" I asked. The owner was immediately on board. We're teaming up on my Wine and Opera and Wine and Cinema events.

Now I kick myself for not reaching out years ago.

Also, lean into expanding your brand. As a single businesswoman, I focused on my demographic. As I had children, my brand broadened. It became about how wine fits into family holidays, home entertainment, business dinners, and international and large-scale entertaining.

**Kathy Cano-Murillo:** Write down clear, specific goals; an action list and a timeline of the tasks — and work on it each day.

I start with a big end goal and visualize it. It's led to many successes, like a greeting card line, two fabric collections, books, an art studio and a craft product line for HSN where I also appear.

Last year, I was a keynote speaker for Michaels Stores, the largest arts and crafts specialty retailer in North America!