

It's the Business: creativity in action

By [Ellie Stevenson](#) Arts Hub | Friday, February 13, 2009

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Thinking of running a creative business? Need some advice? We talk to two experts in the field.

David Parrish is a business adviser for creative people and author of the acclaimed book, *T-Shirts and Suits: A guide to the business of creativity*.* He assists creative businesses in becoming more successful 'by bringing together creative people (the T-Shirts) with smart business thinking (the Suits).'

Nick Williams is an expert on inspiration at work. He is an international speaker, coach and the author of five books. He has inspired thousands of people to transform their limiting beliefs, discover the work they were born to do and turn self-sabotaging behaviour into business and personal success.

Nick, explain your philosophy about being an inspired entrepreneur

The key difference to being an ordinary entrepreneur is that I talk about doing what you love, and then being paid for doing what you love, rather than working for money in the first place. This is crucial; it's the heart of what I'm about.

How can people tap into that?

The first thing is to discover what it is that you would love to be doing. A lot of my work is about helping people discover what I call 'the work they were born to do'. I have a number of signposts that I teach people – about how to discover what they love.

Some of the challenges creative people face are about how to do what you love and make money at the same time. Is that an issue for your clients?

Oh yes, hugely. Most of us feel there's a conflict between doing what we love and being paid. I talk about the two beliefs that most have us have grown up with, 1: to earn money you have to sell your soul to some extent and do something you don't particularly enjoy, or 2: you can do something you love, something meaningful to you, but you shouldn't expect to get paid very well for doing that, if at all. That's the conflict many people face: do I work for love, or do I work for money? And my work is very much about a third way, which is about how to work for love *and* money.

What are some of the principles of that third way?

For many people it's about simply having that belief system to start with, because so many people haven't

grown up believing that's possible. So number 1 is to believe that you can make money doing what you love. Number 2 is to find out what it is that you love. Number 3 is to figure out how to get paid for it, how do you turn that into income? That's what I call becoming more entrepreneurial.**

The conflict for many people can be that they feel that they're artists rather than entrepreneurs, and I think you can have both identities – I see myself very much as an artist, a creative person, but I'm also an entrepreneur and my business is a vehicle for my creativity. I don't see that there needs to be a conflict between being entrepreneurial and being artistic – they often go hand in hand. The business is the vehicle for the creativity. It's about having different aspects of ourselves, having the artist within us but also having the entrepreneur and the businessperson within us as well. And when we can bring all those parts together we can find the people that want what we do.

If you can serve people with your art, if there are people out there who would love your art and they're not finding you, or you're not finding them and you're not making money, then everybody loses.

David, tell us a bit about what you do?

My mission is to help to empower creative people to use business ideas and techniques to do whatever they want to do. By engaging with business ideas or reading a business book, it doesn't mean you're selling out and becoming some kind of hard capitalist or pin-striped business person. My advice is: be clear what you want to do, be true to your creativity and whatever values you might have, but also engage with business ideas so you can pick and choose the things that fit best - that help you achieve what you want to achieve. Adapt business ideas appropriately to your own situation.

What if a person doesn't really have that much interest in the business side?

Well, the first question is to decide whether you want to be in business at all. It's possible to be creative outside the business arena, as a leisure interest, for example. But once you decide that you do want to be in business, then inevitably you will have to deal with issues such as marketing, finance, etc. Initially you won't have enough money to outsource those things, but I think it's quite good training to do these things yourself for a while anyway, because it forces you to understand how the business works economically. Even when the business gets big enough to outsource that side of things, you should still keep an overview on it – it's dangerous to abdicate all of that to someone outside the business.

Can you give us three top tips for running your own successful creative business, David?

- Firstly, define what you mean by success – it could be a mixture of financial success, creative challenges, recognition, job satisfaction, quality of life, etc, and that formula will be different for everyone. Define what *you* mean by success, don't let others define it for you, and know where you want to go
- Be clear about your market and don't try to sell to everyone. Choose your customers. Choose customers that fit your objectives and your ethos and that deliver the financial results you want. Don't have a scattergun approach, looking for any old customer. Choose the customers that work best for your business strategy
- Understand intellectual property (IP), because IP is at the core of the creative industries. It's important to make sure you don't get ripped off by other people, so it's about defending and protecting intellectual property; but just as importantly, it's also about how to commercialise that IP so you can make money from it, through sales and licensing, for example. Given that IP is so central, I think most creative businesses could do with knowing a bit more, and learning how to use it

And Nick, your top tips?

- Never lose your creative soul, never do it just for the money. Do what you love; it's the passion and the love that's going to make you successful
- Be willing to become entrepreneurial, to look at the world and look for the opportunities. Find people who love what you do, value it yourself and charge people

- I talk a lot about resistance, such as all the ways we can sabotage and undermine ourselves, and I think so many creative people do that. So learn to overcome your resistance in order to really value yourself and what you do. And get yourself out into the world, show up in the world

Any final comments Nick?

I always recommend starting your business small. Don't leap out of a secure job into a business that hasn't even formed yet. Also, figure out where's the best place to meet the people who like your work, so you can learn a lot as you go along. Become skilful – do what you do well so that people are likely to buy from you. Remember that the world needs your talent and creativity and gifts – ask yourself, are you showing up and sharing what you've got? If you do, you'll find people who will love it.

And David?

Read my book! The purpose of my book is to empower creative people to read about this stuff, not to go to business school. And don't just read books, but ask, learn from other people, learn about these things and be open to speaking to people from outside the creative sector. Read about business, learn about marketing – from my book, from websites, from wherever. And speak to IP lawyers from time to time - they can be quite useful...

Resources

* *T-Shirts and Suits* is available in paperback and as a free downloadable eBook. You can find the eBook at: www.tss-ebook.com

** If you're not yet clear about the work you were born to do, or want to know how to become an inspired entrepreneur, you can download a free copy of a nine-part programme at www.inspired-entrepreneur.com

