

"I turned my hobby into a business" 1.

By Brian Wheeler

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Many people dream of quitting the nine-to-five and turning their hobby into business. BBC News Online spoke to one woman who took the plunge.

Running a small business can be hard enough at the best of times. But when you are dealing with a product or service you care about passionately, the problems can multiply. It is difficult to retain a sense of detachment vital for sensible business decisions when all you can really focus on is the quality of the product. The plus side is that you will be likely to devote even more passion and commitment into making sure you get it right.

Necessity was the mother of invention for single mum-of- three Ann Herbert. ^{she} decided to turn ^{her} hobby into a business after having been made redundant from a well-paid job in marketing. ^{she} has always loved painting and had recently bought a large format digital printer to help with work, which ^{she} occasionally hired out to artists friends 'for pin money'.

News of ^{my} Ann's service spread through word-of-mouth and the internet, eventually enabling ^{her} to turn it into a full-time business, Photoartistry Ltd. Two years later, the experience has made ^{me} look at ^{my} passion for art in a new light. "It is all the more important to me now that I am doing it full-time. If I don't get it right there is a danger I won't survive".

^{she} has to pay rent on a small business unit, and has two members of staff to pay each month. But " I don't think it has taken the fun out of it. It is my brainchild, it's what I do. I have the freedom to determine the action I want to go in. And it's nice to see when you make a strategic decision and it all works out how you planned. The scary thing is, I have to make a living out of it. You have to have a lot of drive and determination to make it work".

The next stage is to expand ^{my} her customer base, increase the product portfolio and, "make a bit of money".