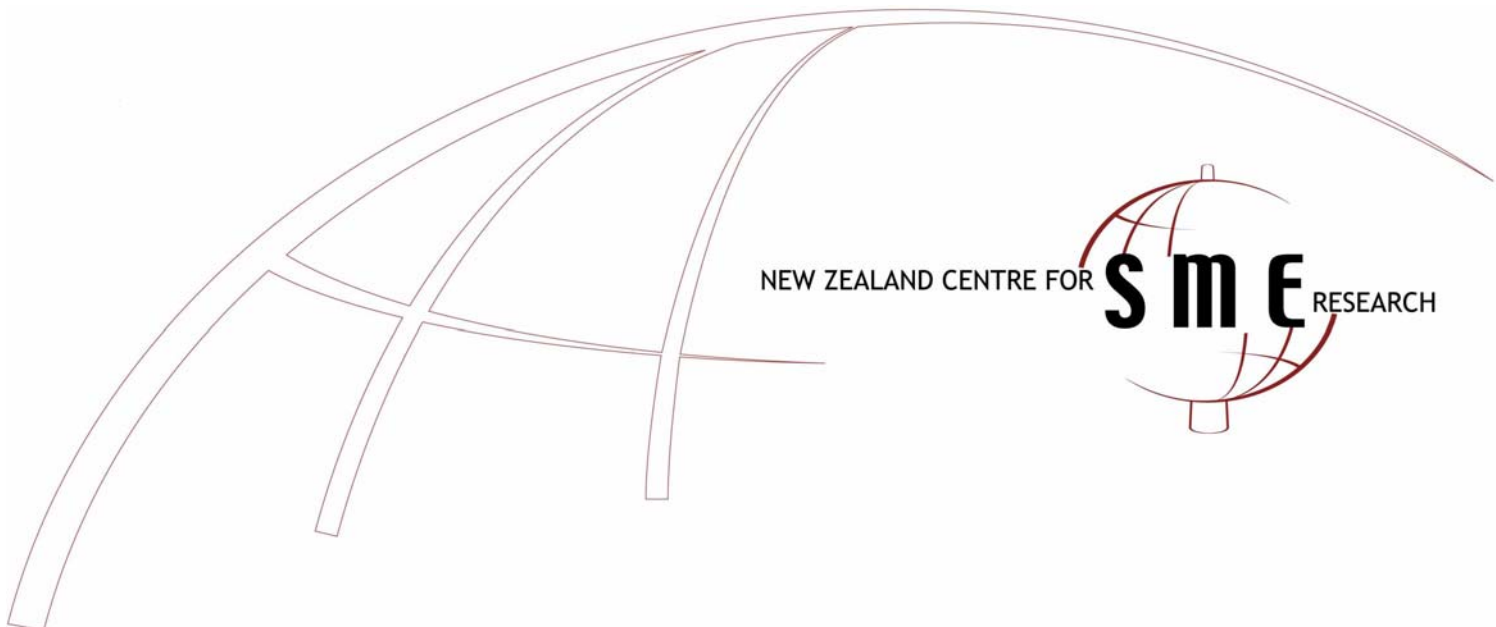


PROFILING YOUNG NEW ZEALAND ENTREPRENEURS

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Introduction

This report contains 17 profiles written on young entrepreneurs throughout New Zealand.

It has been written by Kate Lewis from the New Zealand Centre for Small and Medium Enterprise Research at Massey University in Wellington. Kate responded to a Request For Proposals from the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD), which outlined a project to inform work by MYD in the area of supporting and promoting young entrepreneurs. The project was designed to develop profiles of a number of young entrepreneurs in order to better understand the experiences and factors that have shaped their decisions and successes.

The 17 participants in the project were identified largely from publicly available information and selected on the basis of a number of criteria:

- they represented a variety of personal characteristics (e.g. ethnicity and geographic location)
- they represented a variety of business characteristics (e.g. size in terms of employees, turnover and industry sector)
- they started a business under the age of 30 and were still under 30, or near to 30 in age, at the time of the interview.

Each prospective interviewee was approached by e-mail and invited to participate in the project. If the response to the e-mail was positive, a time was made to meet with the individual and carry out a semi-structured interview. The interview questions were then translated into headings appropriate for creating a profile template on which to write up each interview. The headings and relevant questions pertaining to each are included as Appendix A.

The average length of the interviews was 45 minutes. Each interviewee was also asked to provide a photograph that they were happy for MYD to use publicly. The majority of participants did so. Permission to use the interview material and photographs was obtained by written consent. Each interviewee was also given the opportunity to check their profile for accuracy and recommend any changes they desired.

Profile: Carly Ave

INTRODUCING...

Young Māori entrepreneur Carly Ave is currently based in Hamilton and works full time in her home-based graphic design and photography firm *Marino Design*. She started the business in November 2002 at age 24. Carly's criteria for success in self-employment is "happiness first and foremost" and then "maintaining a balance" in her life. This is a particularly important challenge for her given she is married with three children. Currently relying on casual labour and outside contractors to grow her business, Carly would one day like her business "to be internationally recognised."

ONCE UPON A TIME...

As a trained art teacher, Carly found that the job lacked the passionate attachment she hoped for in her work life. Therefore, when her husband suggested she try self-employment, she thought "why not." Starting out selling designer t-shirts, she soon realised that the market recognised her product as "cool and different" and that she would have little difficulty attracting customers.

After five years of tertiary study Carly's "family nearly died" when they found out about her plans to start her own business. "I had just spent so much money on a student loan...and then there was this hare-brained idea of taking t-shirts to the markets...It wasn't until my parents came down one weekend...and watched me sell \$2000 worth of t-shirts in one day that they suddenly realised - well maybe she's not so silly after all!...They had to see me in action before they actually thought it was okay."

Whilst not entrepreneurial from an early age, Carly describes herself as "walking to the beat of a different drum." For her this meant realising that she was never going to 'fit' into a nine-to-five kind of job – and in fact would not really be the kind of person who would be employable in that kind of role. "I don't think I would have fitted into your normal sort of job so I had to create my own and be my own boss."

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

After focusing largely on arts-oriented subjects at school, Carly went on to tertiary study at the University of Waikato. She graduated with a Bachelor of Education and Diploma of Teaching (secondary school with a major in visual arts).

THE HARD YARDS...

Carly describes herself as "still developing" in terms of her business skills. But, since starting her own business, she has completed some training courses through the Hamilton City Council's Business Development Unit. She has found these valuable as they include "people coming in from all different business sectors and you learn from their mistakes...the learning is really hands on and practical." Up until then, Carly was self-taught when it came to business skills such as business planning and e-commerce. "It's been self-taught because I couldn't afford to employ anybody else to do it...I really did this business on a shoe-string budget to start with...I mean

tax...the business plan...I did myself. I mean there was a few tears involved and frustration because I'm an artist not a writer!"

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

In terms of her career as a self-employed person, Carly is most proud of people wearing her shirts. "When you see someone walking down the street with your t-shirt on and they don't even know that you made it...and they walk down the street and they look really lovely in it."

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

For Carly, one mistake she thinks self-employed people can potentially make is lacking confidence in themselves. One of the hardest things for her was to really believe in herself, but that is where her husband, friends and family have helped.

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

For Carly the best thing about being self-employed is the challenge of being her own boss. Conversely, the worst is "having to, when you're having a down time, really push yourself. You've just got no one else to say - well come on you've got to do this...you can't be irresponsible, it all relies on you."

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

The message Carly would give to other young people thinking about being self-employed is "only do it if you really love it. If you're only half pie about it but you think it will be a good business don't bother about it...But, if you love it and you want to make a business of it then definitely do it."

Profile: Josh Campbell

INTRODUCING...

Josh Campbell is good at multi-tasking. Currently studying at the New Zealand Graduate School of Education in Christchurch, he also has his own business *ZYPE*. He works on the business part-time, along with the contractors he uses to draw in more work. Based around the notion of improving industry standards for web design, *ZYPE* is just one of three businesses that Josh has an ownership stake in. Success for Josh in self-employment is tied up with the notion of freedom: "I've had the freedom to make my own decisions about who I was going to work with and the way I was going to work, and that was huge for me... Money's never motivated me unfortunately, so I'm not particularly worried about financial income...but having the name of *ZYPE* out there and describing me as the web standards guru guy...that is quite nice to hear."

ONCE UPON A TIME...

The idea for *ZYPE* came to Josh as a result both of doing a degree in design studies and from his "previous employment experience...looking at really bad design...and trying to apply a process to that."

In a nutshell he started his own business because "I got sick of idiots telling me what to do!" That attitude has earned him the self-attributed title of "oddball" among his friends and family because none of them are self-employed. Josh remembers looking at the option of working for someone else and thinking "I don't want to work for someone 'til I die." Despite that, he does admit that he hasn't "dreamed about being self-employed" all his life.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

After spending time in Norway on a school exchange during his final year at school, Josh went on to graduate from the University of Otago with a Bachelor of Arts. During his degree he focused on "the design process and the application of the process...so we did just about everything from graphic design to theatre production to ergonomics... I didn't appreciate it at the time, but now I do!"

THE HARD YARDS...

"I think my design skills are the most important...knowing what I can do and how to do it, really does make it easy to sell yourself to people...You can do it - not just talk it...My ability to fake confidence has also stood me in good stead at many a meeting!" Josh feels he has picked up other business skills the hard way – by learning as he goes and from others (for example, the accountant he uses). In terms of skills he wants to learn to make him better at what he does, Josh would like "to learn a little bit more about employees and employing people full-time."

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

"I'm actually pretty proud of the whole business that I've built...There is something about the *ZYPE* brand that I developed that was just a little different from the usual web design company...it's more designer than

geek...it's not about computers, it's about fun people having some fun, being a bit silly about it all, not taking the web too seriously!"

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

Josh describes his biggest mistake while being in business as being "to do with buying into the hype about what makes a good business and trying to grow too quickly...the result being you put so much pressure on yourself that you actually do a bad job. Everything you read about business at the moment is all about growth and being the biggest, the best, the nastiest... you've got to be exporting or you've got to be doing this and seriously, we went down a whole road of looking at product development for overseas markets, and sort of concluded that we want to design stuff for New Zealanders to use - to be local."

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

The best thing about being self-employed for Josh is freedom: "Freedom to do what you want when you want to do it – for example, the ability to work from home." The flip side he says is "money – or lack thereof!"

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Josh would tell another young person thinking about starting up a business to "be sure and think hard about what you are going to do before you make the jump...think hard about your direction and then go for it!"

INTRODUCING...

Managing Director of *Canary Data Solutions Ltd*, Mike Clist started his company in 2000 when he was 21 years old. Auckland based, the firm is a software development house that provides highly-specialised software applications to New Zealand businesses in a variety of industries and sectors including government, manufacturing, and health. The company has a growing track record, and employs 7 full-time developers. With a “good platform and visibility”, Mike’s goal for the business is “strong growth in terms of revenue, staff and products.” Satisfaction for him in self-employment is “the growth of the business, delivering on promises, developing products, and providing employment...there are so many places you can derive satisfaction from in running your own business.”

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Both Mike and his brother each own their own businesses. Mike describes his family (his father especially, having worked in the comfort of steady employment himself) as being extremely encouraging in terms of his business endeavours. But, Mike knew right from his childhood that starting his own company was what he would end up doing.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

“I’ve had a background in doing this type of thing for a long time, since I was a wee tyke even at primary school... I remember writing a little enterprise management system when I was at high school which is still in use today!” Mike was also involved in the Young Enterprise Scheme at college, and helped the team win a trip to Singapore as Young Enterprise Company of the Year.

After school (where Mike also did well academically, achieving Dux status at his college) he studied for degrees in engineering and commerce at the University of Auckland. Committed to lifelong learning, Mike is still studying now (with an interest in languages) whilst running his business.

THE HARD YARDS...

“I think it mostly comes down to persistence. There are people who do things and there are people who have to be told to get things done. I’m a bit of a self-starter in that regard.” Learning the legal and compliance side of business has been a challenge Mike has enjoyed. He considers managing people to be an under-rated skill. “In terms of keeping people motivated and managing problems as they come up - I’ve had to learn quickly - there are a lot of things that perhaps women are better at than men in terms of understanding and getting into other people’s shoes.”

“There are definitely things that I could improve on...but I think one of the things you find with people who are going into business on their own is that they tend to be all-rounders - and if they aren’t, they quickly become so because they have to be.”

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

“Due to the nature of our business we get involved in a lot of very interesting projects” and that diversity gives Mike a real buzz. There is huge satisfaction for him in the completion of a project.

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

“I haven’t got one biggest mistake...they’re not so much mistakes as learning experiences. Everything we’ve done wrong we have certainly gone on and learnt from.”

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

“I’ll tell you one big misconception. People think when you go into business, the best thing is that you won’t have a boss to answer to. But you’ve actually got 50 bosses; you’ve got your clients for a start. The best thing for me is the satisfaction, and I think that’s key.” Caught up in the excitement of work, the challenge for Mike in being self-employed is the conscious effort required to maintain work-life balance.

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

In terms of advice for other young people looking to start their own business, Mike says “go for it”, but urges that it is important to remember that in the real world of self-employment “as the boss you’ll be the last person to get paid. Your employees will always get their money - you won’t...You carry the risk yourself...and your clients and your employees are dependent on you.”

Profile: Jenene Crossan

INTRODUCING...

Young entrepreneur Jenene Crossan started her business *nzgirl Ltd* in 1999 at the age of 21. The online magazine (www.nzgirl.co.nz) has a target market of women aged 16-29. Based in Auckland and run from her home, the business employs three people full-time and outsources other work to contractors. No longer sole shareholder in the company, Jenene still maintains her role as Managing Director, whilst also having part ownership in two other businesses (including *18 Limited*, a youth market research business).

Already “world famous in New Zealand”, the future for *nzgirl* looks exciting and Jenene is setting her sights on “taking the brand that we’ve built and finding ways to further expand into new areas; capitalise on our growth.” She would also like to create best practice in terms of online media technology: “We have an opportunity to support and grow the industry further.”

For Jenene, success in self-employment means a diverse range of things, including “enjoying the lifestyle that comes with working for yourself. I’m an entrepreneur at heart. I’m always thinking of new things to do... I like to create new rules...and to challenge the status quo. So for me...success is about being able to be recognised as a person that actually does that successfully.” In terms of *nzgirl*, for Jenene that means acknowledging that there will be a time for moving on from the business - when she can successfully step out of her role and provide return on investment for shareholders.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

The youngest of seven, Jenene grew up in a large family. Whilst the word bossy had negative connotations as a young person, it is something Jenene admits to being described as, especially by her brothers. “I didn’t realise the understanding of the word bossy...as a teenager it always had a bad connotation to me...but I grew up and realised that I could use this trait to my advantage!”

Jenene also had an entrepreneurial streak right from a young age. “My first company I set up was at the age of 8...It was called JAG - Jenene Amber & Greer...a car wash company and we went round the neighbourhood charging people \$5 to wash their car...we did okay!”

Jenene attributes this bent towards being enterprising to her parents, who are entrepreneurial. “I knew that I could do anything if I had the right kind of attitude.”

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Jenene left school at age 16 after glandular fever kept her out of school for the majority of the year. Then a job she had in the summer holidays gave her a taste for working in the real world. “...much to my parents horror, I left school...my Mum made me promise that if I was allowed to leave school...I would have to go to University two years later.”

Jenene's first job was for eight months as a data analyst in Auckland. "I was bored to tears of data inputting really, but I really enjoyed the computer side of things, it was a language that I understood."

That stimulated her to go and study some computer papers at tertiary level. But, unexcited by programming, she instead decided to travel overseas. Upon returning to New Zealand she took up a role at the head office of Nike. After two years she had made a role for herself as Special Projects Manager. "Most of my job was working with our computer systems and educating our teams on creating new practices in amongst the organisation." After a restructure saw staffing levels slashed at the company, Jenene, aged 19, moved on to a job in web development as an Account Manager. That company experienced a surge in growth and was eventually bought out by an even larger company.

At this stage, Jenene felt like she had reached the "ceiling" of where she was going to go in the corporate world without any formal qualifications. "I just had an insightful moment where I...remember distinctly driving down the motorway one day and feeling like I was on the edge of something but I didn't know what it was...a couple of weeks later the idea for *nzgirl* was formulated."

THE HARD YARDS...

"I think a major part of being self employed is that you do have to have that kind of personality that you do believe in yourself to go and get on with it...You have to get over the whole tall poppy syndrome and all the other things because you're going to meet those people every day who just can't get their head around that they've got a 20 something year old girl in front of them trying to tell them how they should do it...and they're not going to like it."

"What I've had to learn...through my own university of life...is to be disciplined...to maintain focus and to not go off on tangents...to have patience...and to realise that you're going to have to deal with people that you don't necessarily like." Jenene also is quick to find people who have the skills that she doesn't so that she can bring them in to assist her with the business. For example, her business partner is an expert at the financial side of the business, which she admits "isn't my strong point! I prefer to get on with the marketing and business aspects of my company and leave that to the experts who I trust."

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

"The sort of thing I'm proud of is the example of last Friday when an agency called me and said we are pitching to an online business on Monday, it's a multi million dollar account and we want Australasia's biggest expert in online media to come across to join us and we think its you."

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

Employing other people in the business has been the area that has given Jenene the biggest "bumps in the road" in terms of being self-employed. "We've had a couple of really major employment issues that we've had to work through and it makes you appreciate when you get to the point where the team you've got is the one that would walk over fire for you and vice versa...I appreciate that so much."

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

The best thing about being self-employed for Jenene are the perks that go with the type of business she has created “I’ve got to say I do have the best job in the world...I get to go to the coolest things – concerts and movies...and see and try the coolest products first... I couldn’t have picked a better industry to set up my own business in.”

Conversely, the worst thing about being self-employed for Jenene is the fact that “you are totally and utterly self reliant...you can’t just sort of sit back and go oh well somebody else can pay me this month and that will be fine.”

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

“Do your research” is the best piece of advice Jenene would give another young person thinking about starting up their own business. Being able to say “hey, I need a hand with this” is also something she thinks is important to be able to do too.

Profile: Garth Davis

INTRODUCING...

At age 24, Garth Davis started his Auckland based firm *Digital Media Distribution* with his brother, Shaun. Web development and music downloads are the firm's key business activities and both the brothers work in the business full-time. As Creative Director, Garth's goal is to make the business "the main digital superstore of New Zealand." With the company still in its first year of business, Garth's workload is high. He looks forward to the time when as a self-employed person he can say "oh, it's Friday, let's go out to lunch" and the money will still be rolling in.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

With a self-employed dad, Garth has had a role model to aspire to in terms of self-employment. It helped create in him the philosophy that self-employment was a "nice way to work" and prompt him to ask the question: "why would you work hard to make someone else rich?" In terms of starting up the business, Garth feels certain that he would never have done it without the input of his brother Shaun.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

After pursuing science subjects coupled with art and photography at school, Garth completed a Bachelor of Computing Systems at Unitec. After working a series of part time jobs whilst studying, Garth came to self-employment prepared to work really hard, especially after struggling to find work for 18 months after completing his degree.

THE HARD YARDS...

"Being information technology savvy" is something that Garth has found invaluable in terms of running his business. He also considers effective relationship building skills to be critical to being successfully self-employed.

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Garth feels proud when he meets people who have bought music off the company website and he can tell them that he started the business. "The majority of my mates are either trades-people or nine to fivers who generally dislike their jobs...whereas I'm usually saying I can't wait to get back into the office and check the progress on the business."

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

So far Garth hasn't has any 'bumps in the road' with the business..."yet" he admits.

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

For Garth the best thing about being self-employed is the "coolness" of the product he works on through the business: "the new technology in music and all that." What he dislikes about self-employment so far is "the lack of money...it's a struggle, but I think it'll be worthwhile in the end."

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Garth would tell another young person thinking about starting a business to “not drop everything and jump into it...I mean it’s great to be excited about it and have a great idea. But, you really need to write stuff down and go okay, what’s the viability of this and where can we get funding?”

INTRODUCING...

Peter Dixon started his business, *The Church*, in 2000 at age 21. Based in Wellington, with a branch in Auckland, the business has 10 staff and produces graphic design, posters, print work, CDs, websites and photographic work. Peter's ultimate dream for the business "is to have an office in every capital city of the world." However, he does also add that "...we don't want to get big. We want to maintain a small niche company that's just doing really good work... I guess the goal is just continually driving the work and the standards of work...we've grown pretty much double in size every year that we've existed...so we're at a point now where we just need to kind of consolidate."

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Unsure of what he wanted to do after school, Peter went straight to work at a company called Project Adventure. "I was kind of just doing business administration type work and then one day I got asked to find out how much it would be to get a brochure designed... I said I could probably do it for them because I did design at secondary school...they agreed and I started from there."

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

That first job led Peter to decide to commence studying while working as a freelance designer. "I really enjoyed it. It's creative...I was good at talking to people and so that's what I did...and my freelance business kept on growing."

Eventually Peter graduated from Victoria University with a double degree: a Bachelor of Commerce and Administration (majoring in marketing and management) and a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in Geography). *The Church* came to life as part of a class during his final year at university for which Peter had to come up with a business idea. "The class was essentially to come up with a business idea and either establish the company, and run it for the period of the course, or write a full business plan for it."

THE HARD YARDS...

"Not taking set backs as a final destination" and lateral thinking are two characteristics that have helped Peter to remain successfully self-employed. He also feels customer focus is hugely important. "I get a big kick out of knowing people have been satisfied through the work that we've done for them. So I pride myself on trying to go the extra mile for my clients."

"What skills do I not have? I know that I'm generous to a fault... I need to learn to decide when to walk away from a situation. I don't do that very well and probably there have been a few situations that I've created more mess by staying in it and trying to get the best result for everybody rather than just saying no."

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Peter feels proud when his clients are happy with the work they have received. “It’s about achieving the balance between pushing it creatively and fulfilling the brief.”

He is also really proud of “the impact that we have had on our young creatives and the industry in general...I’m also really proud of having people approach us because they see us as the experts for youth-targeted design in New Zealand. I’m proud of the brand and I’m really proud of the team that we’ve got here.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

“I think in retrospect maybe growing too fast. But, we’ve survived and so it’s not a mistake...one of the other things that was definitely a mistake was not spending enough time sorting out the legalities of the business...we got burned by a client because we hadn’t spent the time establishing terms and conditions.”

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

“Everything is such a double-edged sword, it completely depends where you are...like in some situations you’d say the best thing about it is the autonomy and ability to be able to do what you want to do, but in other situations this is the worst thing - you miss learning from somebody that’s there as your manager.”

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Peter advises that young people thinking of starting up their own business should be very clear about why they are doing it. “I see it as two reasons, one is doing it for lifestyle or the other is doing it because you’ve got something that’s really unique and you’re able to take it to a market. If you’ve got one of these as your goal – go for it!”

Profile: Melissa Evans

INTRODUCING...

Melissa Evans owns and runs the company *3D Concepts* with her husband Grant. Based in Rotorua, the business was founded in 2001 when Melissa was 26. The core business activities of the firm are web development, 3D animation and multimedia graphics for television and the Internet. Growing the firm is a key objective for Melissa. "Eventually we would like to employ people that can manage the business without us being here...then ultimately we would like to sell it off and invest in other things."

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Growing up with self-employed parents, Melissa is of the opinion that some of those inclinations have been passed on to her. She attributes the idea of starting up *3D Concepts* to her husband. "He decided to take that leap and I was just supporting him...but I don't ever want to go back to working for someone else and that's what's keeping me going."

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Melissa is currently working towards finishing a Bachelor of Science majoring in information systems from Massey University. She finds her study relevant to running her business as well. "It is most definitely relevant...because with web development and information systems it's always moving so quickly...I feel that when I say to people I've actually got university papers in what I'm talking to you about, they sort of like stand up and actually take note of what I'm saying." Melissa had also completed a design certificate and worked in a variety of jobs before starting up her own business.

THE HARD YARDS...

Dealing with people is a strength that Melissa finds has stood her in good stead as a self-employed person. "Being able to deal with people on their level...to relate to people and be relaxed." Time management and working to deadlines are also skills she has found critical to success in terms of running *3D Concepts*. "In our industry now, we're all time-based and an hour or two hours or three hours really matters in our business." Being more disciplined and able to stay focused on one project is something she has had to learn, and something that still challenges her regularly. "We have also had to learn not to under-sell ourselves because we do have really valuable skills and we used to basically give stuff away...now we are getting a lot harder in our approach."

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Seeing work they have done used in television documentaries is something that has given Melissa a real thrill during her time running *3D Concepts*.

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

Spending \$6,000 on advertising that was not effective is something that Melissa views as a mistake she has made in terms of running *3D Concepts*. She learnt that she needed to spend more time analysing the

strategic impact of such decisions before committing financial resources. “The second biggest mistake would be human resources...when you are employing people you need to have very stringent guidelines.”

THE BEST AND THE WORST..

Being able to “come and go as you like” is the best thing for Melissa about being self-employed, as well as having the flexibility to work from home should she wish to. The worst thing about being self-employed is the paper work. “Doing all the GST and the PAYE and the tax and the accounts... we’re getting better at that, although it can be tedious and time consuming.”

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

“Do it now” is what Melissa would tell a young person thinking of starting up their own business. That would be my biggest thing because people will keep putting it off and putting it off and then before they know it ten years has passed.”

Profile: Lenore Farrelly

INTRODUCING...

Lenore Farrelly started her Christchurch based business, *Lenore Farrelly Photographic Products*, in 2004 as a 25 year old. The core business of the firm is retailing cards, image blocks, stationary, cushions, and other products based predominately on New Zealand design and imagery that Lenore photographs herself. Her biggest markets are in Auckland and Wellington. “One of the biggest things that I have found is that people love the fact that they’re buying directly from the photographer...I’m the person who’s creating it so I can explain everything to them as opposed to sending a sales rep out there who really doesn’t have the passion and the enthusiasm and can’t tweak the product to meet the client’s requirements.”

Other than employing her Mother part-time in the business, Lenore does the majority of the work herself – calling on family and friends to help her out when things hit crisis point. Lenore aims to grow the business “until it has expanded to a point where it can independently support the development of further business opportunities within the art and design industries.” She also has a desire for the firm to be known for its ethics and its commitment to “creating good quality products and great service...I don’t want to be the one making image blocks for the next 20 years, so the business is a stepping stone to bigger things.”

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Coming back after a period of time overseas Lenore found that whilst she was a qualified photographer she was not that employable. “I’ve always been a big believer in being self employed, working for yourself, so it seemed like the only way to go... And I did it at a time of my life where I had no ties, no responsibilities...so what did I have to lose? I live in the family home, I’m extremely lucky...it makes the whole setting up process so much easier.”

“Coming from a family of teachers”, Lenore did not begin to think seriously about starting her own business until she got exposed to some self-employed role models by working for them. “I guess I’ve worked for several people who run their own businesses and I’ve seen that I don’t want to be an employee, I want to be the person who’s running it, doing it, because it seems to be the way I work best.”

Lenore can look back on her childhood and identify some behaviours that are now a bit of a give away that she had enterprising tendencies even then. “We had a bit of land and I had animals and I sold them on to make money...I also had a horse float and I’d hire it out and my father used to make me keep a record of all the transactions in and out, so I’d see the money growing...I looked back over all these little hand written sort of spreadsheet type things that I had...recording how many lambs were born each year and how many sold...it’s just so funny...you don’t actually think about it at the time because it was just fun.”

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE..

After finishing high school and working for two years, Lenore studied at Massey University in Wellington and graduated after four years with an honours degree in design, majoring in photography. She then travelled

and worked overseas for 18 months. It was during this time that she realised that she was not cut out for working in an office. Instead she looked to build a business around her love of photography, which she had originally got into as an extra-curricular activity whilst at school thanks to the use of her grandfather's 35 year old camera.

THE HARD YARDS...

Lenore brought some skills to her business that she picked up during her time working as an employee for others, such as her ability to do accounts and deal with day-to-day business administration. Whilst admitting these are mundane tasks, if they are done correctly (with professional advice where necessary) Lenore believes she gets more time to spend on the business development and sales. She also feels that "knowing how to deal with people and be a good negotiator" are also valuable skills. Lenore has developed excellent time management skills though juggling product manufacturing and getting orders out quickly, while undertaking all the travelling that is part of her schedule. Lenore has had to learn sales skills as she has progressed the business

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Lenore is really proud of the fact that thanks to starting her own business she is able to employ her Mother in a creative role. "If I can provide her something that she can enjoy doing, then that's great." She is also proud of the client base she has developed in a relatively short period of time, as well as the fact that she is constantly developing new product lines.

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

Lenore feels that her biggest mistake since being in business is "a little bit of naivety in terms of money...not in terms of me forking out money for product costs and all the rest of it, but in terms of not chasing money owed by people quickly enough." Lenore learnt that she needed to implement a new system so now "there'll be no more products issued until the account is paid in full."

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

For Lenore the most valuable thing about being self-employed is the freedom. "You can manage your own time. I can work like mad for two weeks and take four days off and do whatever I want...I don't have that time structure of having to be at work by a certain time." She describes the downside of running her own business as the fact that "you become consumed by it...especially when you're living with it...it's hard to be able to sit here and watch a bit of TV in the evening when you know that you've got all these orders sitting there that are just waiting to go out."

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Lenore feels that the best thing that a young person who is contemplating starting their own business can do, is to "find someone to mentor them." She touches base with her own mentor every six weeks and finds the relationship has a direct impact on how much she can achieve in her business.

Profile: Justin Flitter

INTRODUCING...

Along with a business partner, Justin Flitter started his Wellington based company, *The GameON Group*, in 2002 at the age of 22. The overarching mission of the company, which employs two people full-time, is “developing entrepreneurial, proactive and exciting enterprises.” As well as distributing products, the company has also launched a new enterprise called *HouseBrand*. It is Wellington’s only outdoor advertising agency that has sites suited to small and medium-sized enterprises wanting a local presence.

For Justin, success is not necessarily “money-oriented.” Instead it is centred around “project success...having something come to fruition...grow, develop and then generate revenue.” Justin has his eyes firmly on the future and sees *The GameON Group* has having an international focus in the not too distant future.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

“Pretty much since my second to last year of high school I knew that I wanted to do my own thing and run my own business... I mean, I haven’t been employed by another company since I was 21.”

Since he was young Justin has always “admired entrepreneurial people and their stories...and the types of things they achieved...and the opportunities they had as a result of what they did as a job...also that they had control of their own destiny.”

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Justin moved straight from college to tertiary study, skipping his final year at school, and graduating with a Bachelor of Business Studies from Massey University. For Justin, this was the culmination of always having studied business-oriented subjects like economics and accounting at school.

Justin was exposed to the idea of self-employment from an early age. The part-time job he had while at school was working for someone who ran his own juggling business. This gave Justin both some skills in terms of running a business and the perception that running your own business was a definite possibility.

THE HARD YARDS...

“Relentlessness” is something Justin describes as being essential if you intend to be a successfully self-employed person. “You have to realise that you have to be relentless in your quest for success...that’s something that we’ve had to learn...to be motivated to do things even when they look not that hopeful...being able to keep going.”

As well as that, he finds that communication skills are also invaluable: “being able to communicate at different levels...being able to talk to senior management ...but then also being able to communicate effectively with young people and staff.” “Having ideas is not enough” he says, you have to also “have the frame of mind to take the opportunity and do something with it.”

In terms of up-skilling, Justin feels it would be advantageous to have more finance and accounting type skills; but they are things he feels sure he can learn more about along the way.

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

“Getting over the two year milestone” is the thing Justin is most proud of in terms of his time as a self-employed person. “We celebrated...took all of our big clients out for dinner... We have established some very strong relationships with some business people in Wellington that are much more experienced, than us, some have been in business for 30, 40 years...through that type of networking we’ve been able to achieve what we want to do.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

“Not doing due diligence or having proper contractual arrangements with certain business partners” has been the biggest mistake Justin has made since starting up his business. It left the business with “huge debt and commitment that we have had to fulfil at our end” which in turn cemented Justin’s resolve never to let that sort of situation occur again. Out of it he also learnt that “relationships are the most important thing when you’re trying to run your business...and that if it’s your best friend that you’re going to enter into business with, you have to have contracts in place...and the expectations for performance have to be very clearly outlined.”

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

For Justin, “lifestyle” is the best thing about being self-employed. “Being able to plan your day and do the things that you most enjoy...so for instance, not booking meetings before midday...The whole idea of the nine to five just has never appealed to me, nor has being stuck in that mould... Although there is the flipside of it. When you are self-employed you have to be motivated to put the time and effort in.”

The worst thing for Justin about being in business for himself has been the cash flow side of things. “Not having a consistent income, so you know, one month you can be fine and the next month you’re on the bones of your backside...that’s the inconsistency of it.”

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

What Justin would tell a young person who was thinking of starting up their own business is to “find the people that support your idea who can help make it happen and bring them on board...build a group of people around you that can help make it happen...you can’t do it by yourself.”

He also believes in the strength of self-promotion, describing how entrepreneurs need to be prepared to communicate to others what it is they do – especially because it might allow them to meet someone who could help them achieve more. “You can’t be afraid of sharing what you are doing...if you want your idea to get off the ground, you have to tell as many people as possible about what you want to do because you never know which one of them might be able to help.”

Profile: Zach Hitchcock

INTRODUCING...

Zach Hitchcock launched his business *Feedback Sport* on a full-time basis in Christchurch in 2004, at age 27. The core product of *Feedback Sport* is the development of technical solutions for elite sports teams and athletes. At the moment the dominant products relate to the sporting codes of football and cricket. Zach has big plans for the business with his ultimate goal being the “world leader in terms of the provision of sports technology.” Realistically, this means that the majority of his target markets will be outside of New Zealand. Growing market share and the reputation of the products will be key activities for Zach in terms of the future of the business.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

“Even while I was at University, I always sort of thought one day it’d be good to own my own business... I guess it’s just my personality, I don’t like taking orders from others or being the bottom of the food chain.”

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Always into maths and science throughout secondary school, Zach ended up at Massey University in Palmerston North studying computer science. He graduated with a Bachelor of Information Science, majoring in electronics and computer science. After completing his degree, Zach worked for a year for a software development firm in Palmerston North, before going to work full-time for New Zealand Cricket. It was while doing analysis in that role that he developed the cricket system that would see him launch his own business independently.

THE HARD YARDS...

“Not being overawed by anything” is something that Zach thinks has helped him immensely since he started his own company. “I guess it is probably self belief...or even just a belief that you look at something and think you can do it better.”

“I’ve sort of had to learn quite a bit...especially say the accounts side of things...around the same time I started the business I went on a Canterbury Development Corporation course...a high-tech start up programme, and that basically was sort of like a crash course in running a business... That taught me a lot, because sort of before that I didn’t really know what was involved and what the skills were that you need.”

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Zach is most proud of the “the amount of work that we’ve managed to get through...now we’ve developed other products that have sort of opened up other revenues...other opportunities.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

With the company only in the early stages of its life, Zach hasn’t encountered any bumps in the road, “yet” he is quick to add.

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

“I think the biggest thing for me is to be able to take the work you’re doing in the direction you want to do it...you are also going to get the full benefits of your work. Whereas if you’re employed by someone else, all you get is the pay.” Zach thinks the worst thing about self-employment is “definitely the hours.”

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

In terms of advice for another young person thinking of starting a business, Zach says “you’ve got to do your numbers and make sure there’s a lot of potential for what you’re doing...also the other thing...is that you can’t really rely on just one-off sales because what you need to do is somehow create some sort of regular revenue streams.”

Profile: Frelimo Ilolahia

INTRODUCING...

In 2002, 25 year old Tongan Frelimo Ilolahia, launched his company *The Lijan*, in Auckland. With four directors, the core business of the firm is the commercialisation of creative talent (in music, theatre and film). Ultimately Frelimo's goal is for the firm to be recognised as a "one-stop-shop" for those creative industries. With an optimistic-looking future ahead (including the pursuit of off-shore opportunities), Frelimo is currently focusing on ensuring the company is achieving the level of profitability that it should.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Growing up around creative talent (for example "the guys from Bro Town") Frelimo himself "had a strong passion for music...and enjoyed watching theatre and film." This logically led to the conclusion that he should "try something that I enjoy doing and get paid for it."

Frelimo attributes some of his inclination to get involved in the creative sector to his family and their support. His father was involved in the music industry and his sister is currently involved in film and theatre.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

After studying at the University of Auckland, Frelimo graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce with a double major in marketing and international business. This followed his pursuit at school of largely commerce-oriented subjects, despite his creative interests.

While studying, Frelimo also worked as a DJ at a variety of clubs and functions around Auckland, as well as doing other part-time jobs (including working as a courier driver and warehouse store man).

Frelimo's long time goal is to work full-time in his firm.

THE HARD YARDS...

Frelimo describes innovation, hard work, persistence and planning as key elements in his endeavours to become a successful self-employed person. Along the way he has also learnt a variety of legal and financial skills from a business mentor. In terms of improving his personal capability, he believes better people and communication skills would benefit him in his work on *The Lijan*. To help develop some of those skills he attends training seminars run by local companies (e.g. Team One) and economic development agencies.

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Frelimo derives pride in the fact that he started up his own business and that "the concept is in demand" – as evidenced by the firm's track record of getting contracts and attracting an ongoing stream of work. "I think the demand is pretty consistent because for the little bit of marketing that we've done, we're already getting work."

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

Not having balance in his life is the biggest mistake Frelimo feels he has made since starting his business. "I just sort of realised I guess that my relationships weren't as strong as what they used to be...or as what they could be." He addresses this these days by prioritising what he has to do and has learnt how to delegate more.

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

Having control over the company and being rewarded for what he achieves is the best thing about being self-employed for Frelimo. He particularly enjoys "helping people get to where they should be if they've got potential talent...and making a difference."

The worst thing about self-employment he describes as being the work load. With a wife and a young daughter, this is something that Frelimo finds particularly difficult when his work draws him away from spending time with them.

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Frelimo's message to young people thinking about starting a business is to "research and study your idea...make sure that it's feasible...bring together like-minded individuals to work together to achieve that dream...and most importantly, don't give up!"

Profile: Lisa McFarlane

INTRODUCING...

Lisa McFarlane runs her business, *Town & Country Homesit*, from Christchurch. She works on the business part-time as well as holding down a part-time job working for Television New Zealand. Lisa started the company in 2000 at age 24 with the core business being house sitting, security and animal minding at both city and rural properties. “The outlook and growth of the business is very positive and each year gets bigger and better.”

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Lisa attributes her desire to be self-employed to her parents. Her Dad is a farmer and her Mum has had her own business too. She admits that starting her own business was a bit of a whim – but one she now enjoys immensely.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Lisa went to boarding school in Christchurch and worked a variety of jobs after school and in the holidays on the family farm. She then did a one-year hospitality and tourism diploma at the local Polytechnic and after that was keen to get out and work. Subsequent work involved a variety of tourism and hospitality jobs, and corporate human resources roles in London, before her return to New Zealand in 2000.

THE HARD YARDS...

Lisa describes her main strength as being her ability to deal with people. She has had to learn a lot about the accounting side of running a business and feels that she still needs to learn how to effectively resolve conflict.

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Lisa feels most pride in her business when she gets great feedback from her clients. “When you hear back comments like ‘oh we’ve been referred to you by so and so, they just said what a wonderful service you provide’...I suppose you don’t really think that about yourself you know; your attitude is just that it is my job.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

Whilst not experiencing any big hiccups since starting the business, Lisa has learnt the importance of doing police checks on all her sitters.

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

Lisa feels proud to tell people that she runs her own business, but describes the down side as the hours, being the sole decision-maker, and having to take the criticism for anything that goes wrong.

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Lisa would tell another young person thinking about starting their own business to “believe in yourself...if you think you can do something, you can...I’m a good example. All I needed was \$3 for a classified ad and it all started from there.”

Profile: Adrian Owen

INTRODUCING...

Young Māori entrepreneur Adrian Owen started his company, *sweetCHILLI*, in 2002 at the age of 28. Based in Wellington, the firm “adds flavour to the identity” of businesses, large or small, through a diverse range of communication mediums (e.g. television, web or print). Currently employing two full-time and another three to four part-time staff, Adrian is committed to growing his business into a “great big monster.” While the pursuit of profit is critical to business success in the traditional sense, Adrian is also committed to achieving a level of freedom to work how, when and where he wants. Self-employment and *sweetCHILLI* are giving him the opportunity to pursue that dream.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Adrian credits his parents with instilling in him the realisation that being self-employed was a possibility. “My parents were always behind me saying that whatever I wanted to do I could...and my Dad always had his own company as a painter and decorator.”

Adrian recalls that early on in his life he realised that there was only a finite amount of money one person could make working nine to five each day – and that running your own business was a chance to “get around” that.

Adrian started running his first business when he was still at Otago University in Dunedin, selling “paraphernalia for the Super 12 when it first started up.” Through this first foray into self-employment, he learnt a lot about partnerships in business and how they don’t necessarily make for easy relationships.

Not put off, he started his second business – a café with some other friends who were also 18 or 19 at the time. He describes that time as a steep learning curve in which “putting yourself in the deep end enables you to learn a hell of a lot about business.” It was also where he first commenced the type of design work that was to be the seed of his current venture *sweetCHILLI*.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

After spending his time at high school in Whangarei “eating lunch and playing sport”, Adrian’s track record in committing to ongoing learning is proof that you can always change your approach. When he left school he started out in the sports industry and obtained a Diploma of Sports and Commerce at Otago University.

Back in Wellington, when his spell as a café owner-manager in Dunedin had ended, Adrian reached a crossroads in his life. It was at that point that he decided to commit to pursuing his inclination towards design. “I was doing all the design work for the café and I’ve always done art, throughout school, so I thought I’d follow on with my design work.” This led him to complete a multi-media course during at the National College of Design and Technology, during which he specialised in 3D animation.

THE HARD YARDS...

Adrian believes success in business is all about attitude: “Belief in yourself.” This is something he feels he has always had thanks to the positive reinforcement he received from his parents growing up. However, in terms of skills, he feels the most important thing to learn to be successfully self-employed is communication. The ability to “talk to people at multiple levels...I can talk to street kids all the way through to CEOs of huge corporations...and not have a problem.”

Another skill he describes as important is the ability to spend time working ‘on’ the business rather than just ‘in’ the business. Essentially for Adrian it is about creating a “win-win situation” where he is able to leverage time. “Theoretically I can only work 40 hours a week in front of the computer...and there’s only so much money I can make doing that. But, if I leverage time by utilising other people doing the jobs that I would normally do, I can go out there and win more work.”

Learning more management skills for when his firm grows in size is Adrian’s next priority in terms of improving his own personal capability as a business person.

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

What gives Adrian his greatest moment of pride in terms of the business is seeing work that *sweetCHILLI* has done in the public domain – for example on the television. “Seeing yourself like that, it’s been really good.” He is also “proud of people knowing about *sweetCHILLI*...knowing our reputation has got around and that we have delivered.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

Not “listening to his heart” has brought Adrian his biggest challenges as a self-employed person. “I’m a firm believer that your heart tells you the truth...we’ve all had gut feelings or it’s like ‘that’s bad’ or ‘that’s good’...I’m becoming smarter in listening to my intuition... When I haven’t there have been times when I’ve thought oh, that doesn’t feel good but I’ll do it anyway - and I crash and burn.”

Another milestone in Adrian’s own development as a self-employed person came when he recognised that “there’s a difference between a business relationship and a personal relationship, and there is a need to be able to define that there is a line there.”

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

The best thing for Adrian about being self-employed is being his own boss. “The freedom to know that there’s no ceiling...with anything really...where you want to go or how much money you make.”

The worst thing about running a business for Adrian was the fact that it is a 24 hour a day, seven days a week commitment when the business first started up.

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Adrian’s best advice to another young person contemplating becoming self-employed is “don’t be scared of doing it. If you are you’ll always have a what if?”

Profile: Tony Rule

INTRODUCING...

Tony Rule started his Wellington based firm *Spikefin* with a business partner in 2002 at the age of 22. Currently employing 5 staff, the company develops web-based retail management point-of-sale and e-commerce systems. The goal for the business is to be an “export-focused software developer” and “create a sustainable income for those involved in the company.”

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Tony describes himself as having been entrepreneurial from an early age. It seemed natural to him that a company that he started out of a bedroom would go on to win two awards for the Telecommunications Users Association of New Zealand (TUANZ) Interactive Awards best business consumer product in New Zealand and the No 1 Hitwise Ranking (for its work on the Hell Pizza website). Tony also had a role model in his Dad who is also self-employed.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Tony graduated from Victoria University with Bachelors of Science and Commerce.

“I’d previously worked when I was a student...while I was at University I had a fulltime job in my final year...so I gained a lot of experience in my final two years at University actually doing software development...I worked for a company that was actually based in Japan but they outsourced their work to Wellington...the model worked quite well and it was something that I kind of thought oh well, this is pretty cool, maybe five years down the track I might do this for myself...instead an opportunity rose at the end of studying...the firm I was working for they restructured and pretty much closed down their Wellington operation, so I was looking for work...and when I couldn’t find something other than a graduate position I found my own work.”

THE HARD YARDS...

“The thing that I brought to self-employment was being able to work in a team.”

“Probably one of my biggest shortcomings is I take on too much...I need to learn to sort of say no to people...I’ve probably only had three weeks off in the last two years...but I’ve brought it all on myself by what I’m doing...but I’m living my dreams so I’ve got to make the most of it.”

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

The success of the work *Spikefin* completed for the Hell Pizza website is the commercial success Tony is most proud of.

BUMPS IN THE ROAD..

While Tony is a confident person, he believes not having enough belief in the business is a mistake he has made since starting his life as a self-employed person. "If we'd been product-focused in the early stages with our business instead of service-focused in terms of doing one-off jobs for customers, I would say we'd probably be a year ahead of where we are now."

"We've still got a lot to learn and we should look outside for help a lot more... but we've also learnt that with the stuff that we're doing, it's pretty leading edge and...we can't just use generic business advice from people...we have learnt to be very careful about which advice we use."

THE BEST AND THE WORST..

For Tony the best thing about being self-employed is the potential that it gives him. "If you're working for someone else you can do a really good job...but at the end of the day it's not something you've created entirely yourself...whereas if you're self-employed you've got a lot more control and ability to make decisions and create a great team culture."

The worst thing is the fact that you "have to make sacrifices with the rest of your life - in terms of a social life for example."

PEARLS OF WISDOM..

"Go and do it as soon as possible...but have a very clear plan of exactly what you want to do. Stay focused and think about the long term. Don't think about short term; think about how the business will be sustainable in the long term."

Profile: Allison Toner

INTRODUCING...

Niche Forecasting designs corporate social responsibility concepts for businesses. Started by 20 year old Allison Toner when she was only 17, it is a business that is very firmly oriented towards the future. As the sole owner and worker in the company at this stage, it has fallen to Allison to drive the company forward. Her goals for herself and her company are to “earn a decent income, to publicise social responsibility more widely in New Zealand, and to be seen as the social responsibility specialist in New Zealand.” Allison will feel successful when she is fulfilled by her business, both personally and financially.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Not happy as an employee in a nine-to-five job, Allison used her independent streak to drive her towards achieving her goal of being self-employed. While she admits this was not something she strived for when she was younger, now that she has achieved it she could never go back. No one specific role model helped Allison decide that self-employment was the path for her; instead she was just inspired by people with high profiles making a difference, such as Anita Roddick from The Body Shop.

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Allison left school at 16 to begin working life. After giving up her initial career track in the beauty industry she moved into banking before starting up her own company. In terms of transferable skills, Allison feels that working for a large corporate bank that was committed to corporate social responsibility gave her some insights into the best ways to incorporate such practices into all dimensions of business.

Studying is not something that Allison has pursued yet as she finds that in her current situation it is not something that “will add value” to what she is doing. “I think my work can speak for itself once I have got a few good designs...that is what will build my credibility.”

THE HARD YARDS...

Allison believes that determination (i.e. the ability to focus on what you are trying to achieve), discipline and positivity are all traits that enhance her energy levels and her ability to be successfully self-employed. “I think being self-employed you can fall into a lot of holes...the important thing is that when you get knocked down you get up again.”

In terms of practical skills, Allison is a fan of the home business oriented website www.homebizbuzz.co.nz. For her it contained a lot of relevant and useful information all in one easy-to-find location.

She hopes that experience, and the momentum she gains the longer she spends in business, will also equip her with more skills.

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

Participating in international networks on corporate social responsibility is something that Allison is proud that she has achieved since becoming self-employed. “The corporate social responsibility forum is based in London. So, it is mainly done by email...we can ask questions and help each other out with different things...you are all talking about the same topic so it is really interesting to hear all the different views that are being communicated.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD..

Doing good work, but not having it successfully contribute to increasing her profile has been a regular challenge Allison has faced since starting her own business. She hopes that better planning and targeting of her work will enable her to more effectively reap positive benefits from the time she invests in her work in the future.

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

“Being in charge of your own destiny and your own results” is the best thing about being self-employed for Allison. On the flip side, she finds that taking care of the more mundane, day-to-day small business management tasks (like financials), the least enjoyable part of what she does. She looks forward to the day when her business is more established and she can take on an accountant to help her with such tasks.

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

Allison advises any young person thinking about going into business to do their research. “Know the industry that you are going into and know what to expect...make sure you speak to someone who has successfully broken into the same industry.”

Profile: Mario Wynands

INTRODUCING...

Mario Wynands started his business *Sidhe Interactive* at the age of 22 in 1997. Based in Wellington, the company creates video games for personal computers and consoles. As well as having an ownership stake in two other businesses, Mario works full-time at the company which employs 32 full-time staff and turns over more than \$1 million dollars annually.

In terms of goals for the company, Mario describes how “we want to continue growing our company. We’re at a phase now where we want to move away from being service-orientated to being more an originator and owner of original intellectual property...I guess create more of our own content rather than developing content for other people.” At a personal level, Mario feels the owners of the company are beginning to “work towards some sort of exit strategy.”

Success for Mario involves “doing the best I can with the resources that I have available. I think we have been successful in creating something tangible and valuable and constructive from nothing - so in that sense we’re successful... We’ve managed to grow the company, we’ve doubled our revenue every two years since we started getting revenue, so you know, we’ve been successful from a most common standard point of financial measure.”

ONCE UPON A TIME...

“I’ve always kind of done this sort of stuff since I was very young. I’ve always had quite a strong business streak in me...I think I started my first company when I was eight...Selling pine cones by the sack load. Three dollars a shot...I remember I actually out-sourced the collection to other kids...I contracted them to pick them up...it was horrible exploitation really!”

As well as demonstrating such entrepreneurial tendencies at a young age, Mario attributes his desire to be self-employed to the fact he grew up with parents who ran their own business.

“I guess going through high school I didn’t necessarily consider that I would be self-employed. I didn’t have a burning desire to work in my own business. But, going through high school and university I sort of anticipated being on the business side in my own company somewhere.”

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

After leaving school, Mario went straight to Victoria University where he completed a double degree in commerce (majoring in marketing and information systems) and computer science. Mario took on a variety of part-time jobs whilst doing tertiary study including labouring and starting up his first firm, *White Knight Computer Technology*. After graduating, Mario took on a full-time role as a management consultant with firm KPMG. This exposed him to a number of different business scenarios on a large corporate scale. Soon Mario began to realise that “there’s a ladder here and as hard as I’m working and as successful as I’m being here, I can’t climb it as fast as I want to. So I basically handed in my notice.”

THE HARD YARDS...

Mario feels his biggest advantage in terms of running his own business is his willingness to take risks – coupled with perseverance. “I think if a person has those things, it doesn’t matter what other skills they have.” He feels he has learnt most about “how to work with people...and how to motivate people” since starting the business.

“Certainly the side that I could learn more about now is things like venture capital, the process of acquisition, listing a company on the stock exchange.”

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

“I think probably the most satisfying thing for me is the fact that we have never missed a salary payment in the eight years we’ve been in business - and during that time there have been some pretty rocky times financially. But through all of that we’ve been able to maintain a level of stability and consistency for the staff that work here.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

“I can’t really think of many times that I’ve actually really screwed up significantly. I guess there are few things that have proven difficult. I don’t know whether you’d class them as mistakes necessarily, certainly one of the things that has proved difficult is going into business with your friends.”

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

The best thing about being self-employed for Mario is that “you know there’s a ladder there but you can climb it as fast as you want.” However, as a business owner you also “never stop working!”

PEARLS OF WISDOM...

“The advice I’d generally give to any young person is just to stay in school as long as practical...getting as much of an education as their financial situation will allow. While there are benefits to kind of jumping out there and doing it as quickly as possible, it’s good to have a tangible back up plan...roll the dice but make sure you load them first! So to me education provides you with options, it gives you something to fall back on. It gives you more knowledge which will allow you to pursue your chosen business better.”

Profile: Simon Young

INTRODUCING...

Simon Young Writers Limited was founded by Simon Young in 2001 when he was 25. Based in Auckland, the company does all types of writing – including copy-writing and technical writing. In terms of goals, Simon feels he has “every business owner’s goal, which is to eventually not be needed and just have passive income.” For Simon, success in self-employment is “being able to do things that I enjoy, and having variety in the kind of things that I work on.” The future of the firm is “looking good because there is a continual demand for good writers and so that looks set to continue, if not grow. There are also other potential areas to branch out into.”

ONCE UPON A TIME...

When asked how he got into self-employment, Simon says “I jumped! No, actually I’m not tertiary educated and found that that was an impediment when I was applying for jobs...so I thought the only way to get the experience is to try it for myself...I think the entrepreneurship that I embraced is the joy of doing what you’re doing as an expression of what you really want to be like.”

EARNING DOLLARS AND SENSE...

Focusing on arts subjects at school Simon went into the world of work with a strong desire to earn a dollar from the written word. His first job lasted seven years and gave him a good grounding in a variety of areas that are relevant to his business now.

THE HARD YARDS...

“Just being nice to deal with. I think that’s stood me in good stead. The creativity helps but it’s probably not needed as much as common sense and good organisation.”

REACHING FOR THE TOP...

In the time that Simon has been self-employed what he has been most proud of “are the relationships that I’ve been able to build without the usual things - without the contacts to start off with and without the tertiary education. Neither of those do I disparage, I just didn’t have them myself.”

BUMPS IN THE ROAD...

“Paying close attention to risk management and planning for growth” are the two things Simon feels he could’ve done better since starting his own business. “I’ve learnt that once you’re in business...you need to have good risk management things in place, whether it’s insurance or even backing up your computer...you learn one thing and then you start applying it to all other areas of the business.”

THE BEST AND THE WORST...

“Freedom” is the thing Simon values most about being self-employed. The worst thing “is having to think so hard about everything...for a period last

year I was actually working virtually full time in a PR firm for about four months and that was really good because I just had to focus on the work rather than the invoicing and everything else...I do like some predictability and routine, but you get over it very quickly!”

PEARLS OF WISDOM..

Simon’s advice for other young people thinking about running their own business is “talk to lots of other people who run their own business. Read lots. Get to know the landscape of the industry you’re getting into...know who the big players are and who the dodgy ones are!”

PROFILE TEMPLATE

Introducing...

- ☆ What goals do you have for your business?
- ☆ How do you define success for yourself in terms of self-employment?
- ☆ What does the future of the business look like?

Once upon a time....

- ☆ How did you get to be self-employed?
- ☆ What or who influenced you to take this path?
- ☆ When did you know you wanted to be self-employed?

Earning dollars and sense...

- ☆ What is your educational background?
- ☆ What formal qualifications to you have?
- ☆ What is your employment history?

The hard yards...

- ☆ What skills do you have that enable you to be successfully self-employed?
- ☆ Which of these did you bring to self-employment and which of them did you have to learn along the way?
- ☆ What skills do you not have that would help you be better at what you do?

Reaching for the top....

- ☆ What is the one thing you are most proud of in the time you have been self-employed?

Bumps in the road...

- ☆ What has been your biggest mistake whilst you have been self-employed?
- ☆ What have you learnt from it?

The best and the worst...

- ☆ What is the best thing about being self-employed?
- ☆ What is the worst thing about being self-employed?

Pearls of wisdom...

- ☆ If you knew another young person thinking about becoming self-employed what advice would you give them?