



SO YOU WANT TO START A BUSINESS?

What 3 years of freelancing & entrepreneurship have taught me.

By Alyssa Parr, Squarespace Expert & CEO of

Luminescent Dreams

Boutique Web Design Studio

WHO AM I?

& How Did I Get Here?

Hey! My name's Alyssa Parr. I'm a 28-year-old creative entrepreneur currently living in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania. In 2020 (during the pandemic), I launched a boutique web design studio called Luminescent Dreams. This business has shaped me into the person I am today, and has taught me a lot about what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur. I hope that my presentation today is eye-opening and insightful so that you can determine if this path is worth exploring too.



WHO AM I?

& How Did I Get Here? Timeline

- 2018* – Graduated from Cal Poly, SLO with a Bachelor of Architecture Degree. I always had a curiosity for entrepreneurship and used to compete in start-up pitch competitions while I was in college.
- 2019* – First learned about UX Design while working for an architecture firm in San Francisco, CA. At the time, I enrolled in Eddie's part-time UX Design course at General Assembly.
- 2019* – I randomly moved to Australia for 8 months and got a job working in UX design & sales for a small start-up company. At that job, I learned all about sales proposals and how to set up online systems to run a business.
- 2020* – Covid happened and I moved back to the US to figure out the next chapter of my life. People kept asking me to design their website and I loved it so much that I decided to start my own business!

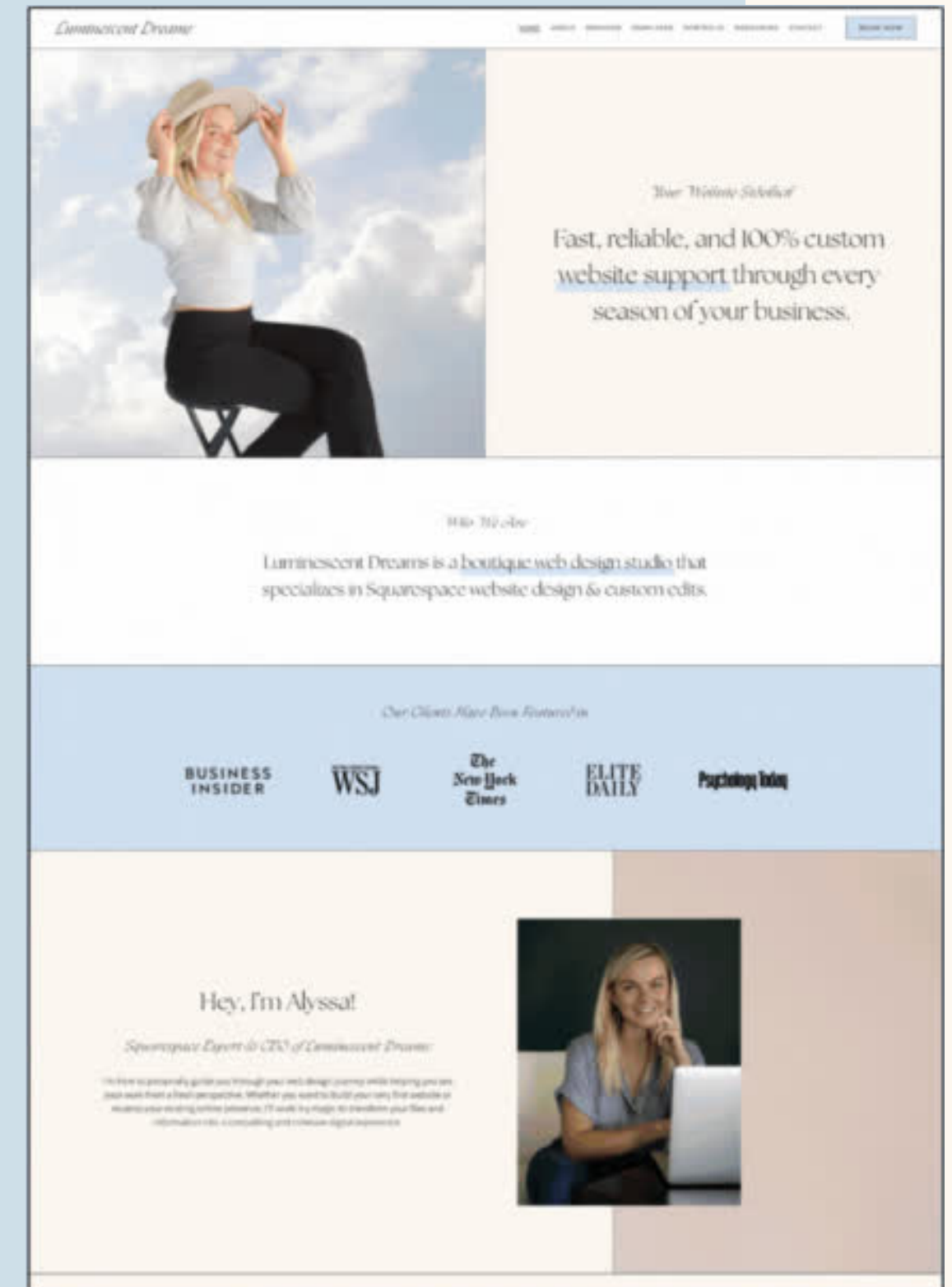


My office setup when I first started my business

3 YEARS LATER...

My Business is Still Here!

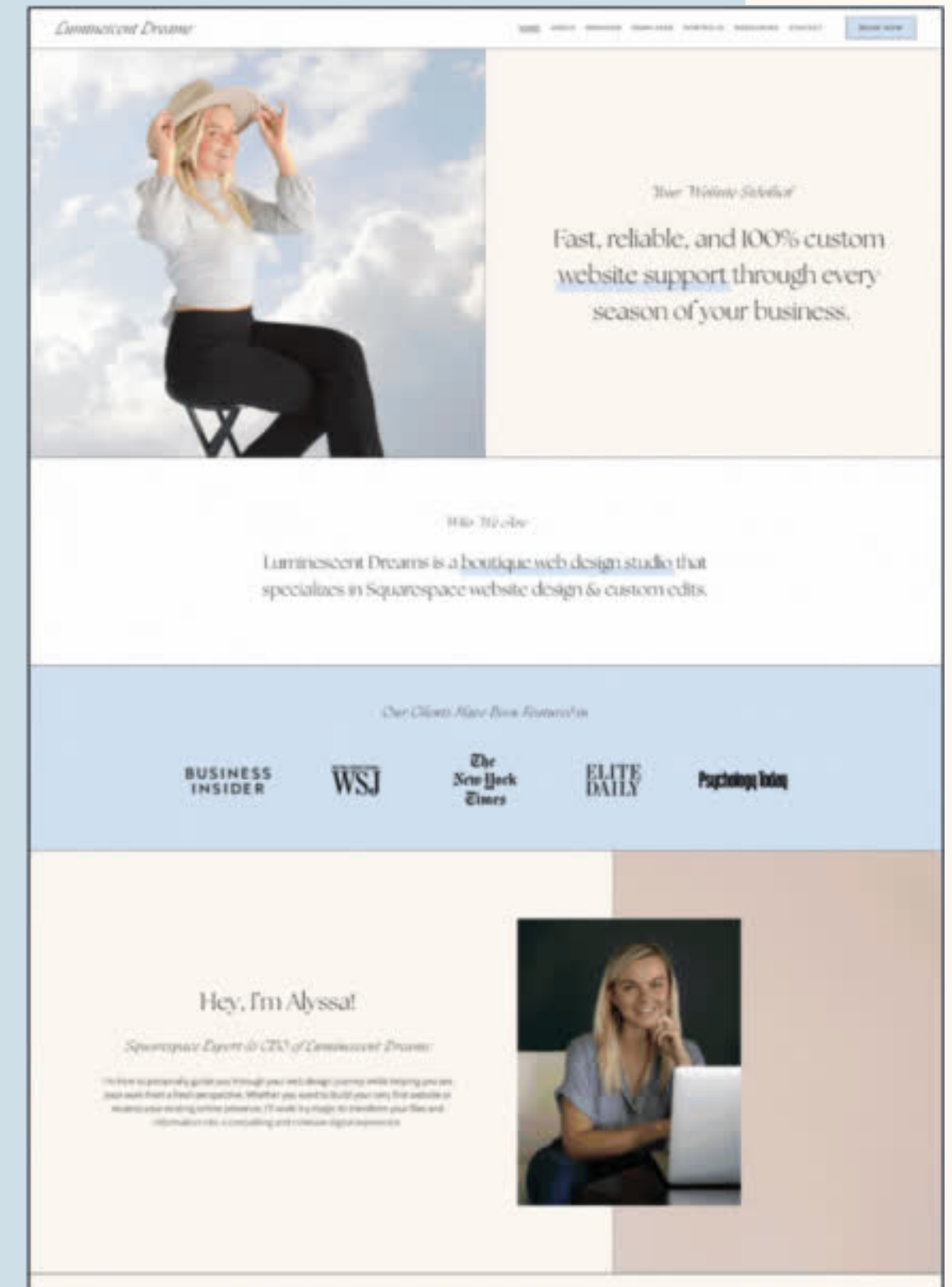
- I've built dozens of websites and have made genuine connections with all my clients. I've even visited a few of them in person!
- I've really defined my brand, what makes me unique, and the type of services that I do and don't offer (through lots of trial and error).
- I'm now a "Squarespace Expert" and have become known for being incredibly fast at building websites. My signature service is my VIP Days where I offer custom website edits in a 4-hour span.
- I just launched a template shop and am looking forward to selling more digital products and building out my YouTube channel.



3 YEARS LATER...

Big Takeaways & Lessons Learned

- I love running my own business and working from anywhere! It has given me a lot of freedom and flexibility in my life (although it hasn't always been very comfortable or stable financially).
- What's helped me be the most successful and balanced is treating my business like a 9-5 job with sick and vacation time and paying myself like an employee.
- I've seen the web design industry and technology change A LOT just in the past 3 years. I love keeping up with everything and continuing to master my craft.



RUNNING A BUSINESS

Pros

- Once you know how to successfully run a business & market yourself, you can quickly pivot & adapt in your career, no matter what happens with the economy & technology.
- The sky's the limit! Depending on how you set your business up, you can make a lot of money and have as much freedom, creativity, and flexibility in your life as you want.
- It can be very satisfying to work with clients 1:1 and see the impact that you're able to make in the world through your business every single day.

Cons

- Running a business takes discipline and a lot of responsibility. When things get tough, you can't really quit, hide, or run away. There are clients and ongoing business things that require your attention.
- Freelancing is a great short-term option in between jobs. However, running your own business might not look so great on your resume if you ultimately want to work for a larger company.
- As an entrepreneur, you will have to wear many (or all of the hats) in your business. In addition to your client work, you need to do your sales, marketing, bookkeeping, etc.

3 KEY COMPONENTS

Of Running a Successful Design Business

1 – Finding your niche & doing what you love

- Getting clear about who you are & the type of work you want to do
 - Branding, marketing, & storytelling to your ideal clients
-

2 – Launching & growing your business

- Getting organized with your finances, taxes, & business paperwork
 - Business planning, online tools, pricing, contracts, & strategy
-

3 – Booking clients consistently & mastering your craft

- Providing a high-quality service with an excellent customer experience
 - Becoming a sought-after expert & thought leader in your industry
-



PART 1

Finding Your Niche & Doing What You Love

- Getting clear about who you are & the type of work you want to do
- Branding, marketing, & storytelling to your ideal clients



WHO ARE YOU, REALLY?

A Couple of Deep Questions to Ask Yourself as You're Brainstorming Your Brand

You can journal about this after the presentation (or pause the video if you're watching the replay)

**WHAT TYPE OF
WORK ABSOLUTELY
LIGHTS YOU UP?**

Web design, branding, UI
design, UX research, app
development, etc.

**WHAT SORT OF
CLIENTS DO YOU
WANT TO SERVE?**

Tech companies, small
businesses, non-profits, large
corporations, etc.

**WHAT IS THE UNIQUE
VALUE THAT YOU
BRING TO THE TABLE?**

What's your superpower?
Active listener, innovator, super
talented designer, etc.

*Even if you're not planning on starting a business, this brainstorming exercise will be super insightful as you're considering different career options.

YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

Clearly Communicating to Your Ideal Clients Through Branding, Marketing, & Storytelling

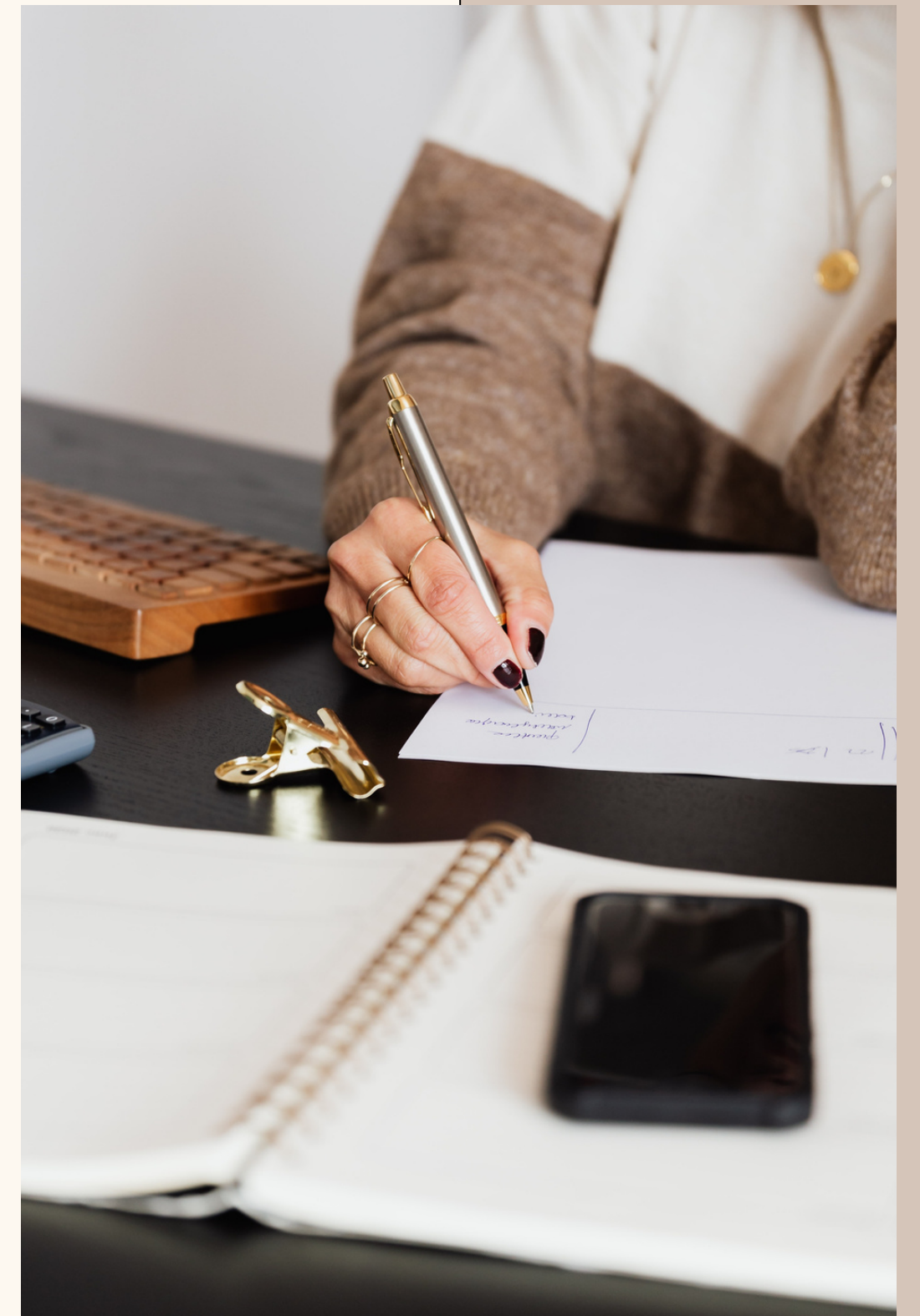
This could be content for your website, portfolio, LinkedIn bio, Upwork profile, social media channels, etc.

THE TYPE OF WORK THAT LIGHTS YOU UP	THE CLIENTELE YOU WANT TO SERVE	YOUR UNIQUE SUPERPOWERS & VALUE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pick a niche/direction (at least to start).<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ What platforms will you work with?◦ What types of deliverables will you produce for your clients?◦ Are you available for ongoing work or only one-time projects?◦ Would you rather work on several small projects or 1 large project at a time? <p>*I recommend keeping your services fairly simple and straightforward so that your clients have a clear understanding of what you do & don't offer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What words and information would establish credibility and build trust with your clients?• What colors, fonts, graphics, and overall design styles would resonate with your target clientele? <p>*Your branding is ultimately about YOUR CLIENTS (not about you). Make sure your website's design is a reflection of that.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What makes you unique & special?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ This could have nothing to do with UX design and be more related to who you are as a person— your story, your motivation, your big <i>why</i>.• Weave this into your branding, marketing, & storytelling. <p>*Showcasing your unique value will help you stand out from your competition and make more genuine connections your target clientele.</p>

PART 2

Launching & Growing Your Business

- Getting organized with your finances, taxes, & business paperwork
- Business planning, online tools, pricing, contracts, & strategy



LET'S DO THE NUMBERS

The Difference Between Working for a Company and Working for Yourself

Let's say you want your net salary (money in the bank) to be around \$5,000 each month

IF YOU WORK FOR A COMPANY:

GROSS MONTHLY SALARY
\$_____?

YOUR EMPLOYER AUTOMATICALLY TAKES
MONEY OUT OF YOUR SALARY FOR YOUR
TAXES, 401K, & HEALTH INSURANCE



NET MONTHLY SALARY
\$5,000

LET'S DO THE NUMBERS

The Difference Between Working for a Company and Working for Yourself

Let's say you want your net salary (money in the bank) to be around \$5,000 each month

IF YOU WORK FOR A COMPANY:

GROSS MONTHLY SALARY
\$_____?

YOUR EMPLOYER AUTOMATICALLY TAKES
MONEY OUT OF YOUR SALARY FOR YOUR
TAXES, 401K, & HEALTH INSURANCE



NET MONTHLY SALARY
\$5,000

IF YOU WORK FOR YOURSELF:

GROSS MONTHLY INCOME FROM CLIENTS
\$8,000



BUSINESS EXPENSES (6.25%)
\$500

SAVINGS FOR TAXES (25%)
\$2,000

RETIREMENT SAVINGS (6.25%)
\$500



NET MONTHLY SALARY
\$5,000

LET'S DO THE NUMBERS

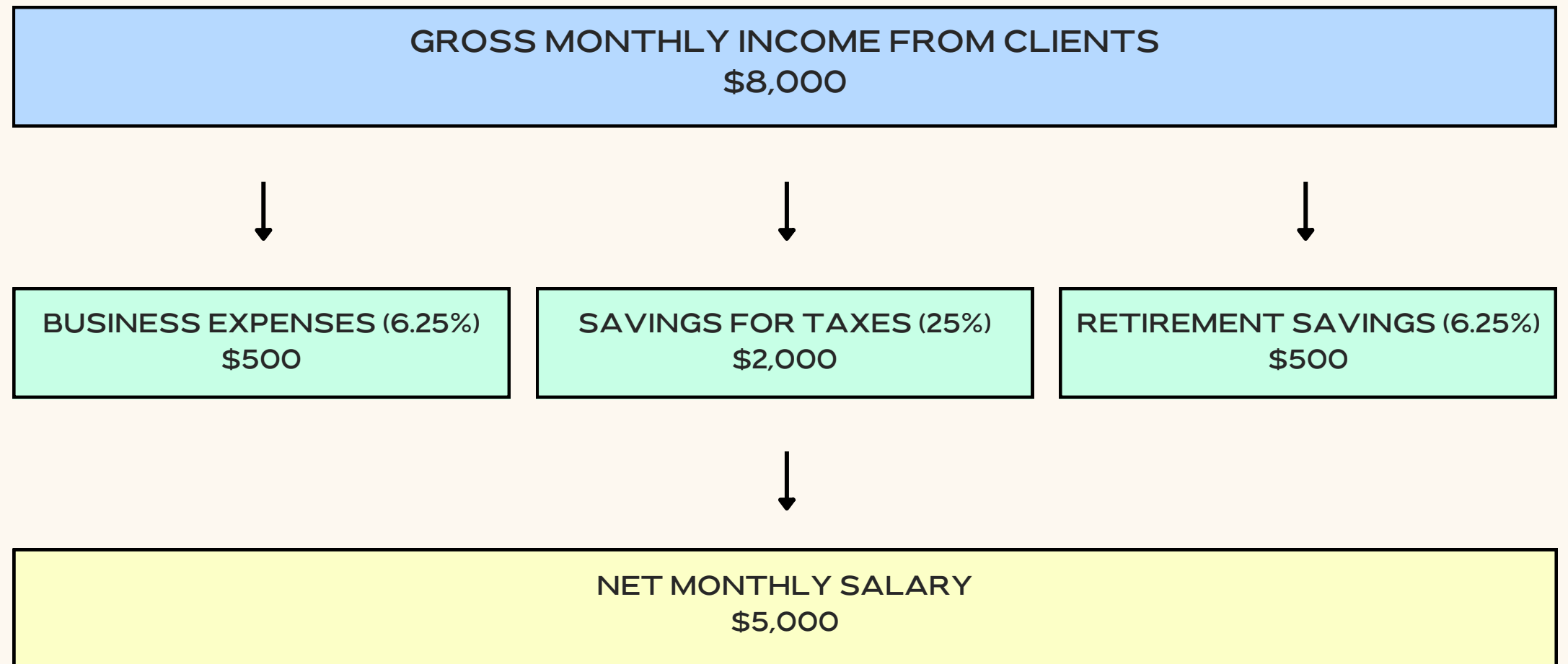
The Difference Between Working for a Company and Working for Yourself

Let's say you want your net salary (money in the bank) to be around \$5,000 each month

SUPER IMPORTANT THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- KEEP YOUR BUSINESS EXPENSES AND PERSONAL EXPENSES IN SEPARATE BANK ACCOUNTS.
- HIRE A PROFESSIONAL BOOKKEEPER & ACCOUNTANT FROM DAY 1 (UNLESS YOU REALLY WANT TO LEARN QUICKBOOKS).
- TAKE OUT A PERCENTAGE OF YOUR INCOME FOR TAXES (15% - 25% IS A GOOD STARTING POINT).
- ALWAYS SET ASIDE A PERCENTAGE OF YOUR INCOME FOR RETIREMENT SAVINGS (10% IS GOOD).
- BE PREPARED WITH HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE.
- KEEP TRACK OF YOUR BUSINESS EXPENSES AND ONLY PURCHASE THINGS THAT YOU REALLY NEED.
- IF YOU ARE STARTING A BUSINESS, I RECOMMEND HAVING A PART-TIME OR FULL-TIME JOB AT FIRST. OTHERWISE, HAVING AT LEAST 3-6 MONTHS OF LIVING AND BUSINESS COSTS SAVED UP IS GOOD.

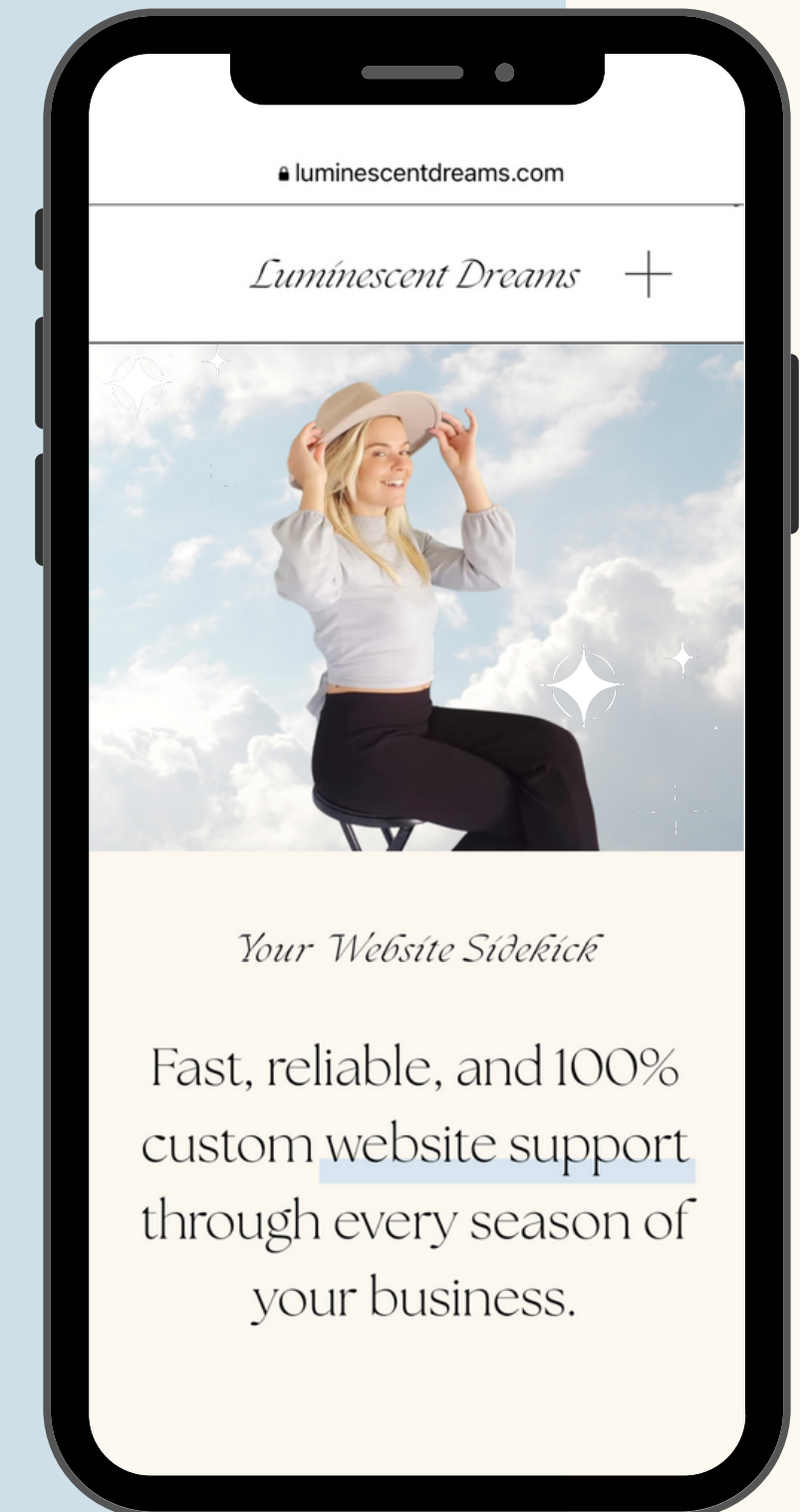
IF YOU WORK FOR YOURSELF:



BUSINESS PLANNING

Online Tools, Pricing, Contracts, & Strategy

- The online tools that I use to run my business →
- How I set up & price my web design services →
 - Custom Web Design → (proposal-based package with add-ons)
 - VIP Days → (hourly rate)
 - I also have 1-2 ongoing clients that I work for hourly each week at all times. This has helped me stabilize my income during slower seasons of work.



PART 3

Booking Clients Consistently & Mastering Your Craft

- Providing a high-quality service with an excellent customer experience
- Becoming a sought-after expert & thought leader in your industry



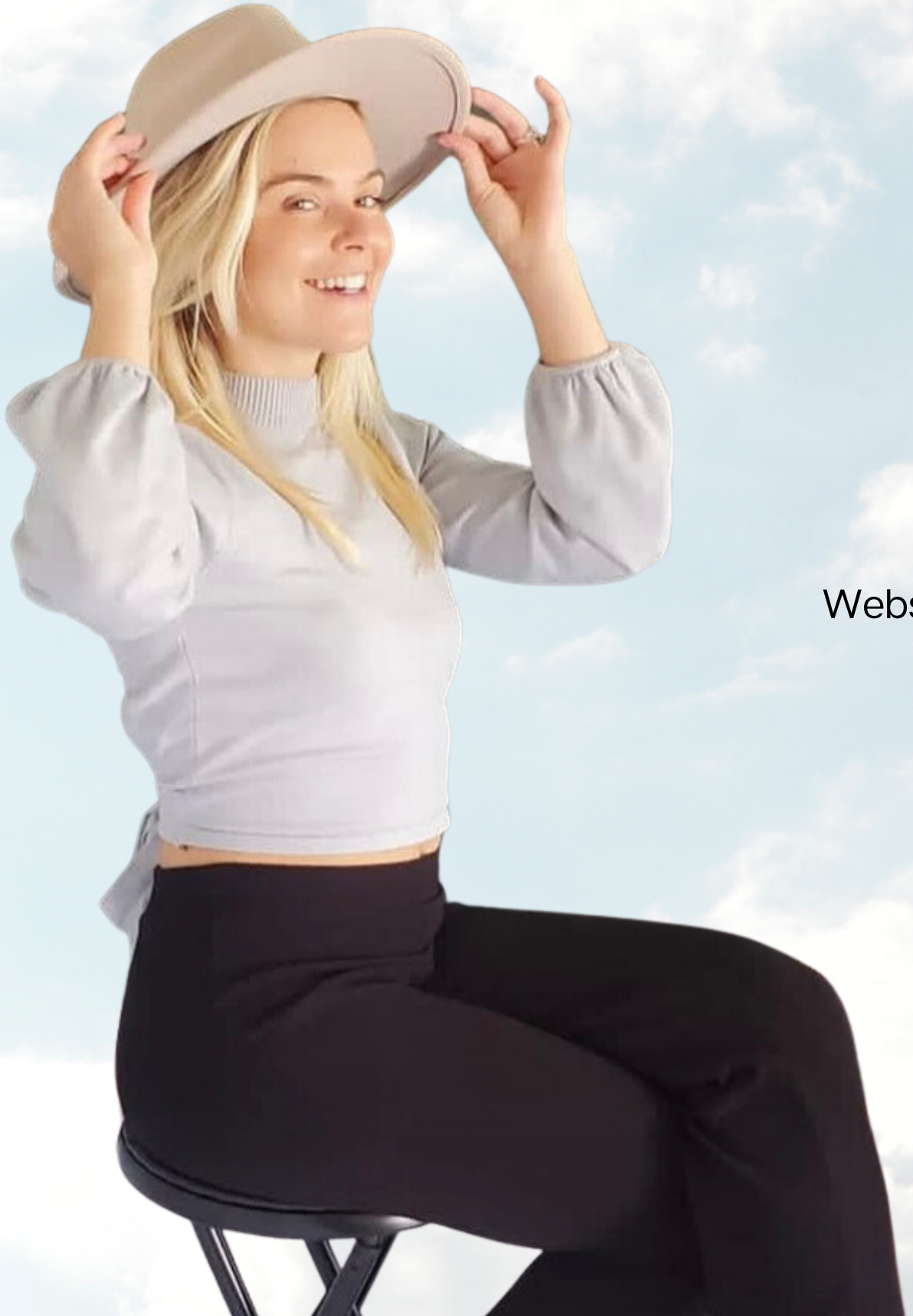
PRO TIPS

For Booking Clients Consistently & Mastering Your Craft

- The best way to book more clients is to do a great job!
 - Client referrals are still my #1 marketing source
 - Upwork is #2
 - Social media and email marketing can be a great way to stay in touch with your audience and remind them that you exist, but I've personally never booked new clients from them.
- Building any business is about building relationships.
 - You build relationships with your clients through your 1:1 communication with them, as well as through your website, social media, sales process, marketing, etc.
- Developing your skills, brand, and process takes time. Start somewhere and put yourself out there!
 - You can refine the details as you get to know yourself better.



Collaborating with a client on a VIP Day at my old coworking space in Bellingham, Washington



STAY IN TOUCH

& follow me on all the socials!

Website: www.luminescentdreams.com Email: alyssa@luminescentdreams.com

[Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Pinterest](#) | [Facebook](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

P.S. For Eddie's students, I am offering all of you a FREE 1-hour mentoring session. I could help review your portfolio website or answer questions about entrepreneurship or Squarespace. If you're interested, just send me an email and I'll send you a link to book a time!



QUESTIONS?