

Kathryn: Welcome to episode 32 of Compass, I'm your host Kathryn Hunter. Are you torn between offering a service and setting up systems to package and sell your expertise? Today, Amy Simpkins and I talk about that and more when we discuss becoming a renewable energy expert. I wanted to let you know, currently, I am offering free one on one brainstorming sessions, to help you find your location independent path. To book, visit compasspod.com/brainstorming and let's get started. You're listening to Compass, where we talk with location independent womxn about their work and the paths that got them there. We get into their stories of struggle and success, finding clients, figuring out what to charge, and of course, we talk money. Join us and take the next step in finding your direction. Amy, welcome to the show.

Amy: Thank you, Kathryn. I'm so happy to be here.

Kathryn: I like to start with your early life and see where that influences you later on. What did you want to be when you were five?

Amy: It's funny. I can't really remember what I wanted to be when I was five, like on a conscious level, but I have a piece of paper that I found kinda tucked into my baby book that my parents saved. It was a note I wrote to my dad when I was six and on the backside it says, Dad, I made this list for you, love Amy. And on the front it says jobs and it has a whole list of things. Everything from a carpenter to a waitress, to a banker, to an astronomer. The one that I love bests on there is clock fix it. When I was little, I was interested in a whole bunch of things, but even at that time of my life, you could see technology coming through. You could see science coming through, you could see problem-solving coming through, but you could also see, you know, a diversity of interests as well.

Kathryn: And also planning skills.

Amy: Yes. Oh my gosh. Good point. That is like, signature of my life. I am, I'm a very advanced planner and that has remained true my entire life. I hadn't even thought of that until you said that. Yes, I am a planner.

Kathryn: How have your, your interest or plans for the future changed by the time you left high school?

Amy: But the time I went to high school, I was pretty sure. I had really doubled down and focused on science, fell in love with science and engineering, particularly spaceflight. I desperately wanted to be an astronaut and not in that kid way of, you know, the, the six year old list way. Interestingly, astronaut does not show up on my six year old list, but by the time I was going to high school, I was pretty sure I wanted to do that. I wanted to design spacecraft. I wanted to work with NASA. I wanted to work with private spacecraft. I wanted to help humans further their scientific knowledge and that space exploration was the way to do it. I was so sure that that was what I was going to do for the rest of my life. And so in high school I was preparing to go to engineering school. I was doing the research on engineering schools and that's where I sort of discovered MIT

and was like, there's no other place for me. I have to go here. You have to find a way. And so that, that was high school for me. I had a one track mind.

Kathryn: So I take it you pursued college?

Amy: I did. I did go to MIT. I majored in Aero Astro. And if you're an MIT person that's course 16 and got my bachelor's degree, which was every bit of the ringer that you think it might be. When I finished MIT, I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do next. I also had a significant amount of burnout that I was facing. I had some job offers from California. A lot of the aerospace industry is out on the west coast and I'm originally from Michigan. I went to school in Boston and I had never really been out west. I had this sneaking suspicion that California wasn't a super great fit for me personality wise, but I didn't really know. And so instead of committing to a full time job, I decided to go get a master's degree. At the time, it was absolutely the right decision. You know, in hindsight, I kind of wished I had dug into my professional interests more before I did that. But I did answer some questions. I did not enjoy living in California and I got my master's degree from the University of Southern California as well before starting to work for Lockheed Martin designing and building spacecraft just like I wanted to.

Kathryn: Is there anything you use from those studies in what you do now?

Amy: Absolutely. When I left spacecraft design and I left the aerospace industry, I thought I was leaving engineering. The immediate thing I started to do after I did that was business strategy consulting. And a lot of people asked, well, Gosh, you know, you are an aerospace engineer. Tell me how that applies to strategy consulting. And I would have told you that it's all about strategic thinking. It's all about problem solving. It's all about, you know, it's just another exercise in design. Whether you're designing a spacecraft or you're designing a business, you know, it's the same type of creative process. It's the same type of level of rigor. But then as I move forward through business strategy consulting, my crowning achievement was coaching my husband to leave his corporate job and he was in energy at the time. And when he did that, I got the bug about renewable energy. I could see both the opportunity to make a big impact, to make a difference, and also the opportunity to make a profit.

Amy: There's just a huge business opportunity there. And so he and I joined forces to form our own renewable energy consultancy. He is the tech brains behind it. And I am the CEO. And so I'm in charge of business execution. But what's interesting about that is that I've come full circle now. You know I kind of thought I had left engineering, I'd left tech forever and now I come back into it and everything is completely applicable. You know it's, it's absolutely engineering process. It's absolutely mathematical rigor, but it's also learning to communicate complex ideas in simple ways so that people can understand them, whether that's end clients or whether that's for PR purposes. So I like to say that everything I've ever learned, whether it was informal education or just you know, life itself is coming together in the work I'm doing now as a renewable energy consultant.

Kathryn: How did you get into being location independent?

Amy: That actually is, is a longer story. I was sort of location independent or looking looking for that before I left corporate. My husband and I dated long distance before we were married. He was in Boston and I was in Denver and we got bit by the travel bug. Traveling first to see each other and then starting to travel with seeing the world. And we continued to do that on the weekends on any breaks we have maximizing our vacation time. While we were at corporate jobs, we got married and we started to have children and he looked at me and said, "is it over?" You know, is the travel part over. And I said, well I don't see any reason why it has to be like, why don't we give it a shot? And so we kept on traveling with our kids, structuring it around flexible work schedules and vacations and all of that. Once I first made the break for entrepreneurship as opposed to corporate work, it became a lot easier. And I think my husband saw that and that was part of the calculus of him quitting his job to start his own business. And even with our family life, you know, we part-time homeschool the kids so that we have schedule flexibility so that we can be location independent. So there's no like first moment where we got into location independence. It was a slow fade.

Kathryn: How do you describe your job to people who are just being polite when they ask?

Amy: I love this question because you're so right. There is the difference between people who are just being polite and the people who really actually want to know. So to people who are just being polite. I say that we help businesses, commercial entities, industrial entities decide if it's economic for them to install renewable energy equipment including solar, battery storage, sometimes wind and sometimes other power generation.

Kathryn: And when you are talking to the ones who want to know?

Amy: I could nerd out on this for a really long time, but basically installing solar on your roof is pretty straight forward. Whether you're a business or you're a residential customer, you know, you put the solar panels up, the sun comes out, the electrons flow, you get power and you save money and the sun goes away and it stops. And that's pretty straightforward, pretty easy to make an estimate of what you can save. There's still some statistics to it because the sun is either out or it's not. Could be a bad weather year, could be a good weather year, but by and large you can make a pretty good guess how that happens. Once you start to get in energy assets like battery storage or natural gas generation, those are assets that you can command. You can tell them when to turn on and when to turn off. In the case of the battery, when the charge from the solar or not, when to discharge, either to serve the energy needs of your building or to certain, you know, put energy back on the, and that can be, you know, sometimes the utility will pay you to do that. So how do you decide like there has to be some brains of the operation deciding when you use your assets and when you don't and what, what is more economically lucrative, how it helps you achieve your energy goals. And that's what we do. We provide the brains of that operation. It uses mathematical optimization, some really heavy duty computation to both design energy systems that are economically optimal. And then to operate those systems. Because if you design a system that's economically optimal, it doesn't matter that it was designed that way unless you use it properly, a battery could just sit there. So that is really what we do.

Kathryn: When you were getting started, how did you find your first clients?

Amy: The very, very first client for Mu Grid, that's the renewable energy consulting came from mutual acquaintance that my husband had through my, who's my business partner through his former work at the National Renewable Energy Lab. He knew somebody who knew somebody who was looking for some help doing this kind of modeling, this kind of analysis, but that, he couldn't pay the prices of the national lab. You know, if you come to the national lab, you've got to bring big money and they didn't quite have that. They were able to invest some in it, but just not at that level. That was sort of the first moment where we were like, hey, like there's a market here, the national labs and the big large companies can't serve this need. You know, they're catering to very large organizations. There's a whole pool of small business owners, small commercial industrial that aren't going to pay those prices, but that still want to have the academic rigor who need to have this financial analysis to take to the bank so they can get financing for their projects. So that very first client came from a kind of a mutual acquaintance and then after that it's been a combination of word of mouth, referrals, and going to technical conferences has been a big deal for us as well.

Kathryn: Tell us about your first major struggle.

Amy: I think the one that jumps to mind is that we had a client who was not a great fit for us or let's say a potential client who is not a great fit and you know when you're at the beginning you don't, you don't have a ton of clients and you don't have a big pipeline and you don't have a ton of prospects and every client is so precious. It's really hard to stand up to a client who's asking for something that's unreasonable or even unethical and say, hey, like this isn't something I want to be a part of. And that was a big deal. Like that was the day, I like really earned my CEO chops. I think like it's all well and good to like put the CEO title on your business card. But I had a hard conversation with a prospective client who wanted to be a little bit under the table. And I said, I'm not going to do business that way. And it's, it's hard. It's a hard thing to say. Like, we might not only lose his potential business on this project, but we may lose his all his potential business in the future. But I think we've never gone wrong being true to ourselves.

Amy: We've never gone wrong being true to our values, that like we are highly collaborative and if you're not, you're not a good fit for us. We are very academically rigorous. And so if you want us to just slap something together, you're not a good fit for us. And that moment of first struggle has really given me the courage to tell people like, hey, like I hear what you're saying and I hear what you want, but I don't think we're the right fit for you. It is still hard. It's still hard to say that. It's still hard to turn people away. But I think that's the way we make this work. When, when you're an independent entrepreneur, you're working in an extremely small team. You have to like the people you're working with, you have to be able to be highly collaborative and if there's something standing in the way of that, like it's just not a good situation for anyone and there's no one for you to put it off onto, you know, it's not corporate, there's no fallback, there's no other team member you can assign it to. And so that's why it, it just, it's just so important to be true to your values and to be okay with acknowledging when there's not a good fit with a client.

Kathryn: Were you at all concerned about them bad mouthing your company within the community?

Amy: That's a good question. It did not cross my mind at the time. And I will say that the majority of times that I have done that, that I have either recommended that a potential client go elsewhere or that I have even decided not to pursue business with a client. I've always felt pretty confident that I was on the right side of things. And in several cases it has been to protect my own reputation and the reputation of my company. Like in the case of like, we've had people ask us to just slap stuff together like do it for cheap, do it fast, do it without checking, do it without validation. Our whole value proposition is that we are going to tell the truth and we are going to give rigorous data. My reputation is at stake. If I deliver shoddy work, even if you asked me to do it, even if you said it was okay, like don't go back and check, don't do the full validation. Our company's reputation is at stake, if we deliver less than stellar work and I, I can't do that, so it's almost the opposite. I feel I'm making decisions that will protect my reputation and the reputation of the company by doing that.

Kathryn: How about your first major success?

Amy: We got to participate in a Department of Energy program called the Solar in Your Community Challenge, community solar is a very specific thing. It's mostly, it's like instead of every homeowner individually buying their own solar panels and putting them on their roof, it's a different set up where a community, maybe it's a neighborhood or maybe it's a set of apartment buildings, has a community solar array that's colocated somewhere. And then all of the residents get some kind of credit on their bill because they have solar power that's sort of co-owned by the whole community. And this is really popular and like low, low to moderate income areas. You're seeing the proliferation of solar where people may not be able to afford it because of programs like this. And so the Department of Energy ran this giant program called the Solar in Your Community Challenge. And it was, it was kind of cool. It was kinda cheesy. It was gamified. So there was this marketplace where teams who were building projects got a certain amount of funding. They got \$10,000 each of funding from the Department of Energy, but they could only use it within this challenge.

Amy: And then the challenge had a marketplace where they could hire consultants and they could hire anything from analysts like us to PR representatives who could help them promote the project to financial and legal experts who could give them expertise on writing contracts and securing funding and all that stuff so they could get a whole ton of different kinds of consulting help from the marketplace. That program was huge for us. We got to see so many different kinds of projects. Some of them were solar only, some of them were solar and battery. Almost all of the clients that we worked with through that program have turned into recurring clients who wanted us to keep working with them doing ongoing work. So it built the pipeline super fast. It formed great relationships. It was a really kind of cool festive environment to be a part of. It also got us a speaking slot at, there was a workshop at a couple of the really big solar conferences that we got to be a part of and stand up and say, hey, here's who we are, what we do and the projects we're working on. And so it was really multifaceted and I think it made us money for sure. It built our revenue in the first couple years of the company. I think that really jumpstarted us.

Kathryn: If you could start fresh today knowing everything you already know, is there anything you would do differently?

Amy: I don't think so. Not as of right now. I rarely have regrets. I'm one of those people who believe that things happen for a reason. The path takes you where it does for a reason. That's not to say it's all been sunshine and roses along the way, for sure. But it's been a good ride and it's taken us where we want to go and every learning experience, even if it's been, you know, more positive or has felt more negative at the time has led us somewhere great. So, I don't really believe in regrets. Even the things I regret like going to get my master's degree straight off of my bachelor's. I sort of regret that, but not really because it built the life I have now. It helped me end up not in California. It helped me end up where I am. So yeah, no regrets.

Kathryn: Odds are there's no such thing as a typical day for you. Do you want to give us what a random day looks like?

Amy: Sure. I have three kids, they're eight, seven and three about to turn four. And so our and, and like I told you, getting, you know, to support our location independence and our travel habits, we part type homeschool. So you're correct. There is no typical day. Our life is a hodgepodge of piecing it together so that everyone gets their needs met and we can have the adventure we want to have. On a typical work day, my kids go to a couple of school programs a couple of times a week. One is a more academic like it looks a lot like traditional school where they get to take classes in academic subjects and they sit at desks and everything like that. And then they also go to a forest school program with, that is more in the like German kindergarten style where they get to like hang out outside all day. They play games, they work on social interaction. It's really cool. So today for example, I dropped my kids off at forest school and then I came in, I work at a coworking space. I'm going to work here, well mostly until about 2:30. So I get about six hours work in and then I'm going to work as hard as I possibly can.

Amy: Sometimes on these days, I also, I schedule lots of calls this, you know, during business hours. And some of the more independent technical work I'll do, you know, at night after kid bedtime or something like that, then I'm going to pick my kids up at 3:00. They do a couple of different sports. So we do the sports shuffle. Sports is another great time for me to get some work in and answer emails, pop my laptop open and stuff like that. I try and create a space for creative work during the times when I have longer periods of time, like when they're at school programs cause I need the space to let my brain roll and then at the end of the day we'll all get together as a family. They actually, the kids actually have a Spanish class this evening. They via Zoom, teleconference with a Spanish teacher in Venezuela and we'll all hit the hay. I'll probably get some work time in for an hour or two after they go to bed and then we get up and do it again tomorrow. On a different day where the kids don't have a school program. Half the days I'll take the kids and we do full on homeschool. We cover all the academic subjects. On a different day, my husband will take the kids biking or skiing and I get the day totally to myself. Those days are really great days for creative work or I need lots of mental space. That's pretty typical for me. That's pretty typical to have nothing typical.

Kathryn: Do you keep up with any kind of continuing education, formal or informal?

Amy: At this point in my life, at this exact moment, I am taking a very, very large break from any kind of education or new input. You know, for a long time I spent my entire life pursuing education, formal and informal, and I've had this strong intuitive feeling lately that it's time to just like take myself, take my brain and myself out for a spin and all of this knowledge that I've acquired, let's, let's try it out. And that's not to say that life is not about continuous learning. Of course it is. But in terms of being taught by others, like I'm on a break. I do believe in, you know, continuing not only with technical education but also personal development. I think especially as a an entrepreneur and independent entrepreneur, that personal development work is so key to this journey to knowing yourself, to knowing your values, to understanding all of your why and all of that. And I've done a ton of that work. I will say in terms of, you know, I do keep my finger on the pulse, you know, I read industry magazines, I read industry newsletters, listen to podcasts, go to conferences, education sessions and conferences. But in terms of actively pursuing education for the purpose of certification or more letters after my name? No, I'm, I'm good for right now.

Kathryn: What are you excited about right now in renewable energy?

Amy: What's not to be excited about in renewable energy? We were working on something, and you know, there's pros and cons being business partners with your spouse, you know. You can never, you can never get away from work because it's always like by your side. That's a con. But in terms of a pro, you know, we were working at home and our couch at 11:30 at night getting something done. It was one of those pieces of work where you're like, we're almost there just a few more minutes. It's like, I'm just going to run it one more time and like it's gonna, it's gonna work this time. And the results came up and like it was pretty, pretty big project for a pretty big client. And my husband looked at me and was like, I think we might be actually saving the world right now. It is really exciting to be part of this revolution. There's a lot of people who are concerned for the planet and rightly so, but don't know what to do and you know can't for whatever reason, because of their training or because of where they are in life or whatever, can't actively be part of it. And it's really exciting to be part of something that is going to make a huge difference in the world like that.

Amy: The revolution is coming, the snowball, we like to say the snowball's rolling down the hill that this energy revolution we're going to, in the next couple of decades, we're going to see energy done absolutely completely differently than it's ever been done since electricity was discovered and captured and harnessed. That's tremendous. Not only from the, the point of view of someone who wants to change the world, from the heart centered part of that, but also, you know, from someone who's been interested in technology and an innovator for a really long time. Space exploration sounds cool, and it really was, and I really loved my time working in space exploration, but nothing we did there was revolutionary. We sent various iterations of similar spacecraft to do different missions, but in terms of like levels of innovation and seeing revolutions in the industry there, there wasn't that, there wasn't that level of excitement, that level of newness, that level of creativity. And that is something that is super inspiring to me as an individual. So we've got this potent combination of, oh my gosh, we're going to go change the world. And then this also like, wow, we're on the cutting edge. We get to do

something really new, really different. I get to be a part of it, innovation. So this potent combination of impact and innovation is just intoxicating and amazing to be a part of.

Kathryn: Now it's time to get into the numbers. What would you say your income range is and how long have you been doing the work?

Amy: I'm going to give you the numbers for the company, which is two people, more or less. Obviously we pay, we pay some subcontractors out of that. We're into low multiple six figures this year. The company was founded in November, 2016 so we're like three, we're just shy of three years and we've more than doubled every year.

Kathryn: What would you say the beginning range is?

Amy: Well, the very first contract we got was actually pretty big and that it was the one that my husband was like, I think I might be able to quit my job, and that very first contract was \$30,000 which is big. That's huge. I mean that's, that would still be a big contract, a big single contract for us today that. That was the beginning and then after he did that work and quit his job, there were crickets for like eight months. And those eight months were spent like planting seeds very carefully and tending the seeds and following up and there was just no work. That, that was the beginning. I don't know if that was, that wasn't like an annual number necessarily but like it was definitely that one big, first big contract that like pushed us out the door and then there was nothing for a long time after that. Then once we got started and then after that came, very shortly came that Solar in Your Community Challenge, which actually was both very lucrative, it was very steady for a while because the program ran for like two years and it really sort of created a pipeline for us.

Kathryn: What was the time commitment on that initial contract?

Amy: I think it was vaguely, about two months of work, but it was, it was an extremely deep dive. Sometimes we analyze a single building. This was a portfolio of 250 buildings across the United States in all sorts of different utility rate tariffs and like all sorts of different situations. It was rather short duration project, but it was very deep and complex.

Kathryn: What would you say the top income range is?

Amy: That is a really good question and that is something that we struggle with almost every day because you know, we sit adjacent to a tech company. In some ways we could be a tech company in the traditional sense of the word. We could have intellectual property. In fact, we, we build all our own modeling in house and we have some standardized models that we use to do our work. And that's intellectual property. We could turn that around and turn it into a piece of software that other people can use. And believe me clients have asked for that. That's a whole different business model from what we're doing in terms of consulting. And so you know, as consultants there's probably an, a cap of how much you can bring in like per consultant. So we could build our team of consultants, you know, we could bring on more people and grow that way. And I would

say that there's some cap of a couple hundred thousand dollars per consultant and that would be in revenue because it's a service based business that goes right back out the door to, you know, if we build the team it goes right back to pay them because it's service.

Amy: You know, if we were to actually scale the business and do, we would do some sort of IP, some sort of tech, some sort of software we've been asked also to do, to actually build hardware, to build a controller box that goes with these energy systems. That's a whole different kettle of fish. But that's more scalable. And I would say the income range cap on like the sky's the limit. That's where you're gonna, you know you're going to grow your business and then there's an exit eventually you could get bought and yeah, sky's the limit there. So the question, and I, believe me, we struggle with this at headquarters here, you know, at least once a week, you know, who are we in, what are we doing. As consultants, we get to be location independent. We get to pick our clients, we get to team with who we want to team with. But there's probably an income cap and maybe that's cool. Maybe that's what we want. But then you know on the other side there's this, well don't you want to take this thing out for a spin and don't you want to see what it could do? You know, maybe you could grow, but with growth comes perhaps a higher need for presence, a higher need for commitment and so it's a trade off.

Kathryn: How do you decide what to charge?

Amy: I think a lot of consultants start out or default to charging by the hour and keeping track of their hours and you know, we do have a quote hourly rate that we sometimes use, especially government contracts, like you'd use the hourly rate, things like that. But generally speaking we prefer to in firm fixed price contracts and sometimes we go and check that against an hourly rate and say, okay, I think it's going to be about this many hours. And like so therefore this is fair. But a firm fixed price contract, it really takes like the nickel and dimyness out of it because when we charge by the hour, sometimes we get clients who come back and they do the thing like I said earlier where they're like, well, don't spend too much time on this cause I don't want to pay for that. And that gets like really old, really fast and it prevents us from doing good work. And so we'd much rather quote the client a fixed price and so they don't get panicked about how much time we're spending on it.

Amy: And then if we need to spend like a whole ton of time on it that's on us and that, you know, that's for us to manage and we can figure that out. I think it keeps everyone pretty happy. It keeps us pretty happy because we don't have to go through the rigmarole of keeping track of hours and feeling guilty when we spend extra hours. It keeps the customer happy because they know exactly what to expect. They can mark it into their bookkeeping and so it works out I think. So we usually quote, firm fixed price, you know, sometimes with a little bit of, you know, management reserve on top of that, a little bit of buffer. If we're not, if it's something we haven't done before, we're learning to put in limits on the scope of a contract. Like a time limit to say like, yeah we'll support calls on this and stuff as much as you want until the end of September so that it doesn't just linger on forever. Cause that is one risk for us. If we, by doing firm fixed price contracts, we have also in the past offered a retainer contract. If we have a client who

wants to do a lot of different projects and it gets tiresome for both them and us to keep, to like every single thing they want us to do.

Amy: When you know they're like, hey can you just check this little thing right here? I don't want to write them a new firm fixed price contract for that. And so sometimes we'll say, hey, like you've got on a whole bunch of stuff here to do, why don't you just pay us this monthly fee? And then we're on your team and you just like throw anything over the fence to us that you want. And that can work really well. That's scalable for us because we get paid whether they use us or not. And so, you know, that's, that's one of the ways we scale up from an hourly rate, but then in in heavy months they get to use us to the fullest extent and you know, it puts the management of our time back on us. So again, I think it's a win-win situation for the client and for us. And ultimately when I decide what to charge, that's what I look for is like there's, what is the win-win situation? What is the thing where the client feels like they're getting a great deal, they're getting super value and they're going to utilize us as much as possible and we feel like we're getting paid our fair wage. We can do the fullest extent of our rigorous work without having to worry about it. And so that's kind of what I think about when I think about pricing.

Kathryn: What, if anything, do you do to keep your income stable?

Amy: Again, pros and cons of being in business with your husband. We have just a ton of different revenue streams and I think once you start down this path of entrepreneurship, you kind of can see different ways you can monetize things in your life. The renewable energy consulting business is not the only business that we run. My husband has been a paid travel blogger in the past for a premier miles and points blog. Together we run a travel consulting service for very boutique clients because we have this huge body of knowledge from all of our location independent travel, frequent flying. And so we run this travel consultancy for people who need advice and help doing kind of specialty travel things. I also still offer my business strategy consulting services. I actually got a retreat that I'm going to be co-hosting for entrepreneurs who are incubating their business and wanting to grow their business in a both heartlead purposeful way and wanting to get, really dig down deep into the business aspects of it. And so that's a revenue stream. And so what we do to keep the income stable is to just really diversify. You know, the downside of that is that it can sometimes be a little unfocused, especially when every business rears its head at the same time and gets busy. Most of the time that's not the case, but it has happened occasionally, but it really does keep things stable and, and it also provides this sense that no one thing is ever going to break us. You know, if there's a lull in renewable energy, we're not panicking because we have these other ways to create income and create financial stability. You know, same thing. It's like business strategy consulting peters out, no problem. We've got renewable energy consulting over here and so diversifying revenue streams and having kind of things in our back pocket all the time is how we do that.

Kathryn: What's your number one tip for women looking to get into renewable energy?

Amy: My number one tip for women who want to get into pretty much any technical field and be an entrepreneur as in any technical field, is to let your femininity and your feminine strengths be part of your value proposition. People don't really critically listen to the

problem of the client. They just like want to shove the solution. They want to, they want to get to the solutions best as possible. And that's another like sort of feminine aspect to really come in and say like, Hey, like what are you working on? I'm interested in hearing about that. Like let me fully understand the problems that you're having and why you're reaching out to get help. That kind of critical listening has been a value proposition for us. And we've had clients who literally tell us, no one else we've talked to has asked those questions. No one else we've talked to has wanted to know the depth of what we're trying to do here. And it's won us business. And so I think if you're a woman in a tech industry, if you're a woman in energy, you are automatically a little more visible because it's, it's unique. It is an industry where you can be the woman in the room. That gives you something that gives you a spotlight that you could take, that you could use, that you, it gives you a little bit of a platform. You're memorable, you're going to stick in people's heads. And I, you know, and you've got to have your stuff together too. You got to know what you're doing. No doubt. And you gotta have your, you know, you gotta have your technical chops, but if you can bring your technical chops and you can be rigorous and then you can also bring with it this sense of intuition and this sense of critical listening. You're a powerhouse, rockstar, automatic.

Kathryn: What are your next steps?

Amy: So for the renewable energy business, you know, we're just continuing to see what comes. We, you know, ever since we started this business we go out and like I said, we speak at conferences, we put our feelers out through word of mouth. But in a lot of ways people come to us, people find us on the web. You know, we have for the energy industry, we have a pretty well fleshed out website with lots of case studies on it. You know, some energy companies seem pretty fly by night. They just put up a single page and it's pretty generic and they're like, Yay, put solar on your roof. And that's it. And we have like lots of technical data. I also bring some of my business strategy consulting coach hat and I, we've done some pretty creative things with video, doing podcasts. We're in a place where we don't have to do a lot of hunting for clients. We get a lot of people coming in to us and being a good fit. So in terms of the energy business, our next steps are we're keeping doing what we're doing.

Amy: We are constantly on the lookout. If there is a, some kind of standard solution that we might offer as software or hardware that would be beneficial to our clients and to us, we're looking for the opportunities to get deeper involved, to make more of an impact in the world by bringing energy to places that it may be unstable, don't have good access to energy, all of that stuff. So it's a keep on keeping on doing the work. And I joke that my, the renewable energy consultancy is where I, I practice all of my theories about entrepreneurship but I still do offer business strategy consulting. If people want to come learn from an experienced entrepreneur who has started and run a successful, you know, tech consultancy and like has really done the work to take the capabilities what we can do and then actually go out and do it. I'm starting to co host a series of retreats called Biz inside out and you can sign up to get on the list for, the first retreat is being offered in April. It's at bizinsideout.com. You can get on the email list there to find out all about that. But it's exactly what I've been talking about the whole time. Like how do you find that fusion of impact and innovation, how do you find that fusion of purpose and profit and that's what we're about at Biz Inside Out.

Kathryn: Where can listeners find you?

Amy: So if you want to nerd out over renewable energy and see what we're up to, if you want to check out some of those case studies and tech reports, you can find our consulting company at mugrid.com and MUGRID.com the mu grid is kind of a joke because it's a, it's a nerd joke because the mu is for the Greek letter mu, which in science and Physics and engineering is the abbreviation for micro and so we're micro grid, which is a thing in renewable energy, mugrid.com and it's amazing how many people don't get that but you can really tell who the nerds are if they get it or if they don't get it. So you can find us at mugrid.com and if you want to geek out with me over business building innovation, fusing innovation and impact and intuition and all of those words that start with I, you can check me out at amysimpkins.com and as I mentioned, our retreat now that is launching here in April 2020 is at bizinsideout.com.

Kathryn: Amy, thank you so much for joining us. This has been great.

Amy: Thank you so much for having me. What a fun interview.

Kathryn: If you want your own location independent life and are eager to take that next step, join us in [compass insiders](http://compasspod.com/insiders) where every week I send you actionable tips, inspiration, and motivation so you can take that next step towards going remote. Join us now at compasspod.com/insiders Did you enjoy this episode of Compass? If so, please take a moment to write a review. Leaving a review helps other women find us so they can find their direction too. Thank you for listening to Compass. You can find today's show notes at compasspod.com/032, that's compasspod.com/032. Join us next week when we talk with Sarah Cordiner, course creation expert.