



AMY FRANKO | consulting  
connect + engage + learn + thrive

## *Engaging Conversations*

**Jason Alba**

CEO & Creator of JibberJobber.com

Author of *I'm on LinkedIn—Now What???: A Guide to Getting the Most Out of LinkedIn*

*Recorded July 22, 2009*

Listen to the audio or follow along with the transcription of this engaging conversation between Jason Alba, and Amy Franko, Book Yourself Solid™ Sales and Marketing Mentor, recorded 7/22/2009.

It's full of inspiration and ideas for the woman entrepreneur!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Amy Franko (AF):** Hello, everyone and welcome to Engaging Conversations, an audio series for women entrepreneurs with lessons from some of the best business experts. This is Amy Franko, owner of Amy Franko Consulting. I'm a Book Yourself Solid™ sales and marketing mentor serving self-employed women.

It is my mission to help fellow solo service professionals get out into the world and build the business and life of their dreams. Even if marketing and selling isn't something they like to do. You can learn more about me and join our community at <http://www.amyfranko.com>.

And today I'm really pleased to be here with Jason Alba. Welcome, Jason!

**Jason Alba (JA):** Amy, it's nice to be here. Thank you.

**AF:** Great! And before we get started, I'd like to tell our listeners just a little bit more about you. Jason Alba is the CEO and creator of <http://www.jibberjobber.com> and author of *I'm on LinkedIn--Now What???* After a corporate downsizing impacted Jason in 2006, he experienced first hand the difficulties of conducting a job search. So drawing on his extensive computer software and IT experience, Jason analyzed the job search process and then developed <http://www.jibberjobber.com>. The gold standard in career management technology.

He's widely acknowledged as a leading career management evangelist. And Jason continues to spread the word to job seekers through his blog, <http://www.jibberjobber.com/blog>. He also has expertise with social media as co-author of *I'm on Facebook--Now What???* The creator of the LinkedIn for Job Seekers DVD and I can personally say that I have learned a lot from Jason's experience and how to use LinkedIn for my business and I regularly follow his blog, <http://imonlinkedinnowwhat.com/>.

So, thanks so much for being here. I appreciate it.

**JA:** Well, it's my pleasure. That was quite a hefty introduction. You make me sound very busy!

**AF:** Well you are very busy! And one of the reasons that I wanted to have this conversation with you today is because your own job search situation uncovered a

need for better career management tools and then from that a company was created. So I think you have a lot of insight to share with our listeners.

**JA:** Well I hope so. You know the funny thing is I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur or to own my own business or be in manager of a company or something like that. But as much as I wanted it, I never felt like I had come up with that better mousetrap and then the whole idea for JibberJobber fell into my lap. And in a time of need when I had the problem and I realized a solution that would be helpful for thousands or hundreds of thousands of other people that had the same problem as I had.

**AF:** So when you were making that transition from that corporate downsizing situation to JibberJobber, was there a process that followed where you figured out, "hey there's this need out here, how can I maybe fill that need?"

**JA:** I wouldn't say that it was like a scripted process, but I definitely went through a number of steps to get from idea to execution. The funny thing is it came in February 2006. I found my developer in March. The site came out in May, right? So it was very fast release time.

**AF:** Oh, yeah!

**JA:** And that was really just the beginning. I mean it's been over three years since then and it's been an immense amount of work, marketing and educating. Some of the steps of the process that you talk about came about where, you know, coming up with and flushing out the ideas. So I had this idea in my mind. I had to put it down on paper and capture related thoughts and things like that. So that ended up becoming the design for the application.

And then I had to design the business model which obviously became the business plan. I had to find people, the right people to help me do what I needed done. I have a development background but I knew that I could not spend my time on development or quality assurance. I had to spend my time in marketing and so I had to find the right people and now that was a process in and of it self.

And then once I got the right person, I started off with one programmer. Once I got the right person on board, there was that two month period where we were in heavy communication, figuring out. I was describing the design. He was developing it. We were tweaking it and then finally I started in the, what I call the pre-marketing, where I started reaching out to people before the site even launched and then on May 15<sup>th</sup>, it launched and I went in to real marketing mode. So those were a number of the components that went in to coming up with what jibberjobber eventually became.

**AF:** And you said two key things I think that are very important for people to really internalize. The first is that you learned very quickly that there were some things that you either wanted to do or knew you could do. And other things that

you knew were just not going to be things that you would personally have your hands in. And so you delegated those responsibilities to people that you trust and that probably really sped up the process for you to become successful with the launch of <http://www.jibberjobber.com>.

**JA:** I remember about, I think it was in November, so five or so months after I launched, I was on the phone with a competitor. What I didn't realize was that my competitor had launched his competitive website and was almost a one for one duplicate of JibberJobber. Functionality wise. I asked him "how do you manage your programming and who does your quality assurance?" And he said "I do all of my own QA."

And I found that interesting because at the time, and this was two and a half years ago and even now many, many people that I come up against say do you have any competition? And when I say "Yes, my biggest competition is such and such" and they say "I never heard of them." And I'm talking to career coaches and college career centers.

This is our target audience and I think because he put his time and effort into quality assurance, whereas I pooled an expert in to do quality assurance. So I didn't have to spend time on that. He put all of his effort into that. The result was in November of '06 and even now today, a lot of people have heard of JibberJobber.com and hardly anybody has heard of his website.

**AF:** Yeah, the mentality that if you build it they will come definitely isn't true. So...

**JA:** I'm not a believer in that.

**AF:** Right! So the strategic choice you made to outsource the QA to someone trusted and to focus on that marketing piece, it sounds like really a key element into what has helped this pay off for you and to leave your competition behind.

**JA:** Yeah, and let me say, go one step further than 'if you build it they will come'. What I have found is it's not necessarily true that if you market it, they will come. I have been involved in a lot of gorilla marketing tactics, not shady or unethical or anything like that, but just stuff that I've been forced to do differently because of the way that I'm funded, which is that I'm not heavily funded with money falling out all over the place. So, I've always thought, "I had a hundred thousand dollars in marketing, what would I do?"

A traditional marketing manager would probably say well go get some billboards and ads on the networks, radio and newspapers and stuff. What I have found in all the traditional marketing that I've ever done, it's all been a waste of money. My marketing has been through developing relationships on my networks and stuff like that. So I'm a big advocate of growing your business through social networking. But anyway, just one of my little pet peeves in the business

marketing world is that just because you can get ink in a magazine or newspaper or anything like that, whether it's an advertisement or an article, does not mean that you are going to have success and people are going to come to droves or to come to you in droves.

**AF:** Right! Because there's so much information out there and so much competition for that information that even if you are written up in a magazine or you have that print visibility, there isn't a guarantee because you're competing against everyone else for someone's time and energy.

**JA:** That right! And let me go one step further. I wrote my book *I'm on LinkedIn – Now What?* in September '07 and it has been a fascinating marketing tool for me. But within six months, people started coming out with free eBooks on how to use LinkedIn. And there's probably a couple of dozen blogs dedicated just to LinkedIn. So when I came out with my book, it was not a commodity. The information was not commodity. But now if you want to go on LinkedIn information. My heavens, there are LinkedIn "experts" all over the place.

**AF:** Right!

**JA:** So there's this weird thing going on where they are sharing free information that it is effecting how stiff your information marketing can be.

**AF:** Yeah! Well and when you take a look over your journey in the last three years, are there any strengths that stand out to you that you've developed that have helped you to become successful?

**JA:** Well, honestly I'd have to say the number one strength is my wife's support. And I say that because I know other entrepreneurs who have not had spouse support and they fail. I mean the amount of work and effort and patience that it takes to grow a business from scratch is huge, and if you don't have the support of your spouse, if you have a spouse. If you don't have the support of your spouse, I think that you're not going to have what you need in order to make it through the really hard times.

I've been in business for about three years now and I'll have to say there have been a lot of exciting times and a lot of fun times and a number of rewarding times, but bless the spouses who are being patient during this time because it definitely is not easy times. Aside from that I would have to say that just a curiosity.

Whenever I hire people, I always like to hire people who are curious. Instead of accepting status quo and this is the way we've always done it, how can I do it better? And I think entrepreneurs to some degree have a sense of curiosity of "how can I do it better?" Because usually that's what their product is based on building a better mousetrap. But you have to have a curiosity in how does, and this going to sound really boring, but how does accounting work? How do taxes

work? How can I organize my day better? How do I do marketing? How can I make my product better? How do I get better input? So curiosity, I've never felt very curious.

But as I've gone through this journey in the last three years, I realized that I had to be curious. Because there is no manual that I've come across that fits my business exactly. Any entrepreneur or start up manual, book, podcast, blog, article or whatever, I've had to adjust it for myself.

Another one which is kind of hand in hand, this is the other 'C' word that I look for when I hire people is creativity. I've never felt that I was creative. Ever! I'm not artistic. I can't draw stuff. I'm just not very creative, I thought. And then when I came up with JibberJobber.com and still didn't think I was creative because really I just borrowed a few ideas from here and there and put them all together to make this solution. I didn't necessarily think that was creative. But as I've gone through the last three years, I've had to creatively figure out how to stay ahead of the competition. Creatively figure out how to fund my company, etc. etc. So I would say aside from spousal support, there is curiosity and the creativity.

And the last one I would mention is because there are so many challenges in getting a business up and running from zero to sixty, you have to have an immense amount of tenacity. You have to be able to work when you don't want to, work in order to keep moving forward. And now, three years later, I've seen the fruits of my labors. I've seen some really cool things happen with my business. And this is stuff that could not have happened in my first year because I didn't have the credibility. I didn't have the branding. I didn't have the name recognition. I didn't have any of that stuff.

But now three years later, I'm able to see those fruits. If I would have given up when it's hard or given up in a year or year two and a half, I would not be able to see some of the really cool things that I'm able to see today.

**AF:** And that right there is such a key point. Because so many people give up just shy of the goal. And the success is right around the corner if they just keep going. So as you said, that tenacity makes all the difference. Especially, you know, you're three years into your business and just from how I've gotten to know you over the last few months and learning about your business; you have really leapt forward to get to where you want to be. And I can tell that it's that tenacity that has gotten you to where you want to go.

And then in terms of creativity, where I was reading an article somewhere and I forget which article it was now but it talked about how often times the thing about being creative is taking two or three ordinary things and just combining them in a new and different way, which is what it sounds like what you did with JibberJobber. You took some things that seemed fairly ordinary, reconfigured them and now you have this product that really has propelled your business.

**JA:** Yeah, I would like to think that one day I'll be written up in a magazine, the front page of Forbes's or something, and that's exactly what they say. For now I'll just continue to be tenacious and hope for the best.

Let me share a quick story...

**AF:** Sure!

**JA:** When I finished my book, well real quick, an awesome movie that I saw recently on a flight to Turkey is *Flash of Genius*. I don't know how old it is, but have you seen it yet, Amy?

**AF:** No, I haven't.

**JA:** Have you heard of it?

**AF:** No! But I'm going to check it out when we're done here.

**JA:** It's about the guy who invented the windshield wipers, instead of going continuously, they take a break. So like if you are in light rain, it will go and then stop for a couple seconds and then go. Well anyway...

**AF:** I remember it now!

**JA:** The guy, who invented this, and he quits his job. I think he was a professor, and tried to sell to Ford who eventually stole his idea and incorporated it on their own. He went to court and after losing his wife, who left him, and basically everything he had, he finally won the lawsuit. I think he eventually represented himself.

It's a fascinating story of what it takes to be an entrepreneur. And I'll tell you what, if you're at that two point five year mark, and you're having a really hard time, watch this movie and just see how low it can really get. It's just a really fascinating story. Anyway, I just want to throw that out there.

The story that I wanted to share, and this kind of goes along with being tenacious, is when I first wrote my book, I had a publisher and I was asking my publisher how much money I would make per sale. You know, how much would I make on Amazon? How much would I make if I sold it on my website through the publisher? How much would I make if an affiliate sold it? So I had all these different scenarios of how much money would I make per book sale?

My publisher came back to me and said "listen, Jason. You will make zero dollars from your book. You will not make any money in book sales. If you want to make money as an author, you go out and consult and you speak." And I replied back

and said “listen, I’m hungry! I have been out of work and out of a paycheck, at by this time it was about a year and a half.

**AF:** Okay!

**JA:** And I had been living off of family investors as well as my 401(k), and I don’t care what you say, but that \$1.50 or \$3.00 or \$5.00 per book sale, it’s significant to me. And so I’m going to figure out a way to sell 1,000 books a month - which I still haven’t done yet. But, I’m hungry and I will make money from my book sales! He just kind of, “you know, okay whatever!” Well to date I’ve made, I don’t know the grand total, but I made over \$20,000 in royalties. And he’s amazed. He’s written more royalty check money to me than he ever thought he would. And I attribute that to being hungry.

I ask entrepreneurs when they talk to me about their business about what it takes and stuff like that, “are you hungry? How hungry are you?” You can tell me you’re very hungry but the proof is going to be in the pudding. If you’re hungry, you’re going to run your business in a different way than if you are comfortable.

**AF:** And that hunger probably ignited some creativity to make sure you were getting out there and finding ways to sell your books and make people aware of them.

**JA:** I would think so!

**AF:** Yep! Well that’s a good segway because I wanted to talk to you a little about the books that you’ve written. You’re an author of two social media books. One on LinkedIn and a second one on Facebook. Was there a particular inspiration in writing those books? How did you come to do that?

**JA:** Well, I’ve always wanted to write a book. I remember, let me think, about ten years ago I was working at a company. I was the IT manager and there was no IT team at all. I reported to directly to the CFO’s. I was the very first IT manager, and I thought, “I’m going to write a book for new IT managers”. All the stuff that I’m learning would be an awesome book for people that are dumped into this situation. I never got around to writing it. I procrastinated and you know, life took over, but I always had this desire to write a book.

So fast forward to when I start my business. I started my blog. I’m a huge fan of blogging as a marketing tool. I started my blog and I really kept my ear to the ground to my industry, and everybody was saying to get on LinkedIn. So I started telling my used to go get on LinkedIn. My users came back and said okay I’m on LinkedIn, now what do I do?

I said I had no idea but should figure it out.

**AF:** But I now have a book title!

**JA:** Well the book title was a stroke of genius that came a little bit later. At that time my question was do I write a series of blog posts? Which would have been acceptable. It would have been just fine or do I write a book? Is this the time to write a book?

And so I was thinking, I didn't even know what to call it for the first few months, but as I talked about it with people, I said I want to write a book. Not a user guide of LinkedIn for, but a guide for professionals to get value out of LinkedIn. I don't know what to call it. And eventually one day it hit me. *I'm on LinkedIn—Now What?* And I think has just been a brilliant title, which actually now there's series that my publisher has. So, *I'm on Facebook—Now What?* came out. And now I have a number of other people doing things that are centered on WordPress. They're entered on press releases, blogging, etc., etc. so that's become its own thing.

My original inspiration was to provide knowledge and information that my users are professionals who are in transition or might be in transition, as well as any professional who is concerned about their own career management. About knowledge and information for those people on how to get value out of LinkedIn. And I expanded it a bit so it wasn't just career related but it was relationship related for LinkedIn. That's kind of where the book came from.

**AF:** OK! I'm also in LinkedIn. I have a lot of clients and colleagues that are in LinkedIn and a lot of them are entrepreneurs and so the natural question is when it comes to entrepreneurs are there a couple of key mistakes that you see entrepreneurs making within LinkedIn? Whether it is their profile or the way they are interacting? Is there anything that stands out to you?

**JA:** Well I would say that the biggest mistake I see from people is that their profile is not fleshed out enough. When I go to your profile I want it to bleed credibility. I want so much credibility to pop off that page that I'm looking for a phone number because you are the person I want to buy from or do business with, or something to that effect or partner with or whatever. So anyway, the profile is the biggest issue in my mind.

Now having said that, when I put my DVD together and I was trying to come up with the curriculum, I realized that what I needed to do was spend a lot of time on the profile. So what I did was I found five professionals and I beat up their profile. On each of the five different people are going to have different needs. So on the five profiles I went over, you know, here's the top of this first person's profile and here's what they are doing right and here's what they are doing wrong. And I'm amazed to say that most of the profiles that I see on LinkedIn lack. I mean seriously lack. So a fair, I'd say 25 minutes of my DVD is devoted to

helping people understand how they can update their profile based on the critique of the other profiles.

I'll tell you the other mistake that I see people make and this is just really simple stuff, but a lot of times people connect on LinkedIn, they poke around and they do a little bit here and there. But I'll tell you what. If you are an entrepreneur and you want to grow your business and you're looking for customers and prospects and partners and affiliates, in all the stuff that you might be looking for, I strongly encourage you to go into LinkedIn, go into the advanced people search and spend time regularly looking for those people. Now you're not going to search by name obviously, but you might search by industry. You might search by top job title, or company or something like that.

But I think that people are not going into LinkedIn enough and looking for other people. Finding people they should communicate with and initiating a relationship. It's not about just being there or being found, go out there and see who else is there because I guarantee you there's going to be valuable people that you could be networking with, that you haven't met yet. Can I share another story about this?

**AF:** Absolutely! Please!

**JA:** This is one of my favorite things I've done on LinkedIn and it was actually in just the last few weeks. I get PR companies pitching me all the time, just because I blog so frequently. And I had a PR company say "hey, I'm with such and such company, which is a very well known company, everybody on this call would recognize it, with such and such company is doing a new thing.

They are starting this initiative and we would like to know if you would blog about it. And I wrote back and she said in the email, and by the way the person over this is the Vice President, David so and so. "I wrote back and I said I would love if you could put me in touch with David. I'd like to talk with him about incorporating my offering into this overall package. And she wrote back to me and pretty much just brushed me off. She became the gatekeeper. Right?

**AF:** Yeah!

**JA:** She put his name in that original email and when she brushed me off, I went straight to LinkedIn. I found him. I sent him a message in LinkedIn. Within half an hour he replied. Now remember, I got brushed off by the gatekeeper. He replied and he said “how can I help you?” I sent him a very brief email saying I got your promotion from so and so, here’s what I would like to talk to you about. He replied back with a director who is over the program and said “please get on the phone with Jason early next week”. We were on the phone and we are in the middle of discussions right now.

I think that using LinkedIn as the tool to find the people and reach out to your prospect is an awesome usable tool. I think that too many people are not using it that way. So that’s the other mistake I would say. Go in and use the advanced people search.

**AF:** Yeah, I would say that there’s probably a lot more passive users of LinkedIn than people that are really actively using it in the way that you describe. So they’re just kind of hanging out there, waiting like you said, for people to find them, rather than take the initiative to see where their target market is hanging out. And locate those people and reach out to them. And that story is so great. And the two things that I really take away from that story is, first of all, you were extremely aware of who the top decision maker was.

And when you saw that opportunity, you saw his name, you saw his contact information. You then took it to the next step and actively reached out to him to get the results that you wanted. So you really, in doing those two things made the difference for you in taking that relationship forward.

**JA:** Yeah! And so, I guess, let me make a comment on another mistake is like you said of passive users. Passive users are not actively nurturing relationships. In my business, whether I consult with career people or people who own their own business, it’s not about finding and being found and having a strong presence. It’s not just about that. It’s about taking the relationship to the next level. And *Never Eat Alone*, Keith Ferrazzi, uses the phrase ‘intimate relationships’. It was kind of uncomfortable for me as a guy to say “oh yeah, let’s have an intimate relationship...”

**AF:** For sure! Yeah!

**JA:** But Keith Ferrazzi talks about that which is going beyond that superficial, “hey let’s have lunch sometime” to actually sitting down and having a conversation, getting to know one another and going to that next level. I think that that’s how we have success in our business as we grow our business. We get a relationship with people. If I sent you one email and say, “hey Amy I would love to be on your show,” that’s one thing. But once we can have emails that go back and forth, and conversations on phone, and hopefully even meet in person, that’s where you take that relationship to the next level.

And guess what! The next time you find somebody in a job search, you're likely, because of our relationship, which is beyond superficial, you're likely to say "you know what? You should check out JibberJobber.com and also LinkedIn and here are the resources you need to go to." Because our relationship is at a different level, beyond superficial, you're more likely to recommend me which marketers like to call "word of mouth marketing" which is a very valuable tool.

**AF:** Absolutely! Those are all great pieces of information and pieces of advice about how to use LinkedIn and really develop relationships. Because that is what it's all about. No matter what tools that we use to market our business, promote ourselves, it really comes down to developing relationships of trust and of credibility with the right people.

So, great advice. Thank you so much. And we have a few minutes left here so I would really like to give you the floor for a couple of minutes to talk about any special programs, offerings that you have going on in your business that you would like to share with the people listening today.

**JA:** Well, I'll tell you the only thing I would like to specify, well two things. One is just let me be an advocate for relationship management in general. I can't imagine that anybody on this call does not have a CRM tool like ACT or Goldmine or Salesforce. Those are the three most common I hear about. I use JibberJobber because of the connections with the company. They gave me a free upgrade!

Which I should probably mention is only is only \$10 a month. But I would advocate that everybody on this call have a real relationship management tool. Just go Google "CRM" or look at JibberJobber.com. So that's one thing I would like to say, the other is my DVD link for job seekers is not just for job seekers. If I were to a book on LinkedIn for entrepreneurs, I would probably change 10% of the content and that would just be the jargon and the terminology.

But really if you are looking at getting more value out of LinkedIn I would encourage you to go to LinkedInForJobSeekers.com when you get there. Because most everything that you see on there is going to be applicable since it really focuses on relationships.

**AF:** And if you don't mind if I add one more thing to that, I really like your blog, <http://imonlinkedinnowwhat.com/> and I find myself going out there pretty regularly to seeing what the conversations are, reading through your posts. I would highly recommend that to anybody who would like to become better at using LinkedIn and to use it to develop relationships. I love that blog.

**JA:** Thank you!

**AF:** Oh, you're welcome. Well Jason, what a great conversation and thank you again for sharing all of your insights and your wisdom that you have developed

over the last three years from jumping into the entrepreneurial world. I appreciate it.

And for our listeners, please be sure to visit all of those sites and resources that we have talked about. Take advantage of what's out there for you and the offerings that Jason has available. So again, thank you Jason.

And this is Amy Franko. Thanks for listening and I hope that you make it a great day.

## About Jason Alba

JibberJobber was designed by Jason Alba during his first real job search beginning January 2006. After having a successful career in IT and business strategy, Jason found himself in the job market, which was supposedly a "job seeker's market."

Jason quickly found that a job seeker's market does not mean the job search will be easy or short. Frustrated by the lack of real tools for job seekers, he decided to move forward on a tool that allowed a job seeker to manage and organize a job search.

As the months passed, and as Jason learned the importance of networking, he incorporated a major networking piece into JibberJobber. This has shifted its focus from a tool just to be used during one job search into a tool to be used to manage job transitions during your entire career.

Learn more about Jason Alba at the following sites:

<http://www.JibberJobber.com>  
<http://www.JibberJobber.com/blog>  
<http://www.jasonalba.com>  
<http://imonlinkedinnowwhat.com>

## About Amy Franko

Amy is the owner of Amy Franko Consulting. She's a small business coach, instructional designer, and trainer.

Amy is a certified Book Yourself Solid (™) business coach, personally trained by founder Michael Port. The group she's most passionate about serving is self-employed women (or solo-preneuses!). She uses a simple, proven marketing and sales system specifically designed to bring more ideal clients into their business, even if marketing and selling isn't something they like to do.

Her learning design background complements her coaching practice, especially for those service professionals who offer workshops, teleseminars, e-courses, and information products to their clients. She helps her clients create training programs that energize the learner, provide knowledge that can be used immediately, and become a dependable source of revenue and profit.

Visit <http://www.amyfranko.com> to learn more about Amy, her workshops, and coaching programs.