

**Starting from the Bottom Up**  
by Melissa Doussey

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*It's okay to start small...*

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## Starting From the Bottom Up

As I write this book, I have a relatively small, but successful and thriving business. Without a bank loan, funding or the financial help or investment of any friends or family members, I managed to take an idea and turn it into a profit-making business, with scope for much more!

My business has now become my livelihood and the very thing that has changed my lifestyle for the better, in many ways! It was not easy building something from absolutely nothing, but the journey has been insightful, demanding and looking back, even a little humorous! I have many experiences to share and decided to write this book for two main reasons:

1.) I'm an "average Jo" who has managed to achieve what many are still struggling to achieve. I was not born sucking on a silver spoon, nor did I have the backing, inheritance or investments of parents, friends or loved ones. In fact, I really didn't have the best start in life, which I will go into shortly. I also lacked the emotional support and belief of those who meant the most to me when I first started out. Still, against many odds, I have managed to realise my dreams. The fact that I have been able to do this is proof that **anyone can do it.**

2.) Although I have much more that I want to achieve (and always will) I am currently enjoying the lifestyle I dreamt of when I first set out on this rather difficult journey of independence and entrepreneurialism. I know firsthand of the many barriers and obstacles people face (and even put up) when trying to break out of the secure 9-5 routine and to do their "own thing" I have had the pleasure of advising and even mentoring others and on my own journey I have learnt a great deal, that is definitely worth sharing.

If like me, you have a dream of doing something other than your day job but don't know where to start or feel you may not have enough to get your personal project off the ground, then **believe me when I tell you that you can! I know that because I did.** I am a firm believer that we can make of our lives whatever we want. You are probably reading this book because there is a desire inside of you to make some sort of lifestyle change. A desire for the liberty that comes as a result of realising your dreams. Don't ignore that desire. Feed it, because it is most definitely there for a reason...

Throughout this book I will share with you my personal and very frank journey - the discouraging lows, the exciting highs, the "faux pas" and the attitudes, skills and qualities that I have learnt are necessary for "going it alone". I will

be providing tips and guidelines from lessons learnt along the way, but first, here is a little background info about my upbringing, what inspired the title of this book and what led me onto the path of independence...

## Introduction

Like many children, I have very fond memories of my childhood. Trips to the seaside, bath time with my sisters, visits to London Zoo, Disney on ice...

I also have a few not-so-usual memories, like my dad walking into my nursery with a butcher's knife and threatening to kill my mum, at which point the nursery nurses scooped up my little sister and I and rushed us away from the scene. That is a long story within itself, but I will cut it very short by saying that it ended with my father committing suicide a few days later. He ended his life by filling up a petrol tank at a local gas station, emptying that tank around the rooms of our Hackney home and lighting the match while he sat on the couch in the living room. Exactly why he did this, we will never truly know. At the time that this happened, my mother, sisters and I were staying at a shelter. My mum had been forced to go to a shelter after my father's behaviour became completely erratic and unexplainable. He was then given a court order to leave the property so that we could return to our home. It was shortly after this court order that he set everything alight. Days later, when my mum went to the bank to withdraw her joint savings, she discovered the worst...my dad withdrew it all before committing suicide, leaving only £1 in their account...

So, not the most privileged start in life...and yes, difficulties and struggles I would face later on would most certainly lead me back to this point.

One thing we were blessed with though, was a mother with some serious willpower. She was determined not to let the circumstances define her and more importantly to her, she wouldn't let them define us, her kids! She worked hard to provide for us, securing a good full time job and later studying law whilst working. It wasn't easy bringing up 3 kids practically on her own. She was not perfect, nor was she made of iron, but with help from her mother and the drive to succeed, she fulfilled her role as mother and father very well. It's for this reason that most of our childhood memories are very positive ones. I, for one didn't miss the absence of a father - not until I hit those terrible teen years. I went through a phase of feeling sorry for myself and even being slightly jealous of the (few) people around me who did have good relationships with their fathers. I had no man in my life to defend me - no older brother, no dad. Why couldn't things have been different? Why did our dad not love us enough to stick around? Why didn't he love us enough to stay alive? This led to all sorts of erratic behaviour. I began to miss my father desperately. The feeling of lack or absence now became anxiety. I was

desperate to get in touch with him. I wanted him to appear to me from the dead. Alone in my room, in the dark I would call out to him. Then I would get extremely angry when I got no response... This continued for a few years, until the prayers and care of close family and the positive thinking of those around me helped me to change my way of thinking.

Having found a more positive path I was happy with the changes occurring and as the years passed by I was going from teen to woman. I left college in my second year because, after years of proclaiming that "I want to be a doctor when I grow up" I actually had no idea what I wanted to do! I then concluded that while trying to figure this out, I may as well be working and making some money. I managed to get a full time reception/admin job at a popular Asian magazine company, earning a pittance..but it was better than nothing and at least I would build up some admin experience, to be able to secure the many, many admin and support jobs that I would go on to doing as a temp.

While temping, I hadn't forgotten that I actually wanted to do something more than just a regular "9-6" with my life. I wanted to use my talents - but, what were my talents? What did I enjoy? I had to figure that out first...

I got a diploma as a nail technician after travelling to Manchester for a 2-day course. I also did a luxury manicure course. I then went on to trying to make a career out of that while I worked. It was very short lived. To say that I was "pants" at "doing nails" may very well be an understatement! I tried to tap into my now very hidden creative side and did an evening bag making course - and then another, but no, I didn't want to pursue bag making as a career path either. Whilst exploring and experimenting I was going from job to job to support myself and gradually, as I gained more experience in PA/Admin support, my hourly pay increased. By this time I was in a relationship with someone who I thought I would marry. We were together a few years when I found out that he was cheating on me...Devastated is not the word...I found out on a weekend and when I went to work on the following Monday I could not concentrate. I was sobbing at my desk, hiding behind my double PC screen, in hope that the boss would not see me (although he could not help making comforting and motivating comments to me - which made it evident that he had access to my emails and had seen all of the "HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME??" messages I'd sent to my ex...)

Anyway, to take my mind off things I decided to do something fun. I received an email about a jewellery making course taking place that weekend. I went along to the course and loved every minute of it! So much so that I went online as soon as I arrived home that day and purchased all of the necessary

tools and materials to take up jewellery making as a hobby. I started making pieces for friends and close family members as gifts and eventually a work colleague of my mum saw a piece she was wearing and made an order for a bespoke set. This was the moment that I thought, this is my career path! This is my business idea! This is my road to independence! I had finally found what I truly wanted to do, but the journey was only just beginning...

Today I am where I longed to be few years ago - financially free with no debts and no limits - knowing that I can earn what I want, depending on my initiative and my actions. Free from the chain that is a 9-5 routine and able to enjoy a better quality of life.

Stepping out on your own isn't easy - that's why few people do it! It is however, very doable and worth the sacrifices and difficulties you will face. I hope you will find my story and the lessons learnt with it helpful and handy and I hope it gives you the motivational boost you may need to get out there and start making those dreams of yours a reality!

## **1.) Vision, Hatred and a Thirst for Life**

You will notice that from the intro, I decided to make a change because I realised that the path I was on was not for me. That was an understatement. I got to the point where I'd had enough of what I was doing with my life and how I spent the majority of my time! I started to think about the things I enjoyed most in life and whether my current situation enabled me to nurture those things. For me those things were:

- Quality time with family and friends
- Being creative
- Being in control of my own time
- Buying good quality unique things (clothes, accessories and homeware)
- Being adventurous and not living in a routine

My job at the time was well paid but demanding, only allowing me to do one of the things on the list very well - buy nice stuff! Whilst I did enjoy taking shopping trips to nearby Bond Street and Piccadilly on my lunch breaks, after a while the novelty of being a young lady with a good bit of disposable income wore off and I realised I wanted more out of life than being able to pay for pretty things. I was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the fact that I didn't have the type of lifestyle that enabled me to focus on and enjoy the things that meant the most to me in life. Okay, most people were in 9-5s and yes, many of them were doing those jobs to pay for their existence, but why did it have to be that way for me? Why was that the norm? Why couldn't I do what I loved and still afford to live? A 9-5 was no longer good enough for me. I wanted to call the shots, to build something of my own, to be passionate about the very thing that would also make me a living. This realisation led me to set out to finding out what I did enjoy and what I did have a true passion for.

Although tempted, I didn't pack it all in to go and live my dreams! Firstly, I needed to know what my dreams were! I set out on that mission on weekends and weekday evenings - at the short courses and the like, as previously mentioned.

After a relatively short search I had finally rekindled my passion for creativity and I loved it. The more I used it, the more I wanted to. The more I used it, the less I wanted to be at my 9-5. I got to the point where I started to despise my 9-5, but my common sense knew that I needed it - it was my bread and butter. When it came down to it, I realised that what I hated was the fact that it

didn't allow me the necessary time to work on and feed my newly rekindled passion - my creativity!

I plucked up the courage to speak to my boss about working less hours, to allow me to work on personal projects. The best he could offer me was a 10am start and a later finishing time to reflect (or make up for) the late start... so, in short, I would still be working the same amount of hours...it wasn't his fault though. The truth was, my job was indeed a full time job. So, I decided it was time to move on...I found a part time job, working close to home for 3 days a week - allowing me two days to work on my new venture. After 8 months of doing that I resigned to work on my business full time. This was an extremely brave step, that took lots of consideration and planning, but what gave me the courage to take the leap from a secure income to riding the self-employed wave was the hatred of what I was doing with my life!

I didn't hate my life, I hated not being content! I didn't wake up every day and love what I was doing. I didn't have a clear vision of where I wanted to be and what I was working towards. I was simply working. Working and making little lists of things I'd like to buy once I'd paid all of my bills. As I searched for my passion, my vision became clearer - I wanted to be creative and to make a living doing so. That was my personal vision. I wanted to create a business, a brand, something that meant something to me and reflected what I wanted it to reflect. Something that could grow - something without limits. My vision and my belief in making that vision a reality, coupled with my discontentment - my lack of satisfaction, was what built up in me the courage to make that move. I wasn't suffering but, at the risk of sounding corny, I knew there had to be much more to this gift called life than slugging monotonously at a job for 5 out of 7 days of the week. There had to be more to my mornings than rolling up my proverbial sleeves to battle my way through the rush hour. More than enduring twice daily "peak time" tube journeys as a sardine, getting more up close and personal with strangers than I would ever choose to!

Looking back, I had the desire to "do something different with my life" for a long while before I actually took my leap of faith. What I didn't have was a hatred for my current lifestyle, or a vision. Those things were what delayed my decision.

When I set out on that journey I knew my vision would be what would drive and keep me. I also knew that when difficulties would come (and there were many to come!) I would never abandon my dream and return to a full time job. I knew that because I hated that life. I HAD to make this work. No matter what. My vision and my dream was so real I could almost touch it. That was

enough for me to know that I needed to work until I COULD touch it. Until I could start to live it!

I was now without a secure income - no safety net. No more little luxuries or treats for a while. This was a small fraction of the price I would have to pay and I mentally prepared myself for that, but I would face many other things that I could not have been prepared for and I would rely heavily on my vision in order to keep going.

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### Write the Vision

Perhaps this is you. Perhaps you are doing something you don't truly love or enjoy and have dreams of much more. You envision yourself as very successful in your own right - using a skill or talent or a passion to make your living and enjoying the flexibility that eventually comes with that. Then bills come through the door and reality kicks you right out of that daydream. You shrug it off and keep going. This is the opening scene to a life story full of regrets and what ifs...

Think about and write down the things that mean most to you in life. What is your definition of a good quality of life? What makes you content? What brings you a true sense of achievement? Be honest and write these things down, preferably in order of priority. If your current situation doesn't help or allow you to achieve or nurture the majority of the things of this list, then maybe it's time to start working towards a change. Write down your dreams - write them down unashamedly. What do you really want out of life? Write down everything with the knowledge that we don't have dreams for dreams sake - we have them so that we can go out and make them a reality.

If you want a different lifestyle, there must be a realisation that what you are currently doing isn't working for you. There must be a strong distaste for what you are doing and a strong and clear vision of where you want to be! Without these two things, you will most definitely be in the same position 5 years from now. Writing things down will serve you well on your journey to change. You will need all of the reinforcement you can get and having recorded your deepest and truest desires will serve as a source of strength and motivation for you later on. On that note, I would suggest getting a notebook dedicated to this journey alone - as your vision and dreams are one of many things you will need to write down

## 2.) What I Have is Good Enough

Now that I had taken the first brave steps to actually getting started, I found myself on unknown territory. All of the research, mental and physical preparation could only get me so far. I was in a situation that I had never experienced and it was scary, but there was no turning back. I had courage, but courage is what it is because of the presence of fear. One fear that would creep up on me every now and then was the feeling of not being “good enough”

I had set myself up as best I could. I had a nice website - nothing flashy, but good. I even had a studio space (which I will go into more detail about later) I did a launch and setup a mini catwalk show, featuring some of the statement jewellery pieces I had made. I still love looking back at pictures of my launch to this day. I worked extremely hard on it and even invited a popular online magazine editor to attend. She featured my launch the following week. I was off to a good start, but when I was alone in my studio, staring at my laptop, I couldn't help but focus on the things I didn't have...I needed a PR expert to help me to get more press. I needed to know more jewellery making techniques, I needed a better website. Then my past would return to me...I didn't have an inheritance - my dad made sure of that. I didn't have a family member willing or able to invest in me like so many of the stories I had read, of other young people who had help from family members...I didn't have loved ones pushing me and motivating me. Out came the violins, softly stringing away as I sat there and listed pitifully the number of things I didn't have going for me and all of the reasons why it would be so much harder for me to actually make it. Those thoughts almost took me into a trance - they almost hypnotised me. Thankfully I had heard a bible story a while ago that would always come to mind...

*A prophet was passing through a town and came across a woman who had lots of debts. Her husband had died and he was the main breadwinner. The lady didn't know what to do. The prophet asked her “what do you have?” she told him that all she had was a small portion of oil in a jar. He told her to go around to everyone she could and ask to borrow empty vessels. She borrowed as many as she could and when she got back the man told her to start pouring the oil into the vessels. As long as she had vessels, by way of a miracle, the oil multiplied and was enough to fill them all. It only finished when the vessels finished!*

Whenever I felt inadequate I would remember this story and find courage to dust off the doubts and get on with it! The lady in the story didn't have much,

but because she took action, all that she needed was gradually being provided. I had to realise that there was nothing I could do about the fact that I didn't already have the things I mentioned. However, if I didn't take action I was certainly not going to gain anything! I stopped focussing on what I didn't have and starting paying attention to what I DID have. I had:

- Great ideas
- The tools and materials I needed
- Internet access - which is a massive resource in itself
- A phone
- Initiative
- A desire to succeed

These were the main things I needed in order to truly get my business off the ground. I wasn't a PR expert, but tips on writing press releases could be found online. Contacts for various publications were also found online! I wrote press releases for various pieces of my jewellery and enlisted the help of photography students to take some professional looking photos for me, in exchange for references and photos for their portfolios.

Below are some other things I did over time, which you may find helpful for your own projects:

### **Making use of free or low-cost online services**

I wanted to be able to sell some things online, but didn't have the funds for a fully fledged online shop at the time, so I found a free one that would allow me to sell a few pieces and would take a small percentage of each sale. That was fine by me as it was a no-sale, no-fee arrangement. I linked this free shop to my basic website so people could see what I had on offer and buy some pieces online.

**Making use of social media** - I setup business pages and showcased my work for free on social media and many of my sales came from people who messaged me after seeing photos.

**Making use of free "labour"** - without exploiting anyone, you can find plenty of students, new graduates or more experienced individuals looking to do a little free work in order to expand their portfolio and/or obtain professional references. I certainly made use of this. I put ads out for people to help me with PR and marketing and I found two young ladies who were unemployed, passionate and hungry to get stuck into a project that related to what they had studied. These ladies set up an entire campaign for me around a jewellery

collection I created. They sourced photography students, models and even a free photography studio space. I covered their expenses, provided lunch and gave them great references. The photos from the campaign were used to create my product line sheets and the collection was my most successful - it was stocked in small boutiques in the UK and was also stocked by a major online retailer. We all gained from this experience - I had some great work done on my behalf and the young ladies gained a wealth of experience. If that isn't multiplication then I don't know what is!

**Making use of local opportunities** - Because I relied heavily on the internet and digital media as a means of exposure, I needed plenty of photos. The bigger the range of photos I had, the better. So I contacted my local college and spoke to the teacher heading up the photography department. I told him about my business and asked whether he might have students who would be looking for experience in photographing jewellery etc. He decided to create an assignment that would involve an entire class. I had to go into the college and speak to the students about my business and what I wanted to achieve with the photos. I brought in a selection of pieces and gave some to each student. They photographed the pieces and sent me photos at a later date. As a gesture of thanks I donated some jewellery busts that I was no longer using to the college's photography department for future use.

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## You Are Enough

Not feeling "ready enough" is such a common thing when venturing into the unknown. We look around at the businesses that inspire us and wish that we had the glitzy office, the perfect PR, the on-point branding and the full staffing that they have. The truth is, everyone started somewhere - most started small! If you want to get started and to keep going, focus on what you DO have and not what you don't. Flip the page in your notebook and write down all of the things you do have - the physical resources as well as your skills and qualities. When you read what you have written you will realise that you are pretty well equipped to make a start. Growth will come as you take action - opportunities will arise because you are seeking them. More and better ideas will come about because you are actively seeking them. In short, as you use the seemingly small portion of "oil" you have, you will be adding to yourself, to your experience, to your personal growth and to your project.

I am putting emphasis on writing things down because, no matter how motivated and passionate we are, we all have "down" days. We are all subject to doubts and often, when those doubts come it can be hard to think.

When we look back at what we have written, it serves as a reminder to us that, yes, we ARE good enough and yes, we CAN make it! That is why the bible story was so helpful to me. I had heard it and I had also read it more than once. The spoken word and the written word are very powerful things.

### **3.) Beautiful Mistakes**

In the previous chapter I mentioned that I had a studio. I rented a studio space in North London, which costed around £500 a month. It was located on a street with good amenities and nice restaurants and cafes. The studio was approximately 10-15 minutes walking distance from home. When the weather was good, I'd cycle. It was at this same studio that my official business launch took place and it was great. My mum catered the event and I had lots of pieces on show. I invited work colleagues, friends and family members who invited their colleagues and so on. I received lots of orders that day and made enough to more than cover a month's rent at my studio, which, to me, was a good sign of things to come.

Life was good. I was finally starting to live life the way I wanted - controlling my own time, coming into my own workspace, taking charge of my life, of my creativity, of my brand. I wanted my studio to have a very unique and elegant feel to it. I had a phone line so I made use of it by ordering a crystal, vintage style telephone from eBay (it costed me over £100). I also paid a very artistic friend of mine to do some wall art for me, which included Swarovski crystal embellishments. I had a vintage style mirror and mannequin, candle sticks, cabinets and other pretty things that I had sourced online and from unique homeware shops in nearby Crouch End. If I did say so myself, my studio was quite a lovely sight. Every time someone came in to see me, they would comment on how beautiful it was. Indeed it was.

It was a beautiful mistake.

Living in rented accommodation meant that I had two rents to pay, my studio and my home. Whenever either one was due I dreaded it! I often only had enough for one or the other, so at the time, one of them was often late to be paid, sometimes very late, which meant making someone very annoyed and upset! It was an awful feeling and probably one of the worst things I went through. I hated not being able to pay my way and although this pushed me to work hard on my business, looking back I believe I put undue pressure on myself. I will detail some of that pressure in the next chapter.

After a few months, the businesses in the neighbouring studios left and the premises was pretty much vacant, save my business. The landlord contacted me and asked if I wanted to rent out the entire premises, because if not, he would have to return it to the owners, as they were thinking of using it for something else. I wasn't able to afford the entire premises, so I had to move

out. I remember having to take apart my studio and bring home all of my lovely furnishings. I was gutted. Although it was costly, I really loved the space and felt I couldn't function properly without it. Within a few weeks I discovered that wasn't true.

My business didn't depend heavily on people coming to my studio space. Most of the time I was the only one in there! All I really needed was a desk space to work on and my laptop. I had both of those at home! I had given myself unnecessary overheads and also unnecessary stress! I decided to sell most of the nice items I had bought for my studio and kept some of the items for myself. After that it was business as usual! Moving out of the studio didn't stop me functioning. I could still take orders, I could still update my website and social media, send emails, make jewellery and so on.

At the time I remember regretting it and saying to myself - if I ever get the opportunity to mentor or advise people on starting up, I will tell them to keep their initial overheads as low as possible! So, here I am! Starting up can be so stressful as there is so much to learn and so many adaptations to make, that whatever you can do to avoid additional stress, do it. The main pressure we face when starting up is figuring out how we will make money - and how we will continue to make money. Even if we love what we do, we need to be able to make a living to truly enjoy it and to keep enjoying it! There is pressure to get to the point of breaking even and then making an actual profit. I can compare it to being underwater, seeing the the surface and actually breaking through that surface and being able to swim to shore. What helps us to break-even quicker is keeping startup costs as low as possible and avoiding unnecessary expense!

I thought I needed the studio but in hindsight I certainly didn't. I don't regret my launch - I absolutely loved it - it was the first thing that I took charge of from beginning to end. It was my very own personal project and it was a success - but looking back I could have simply hired a space for the day to launch my business. The studio was one of the biggest mistakes I made in starting up, but I learnt great lessons from it and also eventually gained something great from it! Because of the need to pay my expenses, I thought about ways to make more money and started advertising small, fun costume jewellery making classes at my studio, as I had the space for it. I didn't know at the time that this would be the start of The Bejewelled Academy - the successful business I am running today. So, it turned out to be a beautiful mistake indeed!

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## Make the Most of Your Mistakes

Even when we are experts at something, we still make mistakes, so venturing into the unknown and taking on a completely new mission will undoubtedly bring about mistakes - most of the time, the kind that when looking back, we will see exactly how we could have easily avoided such things. As the saying goes, hindsight is 20/20! Mistakes are unavoidable, but when we accept that we have made a mistake, we can assess the situation for what it is and then look at how we can either turn the situation around, or make the most of it. Be prepared to make plenty of mistakes! Some, you spot right after you've committed them and some, like mine, will take you a while to realise.

Whenever you make a fundamental mistake (and you will) write it down, take a deep breath (have a cup of tea if necessary) and think about the best possible way to deal with it and move forward. Whether that be a change in your strategy or a gesture of apology to someone, think and then act. When you do this, you are likely to be able to make the most of your mistake and it may even turn out to be a blessing

#### **4.) The Struggle is Real**

I debated whether to name this chapter “Tears on my studio floor” and you are about to understand why! In the few months that I was in my studio, I was at the very start of my creative business journey. The launch was over, the need to feel “all set up” was over and now I was faced with the actual reality of having to run a business and keep making money! Having so many people support me at my launch day was amazing, but that wasn't going to be my everyday reality. I needed a constant flow of customers

I believe in a biblical proverb that states “In all labour there is profit!” It wasn't rocket science - the more I “laboured” - or the more effort and work I put in, the more profit there would be. In my case “profit” was exactly what I needed! So I set out to working on getting just that!

I remember creating a leaflet inviting people to come to my studio for an evening viewing of my unique, handmade pieces - many of them one-offs. I managed to fit four leaflets onto an A4 page and made several copies. I cut them out and off I went to Finsbury Park station to hand them out to the many people bustling out of the exit, fresh from their peak time tube and train journeys

Many took the leaflet. One man actually showed up. He bought a freshwater pearl piece for his mum. Well, it was better than nothing, but I was certainly going to need to do better than this. Trying not to let anxiety get the better of me, I told myself that it was okay. I was going to keep working hard and all would be fine.

I wrote to magazines about various pieces of my jewellery, in order to try to get featured. I put free ads up online wherever I could. I used social media to promote my work. I just needed to get in people's faces! The more people who knew about me, the more orders I would get and consequently the more money I would make! As rent deadlines neared, I found myself working harder and harder to try to “break even” I didn't want to hear that “on average it takes a new business about 3 years to break even” I wasn't trying to be average! I needed to break even right now! I remember spending nights in my studio, making jewellery, taking photos, sending emails, making leaflets. I worked through the night and would cycle home early the next day to take a shower. I was so hungry for success - I needed to keep sowing those seeds, so that sooner rather than later, I could reap the benefits.

All wasn't in vain, I did receive orders here and there, but nothing substantial - nothing major. I was looking for that big breakthrough and I really needed it. I hadn't gone into this blindly, without a plan - I just didn't expect it to be so

hard! I truly believed I had an attitude that was different to other young starter-uppers and my determination and continuous action would set my business apart.

A couple of “opportunities” came my way and I thought, yes this will help catapult my business to the next level! The first was an opportunity to advertise with one of the UK’s biggest magazines! They convinced me to pay a deposit in order to advertise with them. Being naive and wanting exposure I thought “millions of readers means a great amount of exposure, which should mean a good amount of sales!” I thought it would be worth the investment - besides they had an instalment plan so I wouldn't mind paying for it knowing I was making a profit from it. I prepared my wording and a beautiful image and they helped me to put my ad together. When it came out I bought a copy and as I flipped through the pages I had my “ah-ha” moment too little too late! I realised two major things:

1.) The ad was at the back of the magazine - at the very back - in the ‘ads’ section when all of the magazine’s interesting articles were done and over with. Actually when the whole magazine was done and over with! I thought about myself and how I normally approach these sections when reading a magazine. The harsh truth was that I didn't approach these sections! - I hardly ever looked at the ad pages at the back of any magazine.

2.) The ad was in the “ads” section - with a bunch of other ads focussed around fashion and beauty - meaning I was competing with lots of other ads! Needless to say days passed by, then weeks...I didn't get a single order or enquiry from this rather costly magazine ad.

The second “opportunity” was a trade show taking place at a local venue. I had to attend an interview to see if I could exhibit at the event. When I was approved I then needed to pay for my stand at the event. I was allowed to exhibit without having paid the full balance, but would need to make full payment shortly after the event. This event was psyched up to be a huge success, with the who's who of fashion retail being present. I truly believed that this could be the big break I was waiting for, so I made sure I was prepared. I spent time making extra pieces, planning my stand layout and preparing forms and other paperwork for the buyers that would come my way. I felt excited at the prospect of having retail buyers coming to my stand, enquiring about my products and proceeding to make orders. I was definitely optimistic - I believed that the event would go very, very well.

The day came and I arrived early, set up my stall and prepared for the day ahead. The environment was nice, with pop music playing and a very laid back, fun atmosphere. There was a steady flow of people, but it definitely was not heaving. I had a few people come to my stand, give it the once over, smile at me and then leave. I remained optimistic, but as the day went on it seemed to get quieter. So much so, that people were leaving their own stands and wondering around to see who the other exhibitors were. A few of them came to my stand and admired some of my pieces. A few of them said to me "Can I come back and buy that at the end of the day when everything is over?" I agreed that they could and they did! That was all very nice but, I didn't want a couple of direct sales, I wanted large, wholesale orders with retail shops! I wanted a deal that would put me on the map as well as make me a significant amount of money! That didn't happen and I remember feeling deflated at the end of the day. To say I was disappointed was an understatement...

So there I was with a new business, financial commitments and nothing solid in the pipeline. No big sales and no financial breakthrough! Anxiety was beginning to set in - particularly because I lived with family members and not being able to meet my part of the household commitments would not only affect them, but would anger and disappoint them and I would certainly hear about it! We were living in a new, more expensive place and I knew that it would be a struggle to meet my new level of outgoings. The struggle was becoming all too real.

My lifestyle had changed. I was no longer that Mayfair girl who would take regular trips to Fortnum and Mason, or buy new clothes almost every week. I had to abandon that as my current situation didn't allow for those luxuries. I didn't particularly mind - I knew that this was only a temporary change and that soon I would be able to do the things I used to and more! At that moment, I was totally focussed on building my business, so I was committed to doing whatever it took. That said, my family members didn't understand this change. Looking back, I guess for them, all they could see was life seemingly becoming worse for me since I left my great corporate job. I was wearing the same clothes on a regular basis and struggled to meet my financial commitments on time.

I remember a very close relative saying to me "look at you, you're a shadow of the person you used to be. You wear the same trousers all the time!" Admittedly, the lack of support made the struggle harder. I felt so alone at times. It was hard to be going through such brand new and unfamiliar difficulties, without even an occasional word of support or motivation from those closest to me. On more than one occasion, I remember lying on my

studio floor during one of my all-night work vigils and sobbing. As tears dripped from my eyes onto the parquet flooring I started to feel inadequate, incapable and even a little foolish. I was trying so many things and none were really very profitable. I felt silly - I felt that maybe I didn't have what it took to be this businesswoman. I felt small, but my vision...my vision wouldn't allow me to give up. My vision was so real and that was in a way what the frustration was. My vision was so strong, but how could I make it an actual reality! I resolved that something had to change - something *needed* to change and something *would* change because although the struggle was real, my vision and the inner conviction that despite my current circumstances I could still make it, was even more real!

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### The Struggle is Necessary

The struggle is indeed the stuff of self-made people and is unavoidable, but it is also necessary! The struggle is our “trial and error” period and what helps us to build a foundation. Of course, making such a huge transition from being employed to self-employed would not be smooth-sailing. I was on new, uncharted territory and I had to learn the ropes. I had to set my foundation. On your quest for personal success remember the following and keep it with you:

Think about the foundation of a house or even one of your favourite buildings . Before it could become that magnificent sight for all to see, or that beautifully structured and secure home, its foundation had to be built. In order for that house or building to last, it had to have a solid foundation and that meant digging downwards...and going deeper and deeper downwards. That is what our “struggle” is - it’s our foundation. It’s our opportunity to learn new lessons, to be moulded by different experiences, to make better choices going forward. The struggle is what makes our end result better. Without struggle, where would we be?

In my toughest moments, I felt things were “going south” as they say - and indeed they were! I was going south - creating a foundation so that I could start building upwards and building something that would last! Success doesn't start at ground zero, it starts underground, because that's where you lay your foundation.

## **5.) Rejection, Failure and Ammunition**

In all good self-help books and inspirational sites/blogs we read that failure is inevitable on our journey to success. This is certainly true as failure is a major part of the “struggle” discussed in the previous chapter. However, failure can be very hard to deal with, particularly when every step taken in this new “self-making” phase is a brave step into the unknown.

I experienced this too many times. On one occasion, after seeing Alexa Chung everywhere I thought it would be a great idea to get her to wear one of my pieces! I made an extended, more extravagant piece from my current collection and placed it in a lovely gift box. I researched on the internet, to find where and who I could drop off this gift and found the contact details for her managing agent. I contacted them and they gave me the address of their office, so off I went to the other side of London to hand deliver Alexa’s gift, in the hope that she would love it, wear it and promote it! I imagined her being photographed wearing it and my jewellery ending up as part of “as seen on...” magazine features, consequently leading to lots of new sales and a boost of my brand name.

A few days went by and even weeks. I heard nothing - not even a note of acknowledgement. Not even a “thank you” note - nothing. I googled Alexa Chung on numerous occasions - just to see if she had been spotted out with my necklace - but nothing. Maybe it wasn't her style. maybe it wasn't good enough, not trendy enough...maybe it was never even given to her...

So here I was, trying to think outside of the box. Trying to take bold steps and seeing nothing much working. With every new thing I tried, my confidence and self-belief were renewed. I always thought to myself “yes, this is going to work!” I always gave myself new things to hope for, to anticipate the success of - but with every knock-back, failure or rejection there was a big blow to my confidence. After the failed trade show event mentioned in the previous chapter, I decided to contact buyers directly. I researched the best way to present my products to potential retail buyers and started to create my own line-sheet. I spent hours on the internet researching shops that I felt my various collections would be a good fit for. I called and emailed these shops individually, explaining a little about myself, the story behind each collection and the relevant information such as minimum order, materials, packaging and pricing. Some people never got back to me and those that did only did so to let me know that they thought my products were not right for them or that they weren't buying any new products at present. The feeling of refreshing your email to see a reply pop-up, only to realise it's a “rejection” email was so

deflating. With that happening and constantly having to face my family members with no news of a breakthrough and no breakthrough on the horizon was...terrible. Coming home from my studio every evening became something I dreaded. Not because my family was waiting by the door each day to question me on how well I (wasn't) doing, but because I felt bad. I felt like I was failing. I felt like I was just not doing something right.

Back to the studio floor, during one of my weeping sessions, I thought about how hard it was to establish my business, I started to think about my past and my upbringing. I wished I was like many of those other enterprising young people I had read about in magazines and blogs, whose parents took second mortgages to invest in their business ideas. If only that could have been me. I was alone. A young woman trying to make it on her own. I had no one to invest in me. No one with the belief or the resources to back me up. Why couldn't things have been different?

As the harp sounded and the waterworks started to emerge from my eyelids the following came to me: "You have just started out in this and you are already feeling deflated? You knew it wouldn't be easy! If you are discouraged now, at the very start of your journey, how will you handle the greater issues and problems that come with growth and success?"

At that moment I wiped off my tears and sat up, then I stood up and sat at my computer. I wasn't going to keep failing. My success was inevitable because I truly believed in it, but these doubts and feelings of discouragement, brought about by what I could see before my eyes, were so very hard to fight at times. It was then that I realised I needed to arm myself. I needed to combat these negative thoughts when they came my way. For my personal ammunition I turned to the very thing that had encouraged significant changes in my life from the moment I paid attention to it...The Bible. I found it to be filled with words of wisdom, direction and encouragement. My realisation that I needed to grow some back bone when handling rejection and failure had actually come to me subconsciously from a sentence I had read sometime in the past. It was the following from the book of Jeremiah:

*"If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses?"*

In the midst of my sorrow my subconscious remembered these words and reminded me of them. This saved me from drowning in a pool of my own pity, which ultimately would have done me no good, to say the very least!

From then I made it a habit of mine to constantly seek for wisdom and inspiration through biblical stories, morals and proverbs. Whenever doubts and discouragement began to creep in I quickly combated them with the words that I read and believed in. This was my ammunition and this was what kept me going. I knew that without some form of ammunition it would be almost impossible to make it through this journey

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## Arm Yourself

Since we are human and have feelings and emotions, it is only natural that we will be affected by rejection and failure. We all want to be loved, appreciated, wanted, needed and that is the same for anything that we create. However, the fact is that not everyone will like us and not everyone will need us, or our services, or our products - but someone will! Until we reach that someone, we will be met with many a “no” or a “sorry, not this time” or “sorry, we already have something similar” - this is inevitable. So, now that we know it’s inevitable and we also know that it is likely to get us down, the sensible (in fact smart) thing to do is to ensure that we will always be able to dust ourselves off and continue on our journey to personal success. We can do that by arming ourselves with something that will counteract the very thing that attacks our emotions.

For me the Bible worked well as my ammunition and it continues to do so. What about you? Take a moment to evaluate yourself. Where do you draw encouragement and inspiration? What gives you strength and back bone? Is it by reading the success stories of others? Reminding yourself of your own past successes in other areas? Is it by surrounding yourself with encouraging case studies or quotes? Whatever it is that helps you to get through moments of doubt and discouragement, surround yourself with it. Memorise it. Arm yourself, so that you are always ready to deal with the many emotional attacks you will face on your journey

## **6.) Persistence, Perseverance, Determination...**

...And whatever other word you can think of that basically equates to not giving up! All of these are as essential for success as oxygen and water for our survival

As I mentioned at the start of this book, I had a vision of where I wanted to be and a hatred for where I was at the time. These two things would not allow me to look back, no matter how hard this new journey was! Because of this, I made the decision that no matter what, I was going to persevere. When I got off that studio floor I chose to equip myself with all that I needed, in order to make sure that I would make it to my destination. I chose to do that because I had already chosen perseverance. Persistence was my decision and I was determined to make my vision a reality. A soldier only prepares and equips himself for war when he is certain that when war comes he will go out there and fight! That was me. I'd had my moment of acceptance. I accepted that this would be difficult, but now I had to actually overcome. Now I had to keep going until I could taste my victory. Well, as you are about to see, the great thing about perseverance is that it breeds solutions and ideas. I will touch on this some more later on in this chapter, but I will first illustrate this by telling you more about my story:

Whilst I was still renting my studio I needed to bring in more income to cover the rent. I looked around at my studio space. I had a good amount of space in my studio - enough to run small, fun, basic jewellery making classes. I also already had lots of jewellery making materials and tools, so I could bring in extra cash with no additional cost. I put a free ad out on the internet and my first class consisted of 4 people, making me an extra £120.00. This was a start and a good way to generate additional funds, using what I already had. I held more of these small classes whenever I could, enabling me to make a good amount of additional income. Within a few months, I had to move out of my studio, but by then I had an idea to approach local centres about coming in to run short jewellery making workshops for children and adults. This proved popular as I was booked by a number of different centres around London. I was really glad that finally I was starting to make some money on a regular basis, but I still had my jewellery that I wanted to sell and it was frustrating not having a retail buyer who wanted to purchase any of my collections.

I was inspired to create a brand new collection, consisting of bright resin jewellery. My wonderful two PR volunteers at the time arranged a photo shoot for this collection, with models, makeup etc and I also managed to get a photography student to take photos of the jewellery on its own. I was

extremely happy with the outcome of the photo shoot and started to put together my line sheet (or product information sheet) for this particular collection.

When I looked at this collection I had a particular company in mind, that I could envision selling this collection. I believed this was truly a good fit for the company. The only problem was they were extremely difficult to get in touch with. Unlike most other companies the contact details of their buyers were hard to obtain. Despite this being a very well known company and the biggest of it's kind, at the time even a general switchboard number was difficult to find! I had worked extra hard on this collection and truly believed that it was a great fit for this company, so somehow I needed to find out how to get my collection seen by the jewellery buyer.

I started putting keywords into internet search engines and a press release came up, saying that the new buying director for this company had moved over from another well known company. It also mentioned her name. To me, that was a step closer - at least I now had a name. I did further searches but there was absolutely no email address to be found. That left me with no choice. The only thing I could do was make up her email address! I prepared my line sheet, images and email cover letter and in the "to:" field I proceeded to create potential combinations for her email address. I tried many:

firstname.surname@company.com

firstnamesurname@company.com

firstinitial.surname@company.com

firstname-surname@company.com

And many many more. Each time I received an error message saying that my email had been undelivered. Still, I kept on trying different combinations, believing that eventually I would get the right one. I was not wrong. At one point, the "undelivered mail" response didn't come back! I refreshed my inbox and still no error message. As I looked at the screen a slight shiver of nervousness came over me. I had contacted the buying director! Not a buyer, not a buyer's assistant, but the head of the whole, entire buying department for that company. Well, I had nothing to lose! The worst that could happen was her either completely ignoring my email or me receiving another rejection...life would still go on.

Off I went to a couple of meetings and when I returned to check my emails that evening, to my surprise I had an email from the jewellery buyer! She said that the buying director had passed on my images and details and that she really liked my pieces. She asked if we could arrange a meeting in the next few weeks, so that she could see my samples. I couldn't believe my eyes! I believed in the bold actions that I had taken by contacting the buying director directly, but I didn't expect a response so quickly! This was amazing news to say the very least. I wanted to shout it from the rooftops, but this was only a meeting. I could only get truly excited when this materialised into orders.

After much back and forth-ing I finally managed to setup a meeting for two weeks later. I prepared my samples and placed them in a fancy portable jewellery case I had ordered from eBay. When I finally arrived I was sat at reception awaiting the jewellery buyer. My stomach was doing all sorts of gymnastic moves! I was nervous, but at the same time I was excited. All of the failed attempts at a breakthrough, and finally, here I was, sitting in the reception of the head office of a company I truly, truly desired to work with. What if I had given up at any one point of my many failures and rejections? I hadn't fully "succeeded" yet, but just making it this far, making it here (especially after making contact was so difficult) felt amazing. I honestly felt like a winner!

The jewellery buyer finally arrived, greeted me with a handshake and a very friendly, warm smile and led the way to what looked like the staff canteen. We sat on a table in the corner and I started to unveil the sample pieces I had prepared. She looked at each of them closely and asked me about materials and cost prices. Then she said "We are definitely interested and would like to make an order..." I cannot remember word for word what followed this sentence. I just remember being elated inside but nodding and smiling as professionally as I could!

What followed this meeting was a large order followed by a ton of guidelines, covering procedures from barcoding to warehouse delivery. I remember spending weeks putting the order together and packaging each piece properly. I had booked in a delivery slot at their warehouse and they were very strict on keeping to set delivery times. I had the option of ordering a bike courier to transport my box to the warehouse, but decided that I wanted to deliver it myself. So, I booked a train ticket to the outside London location and travelled there to deliver to the warehouse by hand. I still remember sitting on the train with my box of handmade pieces next to me. I felt I had entered into a new phase in business. This was a breakthrough for me. I had sold a substantial amount of pieces to a retail company - and not any retail

company, a large, extremely well known one! The collection sold out within a week and another order was placed. Needless to say this boosted my brand profile and helped me secure other contracts with smaller shops and boutiques in and outside of London.

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### Perseverance Pays Off!

The sense of achievement that came from persisting with that email has gone down in the history of my own life! Every time I feel like giving up on something or I feel demotivated I remember that moment and how my perseverance paid off so massively and I smile and tell myself that I can and will achieve the next thing...and the next...This single breakthrough made all of the struggle, rejection and failure worth it! Perseverance comes with it's own guarantee - it will always pay off! It may not be when and how you expect, but it will always pay off one way or another. When it does, it equips you for bigger challenges, greater difficulties and consequently greater successes! A few years ago I faced a disappointing situation whilst abroad, which meant I couldn't return home to the UK when I had planned to. After my initial shock and upset, I realised errors had been made and that the delay wasn't through any fault of my own. I was told that in order to issue a complaint I had to follow certain procedures and my case could take several months to resolve. At that moment I remembered my own success story - this story right here, where I had been successful in contacting the buying director. I decided to copycat my own success story and proceeded to contact some people "at the top" to deal with my issue urgently. Again, that paid off and my complaint was fast-tracked. I was on the plane home with my family within the initial timescale that I had planned - much to the shock and surprise of our friends and family members.

When your persistence does pay off, document it - build up a "CV" or "resume" of your own successes. The more you persist and experience the positive outcomes of doing so, the more inclined you will be to persist when faced with future challenges.

## **7.) Multifaceted Me**

Before I go much further, let's take a look at the meaning of this word...

Multifaceted:

- 1.) *Having many sides*
- 2.) *Having many different aspects or features*

I had to dedicate a chapter of this book to the fact that when I setup my business I had to **temporarily** become a "Jack of all trades" - and a master of everything too! I didn't have the cash flow to pay for any admin, marketing or accounts staff in the beginning and I also didn't have enough consistent work to delegate to someone else. I was still finding my feet in business and trying to figure out what would work and what wouldn't. Paid staff would have only added more strain to my startup!

I also was enjoying taking the reigns of this business and trying to get it to become something more than a name. This was my thing - my baby - my brainchild and so I had every interest in seeing it succeed and I was willing to put in the extra work and become whatever I needed to become to make that happen. Here are some of the roles I played in the startup and establishment of my business:

### **The Administrator**

I was of course responsible for registering my business correctly and ensuring I filled out and retained the correct paperwork. I had to setup databases and forms to keep a track of materials and equipment purchased, sales and orders and whatever else needed doing.

### **The PR/Marketing Coordinator**

This was and still is a major factor in the success of my business. I learnt from a PR friend of mine how to structure press releases and I would send them to various publications. I managed to get features in some online magazines, fashion blogs and in print magazines such as Jewellery Making, Pride and Drapers. I also was able to sponsor the Glamour Women of the Year Awards with pieces of my jewellery one year, after making contact with the right person. When I had the idea of running creative clubs and workshops I had to create marketing documents and send them to the relevant contacts at various organisations. This is something I still do!

### **Production**

Initially, whenever I received an order, however big or small, I was responsible for creating every single piece of jewellery to fulfil that order.

Even with the large retail orders I received, I hired someone to help me, but she had a family emergency and in order to meet the delivery deadlines, I had to work throughout the night for a couple of days. Some of my pieces were more complicated than others, so sometimes my production days were long and tiring. The good thing was, as I was working for myself I could take short breaks when it suited me or make jewellery while watching (or at least listening to) Eastenders.

### **Salesperson**

When most people hear the word “salesman” they think cold-callers or over-enthusiastic suited and booted door-knockers. I was neither of those, but I did realise early on in business that I needed to be able to sell myself whether I liked it or not! This would be the difference between having an actual profit-making business and the name of a business on paper! When I put myself out there, I had to be prepared for people to respond and ask questions and I had to know how to answer! For example, when I started marketing my jewellery making workshops and clubs, people started calling me wanting to know more about what my offers consisted of. My answers had to be right in order to get contracts and close deals! I had to be certain of myself, what I was offering and what my potential customers would benefit from it. I never considered myself a great sales person - hence why I was never up for those telesales jobs - even at the lowest financial points in my life! However, when it came to selling myself I was an expert. If I didn't believe in what I was doing I never would have gone it alone in the first place. Now I had to prove this belief by getting others to believe and buy into me and into my brand!

Another example of selling myself was when I found out about an annual awards ceremony for businesswomen of colour. I looked at the categories and nomination criteria. I could either be nominated by someone else or I could nominate myself. I decided to nominate myself! On the nomination form I had to sell myself and why I believed I deserved the title of “creative business of the year” In the end I made it to the top 3 finalists for the award and was invited to attend the awards ceremony in London with a guest. I didn't win the award but was honestly proud of myself for going for it and getting so far.

### **The Recruiter**

Although initially I wasn't recruiting any paid staff, I did need the help of volunteers every so often and I had to be able to get the right volunteers with the right skill set to perform relevant business related tasks effectively and efficiently. To do this I needed to know how and where to advertise to attract

these people. I also then had to vet them via telephone screening and/or interviewing as well as preparing detailed job/project descriptions

### **Accounts**

This was and still is a big one! I had to keep on top of my outgoings and income and ensure I accurately recorded these on my Excel spreadsheet, so that I could easily complete my tax return when the time came for that . I also had to make payments and request payments. As a newly self-employed person invoicing was brand new to me! I remember having to google an invoice template and customise it so that I could start sending invoices to other companies who owed me money for services rendered. Sending invoices was always a joy. Chasing payments - not so much! I realised just how hard it was to get money out of some people...

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### The Benefits of Knowing Each Role

Looking at the list above it seems like a lot...and it was! However, if you have not already noticed this, you will soon notice that when you are working on something for yourself, your motivation, determination and drive are multiplied. Anyone who is a parent, raising a child or children of their own will know that this true! These were lots of roles, but I didn't mind - I was up for doing them all, because it was part of the nurturing process and I knew that it would lead to growth! I also knew that I wouldn't be doing all of these roles forever. These were only temporary and when I became more established, I would be able to delegate. The benefit of me doing these roles, was that I knew exactly what I was delegating. I knew what skill set I needed to look for when I did need to delegate the various roles and I knew what to expect from those that I would eventually delegate to.

## **8.) Growth - Celebration and Appreciation**

Now that I am a mother, I can say that the process of starting up in business and getting to the point where you actually have good cash flow is like pregnancy. You conceive the dream/idea and you spend time nurturing, researching on the best ways to do everything, making sure you do your best so that consistent, healthy growth occurs, but for the dream to become reality, you must endure labour pains. The pain goes from bad to worse and the duration of that pain and discomfort seems like a lifetime. At times you feel weak. At times you even feel like giving up - but then you realise you have no choice but to keep going. You must push, you must keep pushing - despite the pain - despite possible tears (and I am not talking tears down your face!) You know that there is something amazing on it's way and your pushing is vital. You sweat, you cry, you even scream. You continue until you give birth to a healthy, profit making baby! The journey isn't easy and for that reason I believe that each achievement, each milestone should be celebrated!

After working so hard and finally getting retail orders, the workshops side of my business was also taking off. Something that I only did as a means of earning extra cash with my studio space was now a second business - and it seemed to be doing as well, if not better than my initial business idea! I was running after-school clubs everyday in schools and although I no longer had my studio I was running weekend sessions in my living room as my rental home was located near to some good public transport links.

I was now able to pay my bills with no hesitation, purchase the things I needed for the business and have money left over to treat myself. I was actually making a living from my business! It felt great. This was the moment I longed for when I first started out. When I went through my struggles and failures this moment seemed so far off, but here I was, living in it! I still had lots more to achieve, but I was so very happy with how far I had come. To mark this moment in my life, there was one place in particular that I wanted to visit...

Back when I left my corporate job and embarked on my journey to personal freedom, I had to sacrifice the little luxuries I loved. As mentioned previously, one of the first things to go was my weekly trip to Fortnum and Mason. Now that I finally had disposable income from my very own business, going back there was a type of milestone of achievement for me. I still remember how I felt that day...As I entered through the wooden double doors I felt like I was able to buy the whole shop! Of course this wasn't true. I couldn't afford the entire store, but that wasn't important. I hadn't come to make a mega purchase just for the sake of it. This trip was not about how much I could buy,

but it was the fact that I could buy! I had the choice! I had the ability! This was a symbolic “because now, I can” moment for me and I marked it with the purchase of some treats from the food hall! This was my own little celebratory moment - it was a representation of how far I had come. I was no longer that person who was a shadow of my former self - I was a startup success, a business owner who was actually doing business. I no longer had a cashless project or a name, but I had a business with cash flow. I was officially off the treadmill, out of the red and on my way to building a true, existing empire. It was amazing. The liberation of that moment (particularly as I was visiting the store in the middle of the working day, at my own leisure and not on a time-capped lunch period) was memorable to say the least. All of my past struggles seemed like nothing at that moment.

As time passed by there were many more moments like this that followed. One of them being the day that a family member was moving into a new place and asked me to be a guarantor for them. At the time I was the most suitable person to do this for one reason or another and this was a big deal for me - not because I was better than anyone, but again this was the materialisation of the fact that I had an actual business, producing income to the point that I was actually able to help someone else out. I remember walking into the estate agents and presenting my bank statements and signing forms. I left there feeling like a boss - and that I was!

With time and continuous effort, the business continued to do well and my profit steadily increased. This meant more milestones! I remember the first time that I was able to take my mother and grandmother to afternoon tea at Harrods. They had never been there for tea before and they loved every minute of it. Knowing that I had the means to treat them to such an enjoyable afternoon was wonderful. As was the first time that I was able to take them both on holiday. This was a particularly special moment, because, not only was this another “first” for me, but it was also a symbol of my progress. I wasn't trying to convince them that I had come far, but I was able to show them with these gestures. I truly believe that any child who loves their parents looks forward to the day when they are able to do special things for them - things that they haven't been able to do before. I can never repay my mother for her hard work and sacrifices during my upbringing, but all of these things were little gestures of gratitude and appreciation and it was important to me to finally be in a position to do them.

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## Celebrate Successes of Every Size

As I typed out these memories and milestones I began to chuckle to myself - and you might have done the same when reading them! However, if you commit to your journey, you will arrive at moments like these and you will be completely able to relate to just how significant they are! A good few chapters in this book detail the difficulty of making the move from working for someone to working for yourself, in the quest to build your own empire. The fact that you will endure the struggle and see your dreams through to fruition is reason enough for celebration. So many people don't - so many fall by the wayside. So many don't even get started! So, when you have endured, continue to endure and start to see growth along the way, you should acknowledge this growth and feel proud of yourself. Pat yourself on the back. Recognise how far you have come and believe that even better things are on the way. I am not saying that you should boast, or throw a huge party. Nor should you blow all of your profits on a celebratory gift or gesture! However, every success, no matter how small deserves some kind of recognition. This is good for your own mental wellbeing and encouragement. Don't spend all of your time focussing on what you haven't yet achieved. Take time out to recognise what you have achieved so far and be grateful. If you don't do this, you may not have anyone else who will do this for you! At the start of my journey, I kept a journal of my achievements - every time I got a feature in a magazine, or an unexpected order I recorded it. Looking back at these helped me to keep going and to aim for more. Sometimes in our quest to be great, we don't recognise how well we have already done!

## 9.) Growth - Delegation, Disappointment and Development

As my business continued to grow, I started getting more workshops than I could physically handle alone. Schools and other organisations were showing great interest in what I had to offer and I was receiving requests for multiple workshops running on the same day, at the same time. I loved and welcomed the growth but could no longer handle everything alone. The time had come for the dreaded “D”...delegation!

You would think that after having to solely do all of the work for so long, I might welcome the opportunity to hand some of it to someone else, but, truth be told, I wasn't thrilled at the thought of having to trust someone else with a small part of my business! Actually, I dreaded it! My thoughts were that no one would be as passionate about my business as I was. No one would express that passion through their service and work. No one could be me! That was true - but if I wanted to continue to grow I had **no choice** but to delegate. So there I went, looking for websites to advertise vacancies on. I found a few good ones that would let me advertise for free. It didn't take too long before I started to get applicants. I setup interviews with them at local coffee shops and followed up on suitable candidates with an email containing further details about the role and some paperwork. After all of the necessary vetting and checks were done, I had tutors who were ready to start working with me!

My first recruit was a young lady who was a talented jewellery maker, who had not long graduated. She seemed extremely keen for the job when we met at interview. She came across as passionate and had the right skills - so for me that equalled perfection! She was local to most of the new schools I was working with and was also willing to travel. After checking out references, DBS checks and all of the other necessary paperwork she got started! I had her on a freelance contract, but this was scarily exciting - my first paid member of the team!

All seemed well to start with, but as time went on I noticed that she was a little “scatty” for want of a better word. She seemed to always be in a rush and on a few occasions turned up to the classes a few minutes late. I spoke to her about this and she promised that she would improve. A few weeks later I had another request to run an after school club from a primary school in East London. The location was close to where my new recruit was based so I thought it would be perfect for her. When I told her about the new school she was more than happy to run the club. I made sure she was well equipped and had everything she needed. On the first week, I contacted her after the session to check how everything went. I did so again on the second week. On

the evening of the third week I received an email from the school informing me that they were cancelling the contract because my tutor had arrived late three times in a row. I was shocked and livid, but before taking any further action I needed to contact the school. I contacted them and they explained that from the first session my member of staff was late and never had a reasonable excuse, nor did she seem apologetic. I apologised to them and offered to change tutors, reduce the cost of the club, offered a free session, but nothing worked. In the end they didn't even pay for the sessions that we had done.

When I contacted my staff member she apologised profusely, begging me not to sack her, She needed this job and would do better - that's what she kept telling me. I was so angry with her I barely had words to say. I started to regret recruiting her and was angry at the fact that I had to recruit anyone at all! I started to tell myself that no one would do a good job in my business because no one was me! I wished there were 10 of me! I even started thinking that maybe keeping things small, where I had full control would be best. At least I could prevent today's disappointment from happening again! My emotions were high, but as I sat in my living room for a while, thinking everything through I began to realise just where I had gone wrong in all of this...

I had recruited someone who needed the money and had the skills to do the job. I didn't recruit someone who was passionate about the actual role and could see this as part of their career path. If she was passionate about the role itself, her efforts would have shown this. I needed to get better at sussing out true passion versus need for cash when interviewing candidates. I needed the ability to discern - and this would come with time and experience. I also needed to improve my communication skills. I communicated well with my member of staff, but not with my client. In hindsight I should have checked the progress of the club with the school - not with the tutor. The school were my customers, they were the ones I needed to provide a good service to - they were the ones who needed to tell me that everything was "fine".

After that harsh realisation I dusted myself off and told myself I would do better. I didn't start a business so that I could be all things in that business, working harder than I would in a 9-5 for all eternity. I had plans. I had business plans, personal plans, personal dreams! I needed growth! That meant I also needed to grow as a person, as a manager, as a business owner! These were "teething problems" but with the right attitude I knew I could get through this and become a business with a good and lasting structure. This was only the beginning. So much more was to follow - many

more problems with tutors, new policies and procedures, new ways of collating data, new contract terms...but if I wanted to continue to make my dreams a reality I needed to learn from each experience and apply what I had learnt. My commitment to personal growth and development is what led to the continued growth of my business.

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Delegation is Necessary for Business!

If you want to be a true businessman or businesswoman, you must learn the art of delegation! As long as you are doing everything yourself, you are not in business! You are self-employed and most likely working much harder than you did or ever would in a 9-5 job.

At the point of delegation, you start to make the transition from self-employed to business person - and this, dear reader is the beginning of entrepreneurialism!

At first, as you have read above, it can be a difficult transition to make as it means trusting others with part of your business - which almost equates to trusting someone with a part of you! Something you have worked hard to build and nurture. Like me, you are likely to trust the wrong people at first, but with time and experience you will be able to discern who you can trust - who has a true passion for what you are doing and who wants to be part of it for more than the money. You will face many disappointments, but take each disappointment not as a setback, but as an opportunity to improve - also to self-evaluate. It's in these "hiccups" in my business that I discovered new and better systems to put in place, new recruitment procedures, new stipulations for my contracts. Committing to growth by way of delegation was the best thing I could have done for my business, because it enabled me to grab opportunities that I would not have been able to grab on my own. It opened up a new world of possibilities for me and made me realise that I could do so much more than I thought I could. It also moulded me as a person. My advice to you is: Don't be afraid of delegation - but be determined to master it! Delegation is an art and once you commit to mastering that art you will find that you and your business will grow together!

## 10.) Planning is Key

There are many things that are key to success but a major one is planning! I always say you can achieve anything when you plan ahead, but the opposite is also true; failing to plan definitely leads to failure! I used to travel a lot and people always asked me how I did that. They thought I had tons of disposable income, and while I wasn't doing too bad financially, it was actually my planning ahead that led me to be able to visit some beautiful places and enjoy unique experiences.

A true passion for making it happen leads you to plan with true purpose! Your plans will include immediate actions - things to work on and do straight away - people to contact, things to create and more. Planning is key because it enables you to focus on what you want to achieve and how you will go about it. Organisation is key to success and planning is key to organisation!

Planning also helps you to organise short term goals and long term ones. When you see these clearly, you will easily be able to sort the things you can work on now, from the things that you perhaps should not spend time on right now.

I will be honest and confess to you that I started my business without a formal business plan. I didn't do one because I believed I knew what I wanted. I did however write down my goals and objectives and I had plenty of notebooks with written strategies. I would also write down every idea that came to mind, that I thought may have potential. However I got to point where I had so many ideas overflowing my mind, that I had to now look at what my objectives were and plan everything out, so that I would know what should be worked on immediately and what was maybe a really good idea for the near future and could be worked on later on. By doing that I could easily and clearly review my goals and check whether I was on target to achieving them or not. **It's not possible to reach your full potential without becoming a great planner.** You may become successful, but you won't be as successful as you could have been!

As a businesswoman and as a mother, I have found that planning is a key factor in leading a less stressful life! Plenty of times I have gone about my day, wishing it was over because of the workload I have had - but when I have looked back I have often realised that much of the workload could have been avoided if I planned better. I have wasted time and money running around and looking for materials and resources for workshops at the last minute. If I had planned ahead I could have ordered them online and got them delivered directly to the venues - saving me money, but also saving me

time, which is often more valuable than money! There have been times when stress has reduced me to tears! I remember literally being on the go and crying at the same time. However, many of those times, I eventually realised that I had brought the stress on myself, with poor planning.

I am now more focussed on planning than I have ever been, as I have realised how important it is. Planning well gives me a great sense of achievement! I love seeing the results of good planning in my personal and professional life and one of my current goals is to become an expert planner - it's right there at the top of my list of goals.

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### Plan for Success

Do not underestimate the benefits of planning. If like the past me, you are a plan-as-you-go type of person, this will catch up with you as you start to see growth and the lack of planning can stunt your growth. Lack of planning puts your wellbeing and professional reputation at risk, so develop your planning skills, because planning properly will enable you to work smarter instead of harder! Get a notebook and write down your plans in there. Make use of your calendars and reminders on your phone or tablet. Try to avoid leaving things to the last minute. If you have been contracted to do some work, or provide a product or service, think ahead and think about everything you need to put in place to offer the best quality of service that you can. When you plan, you will always see the benefits of this and the more you do, the more keen you will become on planning ahead. This will eventually make you the expert planner that is so fundamental to your success.

## **11.) It's Great to be in Business...**

Now that I have been in business for a number of years I am able to look back and truly appreciate all of the great life changes that running my own business has brought. I want to share with you some of the reasons why I personally feel it is great to be in business:

### **Freedom!**

This is one of the main things that can come out of being in business, that you so rarely find doing a 9-5. Having taken this path has given me freedom in so many different ways. It is a wonderful feeling to be out of a mundane, every day routine. I no longer go to bed at night dreading the thought of having to drag myself up the following morning to get ready to go to my job. I go to bed excited at the thought of the different things I will do and the challenges I will have set myself for the following day.

I am also **time-rich**. I now have time to do more of the things that are important to me. I have time to visit my elderly relatives during the day. Time to spend on self-development, time to try out new things. I now have a little boy and since he has been born I have had the choice of how much time I spend with him. His hours at nursery don't depend on my working hours, but on how long I believe he should spend there for his own development. I have time to consider important life choices and plan for my family's future.

I also have **creative freedom**. I can think of ideas and see them through to fruition because my business is just that - mine! I am the decision maker. I am free to make changes - to explore new opportunities - to try out new things in business.

### **No Financial Limits!**

I am no longer selling the work of my hands for a fixed price, so the amount I make depends on me and what I put in! The more I delegate, the more I am able to take on, meaning that my business can be earning substantial amounts at any one moment, rather than me earning one set hourly rate as an individual. I am also able to turn my ideas into money at any time. One summer I hadn't had as many summer workshop bookings as I would have liked, so I decided to create a "summer sale" offering discounted workshops towards the end of summer. I contacted various organisations to inform them of this and I ended up getting a large number of bookings.

I am also able to make money when I least expect it. I remember one day earlier on in my business, I had a dry period while awaiting a number of invoices to be paid to me. That same weekend a lady contacted me saying she had seen my details online and wanted to book a large jewellery making

hen party for a friend. It so happened that I already had a venue where I had been running some weekend workshops. After a few emails were exchanged I quoted her several hundreds of pounds as the hen party was quite large. Moments later she transferred the money to my account. Another example is an occasion when I contacted a school, hoping they would book one or two of my school clubs. They contacted me and after a long, detailed chat they booked 8 school clubs. A few weeks later they arranged for me to come in and go through some paperwork. To my surprise by then they had already marketed the clubs, got parents to book and pay for them and collected the payments. They handed all of the payments to me when I arrived - something I wasn't expecting at all. I left the school that afternoon with thousands of pounds in cheques.

Needless to say that being in a better financial situation has enabled me to enjoy a better quality of life. There are certain things that I would have gasped at when seeing the price in the past, but that isn't the case anymore. Not simply because I have more money, but because automatically my standards have increased as my level of affordability has changed. My family and I have enjoyed some beautiful experiences in our home town and in many countries abroad and we continue to do so. I am also able to invest more time and money into causes that matter to me.

### **The Ability to Create Opportunities From Opportunities!**

Being in business has given me the freedom to create new opportunities from one single opportunity. Whenever I attend a workshop I look around, I listen to what participants are discussing and I think about what possible multiple opportunities can emerge from this one opportunity that I have been given. This is in fact how I started what is now my main business - The Bejewelled Academy. I capitalised on the opportunity that was given to me to run a single after school club and contacted other schools, also offering more than one type of club. Today this is one of the main activities at The Bejewelled Academy - and from this main activity many other ideas have emerged.

### **A Complete Change of Lifestyle!**

Taking this step has completely changed the course of my life in such a positive way and even impacted my love life. I met my now husband while I was on holiday with a friend (who happens to be a close relative of my husband) I hadn't gone on holiday with any hopes or thoughts of meeting someone, but as the holiday came to an end we decided we would keep in touch with each other. After a few months of speaking online, I decided I wanted to spend more time with him in his surroundings and get to know him better. I travelled to his home country and stayed for 6 weeks. I was able to freely do so because I had my business up and running back home and no

major commitments to worry about getting back to. A year later we were getting married and we both decided to live in Africa together for a year before moving back to the UK together. This was an amazing and unforgettable experience, that impacted my life greatly. It was a type of adventure that also taught me life lessons and is a period that my husband and I often refer to when we are reflecting on our journey together. I didn't have to live in Africa, but I wanted to and had the freedom of choice, because I had stability back home in the UK. I had a business that was running and I was able to manage things from my computer and with the help of a friend and relative. When it came time to move back to the UK the transition was smooth because I didn't have to worry about looking for a new job etc. My husband also had time to establish himself in a new country and I was able to help him do that because I had time!

### **Mentorship!**

It's human nature that when we have good news we want to share it with others. Well, that's how I feel about my journey! The highs and lows have led me to a place of true contentment but also given me a sense of achievement and freedom that I know others also long to experience. Over the past few years it has been such a great pleasure to have been able to offer advice to men and women of various ages wanting to startup and turn their talents into money and a better lifestyle. I have also been able to offer mentorship to others and there is nothing more satisfying than witnessing their progress. Being able to give advice, support and encouragement backed up by real-life, personal examples gives a much greater, less self-serving purpose to what I do.

### **No Limits!**

One of the greatest things about business is that there are no limits. No limits on your capabilities, no limits on your dreams, no limits on what you want to achieve. This is not because you are in business, but because you have reached the point of taking your life and your destiny into your own hands. There is always scope for more. Your only limit at this point is yourself.

### **The Ability to Create a Legacy**

I have left this for last but it is by no means least. When you start your very own business you become a creator. You are building your own thing from scratch and therefore you are creating a legacy! You are not working to ensure that something already in existence continues to run, you are bringing something new into existence - something of your very own. Something that can potentially last many lifetimes and more! Now that I am a parent, it gives me great joy to know that I have built and I am continuing to build something

that will always be accessible to my son. Something that he can own and perhaps pass on to his children one day. Something that, if he wants, he can be a part of when he is older. However, more than the physical business, I am happier to be leaving him a legacy or faith; of belief and of the knowledge that it's okay to think outside of the box. A real life example that it is possible to bring into existence something that never existed, even if you have the smallest of resources and little or no support. If you have a dream, that's enough. I am now living proof of that to my son.

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What is your "Why?"

Today I am able to enjoy all of these great things about business because years ago, when I first conceived this dream, many of the things listed above were my reasons "why" Many were my motivation and the reasons for my persistence. I had a hunger for the freedom that couldn't be achieved in a job. I had a longing to lead a different lifestyle, a need for the ability to express my own creativity and a sense of entitlement. Inside me there was buried a knowledge that it was both my right and my duty to pursue something more. Something that would take me to a new level of purpose. These were the things that motivated me to start and to keep going. For me, those were pretty strong "whys" at the time. They gave me chills when I thought about them, because I believed in them so badly. Since I had my son, he has become my biggest "why"

At a recent training event myself and my colleagues were asked to write down our "why" and I wrote about the importance of leaving a legacy. As I wrote it, it gave me those same chills. It is extremely important to me and because of that, I will never give up.

I would like to ask you to do the same thing that I had to do at that training event. Think about your "Why". What is it that you personally want to achieve from this journey? What is it that makes and will continue to make the struggle worthwhile? What is it that motivates you? I heard many different "whys" from my colleagues at that training event. Some had lost family members and couldn't be with them during their last moments because their jobs wouldn't allow them the time off. Some just couldn't afford to travel to be with loved ones when they most needed them. Others wanted to give their children an upbringing they never had. All who spoke were convicted of their "whys" and I am certain that this is what motivates them to come out of their comfort zone and take action! What about your "why"? Is it enough to keep you expanding your goals and pushing towards them no matter what?

If you have more than one “why”, think about your biggest one and write it down. Put it in a place that is easily visible to you, but not to others. With everyday life and the many hardships we may encounter, it can be easy to lose focus, but a constant reminder of your “why” serves as constant motivation and encouragement. I see my “why” every day when I look at my son...

## **12.) Beautiful You**

You have come to the end of my written journey from the bottom up, but my journey continues and so does yours. The beautiful thing about this journey is that it teaches you far more about yourself than any counsellor, course or 9-5 ever could. I set out on this journey because I longed for a freedom that I realised I didn't have. I wanted to see where being brave enough to pursue my dreams would get me. In reality I got far more than I thought I would. I evolved as a person and my mind's eye was opened in ways that I could never have imagined. This journey has made me wiser, more savvy and has given me a different outlook on money! This journey gave me a mirror and pointed out my weaknesses, strengths, points of improvement and more - and it continues to do so! I am still learning how to do better - still learning from past mistakes. On this journey you will experience the same and more. If you are committed to seeing your dreams come alive. If you want to see the materialisation of your desires, then embark on this journey with your vision constantly in mind, but also with humility and a willingness to learn from every experience. In doing so you are guaranteed to become a better person and someone who can handle with integrity the success that is inevitable.