



We're always bombarded by how great it is to pursue your passion, etc. – but we've spoken with enough people to know that it's not always easy. Overall, would you say things have been easy for you?

It has not been a smooth road. Here are (9) nine of some of the struggles along the way (just to name a few) have been things like: (1) Me being in business for myself which can be a con (a not-so-good thing) starting out, when it comes to things like daily structure and time (and money) management. The good news is, there are people you can hire to help you with that! (2) There have been times (especially in the beginning) where there was no money. On many occasions, I had to return food to the grocery store for gas or train fare to make it to a conference or an event, (3) All along the way, I've had a very small support system and sometimes a lack of. This makes the journey feel very lonely at times. (4) Starting out, I had to pray for and learn how to have confidence in my new business, products, and services. I learned that in order to grow (and make money), it was a must that I learned how to tell (and sell) people on my business. (5) I consistently searched for as many free and no-cost resources as I could find to help me on my business-building journey. It was vital to my business growth journey to learn the free tools available to help me along each step of the way. (6) Another struggle for me was the comfort zone of running back to the 9-to-5 or getting a part-time job when funds got low. This always took me off focus and served as a distraction to growing my business. (7) The struggle to stay relevant and use the latest software and technologies in business was often a struggle as well. I had to learn how to put information 'out there' using what I already had access to. (8) I've had several people steal my ideas and business growth tactics (and eventually confess to me that they did it). I had to create a better strategy for sharing my work and accomplishments online (and after the fact!) (9) The biggest struggle of all, like I share in the upcoming "How Were You As a Child", question was me having to "invent the wheel" and create the business model and job/career-type I wanted to have, as I have never seen anything like it (see the "Tell Us About Your Business" section of this interview!)

We'd love to hear more about your business.

The Boss of Me is a training and development company for women small business owners and entrepreneurs seeking to tell their (powerful) story and share their business message by writing their first book, become a professionally paid Speaker, or be a Certified Life Coach- all in an effort to break the poverty cycle and make their first (or next) \$25,000 in business income/revenue. The Boss of Me is known for 'encouragement, empowerment, education, and engagement' with entrepreneurs. Recently, we are most proud of our partnership with [www.fastcoachtraining.com](http://www.fastcoachtraining.com), a multi-million dollar Life Coach Certification company, where our Founder, Master Life Coach Trainer, Andrieka "AJ" Austin serves as Lead Trainer and "the face" of the company's global division. We are also proud to share a portion of our product sales/proceeds with local female college students taking business-based / entrepreneurship courses. What sets us apart is that as far as we know, The Boss of Me is the only provider of virtual Master Messaging solutions delivered by a Master Book/Business/Life Coach Trainer with a real-world, struggle-to-success system infused with a Christian-based approach for women in business seeking to scale their enterprise by at least \$25,000 or more.

What were you like growing up?

Even as a child, I knew in my heart that I would potentially would have to create my own career when I grew up because I had not seen anything like what I wanted to do. I was confident that my occupation had yet to be created. I was uninspired by titles like Nurse or Teacher (although I "taught" a few of the neighborhood kids, my Kid Sister doll, and my Cabbage Patch Kid, Latoya. I enjoyed entertaining myself by reading the labels on the back of the aerosol cans in the bathroom while I sat on "the throne". I figured you must have to be really smart to pronounce the names on the long list of ingredients involved in making this stuff, and for me, the answer to that challenge was to pursue the journey of becoming a Doctor. I've known since I was six years old that I was called to make a difference and destined to do something very impactful in the world. I remember reading a book of children's Bible stories and thinking, "What if God wants me to be a female Noah?" (from the story of Noah and The Ark). Only a few decades later, I enjoy serving as a resource and throwing out the rescue raft that helps women small business owners survive the overwhelming (and often drowning) tides of small business ownership. I knew this was meant to be.



# Andrieka "AJ" Austin

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VoyageATL

Today we'd like to introduce you to **Andrieka "AJ" Austin**

Andrieka, let's start with your story. We'd love to hear how you got started and how the journey has been so far.

On April 14, 2008, I had scheduled time off work from a corporate nine-to-five job I landed through a staffing agency, thanks to a referral from a new friend visiting the States from London. That day, I went down to my local courthouse for the hearing that would make my divorce from a five-year marriage final. I happily signed on the dotted line (you read that right!) and headed out of the courtroom. I approached the elevators and pushed the "Down" button. The elevator doors opened. I stepped inside and pushed the button labeled "Lobby" as I thought to myself, "I wonder how many people have been as happy as I am to exit this building right now?!". I was excited about "that part" of my day (and my story) finally being over. Because I was already off work that day and had some free time after the trial, I had also scheduled a television appearance with a local NBC Studios affiliate to promote a new business I started after work and on the weekends. This would be my second time on television with this new business brand. I was so excited. Back at the elevator, I exhaled as the doors began to close and I saw my now ex-husband for the last time. Then, my phone rang from inside my purse. I answered it in a great mood feeling excited about what the rest of my day would hold for my future and the growth of my new business. "Hello?", I answered.





On the other end was my cousin calling to tell me that my mom had just passed away. Wow! Talk about life-altering. The same moment I was closing one chapter of my life, another was beginning to unfold. I can't remember what I said or thought during that conversation but, a snapshot of one of the memories that come to mind now is about how once I was finally outside of the courthouse building that day, stopped and stood in the middle of the road – wanting to scream aloud – but silently praying and asking God what He wanted me to do. After the first call with the news of my mother's death, my phone rang consistently with calls from family members and other unknown numbers asking me, "So, what are you going to do about your mother's house, and her funeral arrangements, and her nearly half-million dollars in medical expenses, and...?" I wanted to shout, "This is the same conversations I'm having with God at the moment! Give me a minute, please!" I'm the eldest and only girl of my mother's three children, hence the numerous calls about my plans on how to handle this. This meant that the responsibility of 'what to do next' all fell on my shoulders. I was left picking up and putting together the pieces of my mom's life just as I had to do with my own previous life. My mom was forty-seven years old. She was also a fifteen-year small business owner. Her biggest dream in life was to be a homeowner and have a brand-new house built from the ground up. She did that. After calling on a few of my friends to pray with me, I decided to go clean out her new home, handle her personal affairs, pay for her funeral arrangements, and settle her medical expenses. One thing I didn't mention earlier is that during this time in my own personal life, I was living in a homeless shelter for women, then in a prison that had been converted into a transitional housing program for the working poor. Before that, I was sleeping on the floors, couch pillows, pull-out-sofa beds, and (believe it or not) in the guest bedroom of the same house, I was now responsible for cleaning my mother's belongings out of. I was later offered the option to own my mother's home. I accepted.

This was my life now. From homeless to homeowner. The story continues. A few days later, I found myself back at work locked in a small bathroom stall crying uncontrollably. Absenteeism was frowned upon at this job and I had already taken a day off for the divorce, then, my mom's funeral a few days later, and then my Aunt's funeral a week after that. However, my Supervisor at the time recommended I take an additional day or two to get myself completely together. I did. While on bereavement, I received a phone call that my team and our entire department had been downsized while I was away and that I did not have a job to return to. At this moment, I should've been sad. But, I was happy actually about the job and position downsizing! Why? I worked 7 am-7 pm six days a week. I was mentally and physically exhausted which led to panic attacks, chest pains, anxiety, crying uncontrollably, anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medications. I remember being balling up at the top of the stairs in my home not recognizing myself or my life. I had to snap out of it. I fought. I fought for the dream I've had since early childhood to create my own dream job. Now, was my opportunity to live that dream. This is what I've always wanted. It was time to pursue my entrepreneurial dream.

This was the same dream job and position I used to wish for deep in my soul while I sat in my corporate cubicle. So, I decided to get up – from that day on – and seize this time as my chance to be in the place of freedom finally working for myself and determining my own destiny. Once the dust settled from the series of my life events, I took some time to sit with God and process my thoughts on everything that had recently occurred in my life; dropping out of school, homelessness, the divorce, the death of my mom, and the downsizing of my job. I needed to get my story straight. Everything that I'd been through as a result of that one day made me stronger, wiser and gave me a deeper insight into who I am. I read business books, researched successful entrepreneurs. I attended networking events to fellowship with women who were in business for themselves and living the lifestyle I wanted to live. I was now a newly unemployed, aspiring entrepreneur. I noticed women often gave me their business cards filled with titles and taglines – some resembling a mini-resume. I never cared to ask for more detail about what they did specifically in their businesses. I was the person who glanced at a business card, slid it in my pocket (or in the nearest trash bin) after I excused myself from the conversation. This was all because I didn't know (or understand): 1. What they did in their business 2. Why they chose this type of business (or where their passion came from) and why I should care – (aka, "their story") 3. How (or why) I could connect with them to help me get to my next level in my life or usiness (Note: not a sales pitch) I wanted to hear their stories of what got them "here", in business for themselves.

After all, I'd just come through a series of obstacles I was ready to turn into an opportunity for entrepreneurship in my life. I used the contact information on the cards I kept to gather the email addresses of a few hundred of the women I networked with in order to share something valuable with each of them. Here's a snapshot of my email to them, "Hi, my name is AJ. We recently met while networking. I'm new to the business community and I would love to know what your number one struggle is in your business". Surprising, huh? Flow with me here. I figured, maybe if I was having trouble understanding why they were in business (their story), maybe they were having trouble sharing it (or maybe they didn't know to share it) – and this is where they were stuck or struggling.

From the email conversations, I learned that there are around twenty universal business struggles that most women face in their business, all which resulted in not making much money in their business. So, I wrote a book called, *Secrets of a Socialpreneur*. It features the top eight mistakes women in business told me they made that left them broke, stuck, and struggling in their business and I offer them inspiration for the journey of overcoming each of these. Who knew this is where I would land? I was now giving women insight on how to get unstuck, keep moving forward, and potentially make more money in their business. This was now my new goal. I already had business experience from running several businesses, along with the one I mentioned earlier (remember the one I was supposed to be on television promoting the day my mother passed away?). From my own experience, I knew what it was like to be a woman in business needing to make more money, but having your peers looking up to you – thinking you were doing fine. Writing this book gave me a new platform to share my story (remember the one I sat with God to put it all together?), along with a few secrets I uncovered from the hundreds of email and phone chats with women in business about why (and where) they were broke, stuck, and struggling in their business – plus, what to do about it. That day – now, over a decade ago, lead to this being my NEW (current) bio for how I'm introduced on stages around the world". Introducing Andrieka "AJ" Austin; Best-selling author of multiple books, Master Book Coach, Business Coach and Life Coach Trainer, Professional Speaker, Trainer, and Story-teller.

Going from homelessness, job downsizings, divorce and death of her mother – on the same day – she is the living definition of her name, which means 'strong and courageous'. Once she realized poverty is a mindset and self-empowerment is the key to turning obstacles into opportunities in life and business using the power of your story to help build a legacy, she set out on a mission to help change the statistic that 70% of women small business make less than \$25,000 per year. She received over \$100,000 in scholarships to complete her degree specializing in training and development from Mercer University, soon-after enlisting in a movement to train and certify life coaches around the world. AJ Austin taught herself how to share a good story and use it as leverage to instantly increase your impact, influence, and income. She is the best in her field as a world-class Coach, facilitating trainings that teach business leaders how to confidently convert conversations to clients, cash, checks, and credit cards. Ms. Austin also runs the internationally recognized, multi-million dollar ministry division of a life coach training and certification company, where she leads and facilitates the teachings for those wishing to use their life experience, along with this training to add additional streams of income by becoming a Coach, and learning how to share their story in a self-published book. She has impacted hundreds of thousands through online and offline symposiums, panels, conferences, workshops, private trainings, coaching, and mentoring.

She's a business owner with hundreds of clients and partners around the world, a best-selling author of several empowering books, including, 'Messaging MAGIC' [How to Confidently Convert Conversations to Clients, Cash, Checks, and Credit Cards!] and *Secrets of a Socialpreneur* [The Top 8 Mistakes Women Entrepreneurs Make That Leave Them Broke, Stuck, and Struggling In Their Business – and she gives them inspiration for the journey]. Her books and training materials and coaching programs are distributed in The Cayman Islands, Vietnam, The The United Kingdom and all across North America. AJ Austin, then founded, 'The Boss Of Me', an encouraging, empowering, and educational online platform that helps women become Authors and leave a legacy for generations to come, and has launched hundreds of trainings in a virtual community to help aspiring and established Authors stand in authority and be recognized for what they've been through and successfully came out of that can now help others succeed. From homeless to highly-respected, today, AJ is the recipient of the 'Saving Our Families and Children' Economic Empowerment Award, and the Mercer University Training and Development 'Outstanding Accomplishment' award.

