

Successful Selling: Tips for Running a Small Business



LOVE TO SEW AND SEW WITH LOVE

BUSTLE & SEW MAGAZINE

Celebrating One Hundred Issues!

May 2019

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Hello, and welcome to Successful Selling: Tips for Running a Small Business



[Bustle & Sew](#) has existed as a business for nearly a decade now, beginning as an offshoot to the blog I began when I first moved down to Devon way back in 2005. At first I sold items I made myself, but quickly realised that if I wanted to make this my full time occupation at some time in the future, then this wasn't going to be an option as hand embroidery, for me, is simply too time consuming to be profitable. So, after some discussions with my (now-ex) husband, I decided to focus on the designing side - and this developed into the Bustle & Sew Magazine which has now been in circulation for over eight years. My daughter Rosie joined me in the business in 2014 and now it provides an income for us both. I thought that, as part of this, our 100th issue, it would be fun to share some of the business hints and tips I've learned over the years, as well as talk to more of the very talented makers we've interviewed as part of our "Meet the Maker" features.

Helen x



Chapter One: Getting Started

The first question that needs to be answered in any creative business is “what shall I make?” My first tip would be to choose to make something you love - but if you’re serious about turning your hobby into even a very small business then you need to be very passionate about the items you’re creating. If sales take off then you might find yourself needing to make 10, 20 or even 100 or more of the same item, perhaps with just minor variations. If you’re the sort of person that constantly likes to move onto new things, then you may want to consider offering limited editions perhaps.

It’s not sufficient to be passionate though, it’s absolutely vital that you research your market to find out exactly what your customers want. You may love making purple velvet frogs, but find that they have a very limited market and that yellow felt chickens appeal to a much wider audience. Be sure to get some idea of what’s popular before you begin or you

may find yourself stuck with a lot of items that cost you time and money to make but that nobody wants to purchase!

You can market research both on and offline, in fact the more methods you use to do this, the better. Good online ways are to visit websites already selling items similar to those you hope to offer. Browse around sites such as Etsy and NotontheHighStreet and you’ll soon begin to discover popular items and identify trends. Also check out social media such as Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter to find out what’s out there and what people are saying about it. This isn’t about copying others - that’s a definite NO, but getting a feel for what’s on-trend at the moment.

Offline try reading homes and interiors magazines to spot the latest trends. The good thing about being a very small business is that you can respond to the



market quickly, so if you spot that something's trending then you can offer items that satisfy current demand. Try also to go to craft and other handmade fairs, department stores and even just walk down the High Street studying shop window displays, noting down any ideas that occur to you as you go.

And finally, ask your family and friends. They're going to be your most enthusiastic supporters and keen to help you make a success of your business. Ask them to be completely honest with you about your ideas and gather feedback on both the items you're making to sell and whether or not they think you'll be able to deliver. If yes to both of these, that's great - if not -

then ask them what the problems are and how they think you could overcome them.

The next decision is - What shall I call myself? You can of course call your business anything you like - but I recommend that you choose something that's easy to spell, relevant to your products and that people will remember. Even if you don't plan on selling online straight away, and thoughts of a website are perhaps even further from your mind right now, it's worth checking that the domain name is available and registering it if so, that if in the future you do decide to set up your own site, you don't discover that someone else has "taken" your name.



You first appeared in *Bustle & Sew Magazine* in November 2015, could you please tell us if/how your business has changed since then?

Time has flown! I still have the same dream for Cloud Craft to inspire a love for modern hand stitching by carefully selecting all the best fabrics, threads and tools for stitchers to enjoy. We now have a bigger range of goodies, including our own range of tools, like our colourful Snipster embroidery scissors and enamel needle minders, which we also wholesale to other lovely haberdasheries. Our most exciting project recently has been the launch at the end of last year of StitchPop, which is our brand dedicated to teaching kids to embroider. We are passionate about getting the next generation hooked!

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

When your new business is your passion it's natural to want things to be perfect but if you worry too much the little details it's hard to get started. Just make that first step - things can always be improved along the way.

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

Running your own business on your own can be lonely and sometimes it's hard to stay motivated. I think it's really valuable to find the support of other business owners in the same position so you can help and encourage each other.

Nicole Twena is the owner of [Cloud Craft](#), an online shop based in the UK specializing in all the loveliest supplies and kits for hand stitching.



Could you please tell us how your business has changed since you first began?

I have always been rather "crafty" so I had tried so many different things. After my first few stitches I knew I had found something I would truly love. When I first started I was just stitching for myself, fast forward to now and wow things are different. I could never have imagined so many people would love what I create or that I would be able to equip others to do the same, it's the best!

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

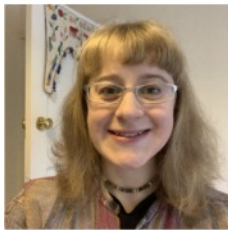
It's simple but the one thing that has stuck with me the most over the past few years is, be true to who you are. In all your decisions and as you create, follow your gut and trust your instincts, If it comes from within you, people will love and embrace it, they will want

to buy your products because they come from you.

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

When I first started out sharing my work I was so intimidated, insecure and nervous to put myself and my designs out there. I wish I had known then about the love, support, encouragement and community that I would soon find by doing the exact thing I was afraid to do. That is one of the best parts of this little business of mine, all the beautiful people I get to meet, work with and be inspired by.

Visit Amanda online at [Brynn & Co](#)



Chloe Redfern Embroidery

Visit Chloe online
at [Chloe Redfern
Hand
Embroidery](#)

What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started your business?

I started my business as soon as I'd finished college, working with painted paper and fabric collage initially and then moving into embroidery after a couple of years. I've always been fairly organised, but I wish I'd known earlier on the need to be more organised in terms of time spent working, and the need to plan things better; initially I was spending a lot of time experimenting with different techniques, which is great, but I didn't work in a very focussed way and would end up working pretty much everyday but sometimes not getting a lot done. I've had a bit of an overhaul of my time management in recent years and am now working in a more focussed way during my work time and giving myself bits of designated time off, which is allowing me to make time to do more things like visit interesting places, which in turn often inspire my embroidery.

I think one of the difficult things about being self employed is finding a work life balance. I love what I do, and it's never far from my mind when I'm not working, but I think it's really important to try to have enough time set aside to do things like go out and even to just do things like read a book.

How has your business changed since you first started out?

I started off working with painted paper and fabric collage, I did this for a few years and sometimes

find myself wishing I'd found embroidery sooner (I've been working with embroidery for about four years now) but really I think everything I've done has been part of the process leading up to this point, and perhaps if I'd never done the collage bit I'd never have gotten to the embroidery bit! Initially I was selling originals and hand stitched decorations online, entering open art exhibitions and also doing the odd craft fair. When I started to work with embroidery I began to create downloadable patterns and although I still sell originals, the main part of my business now revolves around these. For the last three years I've also written embroidery patterns for craft magazines and books, something which I really love to do.

What advice would you give anyone wanting to start their own business?

I think a business has got to revolve around something you are passionate about or at least deeply interested in, as obvious as that sounds, so I suppose I'd say find something that you love to do, and then work hard at sharing that enthusiasm with others, not just in terms of selling products, but in terms of sharing the thinking behind what you create and your process. I'd also recommend being mindful of your work life balance; I started off thinking I had to work every day, and even though I often want to because I love working with embroidery, I find myself feeling reinvigorated if I let myself take some time off to do something different.



Chapter Two: Pricing

Pricing your creations correctly is absolutely vital. If you're making to sell as a business proposition you can't afford to set your prices too low and not make a profit, but at the same time you don't want to set your prices too high and effectively price yourself out of the market.

Some crafters sell their products very cheaply - this may be because they're simply making a little money from their hobby or they don't have any idea how to go about pricing their work. Don't be tempted to reduce your prices to compete with these crafters, remember that you want to pay yourself a fair wage for your work.

Making for business purposes is very different to making as a hobby. Your creations may well have been admired by family and friends, and perhaps you've made a few for sale - and been very pleasantly surprised by the feedback you've received. But if you're serious about making money from making then it's important that you begin to think like a businessperson and work out three important prices for each of your products - knowing these exact amounts will be key to your business success.

1. Cost price.

This is how much it actually costs you to make each item. This amount will include overheads (heating, lighting, electricity etc), raw materials and your time. Also known as Cost of Goods Sold.

2. Trade price.

What is the price you could afford to let retailers and other stockists purchase your creations for - and still make a profit.

3. Retail price.

In the UK retailers generally have a 2 ½ x mark up. So if I sold them my creation for, say, £10, they would retail it at £25. This allows them to cover their costs and still

make a profit for themselves. Generally you shouldn't reduce the retail price when selling direct as it doesn't make good business sense to undercut your stockists.

Keep these three figures close to your heart. If you are selling your products at craft fairs you may well be approached by retailers who like the look of your items and want to stock them in their shops. Retailers can be quite keen negotiators, especially in today's economic climate, and if you aren't aware of these key numbers then you will definitely be at a disadvantage when it comes to negotiating a trade price.

Working out your cost price is perhaps the most difficult for crafters to get their heads around as it's made up of so many different elements - including the one that we all feel most awkward about charging for - our time. So let's consider an example - a fictional patchwork cushion perhaps

The first and most obvious component of your cost price is the cost of materials. This would include fabric, thread, zips and/or buttons, trimmings etc. When you're working out how much your materials cost you should only consider the exact amount of materials you've used for that particular item. So if you purchased 50 buttons for £5, but only used 4 for that particular cushion then you would just include 40p in the cost of materials for that item.

Let's assume that the cost of your materials for one patchwork cushion is £5.

The next step is to decide how much you want to pay yourself. Suppose it takes about an hour to make one cushion - you might decide to pay yourself £7 per hour perhaps?

This means that the total cost of making your cushion is £12. (£5 for the materials, plus £7 for an hour's labour). Now you need to decide on your mark up to sell it to customers. At this point I would refer you back to your retail price and would suggest that you too mark up your products by 2 ½ times. This means that your cushion

would sell for £30 on your craft stall. This is not an unreasonable amount for a unique handcrafted item made here in the UK.

You will not be able to compete with mass produced items made overseas and sold cheaply - and must remember that you're not trying to do so - your products are in a completely different (and much nicer!) category. I have sold my items at craft fairs on many occasions and there are always browsers who will pick up your creations, look at them critically and then comment "£X for this! I can buy it much cheaper on the High Street." I used to quietly fume about this, but then realised I was wasting my energy, as if someone can't tell the difference between high quality handmade items and cheap imports, then they're never going to appreciate my work. They are not my target customers.

As good quality raw materials form such a large part of your cost price, it's worth taking a little time to consider how you acquire them. Think about that cushion again. We've decided that currently it's costing you £5 to make each cushion using fabric and haberdashery purchased in relatively small quantities. But suppose you could commit to purchasing, say 500 of those buttons instead of 50 and an entire bolt of fabric rather than a few yards or metres.

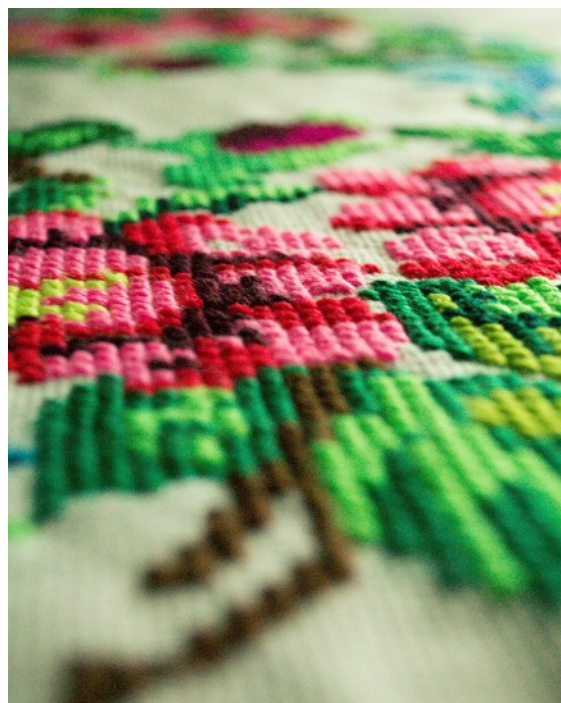
Purchasing in bulk could significantly reduce your cost of making. The downside of course is that to purchase in bulk requires cash up front and you'll need to have confidence that you really can use and sell all of the resulting stock. But if you're dreaming big and planning to really grow your business then buying your raw materials wholesale is definitely the way to go. Perhaps not straight away - but keep that idea in mind for the future.

And here's another question for you to consider.....
If, like me, you love using beautiful recycled vintage fabrics and haberdashery, can you produce enough of your items if demand really takes off. Supposing you create cosies from felted vintage knitwear - and a retailer wants to order 100 from you? Could you meet that order using existing suppliers? I'm not suggesting that you stop using recycled fabrics, but it's worth considering what you might do if your products were flying out of your store. Maybe you could mix some vintage fabrics with cool repro designs to create new items that would be much easier to produce in larger quantities?

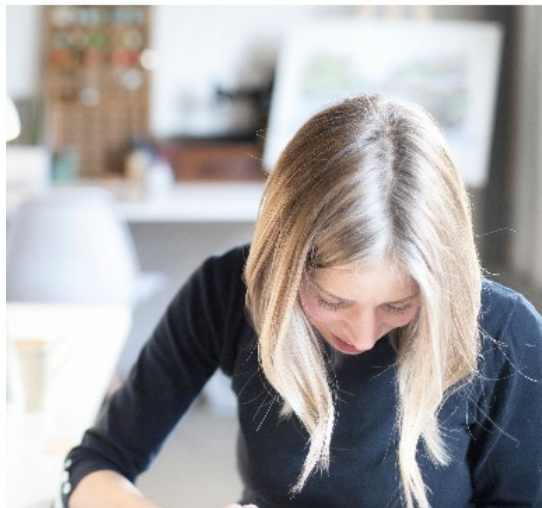
Over time, as you begin to build a reputation and develop your expertise further you may be able to increase your prices. Don't be afraid of doing this as, if they are able to do so, people are generally willing to pay a little extra for that special - and unique - handmade item. It's good to stock items at a variety of cost points though as not everyone can afford to pay more.

Think of artists - who offer cards, open edition prints, limited edition prints and originals - at an increasing scale of prices. This means everyone can enjoy their work in one form or another. So you may choose to offer some items crafted from unique vintage fabrics with hand embellishments, or perhaps at the other end of the scale you might use reproduction fabrics, stitched by machine - that can still be very attractive.

There is one final pricing idea that you might like to consider and it's that of tailoring your pricing strategy to your target market. It's important to think about who your customers are and how this changes when you offer your products for sale in different places. This could have an impact upon your pricing. For local craft fairs you may well discover you have to charge a little less than you would online. People have travelled to get to the fair and may well have paid an admission charge, so will expect your prices to be a little lower than online.



EMMA GIACALONE



You first appeared in *Bustle & Sew Magazine* in May 2017, could you please tell us how your business has changed since then?

When I was featured in 2017, I was doing a lot of commission work, often repeat makes and really wasn't charging enough for what were very intricate one-off pieces. While I was always busy, I realised that if I continued to work in the same way, I would always be limited by the number of hours I had available. I also had lots of ideas for things I wanted to make and no time to make them, so at the beginning of 2018 I took a leap of faith, stopped taking on commissions, and gave myself permission to go away and create. Fortunately it was a gamble that paid off, and taking time to focus on making things I really enjoy shows through in my work.

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

Be bold - don't be scared to give things a try. Have faith in yourself, in what you want to do and in where you want to go. If you are original and do what you love, it will always shine through in your work.

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

Social media can get a lot of bad press, but it really is your friend when running a small business. As well as having immediate feedback from your customer-base about what they like (and don't like so much) you have access to a massive pool of people and opportunities.

Visit Emma online at [Emma Giacalone Textiles](http://EmmaGiacaloneTextiles.com).

You first appeared in *Bustle & Sew Magazine* in September 2015, could you please tell us how your business has changed since then?

I've only ever wanted to help people discover and fall in love with needlework like I did. From that perspective, nothing's changed. But the way I do it continues to evolve.

Since you first featured *Floss & Mischief*, we've launched new cross-stitch kits, revamped our packaging, and experimented with new products like needle-minders and temporary tattoos (!). There have been some amazing milestones too, like: landing my dream stockist, the V&A Museum; writing a cross-stitch pattern book, *I Got 99 Problems But A Stitch Ain't One*; being talked about in the national newspapers (for nice reasons); and being voted Cross Stitch Designer of the Year twice in a row!

Right now we're almost done redefining our mission and rebranding to better reflect our evolution and what we're about. It's made me all the more excited for this next phase of *Floss & Mischief*.

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

Look after yourself. Stay as physically and mentally fit as you can because without you there is no business, especially when you're first starting up. I hurt my back again 18 months

ago and for months I could barely walk, let alone work. Thankfully by then I had outside help and my fulfilment house kept the online shop ticking over while I took a step back. But it was a massive wake up call. I had to cancel all of my commitments which let clients down; not being present to drive things forward meant exciting plans were shelved; and picking things back up from a standstill was surprisingly difficult.

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

That turning your hobby into your job means that you'll lose it as your hobby. I still absolutely adore needlework and stitch for pleasure regardless, but nowadays when I stitch I can't stop analysing everything. It's no longer an escape from work. It took me a long time to realise that I needed to find new pastimes that would help me to properly disassociate, recharge and stave off burnout.

Genevieve Brading is the creative behind modern needlework brand, *Floss & Mischief*. As well as manufacturing contemporary cross-stitch kits from her Cotswolds base, Genevieve designs needlework patterns and tutorials for craft publications, and teaches cross-stitch and embroidery workshops. Find her work at [Floss & Mischief](#)





You first appeared in *Bustle & Sew Magazine* in August 2015, could you please tell us how your business has changed since then?

Since 2015 I have experienced lots of growth and learning! My business is still very much the same in many ways. I still offer unique embroidered artwork, and I continue to have a strong focus on kindness and customer satisfaction. Things have changed in some ways as well, though. Because my business has grown, I now dedicate more time toward product photography, processing orders, marketing, etc. I've also had to adopt some new habits to keep my work/life balance in check - time management is so important!

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

When I first started my business, I was insecure and easily overwhelmed. I didn't know if it would be worth it to put my art out there, since there were so many other embroidery artists who were more experienced, more skilled, more successful... I was under the impression that I needed to either find immediate success, or

give up. But running a business is not like that! It's a journey. I have had ups and downs - busy seasons and extremely slow seasons. And that's ok! Each season has offered its own lesson for me along the way.

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

Enjoy the journey! Use each opportunity you are given to strive for growth - in your business, in your skills, or in your personal life. There is always something new to be learned.

Sarah Buckley is a self-taught embroidery artist living in the beautiful state of Colorado. It is the perfect place to find inspiration in nature, with majestic mountain sunsets, curious wildlife, and the incredible transformation of the changing seasons. Sarah has loved art since childhood, but only began learning embroidery in 2015. She spends most of her time raising her three amazing little boys, but also love shopping for vintage treasure, eating Mexican food with her husband, and listening to True Crime podcasts.

Find Sarah online at [Itty Bitty Bunnies](#)

Chapter Three: Branding

New entrepreneurs don't always appreciate the power of branding - and how hard good, effective branding will work for their business. Consider the giant company Coca-Cola - their brand is instantly recognised across the globe - the red and white colours and swirly font communicate the same message whether you can actually read the text or not. Coca-Cola themselves are totally aware of the importance of their branding - consider the following quote from one of their executives:

"If Coca-Cola were to lose all of its production-related assets in a disaster, the company would survive. By contrast, if all consumers were to have a sudden lapse of memory and forget everything related to Coca-Cola, the company would go out of business."

The first question to ask yourself is - do you completely understand what branding is, and how it can help your business?

Branding is a way of communicating your business's values and standards to your potential customers. Your business can benefit enormously if you are able to create a brand that presents it as trustworthy, unique, exciting, value for money - or whatever you feel is appropriate. You will do this through effectively using design elements, advertising, marketing, etc to communicate clearly what your business stands for.

The key to building a successful brand is to take into account every aspect of your business, ensuring you choose colours, styles and themes that lend themselves to being used throughout your business in a consistent manner, especially if you intend to market your work online, including social media - and also if you intend to sell at craft fairs.

To summarise then, your brand is your promise to your customer. It tells them what they can expect from your products and services. A successful brand makes your business distinctive and helps it stand out amongst the competition. Your brand is created from who you are, what you want your business to be and who (and what) your potential customers perceive you and your to be.

When you are developing a brand for your business there are some basic questions you should ask yourself - some you will need to think about - and others, I am sure, you will be able to answer instantly:

- What image do I want my business to portray?
- Am I cute, modern, vintage-inspired etc
- Who is my target market?
- What do they like, want and need from my business? What is my unique selling point (USP) ?
- What is my business personality, and how do I convey this to my customers?
- Who are my competition - will my brand stand out in what may be a crowded marketplace?
- What is my strapline - and will people know what my business offers from it?

Your logo is a vitally important part of your business branding, so if you're not a graphic designer, or not confident creating your own design, then it's worth paying for some professional help.

Your fonts are also crucial to the feel of your brand. It's also very important that they're easy to read - so make sure that any text is large enough and contrasts well with your background colours. Try to be unique and interesting, whilst at the same time reflecting your products, your own personality and what appeals to your target market.

Choosing your business colours should also take you some time. Be sure that you carry your colours throughout your business - including your website, business cards and packaging. Think again about the Coca-Cola red and white with its distinctive font - you know whose product you're seeing without ever having to read the name.

Take plenty of time to develop your brand identity as you will live and work with it every day - hopefully for a very long time! Changing your mind further down the line could be very expensive - and confusing for your customers too - so work hard to get it right first time.

Once you've created your brand, then you will need to protect it.

Thinking of Coca-Cola again - your brand is possibly the most important business asset you possess. The world of intellectual property and copyright is a very complex one with laws that vary from country to country so you should always take legal advice wherever you live. In the UK we have four main kinds of intellectual property that can be protected - patents, trademarks, designs and copyright.

Patents These are essentially what make a thing work, eg what makes a wheel turn, or the chemical formula of your favourite fizzy drink.

Trademarks These are signs like words and logos that distinguish goods and services in the marketplace. I

have protected my Bustle & Sew bunny logo with a trademark.

Design What a logo or product looks like - from the shape of an aeroplane to a fashion item.

Copyright An automatic right that comes into existence for anything written or recorded. It's important to understand the difference between these types of intellectual property and there will be government websites in your own country to help you.

Remember - your brand is your promise to your customers and it's important that you remain true to it. Customers won't return to you - or recommend your products to others - if you don't deliver on your promises.



What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started your business?

I wish I could tell myself at the beginning that there is no right or wrong way of creating/running a business. Follow your own compass and definition of success and then be willing to go with the flow!

How has your business changed since you first started out?

My business has changed A LOT since I began. I started out by selling handmade journals/books which had a mix of freehand machine sewn and hand embroidered covers with hand bound pages inside. The books were so labour intensive and hard to price that I started offering just flat textile pieces which quickly became so popular I physically couldn't keep up with demand.

At this point my work/family/life balance became really out of kilter and I knew something had to change so I began dipping my toe into surface pattern and design and seeing how I could replicate my designs in a way that I felt was positive and offered something of value to my customers. This was where my first embroidery kit was born and the rest as they say is history

What advice would you give anyone wanting to start their own business?

Go for it!!!

Jenny Blair is a designer and maker of modern Embroidery kits, inspired by the natural bounties that surround her in rural Scotland, a love of colour and a desire to spread some stitchery joy. Find her online at [Jenny Blair](#)



What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started your business?

When I started out, I felt like a real impostor in the small business/embroidery community, like my work was sub-standard and uninspiring, which I think is a common problem amongst makers and artists. For a while I didn't recognise the worth of my work, but the confidence to do that often comes with time and having the courage to put yourself out there. I wish I'd got more involved with my local Etsy team and crafting community in the real world (and not just admiring them from afar on social media), banding together with like-minded people can give you a whole new source of support, friendship, and inspiration. Hindsight's a great thing, of course, but I wish I'd known that it's ok to make mistakes and sit down and have to rethink things when something isn't working, that mistakes are just a process of making things better instead of a sign that things are failing, and that's something I'm still teaching myself.

How has your business changed since you first started out?

I've come to realise that there's always room for growth, and you need to adapt when that happens and learn to re-root yourself - kind of like re-potting a plant that has outgrown its pot. I've also incorporated my once separate blog into my website, which focuses on the things that mean a lot to me, such as the world of embroidery and crafting, mental health, sustainability, lifestyle, supporting small businesses, and my other hobbies, such as writing and poetry. My business has always run alongside something else, whether it was my degree, my day job, my personal life, but I've just had to go with the ebb and flow of how

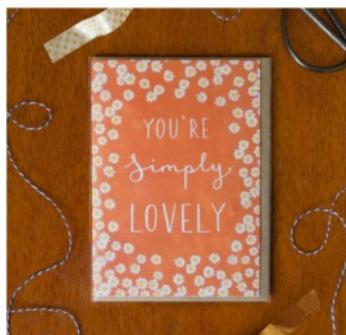
much time I have for it (Which can be difficult when all you want to do is make things all day, every day). When I started my business, it was mainly greetings card focused, then it became about embroidery, then a mixture of hoops, cards, and paintings, now it's heavily embroidery focused again, and in the future... who knows? One craft is often a gateway to another, so my business could house a bunch of connected products in the years to come!

Plan! Throw all your passion and creativity into building your brand and let it be a vehicle for your personality to show in your work! The little things all come together in the end and they are what make up the substance of your business, the rest is just background noise. Support other small businesses and help create a positive community and support network in which these businesses can thrive - community over competition, always. But the most important piece of advice I would give, is just always remember to be yourself in what you do - never forget the reasons behind why you started your business and celebrate every win, no matter how big or small. You've totally got this!

Jessie is an embroidery artist and illustrator who lives in a world of mountains of thread, countless stripy tops, and stacks of books in the vibrant city of Bristol. Having grown up in the wilderness of West Wales, Jessie's work is heavily inspired by the natural world and its botanical wonders, as well as mindfulness, bright colours, and positivity. By day, Jessie works in marketing, but by night, she is an all round creative who knows the entire script to Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone to a worrying accuracy. Find her online at [Jessie Doe](#)



Jess Hinsley
Illustrator & Typographer



You first appeared in *Bustle & Sew Magazine* in December 2017, could you please tell us if/how your business has changed since then?

Since then I have come away travelling, and I'm focusing a lot more on sketchbook work and developing my illustration practice. My Etsy shop is still up and running, and I have a 2019 calendar for sale (this year's theme is British wildlife!)

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

Keep persisting! If it's something you're really passionate about, just keep going with it and it will grow. I also recommend keeping an organised file of all your outgoings and earnings, right from the word go. This will make it easier down the line when you have to fill in your tax forms!

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

That's a hard one! I have learnt so much about packaging, product photography, social media promotion, customer service, and how I want my work to look, that I couldn't pin point something specific! I'm still learning all the time, and my business is constantly evolving. I think you have to be prepared to learn and grow with it, it'll never be perfect in the beginning!

Jess is an illustrator based in Wales whose work explores her love of nature and adventure, and is laced with whimsy and charm. She also loves incorporating hand drawn typography into her illustrations. Find her online at [Jess Hinsley Illustration](#)

Very often your packaged items will be your customers' first physical encounter with your business, whether you're sending your work online or directly through, for example, a craft fair. As we discussed above, packaging forms an important part of your business branding, but that doesn't mean it has to be expensive or complicated. Choose packaging that reflects your business credentials. For example, if you are proud to be environmentally friendly, repurposing and recycling the materials you use to make your products, you might like to think about wrapping them in recycled paper or even left over pieces of fabric you can't use elsewhere. Finish off with a tag (incorporating your logo and business details of course!) and you'll have a lovely eye-catching parcel to give or send to your customer. Again - if you're posting think about strength, durability and cost of posting your items - here in the UK sending a boxed item tends to be more expensive than the same item in a padded envelope

(assuming it fits of course!). You could even use recycled packaging - but be sure to brand it with your own stickers and labels - and tell your customers what you're doing and why.

Packaging doesn't have to be expensive - after all it all adds to your overheads, but some careful thought and a little love will bring you dividends. Everyone loves receiving a beautifully packaged items - so think about simple but effective ideas such as wrapping in tissue paper and string or ribbon in colours to match your branding. This is a cost-effective idea but also rather lovely. Consider also including a handwritten note to emphasise the unique handcrafted nature of your items and make shopping with you a very personal, and pleasurable experience.

Chapter Four: Getting out there!

Effective marketing and PR are absolutely essential - without them you won't be able to reach your potential customers and tell them about your products. Unless people know you exist and how they can purchase from you then you'll never be able to sell anything.

Sometimes people become confused between the terms marketing and PR - Marketing is using advertising, leaflets, business cards and other methods to communicate information about yourself and your business to target your customers, whilst PR (public relations) is using the media to make your customers aware of your business. Featuring in magazines or newspapers - or maybe even appearing on TV or being interviewed by local radio, are all great ways to gain exposure for yourself and your business. Then of course there's going online with your own website and using social media (in the next chapter).

But back to marketing and PR - before you even begin to try to spread the word about yourself you need to have all your tools and information ready.

Business Cards

These are a great way of making sure people remember you and your products. Imagine you're at a craft fair when a retailer gets chatting to you. She loves your products and is interested in stocking them. She can't make a decision on the spot but would like to get back to you in the next few days and asks - do you have a business card? I'm sure you'll agree that handing her a nicely produced, clear, well-branded business card with all your contact details is far preferable to scribbling your contact details on the proverbial back of an envelope! It's easy to design your own business card, or use an online service with easy templates - but be sure they tie in with your overall branding. Don't forget cards have a reverse too - why not picture one of your most popular products on the back?

Catalogue or Brochure

Sounds scary - but isn't really. If you're operating as a "proper" business then you'll need something to give out to new and potential customers to remind them or introduce them to your business and products. If it's

early days, then this doesn't need to be expensive or complicated - consider a simple postcard with an image of one or more of your products on the front and all your information on the reverse. Take them to a craft fair next time you go and slip one into every customer's bag, and make sure they're available for people to pick up whether they purchase from you this time or not - they may well be your customers of the future.

If you're more established, then a product catalogue can be very useful, showing your entire range - great to send to retailers and press representatives who may well pick up on one or more of your designs. Make sure your catalogue has a good photograph of each product as well as brief details (including any available variations) and a reference number - to avoid any confusion if and when an order is being placed. I would recommend creating a separate price list so that if your prices change you don't have to ditch your existing catalogues and create a whole new one.

If you sell through craft fairs then the organisers will be doing plenty of advertising - after all they want their fair to be well attended so sellers will repeat their bookings next time. It may be that you feel this is sufficient advertising for your business at present - otherwise consider other low-cost advertising methods - local post office or newsagents' window displays, local press, village magazine etc. and concentrate on gaining exposure through other methods - PR

PR is a fantastic - and free! - way of gaining positive publicity for your business, but you'll need to do quite a bit of groundwork first to make sure you're targeting the right people at the right publications for your business. Consider approaching mainstream magazines and newspapers - being featured is free, and it's well-proven that editorial content has much more impact on sales than any paid advertising could ever hope to achieve for you.

It's hard not to feel intimidated by the thought of contacting national publications - after all why would they be interested in little old you, you ask yourself. But remember, journalists are always looking for interesting content to attract readers and make their publication a success - all you need to do is convince them that to

feature you is the best choice they could make out of all the other businesses clamouring for their attention!

Take a good look at the magazines available and purchase copies of those where you feel your business might be a good "fit." Then note down all the areas of these magazines that you realistically feel you could be featured in. Many magazines like to write about people who've actually taken the plunge to start their own business - the "We did it" kind of articles. Or perhaps you live in a beautiful home that they might like to photograph - with your products scattered around of course?! Then there are the "New this Month" or "What's Hot in the Marketplace" types of pages - you could aim to have an image and details of one of your products featured on this sort of page.

Remember that magazines will receive literally hundreds of emails or letters from hopefuls, so it's really important that you target the right person for your pitch. If you don't then your carefully worded email is likely simply to be deleted - and odds are you'll never know what went wrong. At the front of a magazine you'll see there's usually a list of staff and their job titles - see if you can identify who does what from the magazine pages or use your initiative - the Features Editor may well commission articles, though not write them him or herself.

It's also important to keep in mind that magazines have a lead-time - that is to say how far in advance of the date of publication they are putting the publication together. For monthly publications you'll need to get information to them roughly three months before the date of publication, so for a product to be included in the April issue, you'll need to approach them early January time!

After you've identified the member of staff you should contact - and decided when's the best time to do so,

you'll need to put an email together. Consider the following format as a starting point:

Title: Be brief, but try to grab their attention and stand out from the crowd

Salutation: Use their name - it shows you've done your research

Introductory sentence (possibly two sentences, but no more): Summarise the key points - your USP (unique selling point) to grab their attention - you don't want them to think "boring" and move on - you need them to want to read further.

Main body: Sell yourself and your story here - what's unique, interesting, new about your story. Writing in the present tense is good - it gives a sense of immediacy and that your story is current - journalists are not interested in stale, historical information. Include a quote if you can - maybe particularly nice customer feedback - this will help bring your story to life. Include one or two low-res (sized for email) photos in the body of the text to catch their eye.

Tell them why: Again in just a couple of sentences say why and where you feel your story would be a good fit with their magazine. This will act as a pointer to the journalist and again show you've done your research.

Finally: Tell them that you hope to hear from them soon. Sign off and include all your contact information. If you are featured, then be sure to contact the journalist after the feature appears - send a card or even a tiny gift saying something like "thank you so much for the wonderful article you wrote about me" is a lovely gesture and one that's sure to be remembered next time that person's looking for content!





Nicki Franklin was taught to embroider by her Great Grandma at the age of 6 and spent an idyllic childhood stitching and knitting. She turned to her sewing box again in her early thirties when life started to feel that it was moving too quickly and becoming stressful. Nicki found stillness and calmness through needlework and it has since become an important part of her mental healthcare.

What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started your business?

Be the sole decision maker in your business, if you can. I persuaded a friend to run The Stitchery with me when I first started out; I think I was afraid to go it alone and needed my hand holding. What actually happened, very quickly, was that we had a difference of opinion in the reporting and admin side of the business, split professionally and our friendship broke down as a result. I was forced to do things on my own.

In hindsight, it is for the best that I have full autonomy, but I miss my friend.

How has your business changed since you first started out?

I actually started my business as The Little Green Door selling homewares and just odd pieces of embroidery that I had stitched. People seemed to like them and would regularly comment that they wished they could do it too. I was already a solid ambassador on the mental health benefits of crafting and wanted to show other people that they could do it too.

I held a workshop in my home to stitch a very simple wreath, wrote instructions, made up a kit and off I went. I started off producing all of my kits in-house with a rickety old printer and lots of swearing but now have an amazing artist and graphic designer working with me who have taken my branding to another level.

What advice would you give anyone wanting to start their own business?

I don't feel as though I have the authority to give advice on starting a business because I didn't start out expecting to have a fully-fledged business with VAT number and all the hassle that comes with it.

I sell my kits and teach stitching because of a genuine desire to share what I love and help other people to find serenity and happiness from a craft that basically saved my life when I was suffering from debilitating depression. Perhaps my advice is that you just have to keep turning up, doing what you believe in, stick to what you stand for and ignore the voices in your head (and from your critics!) who tell you that you can't.

Find Nicki online at [The Stitchery](#)



[KnittyKnotts](#) is a hand crafted embroidery business run by Katie Knott, in Lincoln. She enjoys designing and creating embroidery keepsakes

What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started your business?

I wish I had known that you don't have to know everything. With running a small business it's all about learning as you go along. You don't have to have everything figured out straight away, something's work and something's don't and that's ok.

How has your business changed since you first started out?

When I first started KnittyKnotts it was predominantly all about bunting and cushions, but over time I concentrated more on hand embroidering. Embroidery became my passion and with it

becoming a key trend more and more people wanted to a little piece of embroidery for themselves. I very rarely sew bunting anymore.

What advice would you give anyone wanting to start their own business?

Don't be afraid of the what ifs, just go for it. Running your own business can be stressful and difficult to find a home work balance because you never fully turn off for the day, but it is so incredibly rewarding. When customers thank you for their orders and re order it's such an exciting feeling that never gets boring. If you want to start your own business just go for it.



Mrs Moog

What do you wish you'd known before you started your own business?

I wish I'd known how much I'd miss my regular salary and how hard it is to switch off when you run your own business. I'd advise anyone wanting to start out to do plenty of reading about running a craft and online business. Read up on the tax regulations and know exactly what records you'll need to keep. Try not to overburden yourself with using all the different social media outlets – find the one you feel happiest with, with the community you love the most and really focus on making interesting, fun and varied posts where people get to know not just your product but you as a person. If you love what you do it will show in your work so just go for it!

Find Lesley online at her Etsy shop [Mrs Moog](#)

Chapter Five: Going Online

In this chapter I was going to write about creating and running your own website - but then I had a bit of a rethink. Your own website requires a lot of work to set up and maintain, as well as mastering the principles of online marketing to encourage people to visit, known as generating traffic.

Somebody once said to me that setting up your own website wasn't at all like opening a shop on the High Street as there is NO passing trade. People don't just wander past, see something interesting and decide to pop in. You have to work really hard to generate traffic to your site, and it takes time, strong branding and excellent marketing and PR. So I thought that it might be helpful to look at one or two other ways to get online whilst your business is growing.

A great way to get your business online is to set up a Facebook (FB) page. This is completely separate to your own personal profile, should you have one, though the two are linked through your account. Your Facebook page is a place where you can publicise your business name, address and contact details, and briefly describe your products. You can also talk about any other aspect of your business that is likely to appeal to other Facebook users and create interest in what you do.

When you set up your FB business page, choose a name that works well for your business. Choose carefully though, once registered it's almost impossible to change your page name. Be sure you've spelt it correctly (mistakes do happen!) and check that there isn't another FB page out there with the same, or a very similar, title.


To maximise traffic to your page as you make the move online, include your FB address on your business card, flyers and other marketing materials. FB makes it easy for you to post regular updates on your business and interact with your customers through "likes" and posting to craft-related forums. But don't use Facebook to aggressively promote your products or services as you'll have much greater success if you

share information related to your business that is useful or interesting to others. This increases your credibility and promotes your business by building long-term relationships with others. Giveaways are also a good way to generate interest, as you can ask people to like and share the giveaway with their friends. This means that the news will quickly spread through FB, with new people discovering you and hopefully, in time, perhaps becoming your customers.

The value of a blog as a marketing and promotion tool for businesses is the speed and ease with which a new blog post can be created, and the ability to engage with readers or customers and start online conversations. But remember, like any business activity, managing a blog requires planning, resourcing and monitoring - you should aim to post at least twice a week and more frequently if possible so there's always something fresh for your readers to enjoy. Blogs have been around for a while now and aren't perhaps quite as popular as they were - but that doesn't mean they don't have value, especially if you're confident in front of the camera - making videos is a great way to get yourself out there.

At the beginning the idea of sharing your thoughts, ideas and lifestyle with others can be quite scary. What if nobody's interested? What if I'm not witty or funny enough? How can I think of things to write about? My advice would be to simply be yourself as if you're trying to be something, or somebody, you're not then people will be able to tell. It's like being at a social event in that you do need to make some sort of effort to be interesting and get to know people, but if you try too hard then you'll come across as a bit of a fraud. If you are honest and passionate about your subject then it's likely what you're saying will be interesting to at least some people.

What you decide to share online is entirely up to you - but remember once the information's out there you can't take it back again. I always use the rule of thumb that if I'd be happy to pin my blog post on my gate for passers-by to read, then it's fine to post it online.



Moving on from blogging, it's time to look at other social media

I personally don't use Twitter as I've never really mastered the art of the hashtag(!) but I know others have found it a really effective business tool. I'd encourage you to find out more, but I'm sorry I don't have any expertise to offer now - maybe one day!

Other ways to get online include Instagram and Pinterest - both involve posting images. Instagram is the Twitter of the visual world - aim to post 3 or 4 images daily if you can, whilst Pinterest revolves around boards and collecting images - again a great way to publicise your work, especially if you're working in visual creative media such as textiles and sewing.

My advice would be to choose one or two of these free ways of getting online, the ones that are the best fit for you and your business, and concentrate on these. It's only too easy to spread yourself too thinly and end up doing nothing well - far better to have a really good blog or Pinterest boards that people really enjoy and want to visit - excellence always attracts interest.

Once you have your social media set up then you can move on to setting up your shop - still without building your own website - by selling your work through an online craft site such as Etsy.

Etsy is the world's largest online handicraft market place. There are no upfront fees to open your store and you are only charged a 20c fee (around 10p) to list each product. When you register you need to provide your own personal details (which are never revealed to customers) as well as a card and/or PayPal account for payments. As an aside - I have used PayPal as a payment processor for years and have been very satisfied with their service. Again there are no upfront or monthly fees, simply a fee per transaction. PayPal is recognised across the globe and most customers are comfortable using this method of payment.

Another benefit of using Etsy to sell your products is that it's really easy to integrate an Etsy shop into your website (when you decide to take the plunge), blog or Facebook page, giving you a simple and easy way to

send visitors from directly to your shop. Although Etsy is a US site, it's becoming better known in the UK and Etsy are actively promoting their site here.

Etsy work hard at promoting their sellers, running their own newsletters and Pinterest accounts on your behalf. In the UK, Not on the High Street offers you the chance to promote and sell your product under their brand, though they are very selective about their sellers and reject over 90% of applicants.

There are a lot more online craft sites that you can sell your goods through - and the list is growing all the time. Etsy is still the market leader however, and having used them for many years, I wouldn't hesitate to suggest starting there.

But what about eBay? Again it's a method of selling items with no big up front costs. But Bustle & Sew doesn't have an eBay presence as as I don't feel it's a good "fit" with my brand. This is very much my own business choice though and no reflection on their service since, like many people, I've both bought and sold personally on eBay with no problems whatsoever.

We've already talked about using traditional marketing methods to promote your business - but now that you have an online presence it's important to consider how you'll attract visitors to your Facebook page, blog or Etsy/Folksy shop. It's well-known that word of mouth is one of the most effective sales tools for all businesses, large or small. We tend to trust our family and friends when they tell us something is good - after all we value their opinions!

Social media is simply a way of harnessing this word of mouth effect and expanding it to reach thousands of new potential customers. People using social media tend to share the same likes and interests as other members of their social networks and, in the same way as family and friends, are likely to value their opinions and advice.

Today it's important that any business, large or small, has a strong online presence and, with just a little time and effort, social media marketing can be the most cost-effective form of marketing you ever undertake.



Paraffle Embroidery

Do you have any advice for someone wanting to start their own business?

I would say just do it - go for it and set up that shop/Etsy site/whatever. If you wait until your products and branding are perfect, you'll never start - so just go for it, and things can develop as time goes on!

What do you wish you'd known before you started?

I'm not sure - I still feel like I'm making it all up as I go along! I think having a working knowledge of the boring business side of things would have saved me a lot of time and extra research, though.

Find Sammy online at [Paraffle Embroidery](#)



You first appeared in Bustle & Sew Magazine in November 2014, could you please tell us how your business has changed since then?

When I first appeared in Bustle & Sew I was just starting out with Peonie Cole 'full time'. Since then I have expanded my collection, created new designs and now offer a lot more personalised items. Much of the original ideas behind my business are the same, and I still make and design everything in the UK. It really has just grown over time and I'm enjoying trying new ideas and products.

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

Always remember 99% of businesses aren't overnight success stories. Never compare your-

self to how well other people appear to be doing. I would also say using social media is a must nowadays. It's helped me grow my business massively and means I can connect to my customers and show them the person behind the products.

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

Probably just to have more faith in myself. Also there's lots I have learnt along the way like what events / products work for me and my business. But you only learn these things through experience.

Find designer Catherine Cole online at [Peonie Cole Textiles](#)



Sarah Made That

What do you wish you'd known before you started?

This is a tricky question. You don't realise how many failures are involved in order to succeed in your own business. I wish I had been more prepared for how much work it would be to make a job out of doing what you love. It's very enjoyable, but it can become a chore. There are days when you don't love it, but they are outweighed by how rewarding it is to make money from something you have created with your own hands.

Do you have any advice for someone wanting to start their own business?

It doesn't happen overnight. It takes time to build up a customer base and a lot of motivation to keep people interested. Be prepared to dedicate your whole self to it.

Find Sarah Made That on [FaceBook](#)



What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started your business?

Knowing how to properly work out prices for handmade items would have been really helpful.

How has your business changed since you first started out?

I began only selling finished items but I now sell a mixture of 'made to order' clothing, PDF patterns and craft kits. I have also diversified my business to include running workshops and selling my kits wholesale.

What advice would you give anyone wanting to start their own business?

Do it, start where you are and work from there. I am very lucky that there is a great creative and small business community in Bristol ready to support anyone that needs help. If you don't have this where you live then look online, Facebook has some wonderful groups that are designed to bring people together to offer peer support.

Emma lives in Bristol with her family, where she runs her business and teaches crochet workshops. She fell in love with crochet 8 years ago and now designs her own patterns and kits in order to share her love of making to other people.

Find Emma online at [Stitching Me Softly](#)

Chapter Five: Your Own Website

Once you've started making sales through other platforms, such as Etsy, Folksy and Not on the High Street and have established your online presence through Facebook and other social media then it's time to start thinking about your own website. You can do this by having a custom-built website built to your own specific requirements (or building it yourself of course) or by using an off the peg template. Let's consider both these options

If you decide to have a custom-built site you'll need to purchase your domain name if you haven't already. This doesn't give you a website, but just an address or url - a "space" on the internet where your site will be.

If you're hiring a designer, then you need to think about how your website will integrate with the rest of your business - what do you want it to do for you? It's a good idea to draw a plan setting out the structure - your home page - what the other pages will be, what categories you'd like in your store, do you want to include your blog, how will people navigate around your site? This is absolutely crucial stuff - if your website isn't well thought out and properly put together then your visitors just won't stay around long enough to make a purchase. Today WordPress and Shopify (among others) do make this whole process a lot simpler, but if you're in any doubt or at all unsure about what you're doing, then I'd recommend looking at designers - starting with a well constructed site will pay dividends later on.

When you're looking for a designer choose someone who's style you like and who has worked in a similar area to your own. This means they should understand your requirements, and have an awareness of your visitors' expectations too.

Your designer will want to know all about your business - however good he or she may be, they won't be a mind-reader! They may ask for a brief, or perhaps will send you a questionnaire to complete. At the least they will need:

- Business summary

- Objectives
- Your likes and dislikes (colours, fonts, formats, illustrations etc)
- Any must-haves? (logo, branding elements etc)
- Your budget
- Time scale

It's worth running through your brief with a friend to see if they think it makes sense and if there's anything you've left out. As well as helping your designer, creating this brief will also help you clarify in your own mind exactly what you're looking for in your new website.

If all of this seems a lot of hard work, and perhaps even a little scary - then you might like to opt for a template website. These are offered by a number of companies who also offer domain registration, hosting, e-commerce and customisable design elements as part of the package. This has the advantage of being a much quicker and easier way to get started, but you may find that you're limited regarding future changes and your site may have a more generic look.

Whichever way you choose, be sure that you have the ability to update your site yourself, particularly if you'll need to add new products on a regular basis. It is very frustrating having to wait for someone to do this for you - and remember your priorities may not necessarily be theirs!

Wherever you are based in the world your website will need to be legally compliant.

You will need to:

- Clearly state your terms and conditions of trading
- Display your privacy policy - eg ask customers about accepting cookies and tell them what data collected is used for
- Protect your copyright and trademark if you have one
- Provide full contact details, including a full postal name, address and contact number. If you're a limited company then you're also required to

provide the company's registered address, number and country of registration.

You'll also need to add a shopping cart to your website - or you won't be able to sell anything! Research the product that suits your business - though it's fair to say that PayPal is the market leader for small and medium sized businesses. I use PayPal here at Bustle & Sew and have found it easy to use and that it offers my customers peace of mind that their transactions will be secure.

Another advantage of PayPal is that there are no set-up charges, monthly fees or cancellation charges - you pay as you go - and fee levels are determined upon the value of your sales.

Adding a PayPal button to your site enables you to accept payment from all major credit and debit cards as well as bank accounts across the globe. You can set it up yourself in under 20 minutes.

Remember to comply with distance selling regulations. Again these will vary according to your country, but mostly they're good practice and customer service anyway.

- Offer your customers clear, concise information including details of the goods offered, delivery arrangements, cancellation rights
- Tell them about your returns and refunds policy.

And finally ...

.
When you're running your own business it's so easy to get wrapped up in the day to day issues, that it's easy to lose sight of your original goals. It's really important to make time to stand back and take a good look at things every so often and consider what you've achieved so far, and where you're hoping to take your business next.

Whatever challenges you're facing in your business, be confident that (almost) always there's a solution and what you're currently experiencing will have been experienced by many others before you.

But, perhaps even more importantly than how the business is doing is, how are you feeling? Are you happy? Enjoying running your own business? Or do you feel stressed and miserable, dreading the day ahead? Turning your hobby into a business can be very challenging and you shouldn't be ashamed to admit when you're feeling down about things - or even if you decide that perhaps it isn't for you after all.



Whole Punching

What do you wish you'd known before you started?

I wish I'd known that there were lots of different punch needles available, not just the Amy Oxford punch needles. I was so disheartened for a while as the Oxfords are difficult to attain in the UK, Amy is a small business and as these beautiful needles are handmade they are available in limited quantities.

Do you have any advice for someone wanting to start their own business?

Just try it! Start small and have a go. Take advice from friends and family, it's always useful to have another opinion as you may be so engrossed with your ideas that you neglect other options.

Find Sara online at her [Etsy Shop](#)

I'm Louise, self confessed crazy dog lady in my twenties. I have lived my whole life in a small Devon town and spend my days here working with my furry sidekick and best friend, Rosie the Jack Russell x Chihuahua.

I own The January Rose, selling bespoke pet accessories including hand stamped ID tags, collars and bow ties. I also have a large choice of hand stamped key rings, with various sayings. Everything is hand made by myself, making each item completely unique and personal.

What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started your business?

Everything is achievable given time, don't get despondent - nothing happens overnight.

How has your business changed since you first started out?

It has evolved and grown a lot but I have continued to stick with my core products since the beginning. I have realised what aspects I enjoy the most and try to focus on them as the business progresses.

What advice would you give anyone wanting to start their own business?

Just go for it! Don't be put off with a slow start, and have an open mind along the way. I started very small with the bare minimum and didn't have any plans to do what I am doing now. See where it takes you.

Find Louise online at [The January Rose](#)



The January Rose



Wild Earth



You first appeared in *Bustle & Sew Magazine* in April 2018, could you please tell us how your business has changed since then?

Since appearing in the magazine I feel that Wild Earth Embroidery has come into its own in terms of branding and design - I feel as though I have realised what works and what doesn't with my audience and customers as well as discovering where I want the business to go in the future! The range of products available on my Etsy has been extended to include PDF patterns and embroidery kits, which was a huge business goal of mine last time we spoke!

What advice do you have for anyone starting their own business?

For those wanting to start their own business I would say go for it! Start by drafting up a few product ideas and have a go at creating them. Craft supplies like thread, pens and fabric are usually purse-friendly these days and remember you don't always need the most expensive materials to create good quality products. Taking good pictures is just as important as the product - use as much natural light as possible and try to keep a theme when using social media. I tend to lean towards flatlay styles of photography as they favour embroidery hoops but don't be afraid to mix it up!

A social media presence is also vital to a small business as they generate interest and engagement with your target audience - and it's free! A big MUST is to use those hashtags! For instance I make sure I use all 30 hashtags available on each Instagram post as this increases the number of people who will see your post and also allow other people to find your work! I really encourage those considering starting a small business to take the plunge - if it's doing something that you love then what's the worst that could happen!

What do you wish you'd known when you first started out that you know now?

Wow there's so much I wish I had known two years ago when I first picked up a needle. One of my main regrets was putting unrealistic time pressures on myself to complete orders just to ensure a customer was happy. Now I give myself more time to complete orders and let the customer know how long their piece will take - this way we are both at ease and I can take my time on their order. Fast forward two years, I'm still fairly slow at finishing and packing my hoops and am currently looking for ways to make the process more time efficient. But everything takes time and there are no mistakes - only lessons!

Find Harriet online at [Wild Earth Embroidery](#)

Why do we love to stitch? After all you can purchase mass-produced textile items at many high streets stores for very little cost. These days handmade means something special - a unique item created with love, a gift from the heart, not one that can be bought. Hand stitching is also a great way to personalise an item, or perhaps to breathe new life into an old favourite that has seen better days.

Bustle & Sew offers my own unique patterns, designed to appeal to all skill levels and bring out all your natural creativity. And you can keep up to date with all the latest news from Somerset where I live as well as the newest patterns and much more over on the [Bustle & Sew Blog](#).



Find out more about our magazine..;

www.bustleandsew.com/magazine

PS If you love stitching, then you're sure to enjoy my Bustle & Sew Magazine. It's delivered by email to your in-box each month and is crammed full of ideas, projects, features, articles, patterns and more to inspire you. To learn more please visit the [Bustle & Sew website](#).

Helen xx



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