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 COUNTRY LIVING
MAGAZINE

TURN YOUR *Talent* INTO A BUSINESS

*A guide to earning a living
from your hobby*

EMMA JONES

COOK • WRITE • DRAW • MAKE • GROW

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TURN YOUR
Talent INTO
A BUSINESS

A GUIDE TO EARNING A
LIVING FROM YOUR HOBBY

By Emma Jones



brightword

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Introduction



What better way to earn a living than by doing something you love? That's the position you could be in by following the steps and tips offered in this book.

It has been written in partnership with *Country Living* Magazine after witnessing the success of the Kitchen Table Talent Awards, the most popular competition run by the magazine, and sell-out audiences at the *Country Living* Spring Fair for talks on how to turn a hobby into a business. The team at *Country Living* know their readers have bags of talent; what was becoming increasingly clear is how many of you are considering turning that talent into turnover!

This book will show you how. It presents stories of 17 people who are successfully earning from what started as a hobby or skill and is now delivering decent income. You will discover how to make sales, write a business plan, protect your work, price products and promote yourself.

There's never been a better time to take this onboard and take the first steps to becoming your own boss. You can start whilst keeping hold of the day job, on a bootstrap of a budget and in the knowledge you're not alone; in the 3 months following the launch of the StartUp Britain campaign (a new campaign launched by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs, designed to celebrate, inspire and accelerate enterprise in the UK) the number of people searching for the term 'start up' increased by 25% and Companies House is recording month-on-month increases in the number of people forming a new business.

Turn Your Talent into a Business

People are rapidly realising you can start a business in your spare time and on a budget of less than £100, with the end result being freedom and flexibility to choose where, when and how you work. Indeed one of the great benefits of running a business say many of the case study stories profiled over the following pages, is the ability to shape the business around the family and, in the case of a good number of them, employ family members too!

If being in control of your working life and earning from doing what you enjoy sounds attractive, this is the book for you. Step by step I will show you how to take that hobby, passion or skill and turn it into a business.

I hope you enjoy the journey and that you'll keep in touch along the way.

Emma Jones

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Emma Jones is founder of small business support company Enterprise Nation www.enterprisenation.com and a co-founder of StartUp Britain www.startupbritain.org.

Enterprise Nation provides daily content, books, eBooks, kits, events and funding to help anyone start and grow a small business.

Foreword

Everyone has a talent for something: a skill, often honed at the kitchen table and used as a way to switch off – from work, family, domestic duties and the increasing amount of admin our lives demand.

Your talent is what you are good at or have a gift for, it's what gives you the most satisfaction, a certain pleasure in knowing you do it well and it is often the basis of a hobby.

But the story doesn't have to end there. There's never been a better time to turn that talent into turnover and this book will help you do that, in plain English and wise words from people who have been there before you.

We at *Country Living* Magazine have been working with Emma Jones and Enterprise Nation through *Country Living's* Kitchen Table Talent Awards (kitchentabletalent.com) to encourage our readers to earn a living from their hobbies. When she suggested that Brightword Publishing would be interested in producing a *Country Living* manual for every life-changing step of the journey from pastime to full-time, we signed up immediately.

By telling their stories in each issue of the magazine, and by promoting them at our *Country Living* Fairs and shows around the country, *Country Living* Magazine has helped hundreds of small businesses launch and grow.



Turn Your Talent into a Business

If there's one thing we have learned it is don't be scared by the B word – your 'business' doesn't have to be a *Dragons' Den* contender looking for venture capitalists with big bucks. You might be very local, perhaps only making one item, and your 'factory' could be the spare room but it is perfectly possible to earn an income, especially if you are selling your product to people all over the world through the level playing field of the internet.

Alongside this book you will need passion and persistence but if you sew, make or draw, write, cook or grow then you probably already have these in spades.

So don't be daunted by the stories of success throughout this book, but be inspired. Every one of these businesses started off with a dream and an idea – just like yours!

Lisa Sykes

Features Editor, *Country Living* Magazine

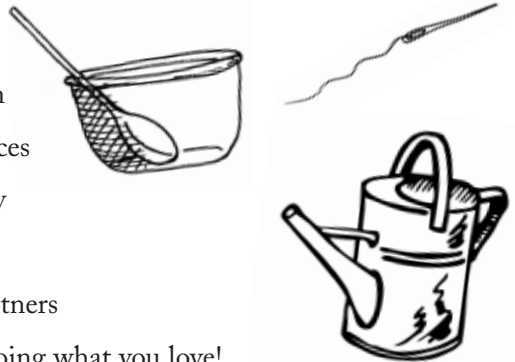
Tell us about your business by posting what you're all about and some pics on Country Living's Facebook wall at [facebook.com/countrylivinguk](https://www.facebook.com/countrylivinguk) or tweet @countrylivinguk

Who is this book for?

This book is for anyone who has a passion, skill or hobby and an interest in turning this into a business. You may be baking cakes for friends and family and dreaming of doing this full time or have a way with words that could be turned into commissions. Maybe you paint or draw and wonder if those who offer praise would be prepared to pay for your creations, or whether your flair for fashion could lead to financial return.

Whatever your talent, it's likely you can turn this into a business with customers paying for the quality products or services you offer. Whether artisan or tailor, writer or baker, what you will discover from this book is how to:

- ★ Make sales beyond friends and family
- ★ Promote your brand and become well known
- ★ Register the company and manage the finances
- ★ Embrace technology to save time and money
- ★ Convey a professional image; online and off
- ★ Create a support network and work with partners



Above all, it shows how to make money from doing what you love!

The book is divided into clear chapters with stories throughout of people who have successfully started and grown their own business; from Alex Gooch who is winning awards for his artisan bread, to Jane Fielding who is selling cushioned love letters across the globe, and Kelly and Kev Brett who have built a business around the family and are now expanding into the corporate world. They all offer their stories and top tips for success.

With clear steps, useful links and expert advice, consider this book your guide as you turn talent into a business, and share it with friends and family who are doing the same!

Contributors

With thanks to the following people who have contributed their expertise or story in the compilation of this book ...

Commissioning Editor

Thanks to Louise Hinchon who acted as Commissioning Editor on this book. Without her, this project would not have happened nor this book be in your hands!

Talent into turnover

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Chapter One

*Making the move from hobby
to business*



COMING UP WITH AN IDEA

When starting a business, the first step is to come up with an idea for what the business will do and on which of your skills it will be based. Many talented people tell me their problem is not coming up with one idea, it's a case of having too many ideas! In which case, bear in mind that a niche business is often the best kind of business.



Niche is nice

Niche is nice! What I mean by this is: craft your hobby, passion or skill so it becomes a product or service that meets the needs of a very well defined audience. For example, a baker focused on producing speciality goods, such as Alex Gooch profiled on page 182, or handmade luxury cards aimed at customers buying for a special occasion which is Aimee Waller's talent, profiled on page 89.

There are two key benefits to having a niche business:

1. You keep marketing costs low, as your audience is well defined; you know where your audience are and you have researched and understand the kind of marketing messages to which they will respond.



2. Customer loyalty remains high, as you become the expert in your field or the only provider of certain products so encouraging customers to return and buy from you to benefit from the specialist product, service or experience you offer.

Turn Your Talent into a Business

Think about how you can fashion your talent into an idea that has a clear purpose for a clearly defined audience.

This book shows how to base a business on what you enjoy making or doing; at the same time, it's important to have an eye on what people will buy. This is reflected in the top tips offered by Emma Henderson (page 101) and Carol Powell (page 23) who say:

“Get your work out there, tell people it's for sale, tell them how much it costs and make sure it's something people will pay for.”

– **Emma Henderson**

“Research is essential. Make sure that there is a market for your product and research whether potential customers are willing to buy what you enjoy making.”

– **Carol Powell**

To solve that issue of having too many ideas, spend time working on them all but focus on the product or service that sells, i.e. let the market dictate the idea that becomes the focus of your attention.

Researching the market

Research your potential customers, the competition and a price point by visiting competitors' sites, online trade sites/forums, reading reports, and seeking intelligence from experts. Look for information that will answer the following questions:

- ★ What is the number of potential customers you can serve, and how do these customers like to be served?
- ★ What are their characteristics, spending patterns and who are their key influencers?
- ★ Who is currently serving your market?
- ★ Where are your potential customers going for their goods and services?

- ★ What do they like about what they're getting and, more importantly, what do they dislike (as this opens up opportunities for you to improve on the status quo)?

In view of the above, is there a business here? Is there room in the market for your business and is the demand there? If so, you then need to start thinking about what price you could charge for your product/service.

Price yourself at a rate that's competitive with other providers in the market, that takes into account the amount of time, personal service and added value you offer, and that will turn a profit at the end of the day!



Talent into turnover

NAME: KATE SHIRAZI

TALENT: BAKING

BUSINESS: CAKEADOODLEDO

Kate Shirazi, a former health visitor and A&E nurse, initially began her cupcake business by baking batches for friends and family, but her business really took off when she was asked to do the cakes for a friend's 50th birthday party.

"Afterwards I started getting orders in from people who had tried the cakes at the party," Kate says. "I was very lucky as most of my business has come through word of mouth. Although I only tend to cater for large events, such as weddings, in Devon, my gift boxes can be sent all over the country."

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The business has expanded to such a rate that every day, Kate's kitchen is lined up with orders. Initially, Kate spent months researching the market and wanted to be able to produce something that tasted as good as it looked. "I bought a cake from a famous London bakery," she says. "For me, it was the pinnacle in design, but when I tasted it I was so disappointed because it was nothing special at all."

As a result of this research, Kate insists on only using the best ingredients, including Green & Black's cocoa and importing her vanilla extract from France, and says that her customers will be able to tell the difference if she used anything else.

In the last couple of years, Kate has grown the business and now works from a separate kitchen attached to her house. All Cakeadoodledo cakes are made to order and entirely bespoke, and Kate has now perfected a system of efficient baking and decorating through investing in new commercial mixers and ovens.

This investment also means that Kate can supply local food retailers with pre-packed gift boxes of cakes.

Kate has also had several baking books published, including *Cupcake Magic*, *Cookie Magic*, *Chocolate Magic*, *Baking Magic* and *Cake Magic*. The Cakeadoodledo Kitchen Linen Range launched in January 2010 and is now being stocked by independent retailers nationwide as well as on sites such as Not On The High Street.

Top tip

"Be prepared to work harder than you ever thought possible and if you really believe in something, stick to your guns. If you have doubts, listen to them."

★ www.cakeadoodledo.co.uk

Research tools

To find answers to your questions and to source information on competitors, visit forums and sites where your potential customers gather and read up on the local competition. Get on Google, follow links posted on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter and find out who's out there and what people are saying about them.

Visit competitor websites and consider buying from them, or using their service, to get an idea of their strong points – and maybe their weaknesses too – so that when you come to set up your business, you know what you like and what you don't like!

Another option is to source primary or firsthand data by conducting a survey, posing questions via social media channels or hitting the streets with a clipboard! This can be a great way of getting information direct from your target audience so when you launch the business you know you are positioning it correctly.

Survey tools

- ★ SurveyMonkey | www.surveymonkey.com
- ★ Wufoo | www.wufoo.com

Social media channels

- ★ Twitter | www.twitter.com
- ★ Facebook | www.facebook.com
- ★ LinkedIn | www.linkedin.com



Turn Your Talent into a Business

Carry out research face-to-face by displaying goods at fairs and markets (*see pages 188–190 for advice on how to go about this*) and complete the market research template below to be sure there's a sufficient market of people to buy your products at a price that will turn a profit.

How big is the market?

What is the number of potential customers I can serve and how do these customers like to be served?

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What are their characteristics, spending patterns and who are their key influencers?

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Who is currently serving my market?

Where are my potential customers currently going for their goods and services?

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What do they like about what they're getting, and, more importantly, what do they dislike?



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What price can I charge for my product/service?

What's competitive and takes into account the amount of time, personal service and added value that I offer?

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TIP: What am I worth?



How much do you think customers or clients would pay for your product or service? To begin with, take a look at how similar offerings are priced and talk to your potential customers about how much they'd be willing to pay. Then talk to suppliers to check you can source materials and deliver at a price that covers your costs and still leaves a margin.

Since starting a business from home will save you lots of money, you can pass some of these savings onto your customers, which could give you an edge over other businesses. However, make sure you don't undercharge for the expertise, talent and knowledge you offer.

Also consider charging less for work that will reflect well on your business and boost your reputation, perhaps in the media or with a credible customer.

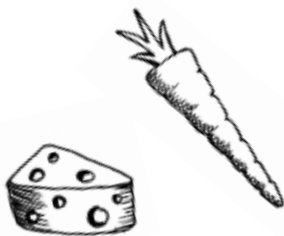
More information on producing and pricing your products can be found in Chapter Three and Chapter Six, and details on how to create a basic cash flow sheet are on page 94.

Friends and family focus group

When moving from hobby to business, friends and family represent a key focus group and your most ardent supporters. Talk through your ideas and ask for feedback on the product/service itself and your qualities in being able to deliver. Joanne Dewberry rightly says on page 25 that you should test products on strangers too but conversations with friends and family will help you prepare an initial SWOT analysis for the business.

SWOT Analysis

With your idea and research in hand, prepare a SWOT analysis. This stands for: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.



Strengths

What are my strengths?

What can I do better than anyone else?

What resources do I have?

What's my unique selling point?



Opportunities

What opportunities do I see?

Does my idea tap into any trends?

Are there any emerging technologies that could help my idea?

Has there been anything in the news related to my idea?

Weaknesses

What are my weaknesses?

What should I avoid?

Where do I lack skills?

What might hinder my success?



Threats

What threats would I face?

Who's my competition?

Does changing technology affect my idea?

Jane Field carried out her market research when she gave Love Letters to her family for Christmas ...



Talent into turnover

NAME: JANE FIELD

TALENT: BUSINESS (AND CRAFTING!)

BUSINESS: JONNY'S SISTER

Jane Field's real passion is for business. Combined with a love of fabrics and interiors, she's successfully created Jonny's Sister, a business selling personalised cushions called Love Letters.

“Both my parents had their own businesses and my three brothers work for themselves so I guess you could say it's in the blood. My earliest memory of business is selling jam jars of bees at the bottom of our drive when I was about 5 years old. It came to a sticky end when a potential customer stopped, got out of his car and, upon inspection of my jars, informed me that they were actually wasps!”

Leaving a high-pressure job in London, Jane moved her young family to the country and took a couple of years off to stay home with the children. She then realised that if she started her own business she could work from home and still be on hand for the family.

“The idea of letters literally came to me, as personalisation was just starting to become popular. I designed the template, got the cushions made up by an upholsterer and then gave them to everyone for Christmas. I watched their faces as they opened them to gauge their reaction. Market research at its best!”

A friend then persuaded Jane to send a Love Letter to the Editor of *Country Living* Magazine. This led to the possibility of Jane's cushions being included in the *Country Living* Emporium, which highlights products for the home and garden. Jane had six weeks to finalise the website, source design protection on the products and get packaging designed and produced in time for her products appearing. On the first day of being profiled in the Emporium, Jane received 17 orders.

“I wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry in panic! Our first customer was a wonderful woman from Wales who bought one for her granddaughter. She is still buying from us today!”

Jane has support in the form of an office manager, a packer and her husband who takes care of company finances. There's also a team of 7 seamstresses who make the products.

“I'm promoting the business and growing sales through encouraging people to visit the website which is the source of most sales. I do this through Google AdWords, attending fairs, sending out a monthly newsletter, donating products to charity events, running competitions, getting featured in magazines, using social media, selling products through third parties (shops and other ecommerce websites) and telling everyone I meet about our great products!”

Jane and the team work from a large log cabin in the grounds of her house. As well as the benefit of a scenic setting, this has meant Jane has always been around when the children are on holiday and still manages (somehow!) to get in a full day's work.

“During the school holidays if the weather prevents camping the children will often sleep out in the cabin with friends, especially as we have a huge cutting table that doubles up as a table tennis table!”

Jane plans to continue growing the business over the next 12 months with help from friends and experts. She is a big believer in accepting you can't be great at everything and to



Turn Your Talent into a Business

concentrate on what you're good at and ask someone who has been there and done it to help in weaker areas.

“Equally as important, though, is that once you're up and running and have some experience under your belt, you should offer to do the same. We are all in this together and the sooner people realise that the sharing of experience is a positive exercise, then the more successful we will all be in business.”

Top tip

“Have a USP (unique selling point), stand out from the crowd and dare to be different!”

★ www.jonnysister.co.uk | @jonnysister

The name game

Coming up with an idea and carrying out research will get you thinking about what to name your new baby (by which I mean your business!). If you are selling your knowledge the company may be named after you, for example, ‘Emma Jones Advisory Services’, in which case, job done. But if that's not appropriate, think of a name that:

- ★ is easy to spell
- ★ is not already registered with Companies House (you can use a free webcheck service to access existing company names at www.companieshouse.gov.uk) or trademarked
- ★ people will remember
- ★ has an available domain name.



You might want to protect the name with a trademark to make sure that no one else can take it in the future. *See page 49 for more information.*

If you get stuck, visit Enterprise Nation (www.enterprisenation.com) where you will find people who can help you win the name game, as the site is buzzing with talented copywriters and wordsmiths.

Carol Powell named her company Re-jigged as it rightly describes what she offers; clothes recycled and re-jigged to become new and stylish garments ...



Talent into turnover

NAME: CAROL POWELL
TALENT: SEWING
BUSINESS: RE-JIGGED



Carol Powell has always had a talent for sewing and a passion for fashion design.

“I learnt to sew when I was very young and at five years old made dolls clothes engineered from scraps of fabrics and tried to sell them in a local sweet shop! Whilst at school, I took a Saturday job working in a fabric shop and then worked for a local interior designer. Both jobs gave me great experience in cutting fabrics and making clothes. This experience stood me in good stead for Re-jigged.”

The beginnings of the company came about when Carol made a dress for her daughter from an old jumper with holes in the sleeves and a shirt Carol couldn't bear to throw out.

Turn Your Talent into a Business

When other mums started to comment on the beautiful design, Carol thought she should make some more! In 2009, Carol's talent was turned into a fully-fledged business, creating employment for local mums and helping others with every sale.

“Before launching, I contacted lots of national charities in order to source unwanted, unusable garments. I wanted clothes that were damaged and of no use to charity shops and eventually decided to support local causes. I also wanted to give something back to those that support me, so in return for clothing donations, for every garment I sell, Re-jigged donates money to charities, schools and groups.”

Children from the area are benefiting in other ways as Carol has launched sewing classes to help retain the skills of sewing and embroidery and inspire young people to make the most of their own creative talents.

In a further expansion, Carol is producing kits so customers can create their own Re-jigged clothes. It's a sensible way to scale the business.

“Making one garment takes a long time and is labour intensive and ideally I'd like more people to benefit from Re-jigged clothing, so we have launched our first kit which is a 'Tank top in a tin' that comes with a needle, thread, wool and instructions on how to make your own garment. These are selling fast and are much quicker to produce than us hand-sewing the garment ourselves.”

Carol promotes the business through social media and directs people to her professional, well-designed website. She also enters awards such as The Pitch in which she was a 'Best New Business 2010' finalist. Carol encourages people to sign up for her email newsletter so she can keep in regular contact with existing and prospective clients.

The business is run from a granary on the side of Carol's family farmhouse in Herefordshire so this business owner remains on hand to be full-time mum. It's a way of life which has been re-jigged to perfection!

Top tip

“Research is essential. Make sure there is a market for your product and research whether potential customers are willing to buy what you enjoy making.”

★ www.re-jigged.co.uk | @rejigged

Useful link

★ The Pitch | www.thepitch2011.com

See page 181 for details of other awards to enter (including Country Living Magazine's own Kitchen Table Talent Awards!).

Top tips for launching your craft business

Joanne Dewberry, founder of Charlie Moo's (www.charliemoos.co.uk) and author of *Crafting a Successful Small Business* (www.brightwordpublishing.com) provides her top tips to launching your craft business.

1. **Start with something you know** (you can develop other skills behind the scenes). This way you can be confident and know the products are of a suitable quality.
2. **Decide where you will sell**, whether that's on or offline, craft fairs and/or websites.
3. **Research what others are making**, where they sell, the prices they sell at and how they are branded and marketed. Find out if you need any information on your products' packaging. Do they need testing? Do you need any certification? Food or natural products will need ingredients listing, kitchens will need to be inspected by environmental health, toys will need CE testing for health and safety. Make sure you know all of this.

Turn Your Talent into a Business

4. **Pricing is vital.** You have to take everything into consideration; factor in waste, shipping, equipment, advertising, utilities such as the internet, electricity, telephones, time and your hourly wage.
5. **Test the market.** Get your products in front of others. Find out what they like, don't like, etc. Talk to family members, bearing in mind they are normally well meaning and may not provide the helpful criticism you need so test on strangers too – a market is a good starting place.
6. **Have fun** – that's why you started in the first place!

The franchise option

Consider buying into a franchise or direct selling opportunity that enables you to develop your hobby/skill whilst being self-employed and benefiting from being part of an entrepreneurial team that provides you with templates, branding, training and help with finances.



Whether your passion is gardening, music, homewares or hospitality, there's a franchise opportunity for you! Five are listed here; you can find 45 more in '50 Fantastic Franchises'. For more information visit www.brightwordpublishing.com/50fantasticfranchises

- ★ Jamie at Home – perfect for anyone with an interest in kitchen and dining accessories, events are held in the homes of friends and their network of friends. | www.jamieathome.com
- ★ Girlie Gardening – green fingers, step forward! Become a Girlie Gardening franchisee and you'll be selling Welly Warmers and gardening gloves to those who spend ample time in the herbaceous borders! | www.girliegardening.com

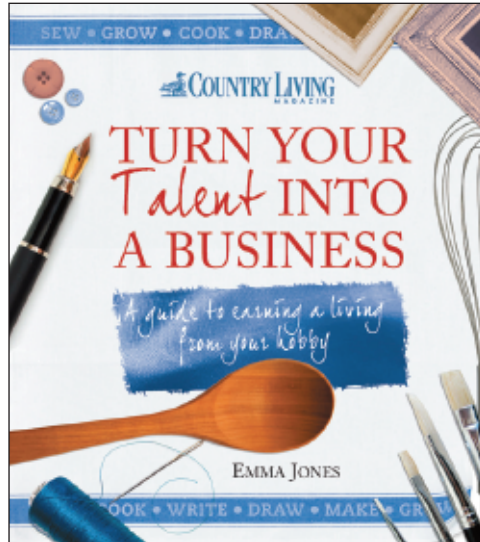
- ★ Neal's Yard Remedies – if selling organic natural health and beauty products is your idea of heaven, this is the opportunity for you to make money and make a difference to customers. | www.nyroorganic.com
- ★ Best in Glass – believing that staying in is the new going out, Best in Glass launched to offer entrepreneurial individuals with an appreciation of wine and spirits an opportunity to become consultants and sell products at parties. Perfect for the party lover! | www.best-in-glass.co.uk
- ★ Music Bugs – run music and singing classes for children as part of the Music Bugs franchise. Franchisees experience high demand for their award-winning sessions and with exclusive and generous territories up for grabs, there has never been a better time to join their friendly and supportive team. | www.musicbugs.co.uk



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