



At the risk of sounding like a wannabe beauty queen, one of my main reasons for becoming my own boss was wanting to make a positive difference in the world. Being a sole trader, everything I use and do is completely my decision. I bank with Smile so my savings aren't funding the arms trade etc., buy fair trade, recycled and earth / animal / people friendly products and services wherever possible.

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HOW TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE BY BECOMING A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR



I also consider each job I take very carefully. To coach my clients effectively, I need to be able to fully support their goals. I also offer a 5 per cent discount to clients who are

working to improve the world in some way through their business or creative endeavours. And as a freelance writer, I only take on the kind of work (journalism or copywriting) that I can feel good about.

More and more people are realising that by starting their own businesses, they can live more congruently than they could ever hope within a large corporation.

Entrepreneur, author and publisher of the Winning Ways newsletter (www.barbarawinter.com/winning_ways.htm), Barbara Winter agrees. She says, "I am wildly optimistic about this growing movement of social entrepreneurship. It's popping up all over the world and is making a profound difference in the lives of people.

"Paul Hawken said, 'If you want to change

the world, don't join the Peace Corps. Start a business.' I think people who want to be change agents often come to the conclusion that business is a perfect vehicle for that. And in the past couple of decades we've had some glorious examples of how that can be done through the way in which people like Dame Anita Roddick and Ben & Jerry's have used their businesses to support causes they care about.

"Helping people discover their passions and turn them into creative enterprises adds to the total happiness of the world. One of our most under-utilised natural resources is human creativity. The more people who are making their own unique contributions, the better. Entrepreneurs often serve as accidental role models providing a living example of another way of being in the world.

"Of course, a business provides ample opportunity to exercise values such as integrity, community building, generosity and helping others succeed. For instance, besides delighting thousands of people every day with their stunning shows, Cirque du Soleil also run a programme for street kids using acrobatics to build confidence and trust.

"Since one of my major missions is to fan the entrepreneurial spirit, I also support causes such as Heifer International who help others start their own little businesses. And I encourage my readers and seminar participants to do the same, depending on their personal values. First of all, get really clear about your personal values and then get creative about finding ways to incorporate them into your daily activities. And as Marianne Williamson points out, people who are involved in the solution don't feel so pessimistic about the problems facing our world.

"Pay attention to how other entrepreneurs incorporate their values and be inspired by that. If you're a really small business, you'll be operating on a smaller scale than the Body Shop, but that doesn't make the contribution less important."

Cornwall based entrepreneur, Amy Brennan, says, "FindaReflexologist.com was formed because I wanted to use my knowledge of advertising and marketing to help promote reflexologists and reflexology as a whole. By getting as many reflexologists to be part of FindaReflexologist.com, I have been able to use their membership fee to advertise them on a much larger scale.

“I BUILT MY BUSINESS TO BE A REFLECTION OF THIS BIGGER INTENT. NOW I USE MY EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS ME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO OTHERS EVERY DAY”

“Putting your values into your business should be instinctive. That’s what’s so wonderful about running your own business - everything you do is down to you. You are accountable so you can run your business exactly how you want and can link up with organisations you feel strongly about promoting.” They have linked with the Eden Project and recently encouraged reflexologists across the UK to offer free taster sessions at Macmillan’s World’s Biggest Coffee Morning event.

Working for corporations had left Amy feeling that she “was churning out ideas and work that would ultimately be diluted because so many other factors were involved. If you don’t believe in what you are doing or promoting, you have to do it anyway because that’s what you are employed to do. Putting my values into my business practice is what gives my work true meaning. All the hard work pays off because everything you do is how you want to do it. You can be very environmentally friendly with the way you run your own office space (recycling and minimum power use etc.).”

Wellbeing Network founder Neil Davidson says, “I try to make as big a difference as I can within the areas I can influence. At a certain stage of my life, I realised that acquiring stuff was not the be all and end all. To get a true sense of achievement, I want to know that I can make a difference to others and help to create a world that is a little bit more inspired, a little bit kinder and one which connects people at a level where we can support one another to achieve our purpose.

“So I built my business to be a reflection of this bigger intent. Now I use my experience and skills in a way that allows me to make a difference to others every day. One of the most valuable lessons I have learnt is that the quality of my life is directly related to the quality of life I can help create for others.

“The Wellbeing Network is a commercial venture but one which empowers people to express their values and make a good living from them at the same time. My team have created a truly effective network of people who work together and support one another to achieve their goals in many areas such as health, career and relationships.

“My biggest contribution has been creating a financial model that supports those involved and makes it work not just at an altruistic level, but at a practical one too. That is the only way it can grow around the world - which is my ultimate vision.

“Our website, www.wellbeingnetwork.co.uk, allows amazing interactions between like-minded people. Then our local clubs follow though with physical meeting places. The world is so full of richness and new opportunities but many people never get to savour them. We want that to change for the better.

“If your values are not built into your business, you are unlikely to find fulfilment or success. When you harness values to skill and hard work, you have a powerful combination that not only affects your own life, but attracts and expands the possibilities for those around you.

“If you look at almost any great success or achievement, it is inevitably linked to someone on a mission. Your mission comes alive when what you do is inseparable from who you are. Follow your values every time and ensure that they are at your core. It is simply a decision to choose an enriching path. It can be very practical and profitable too and there is nothing wrong with that. It involves courage and trusting yourself to make sure you become the hero in your own story. We are all much stronger and more capable than, at times, we believe we are.”

So whether you’re a webdesigner, printer, restaurateur or importer, take that first step by thinking of the kinds of values you would like to bring into your work.

Charity work - For some, a first step might be thinking about the kinds of charities you’d like to support with greater profits. Realising that bigger profits mean bigger donations for them can really inspire you to get more business.

Pro bono - And if you’re not yet in as much profit as you’d like, you can apply the same creativity as you’re applying to your marketing and sales budget to making the world a better place. Can you do some pro bono work on a regular basis?

Could you sponsor local events?

Ben & Jerry’s share free ice cream at various community events and this is great publicity for them too. Think about your local community and let your mind wander.

Join a network

If working alone feels overwhelming, have you considered joining with other businesses to do something for your neighbourhood?

Create a personal mission statement

This can be for your eyes only but making it public (on your website, perhaps) will help you to attract the right customers and clients. Keeping it close to your desk can be a great motivational tool too.

Be ethical in all your dealings

Offer the best products and services possible at all times. And be scrupulously honest with your tax return and all other dealings to make sure that you’re really walking your talk.

Make a list - Spend a few minutes listing all the things you can do with your business to make the world a better place. Schedule them into your diary so they’re not just thoughts and make this kind of strategising a part of your regular work.

Further resources:

To find out how Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield transformed their traditional hippy values into profit, read their delightful *Ben and Jerry’s Double Dip: Lead with your values and make money, too* (Simon & Schuster, 1997).

Paul Hawken’s *Growing a Business* (Simon and Schuster, 1987).

Anita Roddick’s *Business as Unusual* (Anita Roddick Publications, 2005).

Nobel prize winner Mohammad Yunus *Banker to the Poor* (Aurum Press, 2003).

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