

HOW TO EARN YOUR LIVING
FROM THE THINGS YOU
LOVE TO DO.



MAKE YOUR
CREATIVITY PAY

Who is this book for?

'This book is for everyone out there that has a head full of ideas and the notion that earning a living from their own creative endeavour is simply the best thing ever.'

It's aimed at:

- People with a hobby on the verge of a business - working from home, studio or garden shed.
- People who are desperate to escape the 9-5, or through redundancy or change of circumstances, need to start afresh.
- Start-ups and fledgling businesses needing ideas, inspiration, and a guide to what works.
- More mature businesses that need some fresh thinking
- Folk who are looking for a friendly, jargon free guide

People like you:

Wood-turners, glass artists, potters, cake-makers, furniture makers, artists, coracle-builders, soap and candle makers, calligraphers and illustrators, jewellers, bead workers, blacksmiths, spoon carvers, knitters and weavers, model makers, leather workers, basket makers, toy makers, musical instrument makers, rug makers, well - all creative people!

If you recognise yourself in this list, *Make Your Creativity Pay* will resonate, because for you it may well fill a need, solve a problem, answer questions, provide help and support, get you heading in the right direction.

It will help you 'Make Your Creativity Pay'.

Foreword

This book is for everyone out there who has a head full of ideas and the notion that earning a living from their own creative endeavour would be the best thing ever. From my point of view creative endeavour takes in a pretty wide swathe of human activity. In truth, the mere fact that you already have or are seriously considering starting up a small business based on your own skills and ideas guarantees that you fall within my definition of creative. And being your own boss beats the pants off 9-5 any day of the year.

The contents of this book - the reflections, observations and insights, are informed by literally hundreds of conversations with people like you over a long period of time. In that time I've seen some brilliant ideas executed and some real doofers which predictably ran aground. What I've realised is that there are a few underpinning immutable truths about making a business out of one's innate creativity. Adhering to them seems to make the difference between success and failure.

So - why write a book like this when there are so many small business guides around already? Well, partly because so few of the books are truly aimed at creative people - it's as if there's a bit of a clash of language and world view going on between people who make and do stuff and the world of mainstream business advice. My

own coaching and mentoring work is designed to bridge that gap. Indeed, business development organisations often employ me to provide that support precisely because, over time, I have accrued some pretty unique experience in the field of profitably combining creativity and small business models.

Like a lot of creative people, my academic career stuttered along in its early stages. It took me a couple of shots to get the right combination of qualifications I needed to go to Art College. My very first creative job was at Govancroft Potteries in Glasgow (a major manufacturer of stoneware whisky flagons) - they had a nice little studio where I threw wonky pots for the gift shop - it prepared me well. After graduating, I started my career proper as Town Artist in Chorley, Lancashire in 1979, then moved to Leicester to head up a new arts facility for unemployed 16-25 year olds in the City Centre where we ran workshops in Visual Arts, Photography, Music and Drama. In 1984, I started my own company, delivering arts workshops in education and community settings – schools, hospitals, community centres, prisons, and day centres. I also forged a link with an Arts in Education company in New York and spent many summers working in the States throughout the 80's.

I've been working for myself ever since - making, doing, training, problem solving - increasingly by working with other creative people who want to get their own small ventures off the ground. I also write about it – I'm

Business Editor for craft&design magazine and write both online and offline content for them.

I specialise in coaching and mentoring creative and exceptional people – helping them start and develop their creative businesses.

You won't find much jargon in here or too many technical terms, but you will find those immutable truths I mentioned that have helped me to run a small business and advise others through thick and thin for all these years. As you'll discover, it's the tough times that help you acquire and keep your cutting edge.

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, magic, and power in it. Begin it now." Goethe.

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The Fire in Your Belly

1

So. You're curious about the business of being creative, and you've decided to do something about it. Maybe you've already started.

Have you got the fire in your belly? By that I mean the combination of fear and excitement that you'll need to drive this project of yours forward to the point where money starts going into your bank account by dint of your own ideas and efforts. Have you got what it takes? Have you got the tenacity and self-discipline you need, both to start and to keep going? Because you're going to need a healthy measure of all of these things if you are to succeed. Creativity, skills and talent alone will not guarantee the success that you crave. Nor will the kind and supportive words of friends and relatives – in fact you need to beware of those very things.

Are you – despite your excitement, fear and anticipation – putting off the actions you need to take to commit to this path? Do you seem to be a long time in the preparatory stages? Yes? Don't worry, this is a healthy sign. This is resistance at play – and the degree of resistance you put in the way of getting on with making the dream a reality is a sure sign that it is indeed, exactly what you need to do.

Read, research, above all talk to people, prepare, become informed – do what you can to allay your worries and trepidations. But finally it comes down to this – decisions, followed by action. Stoke the fire.

Why Do You Do What You Do?

2

It's important to be mindful of your motivation - because we are not all motivated by the same things. You need to know what fuels your fire, and seek out plentiful supplies.

What satisfies you more - recognition and financial reward, or the pure joy of creation? Or do you walk (like most of us) a bit of a tightrope between the two? Do you find the rigour of working to commission, or mass producing 'bread and butter' artefacts exciting, or does this dull your senses and blunt your creative edge?

As a business mentor, I regularly meet with clients who are frustrated by their inability to earn all of their living from their creative activity, or what they do earn isn't quite enough to fund the lifestyle they might aspire to.

People get round this in all sorts of ways - I met an artist the other day who worked as a full time fireman in the hope that the 4 days on, 4 days off rota might give both enough money and regular and useful slots of time to meet his creative goals. Traditionally creative people have always taught, run workshops and demonstrations or held other part time jobs in order to make up the shortfall. I've met many that have learned trades or taken