



From TV Broadcaster  
to Entrepreneurship

# HOW ONE JOURNALIST WENT FROM TELLING OTHERS' STORIES TO WRITING HER OWN

By: **Gina Riley**

Weather chief, journalist, and world-class communications expert, Kristy Siefkin, arrived at a place in her career when she felt restless and stuck. Obvious prescriptions about the roles people take after a significant career in television news and broadcasting weren't resonating. What was the process that helped her get unstuck? How did she shed the feeling of being trapped by creating and launching her own company, Kristy Siefkin Communications?

Full disclosure - Siefkin and I had our first strategy call in December of 2020 to discuss ways I could help her career transition plan. Our process was upended once we uncovered her true passion which did not align with making a corporate move.

Siefkin set out to make a transition most people make when they leave television news and broadcasting - roles in marketing, communications, or public relations. A dogged researcher and deep learner, she held eighty-five informational conversations to figure out exactly what the next ideal job would look like. The result of all that research left her with something that just didn't feel right.

I invite you to read on about her career transition journey that ultimately led her to entrepreneurship and coaching.

**First, I want to thank you for being vulnerable and sharing your career transition story. I find it inspiring and know it will strike a chord with many people. Would you give me a quick overview of your career journey so far? Then, we'll take a deeper dive into where you've arrived today.**

Sure! When I started my undergrad at Duke University, I planned on studying public policy. I quickly became fascinated with psychology, and chose that as a major, instead. I also took a lot of English classes, which served me well during my journalism career.

While in college, I had two summer public relations and marketing internships with the American Kennel Club (AKC). I learned the AKC not only oversaw the big dog shows we see on TV (ones I competed in growing up, by the way!), but it's also a 140-year-old historic organization with extensive brand partnerships and collaborations. My first job out of college was with the AKC, working on a rebranding project to help expand knowledge and educate the public about their extensive welfare work, medical research to prevent diseases within certain breed lines, and creating new initiatives to diversify revenue streams.



When I was asked by senior management to be a spokesperson at a national media event, I got a taste of what I really enjoyed doing – communications. This influenced my entire career path. One of the AKC executives said something that really

stuck with me: “You are hiding your light under a basket.” What she meant was that I was doing an excellent job crunching data, writing business plans, and generating revenue streams, but I was meant to shine in the communications space.

This informed my next career move working for another national nonprofit, Guide Dogs for the Blind, where I became the manager of community resources. It was wonderful to promote an organization that pairs guide dogs with blind handlers for life. Because we were providing a free service, my job was to recruit and onboard hundreds of volunteers to fundraise in their communities and build partnerships with schools and philanthropic organizations.

Here, I developed formal training and consistent messaging for our speaker’s bureau program and trained a few thousand people across the US and Canada to be messengers for the organization. I started to dabble in video content creation by combining forces with a production team in the Bay Area to make educational videos about guide dog services and programs.

I realized, ‘OK this is really what lights me up!’ It was the combination of communications and the creative element of storytelling. These first two jobs were the catalyst for my decision to pursue my master’s degree in multimedia journalism at the Academy of Arts University in San Francisco.

At this point, you are five years into your career, and you continue to receive signs and have experiences that storytelling, developing messaging, and now communicating through video are your calling.

Yes, that is right! Another pivotal moment came while I was working on my master’s degree. A news director at a local San Francisco station saw my green screen classroom work and invited me to intern. This led to my first freelance television job – and let me tell you, it was baptism by fire. I was a full-time student, worked at the station forecasting and reporting the weather, and was what’s called a “One-Man-Band journalist”. I wore the hats of a news car driver, videographer, reporter, and editor. It was an incredible opportunity at a top five station in the country that opened the door to work at another network-owned station in San Francisco.

**What did you do after you completed your master’s program?**

I took my first multi-year contract job in Phoenix with the Fox affiliate station and spent ten years doing every single on-air job, except for sports. While I ultimately became the Weather Chief leading a team, I reported from the field, anchored the news, and even did a little traffic reporting. I loved being in the community, making connections with people, and telling their stories.

Aside from my work at the station, I was regularly using my skills as an emcee and keynote speaker, helping raise awareness for nonprofits and fundraising events. All this fueled where I am today – helping people improve their messaging and become better spokespeople for themselves and their organizations.

Some would say earning a way into this type of position would be exciting and satisfying. What started to change and made you think about making a career transition?



**ONE OF THE AKC EXECUTIVES SAID SOMETHING THAT REALLY STUCK WITH ME: “YOU ARE HIDING YOUR LIGHT UNDER A BASKET.”**



“

Aside from my work at the station, I was regularly using my skills as an emcee and keynote speaker, helping raise awareness for nonprofits and for fundraising events. All this fueled where I am today — helping people improve their messaging and become better spokespeople for themselves and their organizations.

”

Being in the anchor position was a dream come true and I feel very fortunate to have had that experience. Eventually, the work removed me from what was truly driving me and what prompted me to pursue journalism in the first place.

I've always been a lifelong learner and a big piece of my fulfillment in life is getting to meet new people, research, and help tell people's stories. I found these elements were missing and I felt stagnant in my job. I was motivated to find more creativity in my work and wanted to keep learning and growing. I wanted to be exposed to new challenges and problems. I started feeling sad that I wasn't making the contribution I wanted to make to the world. This internal dissatisfaction was a good sign it was time to make a change.

**What were your initial career transition goals? What did you think you would do next?**

Initially, I thought I'd apply my skills in a corporate setting because a lot of people leave journalism and go into public relations or become the director of communications for a company. I took it for granted this is just what people in my line of work transition out to do.

But my heart wasn't in it, and I started exploring options by conducting informational interviews and then working with coaches to unpack the direction I was meant to take. I had meeting after meeting with people who did communications in corporate settings, those who were lobbyists, and even teachers ... none of which made me feel excited. I think I conducted about eighty-five interviews in all!

**As we get further along in our careers, job satisfaction becomes more and more important. We want to feel a sense of joy in what we do before our head hits the pillow at night.**

Yes! I wanted to feel invigorated and not drained by my work. I am happiest when I am working hard and working on something I really enjoy. I was tired of feeling flatlined in a lot of ways.

What really caught my attention were people who created their own masterpieces and then launched their own companies. This was really enticing to me. But I initially resisted going down this path because I am from a traditional household where people stay in one place their whole careers. This was modeled for me. It was the safe play. But we all know the world and our careers no longer have the certainty of earlier generations.

**It sounds like you went through a long process to become unstuck and figure out your best course of action.**

I committed to evolving so I could pursue the thing that lights me up. It was a true metamorphosis. I had to let go of the stability, title, and salary knowing in my heart of hearts it would come if I was brave enough to go down my own path and pursue something that really inspired me.



**“I STARTED FEELING SAD THAT I WASN'T MAKING THE CONTRIBUTION I WANTED TO MAKE IN THE WORLD. THIS INTERNAL DISSATISFACTION WAS A GOOD SIGN IT WAS TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE.”**



**You mentioned you worked with coaches during this time. How did it help you in your process?**

While I connected with a few great coaches, initially, I didn't get where I needed to go. Some of the initial advice was to conduct informational interviews! This appealed to the journalist and researcher in me, but it never led me to make a move. As I was conducting informational interviews, it became apparent that a corporate career transition was going to box me in.

I discovered you through a referral. Before I ever met you, what was appealing was you had a system in place. That is how my brain works. I like to follow a process with additive building blocks that help you get a result. It gave me hope I had not had in a long time.

**So, you've mentioned us working together and your initial intention was to make a corporate career transition. We used the YouMap® to help us unpack your unique value proposition on the front end of the process. What was that like? What did you learn about yourself?**

What I like about the YouMap is it really ties into my psychological background. I liked digging deep into who I am and what I am about. The YouMap brought to the surface traits I knew I had and affirmed the direction I was heading.

I recently printed out the work we did together to remind myself of my top strengths. I can see how my strengths of "input", "communication", and "harmony" are all about researching, consuming, and conveying information while bringing people together and sharing information with others. I also have the rare strength of "competition," which shows up as me constantly trying to better myself and help others be better versions of themselves so they can compete in today's marketplace.

What really flipped the switch for me was the personality assessment within the YouMap. I am "an idealist" who is extremely cerebral, and verbal and needs a lot of quiet, reflective time to create. This tied to the entrepreneur I thought I could be. I had a desire to create something from scratch, think deeply about it, research it, and then apply all my other strengths. The YouMap gave me the confidence I should pursue the entrepreneurial path because it would tap into my strengths and personality. I could also tell that making a corporate move would lead to dissatisfaction.

**I started to get an image of you being a caged hummingbird! I couldn't see you in a cubicle doing a PR or communications job and being happy. Nothing was making sense based on who you are and what lights your fire. This is a hard place to come to when you've invested a lot of resources to figure out your career path!**

I came to a place where I realized I couldn't live with myself if I didn't hold up a mirror and tell myself I

needed to start my own company, which was not the original purpose of us working together!

For the longest time, I thought something was wrong with me and I needed to just accept that there are specific types of jobs I should transition into. I mean, it is called "work" for a reason, right? But my struggle inside was real because I knew it did not have to be the case. I saw people pursuing their own paths by starting up companies or consulting. They were able to focus on their areas of passion, and I wanted to, also.

I knew I had to take control by investing in the work that excited me and that I loved - if I could only be brave enough to do it. So, I started reflecting on what I wanted to offer, journaled, listened to podcasts, and took a lot of notes. I asked myself what my program would look like, and I started to feel alive again. This creative time started to reinforce what I needed in my life and career.

**It takes a lot of courage to make this leap, where does your bravery and strength come from?**

As you can tell, it took a very long time, a lot of reflection and journaling, to get to the point when I was ready to make the leap.

This might seem overly dramatic, but it really came down to either accepting the safe path right in front of me or realizing I'd never reach my full potential if I chose not to try the entrepreneurial path. I knew I had to try and make a go of it - even if I failed. At least I'd put myself out there to do it. I also had a backup plan in case I failed and knew the world would not fall apart if I gave this a try.

I realized what was limiting me in this entire process was myself and my thought process. This was ironic given my psychology background and all the exploration I've done. I'm a big proponent of self-improvement. I was preaching to others through the coaching work I was doing what I wasn't willing to do myself! I was encouraging people to take these brave steps and yet I wasn't living it fully until I was willing to leave the predictable behind.

Working with you for career coaching and then Mary Henderson as my business coach helped give me the confidence to embark on this journey. Anytime I felt like I was slipping, you would help me get back on track. I also think surrounding myself with other entrepreneurs in Mary's program has been helpful in that we trade stories about our bumps and bruises along the way and learn from each other. Most of us who are entrepreneurs made a big, scary leap and likely felt stuck at one point.

### How did you go about developing your program?

The first step was realizing and believing I had a goldmine of knowledge specific to my industry. Then, I had to get to work building my model and frameworks to help my clients achieve success.

I'm a huge proponent of note-taking and have a notepad in every room, in my car, and in my purse. Whenever I have a thought about something related to my business, I jot it down or take a screenshot. This plays to my "input" strength. I read books and listened to podcasts. Over the course of several years, I started to think about my framework by grouping ideas into themes. I was drawing from my work from the AKC, Guide Dogs for the Blind (with my speaker's bureau work), and my work as an emcee and journalist.

I started to see that 20 years of expertise could help others expedite their process of becoming a better speaker and avoid many of the growing pains I'd experienced.

Then, I started mapping out my process on giant pieces of butcher paper on the wall. I mapped out my client's journey from start to finish. What were the challenges they would face and how would I address them? At the end of their journey, I was confident they would experience a transformation.

**“THE FIRST STEP WAS REALIZING AND BELIEVING I HAD A GOLDMINE OF KNOWLEDGE SPECIFIC TO MY INDUSTRY.”**

### Did you create your program while working full-time?

I can tell you I didn't sleep much! I built my coaching practice, worked full time, and continued to do research by volunteering in ways that helped me further test ideas for my program.

I interviewed amazing content experts who needed a way to showcase their thought leadership through video or keynote speeches. One person that stood out was a Nobel Prize winner who was one of many with brilliant messages, research, and stories to tell. Most of the brilliant folks I spoke with weren't getting the accolades or the attention they deserve because they couldn't communicate it well.

This is what I had in mind when I created the GoTo Speaker Method™ training program. I am passionate about teaching people how to communicate effectively in any setting – on stage, in a board room, or in front of a news or web camera. This includes everything from crafting messaging and sound bites that break through our noisy multimedia landscape, to presenting with confidence, authority, and a signature style. All of this is a signal you are the expert in your space and elevates you to become the “go-to” person clients want to engage within your industry.

Over the years, I have tested out my model and frameworks with a PR firm and run hundreds of people through my methodology across multiple industries, including real estate, technology, medical, culinary, and hospitality. The feedback helped give me fresh ideas so that I could add high-impact elements and launch my program with both feet on the ground.



I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT

# TEACHING PEOPLE

HOW TO COMMUNICATE  
EFFECTIVELY

IN ANY SETTING – ON  
STAGE, IN A BOARD  
ROOM, OR IN FRONT OF  
A NEWS OR WEB  
CAMERA.

Leaders or experts oftentimes discount they have something unique to offer. If they break their frameworks and expertise down to the micro level, they can visualize their unique value proposition.

A lot of people struggle with impostor syndrome, especially high-achieving individuals. They have a wealth of knowledge but don't consider their offering as different or great.

Once I started looking around at potential competitors, I quickly realized there are a lot of self-proclaimed experts within a given space who are not experts at all. There is little to back up what they do. Doing this research can really give you confidence in knowing you have something special.

Just because somebody gives themselves the label of being "the best" at teaching something or leading in something doesn't mean they are. Look to see what they are really offering, and you'll realize you do have a lot to offer, and your frameworks will yield a result for your clients.

One thing I really aligned with your Career Velocity program is you were able to articulate the micro-moving parts to get to a result. In turn, I realized when I fleshed out my own methodology, and broke it down into micro pieces, I would build the same trust in my process.

Clients would feel confident my process would yield results and be the answer to their long-term struggles.

### What are your program offerings?

I have one program geared toward creating speeches and presentations, and another program that is geared toward media training and preparing spoken messages for media interviews, podcasts, panel interviews, print interviews, television, etc.

Both programs are informed by the Go-To Speaker Method™ I created.

I work largely with mid-career subject matter experts who have reached incredible heights within their careers, but they desire to take their 'know, like, and trust factor' to the next level and become a thought leader by communicating in a more charismatic and dynamic way.

Individuals in my one-on-one coaching program create a signature speech and a short video series, because as you well know Gina, we've gone from in-person meetings to needing to be able to communicate dynamically over Zoom or short videos you can use on your social media channels.

### I love the name of your program!

Thanks! When I did my research, I consistently heard people say they wanted to be thought of as an expert in their space or industry. No matter if you are a pediatrician, interior designer, or pastry chef, people want to be the "go-to" expert and the first person who comes to mind in their field for interviews, as a panelist, or even for keynote speeches.

### Walk me through your methodology. How do you help your clients realize a transformative experience?

Anyone can write bullet points for a speech - but what makes you stand out is to ensure everything you say reflects your uniqueness as an individual.

I start at the foundation of the client's values, strengths, and how they want to be perceived. Then we do a gap analysis between the way they communicate now and plan for where they want to be. Then, we work to get rid of stumbling blocks and false perceptions they may have around communication and around leadership. These are powerful exercises!

Speaking as an introvert myself, I empathize with other introverts who allow themselves to be held back by the negative messages that get stuck in their heads. I like to turn the narrative around and help introverts stand out and attract positive attention based on their expertise and personal stories.

For those of us who are introverts who might not like the spotlight, we can learn how to keep the focus on our subject matter expertise and our audience. Many introverts are very empathetic and connect well with audiences by customizing their messaging that really resonates.



**Connecting with our audience is what it is all about. Being memorable!**

We know our brains light up, we become more memorable, and we can move people into action by using tactics backed by psychological research. I leverage TV news principles and psychology by teaching how to create compelling spoken communications. I also teach people how to set up their camera, lighting, and microphone so they can shoot and record their own high-quality videos. They can also use the videos on their website, to submit to a conference, or to try and land podcast guest spots. This way, a person can provide visual proof about how they communicate and show up. This can really help someone rise in their career and connect with other thought leaders.

A unique aspect of your program is linking the psychological ways to connect with the audience married up with the speaker's unique strengths and experiences. That is brilliant.

There is a reason we tune in to the same TV stations, podcasts, and social media channels. There becomes a core connection generated by the speaker that keeps people's attention and ultimately their trust.

**What has been the hardest part of your journey?**

Working in the news is fast-paced with quick turnarounds. There is something new and fresh every day. What I've had to learn to do on this journey is plant seeds and water them and be patient. Check on them and give them a little more sunlight. In short, I've had to be patient!

For entrepreneurs, there are constant pivots and ups and downs. I've had to maintain faith if I continue to work hard, put out a good product, and remain committed to serving with a client-centric focus, good things will happen.

I like how you ended with the commitment toward the client and service because I think a lot of people look at becoming an entrepreneur to become famous.

If that's your intention, there are a lot less stressful and time-consuming ways to become famous than becoming an entrepreneur! If you're truly coming at it from service, the importance of notoriety will fall down the line. You'll naturally attract the right attention.

**What is your advice to people who have felt similarly stuck in their careers? Perhaps they are twenty years along and starting to feel restless like something isn't right?**

The first step is to get a coach! My job and career were pieces of my identity, and I needed an outside perspective to reflect my natural gifts. Get guidance and support, whether that is a coach or a group of individuals who are in the same boat so you can help each other. Find ways to get to the core of what is making you unhappy - because for me it was about the lack of fulfillment and feeling like I wasn't using all my gifts.

I would also advise one must realize there will be trade-offs. What are you willing to let go of to get to what you enjoy? For me, the drawback was having a lack of stability but that was countered by the idea of the joy of constantly creating, serving, and learning.

Take a step back and see within your current job if the pain points are outweighing the joy. You must be willing to jump off the cliff and trust your wings will spread as you jump.

**When did you feel ready to launch your program?**

This has been years in the making, but when I made the commitment to myself, it took me several months to shore up my methodology so that I could launch my website. I think most people could launch a program in six months with true dedication. It helped when I left my corporate job that I was able to line up some communication and training consulting gigs to keep the lights on. Perhaps someone could do it faster, but the reality is many of us are creating a program while holding down a full-time job for income and benefits. Once I signed up with Mary Henderson's coaching program, I was able to accelerate and launch so much faster.

**It sounds like you created your GoTo Speaker Method™ to serve not just individuals, but groups.**

That's right. Not everyone has the time or budget for an intensive, 1-on-1, multi-month program. I wanted teams to have access to my methodology in a condensed period of time, so I created corporate team workshops. After these workshops, companies will often hire me to work one-on-one with their leaders who need to prepare for a keynote, conference, Q&As within the company, or speaking in front of investors in person or over video.

**"VENTURE FIRMS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BACK PEOPLE WHO CAN MOVE THEM WITH EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING. IF YOU CAN COMMUNICATE MESSAGES CLEARLY, MEMORABLY AND SUCCINCTLY, YOU WILL RISE ABOVE THE COMPETITION. IN THE CASE OF A LEADER WHO NEEDS TO GENERATE FUNDING, THEY ARE A TRUE SPOKESPERSON WHO MUST INSPIRE INVESTORS AND BOARDS OF DIRECTORS."**

It is all about these leaders conveying they are relatable, believable, clear, and relevant. Today, it's not enough to just have a nice message written down. We expect your face to appear on the video. There's plenty of research about how expressions and body language impact our ability to trust someone. Coaching someone to present well from message to tone to presence gives a leader the opportunity to connect with and influence their audience regardless of their industry.

I'm a firm believer in practicing what you preach, so I also continue to work as a professional communicator, myself. I regularly deliver keynote speeches and emcee local and national events for professional and charitable organizations. Every time I speak professionally, I learn something new to teach my clients.

What is great about continuing to be an emcee and keynote speaker is you walk the walk and show how it is done. Really, what a lot of executives need is the day-to-day help presenting to their board or a group of investors when they do a dog-and-pony show. They come to a place they must convince people to invest in their company when what they really need is for these decision-makers to invest in them personally. They need to be convincing, likable, and trustable to get people to open up their wallets.

I love that point, Gina! Venture firms are more likely to back people who can move them with effective storytelling. If you can communicate messages clearly, memorably, and succinctly, you will rise above the competition. In the case of a leader who needs to generate funding, they are a true spokesperson who must inspire investors and boards of directors. Today, leaders must be believable, trustable, and inspirational. All these traits are conveyed through dynamic communication. It's not enough to lean on a great product or service to ensure your success.



**Where can people find you?**

They can find me at [www.kristysiefkin.com](http://www.kristysiefkin.com). All the details of my GoTo Speaker Method™ program are there. I also love to customize training (it's the creative in me!) so I welcome people to reach out and discuss how exactly I can help them.

I post a lot of free, educational content about communications, thought leadership, public speaking, and video on LinkedIn and Instagram:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kristysiefkin/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/kristysiefkin>

Leaving a TV station "Chief" role to pursue wearing all the "chief hats" of her own company, Siefkin is pursuing her own happy ending by writing her own story, chapter by chapter. By facing her self-limiting beliefs, tapping into her strengths, and pursuing work that feeds her intellectually and creatively, she no longer feels stuck. She feels challenged, hopeful and excited. If you are feeling stuck and want help with speaking, presenting, or media training, reach out and connect with Siefkin!

**CONTRIBUTING WRITER'S PROFILE**



*Gina Riley Consulting & creator of the Career Velocity™ System. She is a career transition coach who helps leaders customize their career stories to land jobs where they can leave a legacy. She is an Executive Search Consultant for Talence Group.*



**CONTACT  
GINA:**

[ginarileyconsulting.com](http://ginarileyconsulting.com)

 @ginariley