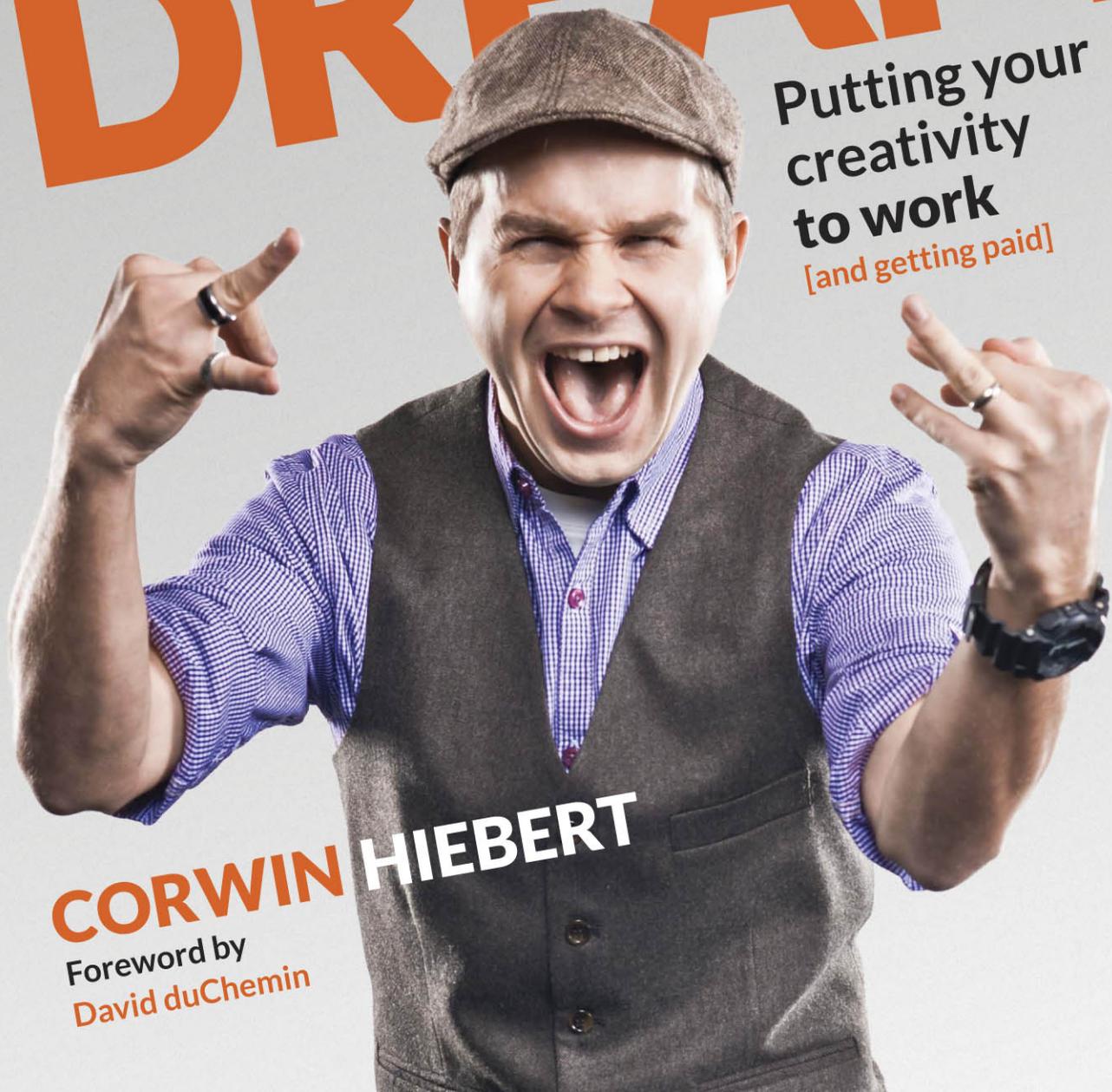


LIVING THE DREAM

Putting your
creativity
to work
[and getting paid]

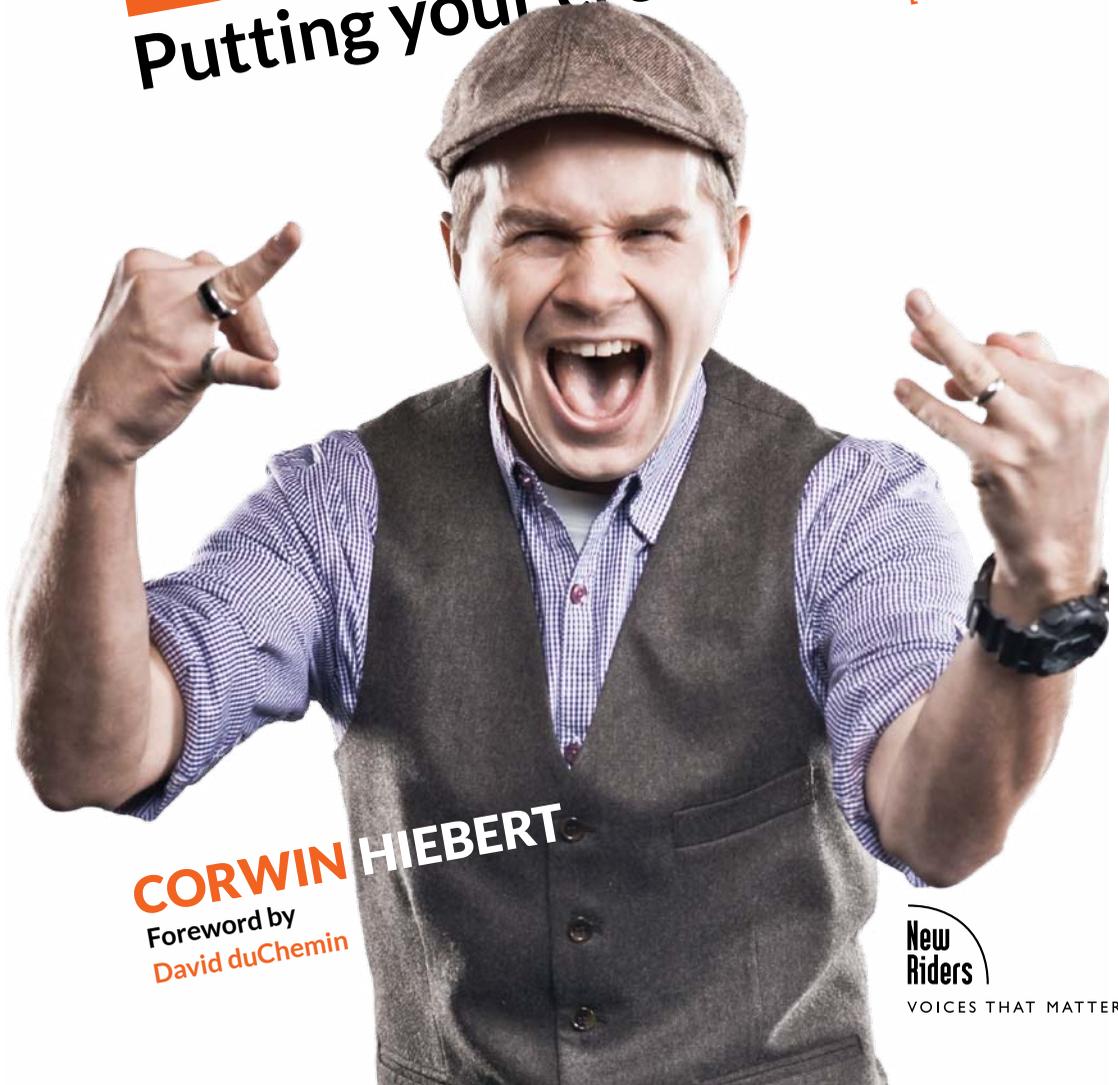


CORWIN HIEBERT

Foreword by
David duChemin

LIVING THE DREAM

Putting your creativity to work
[and getting paid]



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David duChemin

New
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VOICES THAT MATTER™

Living the Dream: Putting your creativity to work (and getting paid)
Corwin Hiebert

New Riders

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*This book is dedicated to my wife, and best friend, Eileen.
Being connected to your creative spirit inspires me beyond words.*

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About the Cover David Vandas is an independent creative director/producer based in Vancouver, Canada. He's my friend as well as my client, and I'm inspired by his enthusiasm for the creative life, his friendship, and his commitment to inspire those around him.

Web: www.DavidVandas.com Twitter: @VandasCreative
Image credit: Dave Delnea

Foreword

Every time the nurses walked into my room they would ask the same question: “How are you doing?” I think it was a matter of habit. And every day I would answer the way I always do, without sarcasm or irony, but perhaps also out of habit: “Living the dream.”

They laughed every time. That I was lying in a bed from which I could not get up, with two shattered feet and a cracked pelvis, was, I think, what made them laugh. They thought I was kidding. I wasn’t. I was alive. Although they talked about me never walking the same again, I knew I’d walk and be able to do my work, and that was enough.

I am a photographer. I’m an author, an adventurer, a nomad, and an accidental entrepreneur. I make a living doing something I love: creation. I create photographs, books, eBooks, and—a couple of times—businesses.

I’m passionate and unashamed about the idea that doing business—and running a business—should be an act every bit as creative as the more artistic endeavors pursued by anyone reading this book. I can do my work—not my job, my *work*—from anywhere in the world. I’ve done it on all seven continents, in five-star hotels, and in remote areas of Africa so far from civilization you’d need to drive two days to find a road. And I’ve done it while lying in bed recovering from a 30-foot fall onto concrete in Pisa, Italy, in April 2011.

The work I do has introduced me to astonishing people, allowed me to collaborate with people who inspire me, and allowed me to follow my muse anywhere she asks me to go. That I have had this freedom is in large measure due to the man who wrote this book, my manager and my best friend, Corwin Hiebert.

My dream is to spend every day doing what I was made to do: my work. I want to make photographs where and when I choose, to write my books and blog from the places on this planet I’ve always wanted to experience. That’s my dream. So when I say I’m living the dream, I am doing so in every way.

Your dream might be different. And it will grow and evolve as you do. But for too long creatives have been told that the worlds of creativity and commerce are irreconcilable, that if you dream about doing your work, you should forget about making a living, as though making a life and making a living are incompatible. They aren’t. In fact it’s the so-called Creative Class that seems best equipped to do business at all; we have not only the mind to solve problems from new directions, but the disinclination to do things as they’ve always been done. We have a willingness—even a compulsion—to forge new directions. The late Steve Jobs comes to mind.

Of course, the problem with all this talk of “dreams” is that we continue to describe the life we long for—creating satisfying work on our own terms and not going bankrupt for the privilege—as though it is, in fact, a dream. It’s not. I mean, it’s not merely a dream, as though it were ephemeral, illusory, just a little out of reach. We just have to acknowledge this: It’s possible.

If you’re tempted to write me off as yet another lunatic preaching the too-familiar promises of laws of attraction and positive thinking, please don’t. Do I believe in thinking positively? Yes I do. But do I believe that to mean you get what you want simply because you want it badly enough? Not in the least. You want something badly enough, you’ll do what it takes to get it, and for most of us that means working harder than we’ve ever worked.

When I fell off the wall in Pisa, doctors told me I’d fractured both feet severely. My pelvis was cracked but it would heal. My feet, however, would require surgery, and I would never walk without a limp. As I write this I’ve limped my way onto another plane, my foot freshly stapled and looking like popular portrayals of Frankenstein’s monster after what should be the last surgery.

In August 2011 I spent a month in full-time residential physical rehabilitation. I was learning to walk again. Beside me were others learning to do the same. Some, like me, still had their legs, though scarred. Some were missing one leg and others missing both. The causes were many, but most of them were motorcycles or road-side bombs in Afghanistan. I was the only idiot who fell off a wall.

Day by day, people cheered our positivity. But not one of us learned to walk in that gym by being happy, positive, or asking the universe for help. Those things might give us the courage to keep going, but it’s the keep-going that causes progress. Every day we stretched, we did little movements and small exercises. We did the mundane stuff and it didn’t feel like walking. It felt like work. And those little pieces added up and every day the walking got smoother, or stronger, or we gained another 100 meters of endurance.

Kittens and rainbows be damned; we did the work. We just showed up and did the work. And at the end of the day we took our pain meds and some of the guys wiped the blood from their stumps where the prosthetics were chafing, and we bitched a little. But we went back the next morning and did it again.

Thinking positively gave us the strength to go to the gym every day for another round of abuse. Laughing about it made it easier. But it was still work. And we did it because we all wanted one thing: to walk again. Sometimes we fell over. We picked ourselves—or each other—back up and tried again. A month after

I'd entered that place with a wheelchair, I walked out with a cane, got on a plane—still limping, but walking—and flew to Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. A month after that I hobbled around Mexico and Honduras. A month after that I hobbled around Ushuaia, Argentina before getting on a boat to hobble around Antarctica. It wasn't happy thoughts; I just did the work.

If you think Corwin's book, *Living the Dream*, is about a secret formula or get-rich-quick scheme, or that your brief journey with this book will put you poolside at a luxury hotel while your bank account grows, then you'd be better served to put this book back on the shelf, save your money (you'll need it), and stroll a couple of aisles over to the Self-Help, or possibly the Psychiatric Disorders, section.

I've never worked so hard in all my life as I have since I started my business. But it's work I love. I don't want a life without work. Work, among other good things, gives life meaning. It fills our days with creation. People don't want to stop working; they want to start doing work they love, and stop doing work they loathe, work for others that drains their souls. But make no mistake: It's still work.

Not everyone who reads this book is going to make it. How's that for positive thinking? This book cannot sharpen your creativity; it can only make use of your creativity to the level you nurture and hone it. It cannot give you courage or eliminate the risk inherent to chasing your dreams. I went bankrupt chasing mine the first time.

This book can't even make you work hard; only you can decide how badly you want this and work as hard as it takes to make it happen. What this book can do—and I know because I'm one of the benches on which Corwin has hammered out the ideas and strategies he shares in this book—is give direction to that work, open your eyes to some of the blind spots, and help you take your Creative/Artist hat off for a while in order to think like an entrepreneur. This is what you must be until the day your rich patron pulls up in her silver Rolls Royce (don't hold your breath), you make your first million-dollar sale (really, stop holding your breath), or you win the lottery (breathe, dammit, you're turning blue.)

If your dream is just to do the work you love on your terms, to create something simply because you can't not do it, while all the other voices are telling you it's not practical, that it's career suicide, and if you know that you've got one kick at this life and there are beautiful, amazing, new things to create and experience, and you know that going to work would only get in the way of doing your work, then roll up your sleeves and get started.

► **David duChemin**

Contents

Foreword	vi
Introduction: A Business Book for Creatives	xiii

PART I MANAGING YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS 2

CHAPTER 1 Establishing Your Creative Capital 4

Defining and Refining Your Skills	7
Finding Your Creative Mix	9
Being Educated and Getting Schooled	12
Creative Work Should Be Hard	13
Turning Your Assets into Value	16

CHAPTER 2 Planning for Success 18

Being in Business with Yourself	21
Clarifying Your Business Offering	23
Understanding Your Marketplace	25
Preparing a Business Plan That Doesn't Suck	27

CHAPTER 3 Creating a Workflow That Works for You 32

Winning the Battle and the War	35
Making the Most of Your Home Office	38
Build a Schedule That You'll Love	41
Planning a Project Like a Smarty-Pants	43

CHAPTER 4 Making the Most of Your Meetings 48

Running a Meeting	51
Attending a Meeting	55

CHAPTER 5 Getting Clients to Love You 64

Understanding Your Clients' Needs and Wants	67
Establish a Scope of Work	70
Fitting In and Standing Out	74

CHAPTER 6 Being a Lawful Entrepreneur	78
Starting Your Business on the Right Foot	81
Letting the Legal Beagle Out of the Doghouse	86
Making Sense of Your Contracts.....	89
Putting Your Legal Documents into Action.....	94
CHAPTER 7 Dealing With Those Pesky Finances	96
Risking It All Without Risking Your Future.....	99
Building a Pricing Strategy.....	103
Asking for Money	108
Borrowing Money and Making It Count	112
PART I SUMMARY Your Management Style	117

PART II MARKETING YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS 120

CHAPTER 8 Generating Demand for Your Services	122
Eliciting Curiosity	126
Developing Auteur-like Attitude.....	128
Creating a Marketable Brand	130
Putting Your Brains and Your Brand into Action	134
CHAPTER 9 Building a Marketing Strategy	136
Creating a Marketing Plan That Doesn't Suck	139
Preparing Your Marketing Mix	142
Focusing on Bottom Line ROI	148
Assessing Your Marketing Impact	151
Planning a Think & Drink	154
CHAPTER 10 Doing Self-Promotion Right	158
Adjusting Your Attitude About Selling	161
Succeeding Through Subtle Persuasion	164
Fostering Real Word of Mouth.....	170

CHAPTER 11 Making Your Mark Through Collaboration	176
The Collaboration Effect	179
Finding the Right Collaborators	180
Choosing the Right Project	181
Making a Collaboration Awesome	184
Building a Buzz	186
Being a Fan and a Follower	189
CHAPTER 12 Networking in the Real World	190
Be the Lone Ranger, Not a Loner	193
Creating Your Own Sphere of Influence	196
Building a Proximity Plan	200
Giving the Media Your Attention	204
CHAPTER 13 Creating a Marketable Web Presence	208
Shaking Your Digital Head(space)	211
Marketing to Your Social Network	214
Leveraging Your Digital Assets	222
CHAPTER 14 Producing Collateral (Not Damage)	232
Making Your Creative Work Touchable	235
Putting Your Business Card in its Place	240
Portfolios and All That Jazz	245
PART II SUMMARY Your Marketing Style	251
Conclusion: That's a Wrap	257
Index	259



Creative at Work Dave Delnea—a commercial photographer based in Vancouver, Canada—shooting in Iceland. His clients include Ritz-Carlton, Trump Development, Raffles Hotels and Resorts, Johnson & Johnson, lululemon athletica, and Mountain Equipment Co-op.
Web: www.davedelnea.com Twitter: [@davedelnea](https://twitter.com/davedelnea) Image credit: David duChemin

INTRODUCTION

A BUSINESS BOOK FOR CREATIVES

Whether you're considering starting a small business; doing freelance photography, design, video, or illustration; or you're in the early stages of running an independent venture, then this is a business book for you: the creative entrepreneur. You may not see yourself as an entrepreneur yet, but you are. The marketplace needs and wants your creative talent, and you're eager to strike out on your own, to attract clients and customers, and to make a work life for yourself that relies on your creativity.

Independence, freedom, and success happen over time. To enjoy these things you'll have to continue challenging the status quo and taking risks on a daily basis; making a living doing what you love is earned, not wished for. I'm guessing you have already discovered that. *Living the Dream* builds off that idea, that there's no place of arrival—it's a journey that is focused on being creative and getting paid.

The smartest guy I know is Dr. Ben Kadel (rhymes with “bottle”), a social psychologist and entrepreneur who specializes in the emotional dynamics of work. When it comes to pursuing a venture of any kind, he believes the task at hand is “to find the ‘sweet spot’—that point where your great joy meets the world's great need. You know that you're in your sweet spot when you are energized, focused, and ready to take on the next challenge. Consistently find your sweet spot and you will find the best in yourself. All great work involves a dialogue between your vision for the world as it could be and pushback from the reality of the way the world currently is.”

Putting your creativity to work means getting excited to contribute to the marketplace and becoming content with where you are in the process. If you're feeling challenged and excited, you're doing something right, and maybe the nagging voices in the back of your head should just take a hike. In this book I'll help you identify an attainable dream and put the right pieces in place to help you on your way.

What You Should Know About This Book

This book is a conversation starter, an idea generator, and a guide to help you discern for yourself what areas of your small business you need to focus on.

Format

I've divided the book into two sections: *Managing Your Creative Business* and *Marketing Your Creative Business*. There are, of course, common threads between the two areas, but I put management first for a reason: A well-managed business is more attractive and more worthy of promotion.

This is not a linear book. I talk about fitting into the culture of a client's business before I talk about the contract you've signed to get there. It's not a system that you should enact, or a blue pill you should take, and it certainly isn't a get-rich-quick scheme. This book is a bit like an à la carte business course for creatives: Take what you want and get to it. I've also chosen an interdisciplinary approach, never restricting my advice to, say, photographers or designers; good business is good business regardless of what creative industry you're in.

Stories

If you're like me, you don't learn very well from people you don't know. A talking head will never leave a lasting impression. So I've included short stories from my life, mostly my childhood, that should help you get to know me a little better—or at least make you laugh. These little snippets from my life experience describe the things that have shaped me, hurt me, scared me, or brought me closer to knowing who I am and what matters to me, and I hope the correlations I draw between the anecdotes and the chapters they introduce will connect for you.

Images

The images in this book, for the most part, feature independent artists and creative talent, or their creative work. The images highlight entrepreneurship, interesting ideas, and cool people. Sometimes they connect directly to the subject at hand, sometimes they don't. I hope you find them inspiring. Think of them as a fast-acting ointment, easing the pain of reading about a topic that stings, as I ask you repeatedly to take a hard look at yourself and your business and assess what you need to do better.

Business Advice

My primary goal with this book is to remove some of the mystery associated with starting and growing a creative business. The concepts, best practices, actionable ideas, and insights I provide should help steer vocational creatives so they can get started or inject new life into their ventures. Throughout the book I've featured inspiring and innovative people that provide context to the discussion or simply a welcome reprieve from all the talky-talk. I've also tapped on the shoulders of some pretty serious subject-matter experts, like lawyers, accountants, and consultants, to go a little deeper or provide some additional context.

Action Boxes

I hope the advice in this book will help you make the right decisions, or ask the right questions, as you continue on with the adventure of your small business. That is why I created action boxes. These action-oriented elements are formatted differently than the body of the chapter so that you can take special note of a supportive position by someone I trust, or consider how to move forward. They feature quotes, statements, questions, or tasks that you can use to take the next steps.

Twitter Handles

I've included web URLs of the people and tools I think you'll benefit from learning more about, and I've also dropped in Twitter aliases. I included these for two reasons:

- ▶ It's fun to connect with other people, and following them on Twitter is a simple way to do that.
- ▶ I wanted to prove that being creative and successful has nothing to do with how many Twitter followers you have. Many of the creatives I mention are quite unpopular (so am I).

Creatives Explained

By way of a disclaimer, I use the description "creatives" as a proper noun. By convention, it's a term that means "Those who display productive originality." I'm working off a similar definition here. There are a few different interpretations of this (such as cultural creatives), but for the sake of this book, when I refer to "creatives" I'm picturing emerging or established artists who contribute to the economic workforce through their creative endeavors, such as photographers, designers, illustrators, bloggers, basket weavers, or candlestick makers. I talk about creatives and artists synonymously.

A Little About Me

In case you're wondering what it is I do for a living, legendary agent and film producer Jerry Weintraub explains it better than I can in his book *When I Stop Talking, You'll Know I'm Dead: Useful Stories from a Persuasive Man* (Twelve, 2010): "I take the pressure off. I handle the mundane concerns so that the [creative] can do what only he or she can do: perform, create." I am not an agent or representative (or a film producer); I'm a business manager—an action man. My clients are independent creative entrepreneurs who want to focus on what they do best. I take care of the rest.

As a creative entrepreneur, you crave to break free from the constraints of the modern workforce, be autonomous, happily pursue your creative enterprise, and make money while you're at it. I'm convinced that creative people can bridge the distance between their reality and their dreams one good business decision at a time.

Let's do this!

Corwin Hiebert
Vancouver, Canada

8

**GENERATING
DEMAND
FOR YOUR
SERVICES**

Marketing is a lot more than just being available to the market. By sharing fresh ideas, sharing your unique attributes and leadership, building a brand that's memorable and meaningful, and putting it into action, you'll draw a crowd instead of just standing out in one.



Creative Work Designed and crafted by Vancouver-born Kari Bergrud, Belvedere is a collection of gentlemen's accessories inspired by the 1950s with a dash of modern style for today's classy gent.

Web: www.belvedereregents.com Twitter: @karibergrud Image credit: Zach Bullick

I was not a tough kid growing up, so as a young boy I survived the school playground not with muscle but with speed. When bigger boys would taunt me or try to make my existence miserable, I would either try to win them over with quick-witted charm or simply run away. One day in the fourth grade I responded with a third tactic: weaponry. I needed a more convincing method of getting what I wanted and, as an avid jackknife collector, I figured if I brandished a blade I'd be able to take charge of my own destiny.

The next altercation happened on the swing set and, instead of trying to make nice, I pulled out my knife, flipped open the blade, and said with a nervous voice, "It's my turn. Get off." The older, stronger boy jumped off and ran away. A couple of minutes later the monitoring teacher confronted me about the



Creative Work The Belvedere brand was created by Zach Bulick, a Canadian-Texan designer/illustrator from Vancouver, Canada.

Web: www.zachbulick.com Twitter: @zachbulick

incident, confiscated my knife until the end of the day, and said I would be serving a detention. After school, she instructed me to come to the front of the class and write, “I will not bring a knife to school” repeatedly on the blackboard for 30 minutes. Lesson learned. The teacher returned my knife to me and off I went.

By today’s standards, I got off pretty easy—the school never even notified my parents. But the situation often comes to mind as I think about the current-day creative entrepreneur and the marketplace you play in. Creatives tend to respond to the challenge of marketing their businesses in a couple of different ways: either they run for the hills, claiming it’s too hard to promote themselves, or they take the extreme approach of pulling a stunt that produces short-term results at the expense of building businesses they can sustain.

Eliciting Curiosity

Putting yourself out there as a talented and serviceable creative is tough stuff. I get it. With more and more small businesses springing up, and skilled people in the workforce, it appears that on a macro-level creative valuation is being targeted from multiple angles; clearly these are forces you can't control. However, you can control how you present yourself to your sphere of influence and shape the perception of you and your business. This microcosm can act contrary to the general market based on what your prospects need, value, and who they hope to engage. Building a meaningful connection with your target audience should be the focus of your marketing efforts, and you can do that most effectively when they come to you.

Many business owners feel they'd be more successful if they had less competition, but I disagree. I see countless creatives approaching their marketing efforts in ways that aren't attractive—or worse, aren't creative. Creatives seem to either run scared from the big, bad buyer or act like a loud, annoying bully trying to convince buyers they're the real deal. The mediocre ones who don't fall into those two categories flit about from stunt to stunt, not sure what to do or say or how to get the attention they feel they deserve.

The solution is to stop chasing. Stop spinning your wheels, stop marketing like your competitors, stop regurgitating stale schemes, and stop making noise about your work because everyone else is. A successful marketing mindset seeks to generate a spark in the mind's eye of an ideal client (and those who influence them), rather than to simply make noise.

All the marketing jargon that has been filling your head for years isn't useless; you simply need to sift through all the junk and make sure that what you do attempt serves a greater goal than just pulling in some more money. It needs to build your brand, it needs to satisfy your purpose, and it needs to make the long game an adventure you're proud of. When your actions—both as a creative humanoid and as a business owner—pique just one person's interest, you'll have produced the most valuable sales opportunity there is: being in demand.

DEMANDING ATTENTION = ILLICIT MARKETING
ELICITING CURIOSITY = GENERATING DEMAND

Your creative legacy deserves better. Your creative spirit demands to be handled more deliberately. Your business will succeed as you develop the habit of doing and saying things that make people curious.

SEVEN WAYS TO STIMULATE CURIOSITY

Want to get off the marketing treadmill? Consider implementing one, or more, of these attention getters:

- ▶ Act on impulses that spark your creativity or that help you learn or experience new things. Practice being curious yourself and share it with friends and peers.
- ▶ Become a militant supporter of others. Ramp up your enthusiasm for innovative and creative people and organizations, going the extra mile to help them succeed.
- ▶ Make some notes about how you make buying decisions, what kinds of conversations or opportunities excite you, and what your vendors do to sell you on something.
- ▶ Scheme up a plan for a personal project, creating achievable milestones, and then announce it to your social networks as a “Work in Progress,” keeping them in the loop as you go.
- ▶ Attend an event or travel somewhere you’ve never been to before. Document your experiences in a creative medium you don’t normally work in.
- ▶ Find a subject that interests you and determine what opinions you have, and then find evidence to support a strong position you can stand behind vigorously.
- ▶ Give yourself a makeover. Experiment with an out-of-the-ordinary style. Change-up your hair or wardrobe. Do something that gives you a boost of confidence. Don’t try too hard; the change should amplify your personality, not alter it.

To help nudge you in the right direction, consider the concept of push/pull marketing, at least how I see it as it pertains to a creative venture. Pushing your offering onto an unsuspecting network only works if the viewer takes the bait and reaches out to you. There’s no engagement; it’s simply guesswork about which tactic will land in a willing party’s lap. You’re going for volume and you’re hoping for the best. On the other hand, pulling is an action that is customer-initiated as a result of you connecting with the right people, at the right time, in a manner that meets their individual needs. Demand may be scarce but it’s there, and you know it because your level of engagement is high. Defining your target market right down to the companies and the people you want to serve and then taking the kinds of risks that excite you, both creatively and personally, will put you in a position to be noticed. That’s the kind of foundation you can build on. Survival of the fittest has less to do with marketing wizardry and more to do with looking good while making valiant attempts at activities and ideas that convey who you are, what you do, and why you do it.

Scott Stratten, in his book *UnMarketing: Stop Marketing. Start Engaging.* (Wiley, 2010) reminds us that we need to market in a way we can stand behind. “We’ve been taught to market to others in ways we hate being marketed to (cold-calling, flyers, ads, etc.),” Stratten writes. “So why do we still keep trying the same stale marketing moves?”

Business owners who promote themselves through the very methods they detest convey an attitude of desperation. Marketing efforts that employ means that don’t connect with you will fail at connecting with those you’re eager to reach. It’s a matter of authenticity; it’s off-brand because *you* are your brand, and as an independent business owner your marketing efforts must reflect your talent, expertise, passions, and ability to deliver on a promise. If “push-marketing” isn’t your style, don’t use it; creatives should never apply marketing strategies that contrast with the character of the person behind the creative work. If you judge the marketing ploys of your competition as cheap stunts, don’t use them. Put the same critical eye to your own efforts to ensure they’re producing high levels of engagement; if they’re not, it’s time to hit the reset button.

Leverage your bravery and confidence, and rely on your ideation and influences. Put more energy into being more attractive to watch, cheer on, support, brag about, and engage with. Let your creative mix shine.

Developing Auteur-like Attitude

Great artists tend to have a certain *je ne sais quoi*—an elusive yet attractive way about them—but the self-employed can rarely feel they can afford the luxury of such artistic sensibilities; however, nothing could be more important. The marketing conventions out there appeal to your insatiable desire to stand out from the crowd, but why struggle to fight off the competition? Why not try to rise above and strive to attract a crowd?

Skills and experience are the foundation of a creative business, but in the end they don’t matter as much as many would like to believe. I wish I could buck the trend here and tell you that talent and longevity are all you need to be successful, but I’d be lying. The market doesn’t care about talent in the same way a craftsman does, and it sure does love to chase the new kid on the block. We’re exposed to mediocrity at an unprecedented level these days, so I’ll just assume I’m preaching to the choir on this one.

We live in a jacked-up creative economy. The labor market has changed dramatically these past few years and, due to a suppressed economy, affordable

technology, specialized education, and fake money (credit), the market has been saturated with talent. Every new small business owner is likely more wet behind the ears than they'd care to admit. Naivete reigns if skills and experience are the only thing you're counting on to differentiate yourself from the competition. Success requires taking a venture well past the realm of talent and pursuing, with great fervor, something deeper, something more valuable to your business in the long run. Creative entrepreneurs should strive to become auteurs.

When a creative's style permeates their work to the point that they control every facet of their output, they have achieved a level of uniqueness that is definable and recognizable. An auteur has a discernible vision they can, in some way or another, claim as their own. This is very much a film industry term and, in that vein, Woody Allen stands out as an auteur. As a film director, his work consistently explores the same themes and notions regardless of the cast, setting, or script.

Comparing ourselves to an award-winning American icon probably isn't the most useful exercise, but his example is potent nonetheless because we all know his work, regardless of whether we like it or not.

I value the lofty ideal of creatives wanting to become auteurs in their own right because it resolves the dilemma many artists prematurely worry about: whether it's worth selling out to become successful. The real issue behind selling out is not a matter of whether you get a big payout or not, or whether one person's ethics are in line with those of her peers; it's whether you're giving up control of your art. Determining the level of control that means the most to you is the mature way to assess a business opportunity.

Many creatives appeal to their artistic sensibilities by chasing their muse around dark hallways in the middle of the night or brooding in the way only an artist knows how to brood. But what if you spent your time and energy on something a little less mysterious? Get your hands dirty and evaluate your creative inputs; grind out your unique vision; establish your voice, your message, and your story; and put your ideas through the wringer until they're repeatable and manageable. The results of that process will show the market who's boss, and new challenges and opportunities will come knocking.

If aspiring to be an auteur sounds over the top to you, consider adopting what I call the street-wise auteur, the linchpin of author Seth Godin's philosophy of creative business: "Be remarkable, generous, a creator of art, make the tough calls, and bring people and ideas together." To grow a successful business, stop looking for inspiration and start the difficult work of transforming your craft into something truly unique and definable.

RELEASING YOUR INNER WOODY ALLEN

Shake things up in your creative world by acting on a few Woody-isms, some more tongue-in-cheek others. Find your voice, define your style, and inject some Mr. Allen-inspired auterisms so you can draw a crowd of your own:

- ▶ Forget the special effects. Ignore the bells and whistles your peers make so much noise about; work simpler.
- ▶ Be self-indulgent once in a while; and if you're going to be a jackass, have a good reason—or at least be prepared to apologize.
- ▶ When working alone, act insecure and downcast so as to prove to yourself that you're not actually as lame as you could be.
- ▶ Script a monologue, or memorize a poem or song, that you can recite at parties; entertainment comes in all kinds of forms.
- ▶ Psychoanalyze yourself to the point that you know your shortcomings better than anyone, and then take a self-help course.
- ▶ Live and work in a city you love, or at least travel to one you love as often as possible to stay invigorated by the environment and setting.
- ▶ When your back is against the wall, sign yourself up for a massive undertaking, risking all your time and energy in the hopes of a big break.
- ▶ Take up the jazz clarinet.

Creating a Marketable Brand

Your brand is derived from who you are, who you want to be, and who people perceive you to be. Your brand is your promise to your customers. Your brand tells them what they can expect from you, and it differentiates your offering from your competitors'. A marketable brand is a combination of elements that create trust and trigger manageable action. A marketable brand is a springboard that inspires you to jump to the needs of potential buyers and motivates prospects to discover more about how your creativity can serve them. When buyers instill trust, they show their faith by pulling out their checkbooks.

My friend Brian R.G. McKenzie is a marketing professional with a nonprofit organization in Kelowna, British Columbia, who consults on a part-time basis to entrepreneurs of all types. He's a former agency manager who regularly takes up the call to help startups focus on making marketing problems go away so they can focus on what they do best and deliver their unique value. Brian believes in the marketing value of building trust because it identifies the business transaction with the business owner behind it. "As the ultimate authority on your brand, you get to choose what others think—about you and your brand," he says. "It's the essence of who you are and what you offer. It encompasses all of your products and services. It even drives what you talk about during meetings and who you have business lunches with and why." As you work to develop a brand, never think of it as just a logo; think of it as a full-scale scene that captures the essence of how you fit into your business.

As you've already witnessed, I believe entrepreneurs need to seek professional help whenever possible; and building your brand should be added to the docket of things you shouldn't try to create in a bubble. Regardless of your marketing prowess or design expertise, your brand is an extension of yourself, and the harsh reality is that you're too close to your business to effectively extrapolate all the ways in which your business can develop or how it would be perceived by potential buyers. Find a trusted advisor or a skilled peer to be your sounding board or to help you hammer out some of the nuances of your brand. Or hire someone you respect to help take you through the steps, either to provide you with expert approval or help fill in the gaps (or hit the reset button).

I'm not a "branding guy," but I'm exposed to the inner-workings of creative business brands on a regular basis and I can tell you that isolated branding efforts show their true colors more often than not, and sexy-looking graphics have nothing to do with it. Get backup on this one. Trust me.

Speaking of sexy—I mean backup—Luke Taylor is a Branding Specialist in Victoria, British Columbia. He started his sole proprietorship, five, in 2005 (@fivegraphics), and he's a service provider to a couple of my clients, so I know his work really well. This guy knows logos. His target client is a company that needs to build and design a new "brandmark." He has adopted this terminology rather than "logo" because it helps his clients understand a logo's place within the structure of their brand and their business, and he meets their needs in a very specific way. He guides clients through the process of developing a brandmark that, as one of many elements, fits into the brand strategy they're developing.

A successful brand brings together all the elements that make up a creative endeavor into one cohesive package that clarifies your reason for working and serves as a catalyst for action:

- ▶ Purpose: Who are your customers, what do they like, and why are you serving them?
- ▶ Values: What is most important to you and why does it impact your business?
- ▶ Goals: How will you know if you're successful, or if your customers are happy?
- ▶ Uniqueness: How do you differ from other providers? Is your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) clearly defined? (For more on USPs, see Chapter 2, "Planning for Success.")
- ▶ Style: What will the words convey? Are you casual, formal, conversational, friendly, urban, or action-oriented?
- ▶ Name: What is your formal commercial name? How do you want the marketplace to identify you?
- ▶ Tagline: Can you communicate your most important benefit in just a few evocative words?
- ▶ Logo: What graphical element can you create that embodies your business offering and attracts eyeballs?
- ▶ Visuals: What images, colors, styles, fonts, treatments, and aesthetics will help you earn your buyers' trust?

A WELL-CRAFTED BRAND DOESN'T PUT YOUR BUSINESS INTO THE ACTION; YOU DO.

In the everyday world—one filled with decisions, transactions, failures, and successes—a brand is an identity. It's a business name, a symbol, visual treatments, words that state an offering, and the voice and tone in which they're delivered. When these things connect with a need or want, the potential buyer initiates contact. As clever as creatives want to be with their branding efforts, the most difficult challenge is simply to stay out of the way of a potential buying decision. As you already know, your USP sets you apart from others. A solid brand removes barriers and creates opportunities that build up your creative legacy while helping buyers focus on what's most important: your creativity and your ability to make good on your promises.

BRINGING THE WOW TO YOUR BRAND

Trying to come up with a name for your start-up? Putting together a new brand or revitalizing an existing one? Consider working through the WOW Branding worksheets to help you answer the fundamental questions about your business's most strategic components.

Naming Worksheet

Your business name will be one of the most identifiable elements for the entire life of your brand. Creating the right name is a mix of creativity, meaning, impact, use, and—of course—availability. Start by getting as many ideas as possible and uncover which stream is the greatest. WOW's naming process starts by exploring possibilities in each of the following categories:

- ▶ Playful: Challenge the ordinary, irreverent, arbitrary, oxymoron
- ▶ Origin: Pay tribute to a specific inspiration, founder, location, cultural bias
- ▶ Inventive: Make up words; Kodak did it—so can you
- ▶ Descriptive: Choose deliberately clear descriptions or attributes
- ▶ Technical: Blend modern words, technical language, and specific function
- ▶ Conjoined: Combine or connect two or more ideas
- ▶ Acronym: Group letters that mean something to you
- ▶ Metaphoric: Attribute or symbolism
- ▶ Random: Roll the dice

Naming Criteria Evaluation Sheet

Got a few names you're considering? On a scale of 1 to 10, rank the names individually. This is not a comparison exercise.

- ▶ Is your first impression of the name strong?
- ▶ Does it sound/look good?
- ▶ Is it easy to read/pronounce?
- ▶ Use it in multiple sentences. Does it feel right?
- ▶ Are quick associations positive? Does it have story appeal?
- ▶ Does it relate to the primary benefit(s) of the company/service?
- ▶ Does it sound credible?
- ▶ Is it registrable and protectable?
- ▶ Is it memorable?
- ▶ How nervous does it make you?
- ▶ How well does it relate to your positioning or who you are?

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Creative at Work David Airey is graphic designer and design author from Northern Ireland. His popular book *Logo Design Love* is full of inspiring logos and real-world anecdotes that illustrate best practices for designing brand identity systems that last. He shares his experiences in working with clients, including sketches and final results of his successful designs, but also uses the work of many well-known designers to explain why well-crafted brand identity systems are important, how to create iconic logos, and how to work with clients to achieve success as a designer.

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Putting Your Brains and Your Brand into Action

The most successful way to generate demand is to proactively connect with the clients you want or the ones you have, and to do it with your brand leading the way. When you repeatedly care for, support, and over-deliver to buyers big and small, you aren't just providing a service; you're leveraging your character and charm. Nothing creates a spark more than a personal touch, and that takes some scheming. Too often, the traditional sales call or networking attempt is dry and boring, but when you can incorporate your brand into the experience, and produce a good feeling or a memorable moment, you're giving yourself the opportunity to make more than an impression.

The value of your business lies in the fact that you're in it for the long run. The long run is what true demand requires. Demand builds over time when you build trust and give people more than they expect. It shows that you're not a flash in the pan, but rather a skilled craftsman who is building a legacy, a résumé of being the go-to person for this particular creative product or service. You rely on your craft; others should feel like they can rely on your craft too. In the end, your brand is not really for you, it's for your buyers. So as your brand develops, expand your thinking around how you can put your brand into the minds, hearts, and hands of your target market. Your captivating style can't just be shared with those who are currently paying you. Let your brand be something you use beyond your website and stationery. Find unique and recognizable ways to share the big ideas and big heart behind your business. You don't want to end up with a sharp logo and no crowd to attract with it.

LOVE THE ONES YOU'RE WITH

Here's an excerpt from *Work for Money, Design for Love: Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Starting and Running a Successful Design Business*, a new book by David Airey:

Karishma Kasabia of Australia-based Kish+Co understands that marketing today needs to be savvier than traditional marketing methods, especially when it comes to keeping relationships with existing clients flourishing.

No one wants a bad flyer or an average postcard. We need more to catch our attention, and even more still to be loyal and to love a brand.

The best and often most unloved place to start is with existing clients. We're used to their attention; we're much more sugar-coated when we meet the potential new ones. That's not right.

For Valentine's Day, we had custom cupcakes made for our studio, then mapped out our existing clients, from the outer suburbs of Melbourne and all the way back into the core of the central business district.

One hundred cupcakes, with orange and brown icing based on our corporate colors, individually boxed with a Kish+Co seal were delivered. We started at 9 a.m. and finished at 6 p.m., hand-delivering to suppliers as well as clients. I drove and double-parked; my partner Agnes did the delivery.

That same day we got Tweeted and Facebooked, and received calls for new work, recovering our marketing costs for the day's effort with one single job.

The best thing is how memorable we made our brand.

You'll discover that owning a small business makes you very stringent when it comes to expenses. But as Karishma recommends, you need to measure the results of your marketing, whether it's tracking hits with a pricey placement in a marketing magazine or a creative treat costing you about \$500. It can often be the cheaper, more creative endeavors that bring the best results.

Index

4-hour Work Week, The (Ferriss) 16
56thStudio, 15
\$100 Startup, The (Guillebeau) 141

A

abstract art 9–10
Accidental Creative, The (Henry) 14
accountants 29, 84, 102, 109, 115
accounting system 109, 111
account managers 102
acronyms 133
action boxes xvi
Action-Method.com 44
action vs. reaction 46
active inspirations 11
Ada and Miranda shoes 69
added-value items 23
address book 40, 180, 197–198.
 See also contact information
administrative tasks 42
Adobe Certified Expert 214
advertising. *See also* marketing
 awards 245
 and collaboration effect 179
 effective vs. amateurish 206
 as part of marketing mix 140, 143
 via social networks 217, 218
agendas, meeting 52, 53, 56
agents xvii
Age of Enlightenment 12
agreements. *See also* contracts
 collaboration 91, 185
 negotiating 89–90
 non-disclosure 92–93
 overcoming fears about 86–89
 purpose of 94
 tools for creating 94–95
Aiken, David 37–38
Airey, David 134, 135
Albano, Nadia 20
aliases 40, 226, 227
alien influences 11
Allen, Woody 129, 130
aphorisms 118–119, 253
Apple 39
apprentices 12
apps, iPad/iPhone 109
Armstrong, Joey 113

Arnold, Corey 170, 171
art events 60
artistic play 9
artists xvi, 7. *See also* creatives
aspirations 21
aspiring expertise 11
asset management 6
asset protection 84
attention getters
 blogging 224
 marketing 127
audits, business 141
auteurs 128–129
awards 186, 245, 250
Aweber.com 229

B

backup files 63
backup parties 39
Bailey, Martin 234, 238
Bancroft, Sarah 26
banking 102, 115
bank loans 112, 115
barter arrangements 106.
 See also contra deals
Basecamp.com 44
baseline pricing matrix 104
BC Adventure 243
Beckwith, Harry 140
Behance Action Method Action
 Journal 58
Belsky, Scott 14
Belvedere brand 125
Bentzen, Chris 182
Benum, Ilise 17
Berglund, Graeme 59–60
Bergrud, Kari 124
Bernbach, William 140
Best Business Practices for Photographers
 (Harrington) 90, 104–105
billing clients 108–111
biography, website 226
Blinkbid.com 111
Blog, Inc. (Cho) 224
bloggers
 common mistakes of 213, 223
 networking with 204
blogging 222–224
 as part of marketing mix 144, 212, 222
 recommended books on 224
 and SEO 223

- body language 51
 - boilerplate 86, 93
 - BOMA Project 256
 - bookkeepers 102. *See also* accountants
 - bookmarks, web 40, 226
 - borrowing money 13, 112–115
 - brand capital 213
 - branding
 - specialists 131
 - worksheets 133
 - brandmarks 131, 242
 - brands
 - creating marketable 130–133
 - elements of successful 132
 - putting into action 134–135
 - Brown, Colby 224
 - browsers, web 226
 - budgets 45, 106
 - Bulick, Zach 125
 - business
 - asking for 61–63
 - borrowing money for 112–115
 - building pricing strategy for 103–108
 - building revenue streams for 21–22
 - choosing name for 82–83, 132, 133
 - clarifying offerings of 23–25
 - developing management style for 118–119
 - essential components of 16
 - evaluating saleability of 22
 - financial considerations 99–102
 - incorporating 84
 - insurance considerations 83–85
 - legal issues (*See* legal issues)
 - marketing strategies (*See* marketing)
 - preparing master plan for 27–31
 - questions to ask about culture of 23
 - registration requirements 82–83
 - setting expectations for 21
 - soliciting future 150
 - startup considerations 81–85
 - understanding marketplace for 25–26
 - business advice xv
 - business audits 141
 - business capital 115
 - business cards 143, 165, 173, 240–244
 - business contracts. *See* contracts
 - business culture 74
 - business debts 13
 - business gifts 144, 175, 236, 239
 - business managers xvii
 - business plans 27–31
 - categories to include in 30
 - getting help with 29, 31
 - guiding principles for 30–31
 - purpose of 27–28
 - recommended length of 30
 - Business Playground, The* (Stewart/Simmons) 11
 - business practices, photography 90, 104–105
 - buyers 26, 59, 61, 63. *See also* clients
 - buy-outs 23
 - buzz, building 30, 186–189, 194, 219, 273
 - Byron, Angie 210, 217
- ## C
- calendars 41. *See also* schedules
 - camaraderie 75
 - Canada is Awesome network 197, 199
 - Capilano University 166
 - capital
 - brand 213
 - business 115
 - creative 7, 17
 - CAPTCHA tests 226
 - CARDED! 182
 - Carter, Sean 27
 - Carter Hales Design Lab 27
 - cash flow 84, 111. *See also* revenue
 - cell phones 58, 147
 - champions 13, 189
 - Chandra, Jeannine M. 112
 - character 114
 - charities 106
 - Chartered Accountants 84
 - Chase Jarvis Inc. 92
 - Cheaper Show, The 60
 - Checkerboard Guy 37–38
 - cheerleading 77
 - Cho, Joy Deangdeelert 224
 - Circles, Google+ 219–220
 - clients
 - accommodating budget constraints of 106
 - communicating with 169
 - establishing Scope of Work for 70–73
 - exceeding expectations of 174
 - fitting in with 74–77
 - meeting needs of 23
 - scheduling meetings with 36

- servicing multiple 9
- treating like prospects 169
- understanding cultural landscape of
 - 74
 - understanding needs/wants of 67–70
- clothing 36, 58, 98–99, 127
- cloud-based environment 40
- clubcard.ca 242
- clubcardprinting.com 242
- coffee sleeves 237–238
- cold-calling 128, 142, 143
- ColecoVision 257
- collaboration 177–189
 - agreements 91, 185
 - attributes of successful 183, 189
 - benefits of 177–179
 - choosing the right projects for 181–183
 - ensuring success of 184–185
 - finding right people for 180–181
 - identifying target audience for 187
 - marketing/promoting 186–189
 - as part of marketing mix 144
 - tools 44–45
 - vs. partnership 83
- collaborators 30, 91, 180–181, 189, 198
- collateral 115. *See also* print collateral
- columnists 204
- comedy 221
- commissions 22
- Commitment Engine, The* (Jantsch) 175
- communication tasks 36, 40
- competition 103, 126, 162
- complaining 75
- computers 39, 58
- confidence 12, 24, 52
- confidentiality agreements 92–93, 95
- Conscientious Objections* (Postman) 12
- ConstantContact.com 229
- consulting agreements 95
- contact forms 226
- contact information 40, 175, 197–198, 221, 226. *See also* business cards
- Contactually 221
- content
 - vs. context 216
 - website 225, 226
- contests 141, 144, 165–166
- context vs. content 216
- contracts. *See also* legal issues
 - boilerplate “legalese” in 86
 - developing your own 90–91
 - learning to read 87
 - making sense of 89–94
 - negotiating 89–90
 - payment terms in 108
 - purpose of 70
 - saying “no” to 89
 - storing 87
 - tools for creating 94–95
 - vs. Scope of Work 70, 71
- Contractually 94–95
- contra deals 106, 108
- cooking 9
- corwinhiebert.com 147
- Costanza, George 178–179
- Cost of Business 108
- coursework 12–13
- Craft & Vision 24, 67
- creative alliances 189.
 - See also* collaboration
- creative assets 11
- creative briefs 91
- creative capital 7, 17
- Creative Class vi.
 - See also* creative entrepreneurs
- creative control 90
- creative diversity 11
- creative entrepreneurs. *See also* creatives
 - business managers for xvii
 - characteristics of successful xiii–xiv, xvii, 8
 - financial considerations for 99–102
 - hard work required of 13–16, 35
 - pricing strategies for 103–108
 - revenue streams for 21–22
 - and Twitter xvi
- creative freelancing 22.
 - See also* freelancing
- Creative Habit, The* (Tharp) 7, 13
- creative mix 9–11, 36
- CREATIVEMIX conference 11, 207, 237–238
- Creative Money Manual, The* (McGuinness/Thelwall) 107
- creative rhythm 14, 118
- creatives. *See also* creative entrepreneurs
 - aphorisms for 118–119
 - as auteurs 128–129
 - collaborating with other 179–181. (*See also* collaboration)
 - defined xvi
 - as early adopters of technology 211
 - education for 12–13

- creatives (*continued*)
 - feelings of isolation by 179, 193–194
 - most valuable asset of 7
 - self-employed 22
 - stereotypes of 43
 - support systems for 179
 - website-building tools for 225
 - what clients expect from 68
 - work environment for 38–40
 - Creatives Agency, The 200
 - creative services
 - advertising/marketing 140, 164–165
 - persuading clients to buy 62
 - pricing 104, 105
 - creative toolkit 7–8
 - creative workspace 34
 - credibility 12, 174
 - Credit, Five Cs of 114–115
 - credit cards 100, 114
 - credit scores 114
 - CRM tool 174
 - cue cards 157
 - cultural creatives xvi
 - cultural landscape, client's 74–77
 - culture, business 23
 - cupcake marketing 135
 - curiosity 126–128, 168
 - customer feedback 151–153
 - Customer Relationship Management tool 174
 - customers 23. *See also* clients
 - customer satisfaction surveys 153
- D**
- Dacosta, Matheus 240
 - Daily Drop Cap 34
 - day jobs 90
 - day rates 104–105
 - dba 82, 83
 - deadlines 43, 147. *See also* schedules
 - debts 13, 100, 112, 114
 - defaults, loan 115
 - deliverables 41, 146
 - Delnea, Dave xii, 178
 - demographics 26
 - Derringer, Jaime 224
 - Design Milk* magazine 224
 - desks 39
 - digital arts 210
 - digital calendars 43
 - digital communications 237
 - digital life 211, 212. *See also* web presence
 - digital media 245
 - digital workspace 40
 - direct marketing 143. *See also* marketing
 - Dirty Apron Cooking School 10
 - disclosure terms 92
 - Discorder* magazine 248
 - discounts 106
 - distractions 16
 - Doing Business As 82, 83
 - domain names 226, 227
 - Do-Not-Compete agreements 81
 - dreams vi–viii, 21, 30
 - Dropbox.com 40
 - Drupal 210
 - duChemin, David
 - and blogging 222
 - Craft & Vision business 24, 67
 - and living-the-dream model vi–viii
 - Think & Drink sessions 154
 - at work 66
 - Duct Tape Marketing* (Jantsch) 175
- E**
- eBooks 22, 24, 67
 - ECCO Design 50
 - eco-friendly printing options 242
 - e-commerce systems 227
 - education 12–13
 - effectiveness 16
 - efficiency 16
 - egos 76
 - E-Junkie 227
 - Ellis, Amy 230
 - email 227–231
 - aliases 227
 - etiquette 227
 - filtering 40
 - importance of 227
 - managing 36, 40, 46
 - marketing campaigns 228–231
 - newsletters 144, 169
 - pings 143
 - sending too much 68
 - tips for effective use of 227
 - traction reports 167
 - vs. face-to-face interaction 51
 - vs. phone calls 142
 - E-Myth Revisited, The* (Gerber) 21

energy management 14
e-newsletter campaigns 144, 169
engagement levels 26
Enlightenment, Age of 12
Enns, Blair 62
entertainment 130
entertainment industry 37–38
entrepreneurs xiii, 23, 38.
 See also creative entrepreneurs
Equifax 114
ergonomics 39
errands 42
Ertl, Martin 94
estimates 108
etiquette, email 227
ET Web Hosting 226
event organizers 203
events
 attending 127, 141
 hosting 144, 182, 203
 networking at 201–202
Excel 115, 147
exchanging goods/services 108.
 See also contra deals
EX-factor 17
exhibitions 144, 200. *See also* events
expectations, exceeding 174
expenses 90, 100, 101, 119, 183
experience 77, 128

F

Facebook 144, 148, 214, 218
face-to-face meetings 36, 51, 59, 199.
 See also meetings
fans/followers 148, 172, 186, 189, 213, 221
feedback, customer 151–153
“Feedback” clause 92
Feiler, Tom 245
Ferrazzi, Keith 199
Ferriss, Timothy 16
files
 cleaning up 39
 naming 40
 storing 40
filters 40
finances 97–119
 asking clients for money 108–111
 borrowing money 112–115
 building pricing strategy 103–108

 getting help with 100, 101–102
 making good decisions about 99–100
financial advisors 102
financial security 99
financial statements 29, 84, 115
fireworks story 80–81
FISH-WORK project 170, 171
Five Cs of Credit 114–115
flags 40
Flipboard 216
flip charts 157
flyers 128, 135
focus 14, 26
folders 40
followers/fans 148, 172, 186, 189, 213, 221
Freelance Camp Vancouver 50
freelancing 22, 83, 101
free work 106, 174, 217
FreshBooks.com 108–111
Fried, Jason 54
fundraisers 76, 203

G

GAAP 109
Garrett, Chris 224
Gerber, Michael 21
gift cards 144
gift certificates 144, 236
gifts 175, 239
G.I. Joe 34
Godin, Seth 129
“going rate” concept 107
Goodrich, Jay 160, 163
Goods and Services meetings 72
goodwill 77
Google+
 assessing value of 148
 as marketing tool 144, 148, 212, 213, 214
 organizational features 219
 as peer-to-peer environment 219–220
 recommended book on 224
 WordPress blog plug-in 223
Google Docs 44
Google+ for Photographers (Brown) 224
Gora, Christopher 91
graphic designers 242, 248
Groberman, Pamela 207
guilds 12
Guillebeau, Chris 138, 141

H

Hales, Ross 27
Halloran, Jaz 248, 249
Hamada, Jeff 228
Hangar 18 Creative Group 7
Hansson, David Heinemeier 54
Harrington, John 90, 104
hashtags 219
headphones 39
Henry, Todd 14
Hiebert, Corwin 155, 256
Hiebert, Kevin 84
Hische, Jessica 34
hobbies 11, 101
Hoehnle, Jim 182
holiday cards 168
home office 38–40
“Hong Kong Nights” shoes 69
HootSuite 219, 220
hosting, web 226
Hot One Inch Action 182
hourly rates 105, 106
HowCast 221
Huddle.com 44

I

idea mapping 55
IDEA Program 166
ideation 16, 46
ideation conference 11
identity, business 132
images
 on business cards 242
 sharing on social networks 216
 for successful brand 132
 this book’s xv
income 22. *See also* revenue
income tax 82, 100–101, 108
incorporating 84
independent creative work 35–38, 154.
 See also creative entrepreneurs
industry-itis 202
inLine ARTS 216
insecurity 130
inspiration 11, 13, 38, 129, 183
instructional content 221
insurance 83–85, 115
intellectual property 84, 88, 93, 95, 184, 213
Internet 94, 142, 212. *See also* web presence

invitations, meeting 52
invoices 108–109
iPad apps 109
iPhone apps 109
isolation 179, 193–194
It’s Your Biz (Solovic) 22

J

Jantsch, John 175
Jarvis, Chase 80
Jarvis, Kate 92
jazz music 9–10
job requirements 68
joint ventures 83
joking 75
journals 58
Jurcic, Vida 7

K

Kadel, Dr. Ben xiv
Kasabia, Karishma 135
Kashoo Online Accounting 109, 111
Kaufman, Josh 16
Kenna, Susi 200, 205
Kerpen, Dave 224
Keynote 63, 157
Kish+Co 135
Kronbauer, Bob 197, 199
Krug, Kris 215, 216

L

Lackey, Tamara 165, 169
launch parties 203
lawyers 81, 82, 86, 93
legal issues 79–95
 choosing business name 82–83
 Do-Not-Compete agreements 81
 getting help with 82
 incorporating your business 84
 negotiating contracts 89–94
 non-disclosure agreements 92–93
 overcoming fears about 86–89
 partnerships 83
 regional requirements 82–83
 resources 87
legalitis 86, 87
letters, personalized 144
letusbuzz.com 220

licensing agreements 91
 licensing fees 22
 life experiences xv
 lifestyle photography 165
 life-work balance 22, 35, 43
 lighting, workspace 39
Likeable Social Media (Kerpen) 224
 LinkedIn 214
 listening 118, 157
 liveBooks 225
 living-the-dream model vi–viii, 22
 loan applications 114
 loan defaults 115
 loans 13, 112–115
Logo Design Love (Airey) 134
 logo-marked items 237
 logos 131, 132, 134, 242
 Lone Ranger 194
 Lorren, Trisch 216
 lost-luggage.com 247
 Louise Fili Ltd. 34
 Luxuryhomes.com 142, 143
 lynda.com 214

M

Machine, The 38
 MailChimp 228–231
 mailing lists 228–231
Making Ideas Happen (Belsky) 14
Making the Print (Bailey) 238
 management style 118–119
 marketable brands 130–133
 marketing 121–157. *See also* self-promotion
 action plans 139–141, 145–147
 assessing impact of 150, 151–153
 attention getters 127
 barriers to successful 154
 cost considerations 145
 creative approaches to 135
 developing your own styles of 251–254
 goal of 140, 141
 materials (*See* marketing materials)
 mentors 17, 253
 preparing your mix 142–147
 push/pull 127
 recommended books on 128, 140, 175
 role of web presence in 211–214
 to social networks 214–221
 through subtle persuasion 164–169
 tracking effectiveness of 135, 148–151

 via email 228–231
 viral 173, 220
 word-of-mouth 170–175
 marketing materials 233–254
 business cards 143, 165, 173, 240–244
 portfolios 245–248
 print collateral 235–239
 marketplace 25–26
 master plan 27
 McGuinness, Mark 107
 McKenzie, Brian R. G. 131
 McMinn, Steve 175
 media contacts 204–206
 MedJet Assist 85
 meetings 49–63
 attending 55–63
 billing for 57
 choosing location for 52
 declining invitations to 55
 ensuring success of 52–53
 importance of 49
 as part of marketing mix 144
 preparing for 57, 58
 running 51–55
 scheduling 36, 52, 54
 selling at 59–63
 sending out invitations for 52
 setting/achieving goals for 57
 surviving difficult 56–57
 taking notes during 58
 tips for making the most of 58
 turning off electronic devices during
 36, 58
 using visual tools for 55
 Memorandum of Understanding 91, 185.
 See also MoU
 memorizing names 202–203
 mentors 13, 17, 253
 merchandise 22, 23, 37
 Merkle, Steve 6
 metrics 141
 Microsoft Excel 115, 147
 milestones 72, 146–147
 Miller, Titerle LLP 91
 Mini-CD business cards 241
 minimalise 223
 Mint.com 111
 mistakes 68, 213, 223
 Moleskine 58
 momentum 46

money. *See also* finances; revenue
 asking for 61, 63, 108–111
 borrowing 112–115
 and incorporation decision 84
 time as 41, 100
Monster, The 38
Monty Python 138
MoU 91, 152, 185
multitasking 9
MyCake 107
Myspace 214

N

names
 business 82–83, 132, 133
 memorizing 202–203
navigation, website 225
NDAs 92–93
negativity 75, 118
negotiating contracts 89–90
networking 191–207
 benefits of 193–196
 building proximity plan for 200–204
 getting comfortable with 198, 199,
 200–201
 as marketing tool 195
 with media-makers 204–207
 recommended book on 199
networks, social. *See* social networks
Never Eat Alone (Ferrazzi) 199
newsletter campaigns 144, 169
newsmakers 204–206
niche markets 26
ninja story 160–161
non-disclosure agreements 92–93
nonverbal communication 51
“Notice to Readers” statement 115
Nyland, Ben 21

O

OCW magazine 248, 249
office space 38–40
office supplies 39
Oliver, Jamie 9
Ona, Cynthia 145
OnGray 178
online file storage 40
online promotions 144
online surveys 152–153

opportunities 31
organizing projects 44–46
ownership rights 91.
 See also intellectual property

P

padding quotes 105
Palm Pilot 241
paperboy story 234–235
paperwork 94–95, 101, 108
partnerships 22, 23, 30, 83, 175
part-time jobs 90
passwords 40
payback terms, loan 115
payment gateways 109, 227
payment terms 90, 108
PayPal 109
PDF eBooks 24
personalized letters 144
Personal MBA, The (Kaufman) 16
personal projects 144
persuasion, succeeding through subtle
 164–169
phone calls. *See also* cold-calling
 follow-up 144
 managing 36
 during meetings 58
 vs. email 142
 vs. face-to-face meetings 51
photographers
 best business practices for 90, 104–105
 blogging by 148
 and Google+ 148
 websites for 225–227
PhotoShelter 225
Photoshop Quicktips podcast 214
physical workspace 39
Pichler, Chris 171
pinazangaro.com 247
pings, email 143
Pinterest 214
planning
 business (*See* business plans)
 marketing 139–141, 145–147
 project 43–46
political culture 74
portfolios 144, 245–248
postcards 135, 238
posters 165, 238
Postman, Neil 12

power diagrams 72
Power of Influence, The (Prout) 224
 PowerPoint 63, 157
 premium pricing 107
 presentation covers 247
 presentations 55, 61, 63, 157
 Pressfield, Steven 258
 press kits 206, 207
 press releases 205
 pressure 68
 Prevail 250
 PR firms 204, 207
 price lists 104, 144
 price quotes 61, 63, 105
 pricing strategies 103–108

- barter arrangements 106
- baseline pricing 104
- day rates 104–105
- free work 106
- most common approaches 107
- padding quotes 105
- value-based fees 105–106

 Prihoda, Martin 192, 204
 print collateral 235–239

- focusing on value when creating 238–239
- shareability of 236–237
- vs. digital messages 237–238

 printers 242
 printing, eco-friendly 242
 print promotion 144.
 See also print collateral
 prints 22
 pro, turning 258
ProBlogger (Rowse/Garrett) 224
 procrastinating 34
 productivity 38, 40
 product launches 141
 products 23
 professional guilds 12
 professional help

- with finances 102
- with marketing 131

 professionalism 118–119
 profile pictures 40
 profiles, social media 221
 profit 21, 22, 107. *See also* finances
 project-planning tools 44
 projects

- adding to portfolio 246
- collaborative 179–183
 (*See also* collaboration)

establishing Scope of Work for 70–73
 getting feedback on 151–153
 negotiating contracts for 89–90
 planning 43–46
 pricing strategies for 103–108
 soliciting future 150
 Project Space 248
 promoting creativity 59
 promotion plan, one-page 141
 promotions 144, 150, 166.
 See also self-promotion
 proposals 61
 Prout, Sarah 224
 proximity plan, networking 200–204
 publicists 205–207
 public relations firms 205, 207
 push/pull marketing 127
 pyromania story 66–67

Q

QR codes 241
 quality of engagement 149
 quality of life 21. *See also* life-work balance
 QuickBooks 109
 Quick Response codes 241
 quotes 61, 63, 105

R

radio broadcasters 204
 Rampworth Capital 21
 rankings, search engine 223
 Ratcliff, Trey 148
 rate of occurrence 149
 Raw Canvas 6
 receipts 101
 Red Harvest Pictures 85
 Reelhouse 225
Referral Engine, The (Jantsch) 175
 referral networks 174–175
 referrals 75, 85, 144, 173–175
 relationships 14, 199
 remembering names 202–203
 reputation 12, 77, 114
 residuals 22
 response rates 149
 résumés 61, 179, 245
 retirement savings 102
 Return on Investment (ROI) 148–151
 revenue 21–22, 41. *See also* finances

- reviews 223
 - rewards 16
 - ReWork* (Fried/Hansson) 54
 - RFPs 68
 - rhythm, establishing creative 14, 118
 - rights
 - ownership 91
 - usage 22, 90
 - risk-taking 11, 61, 75, 76, 99–102
 - Robertson, David 10
 - Rogers, Kenny 89
 - ROI 148–151
 - rollerblading story 210–211
 - roundtable reporting 53
 - Rowse, Darren 224
 - royalties 22
 - Rules of Order, Think & Drink 154–157
- S**
- saleability 22
 - sales meetings 61–63
 - saltprint.com.au 242
 - Saradini, Matteo 85
 - savings 101, 115
 - schedules 14, 36, 41–43, 90
 - Schlitz, Don Alan 89
 - schooling 12–13
 - Scope Creep 72, 73
 - Scope of Work 70–73
 - search engine optimization (SEO) 223
 - Seeley, Justin 214
 - Seeram, Dave 71, 73
 - Seinfeld* 178
 - self-employment 22, 35, 36, 101, 258
 - self-help courses 130
 - self-promotion 159–175. *See also* marketing
 - cost considerations 166
 - effective vs. annoying 161–162
 - learning to do it right 162–164
 - professionalism in 166–167
 - recruiting ambassadors to help with 171–173
 - subtle approaches to 164–169, 239
 - ultimate goal of 167
 - when to stop 68
 - selling. *See also* marketing; self-promotion
 - adjusting attitude about 161–164
 - knowing when to stop 68
 - new model for 62
 - subtle approaches to 164–169
 - “selling” meetings 59–63
 - selling out 118
 - Selling the Invisible* (Beckwith) 140
 - SEO 223
 - service packaging 20
 - Shieh, Mark 50
 - shopping cart systems 227
 - Sibbet, David 55
 - side projects 108
 - Simmons, Mark 11
 - Simply Accounting 109
 - skateboard story 50–51
 - skating story 210–211
 - skills
 - defining/refining 7–8
 - developing new 11, 128
 - skydiving story 192–193
 - Smartsheet.com 44–45, 146
 - Smith, Adam 103
 - social connections 173
 - social culture 74
 - social media
 - maintaining regular presence in 141
 - as part of marketing mix 143
 - profiles 221
 - recommended book on 224
 - strategists 205
 - widgets 220
 - social networks. *See also* networking; social media
 - being selective about 214–215
 - building 198, 216
 - descriptions of top three 218–220
 - including on business cards 242
 - marketing to 214–221
 - posting updates to 217, 221
 - tips for effective use of 217–218, 220–221
 - vs. face-to-face relationships 198
 - sole proprietors 21, 82, 83
 - solopress.com 242
 - Solovic, Susan Wilson 22
 - spam 213, 226, 227
 - spam filters 40
 - speaking up 77
 - special effects 130
 - sphere-building actions 199
 - sphere of influence 196–199, 213, 253
 - spreadsheets 115, 147
 - stakeholders 29, 52, 70
 - startups, business 12, 81–85, 131, 141
 - starvation mentality 90

statistics 63, 104, 149
Stewart, Dave 11
stimuli 14
stories xv
storyboarding 55
strategic partnerships 22
strategic planning 38
strategic pricing 107
strategies, marketing 140
Stratten, Scott 128
strengths 31
Stromboni, Laure 88
stunts, marketing 161
style 129, 130, 132
subject-matter experts xv
supplies, office 39
SurveyGizmo 153
SurveyMonkey 152–153, 231
“Survival” clause 92
Swanson, Matthew 186
sweet spot xiv
Swollen Members 250
S.W.O.T. analysis 31

T

tactics, marketing 142–147
taglines 132
talent 7, 8, 16
talking points 63
target market 26, 187, 211
taxes 82, 84, 100–101, 108
Taylor, Luke 131
teaching 22
Teambox.com 44
technology 211
TED 11
television broadcasters 204
templates
 agreement 95
 marketing mix 147
“Termination” clause 92
terms and conditions 86. *See also* contracts
testimonials 152, 175
text messaging 51
Thank You Economy, The (Vaynerchuk) 213
thank-you notes 168
Tharp, Twyla 7, 13
Thelwall, Sarah 107
Think & Drink sessions 154–157
threats 31

time
 as money 41, 100
 organizing 68
 tracking 36
timelines 183
time off 36, 42. *See also* vacations
Time Zones 42
Tiny Letter 228
trade shows 198, 201. *See also* events
TransUnion 114
travel photography blog 148
trends 26, 168
trust
 and business loans 114
 and business names 83
 and face-to-face meetings 51
 fostering with web presence 211–212
 and management style 119
 marketing value of building 131
 and quality of your character 69
TweetDeck 219
Twitter xvi, 144, 148, 213, 214, 219

U

Unique Selling Proposition 24–25, 132.
 See also USP
UnMarketing (Stratten) 128
unprofessional behavior 36, 61, 142, 227
usage rights 22, 90
Using Drupal (Byron) 210
USP 24–25, 30, 132

V

vacations 9, 36. *See also* work-life balance
value, adding 175
Value-Based Fees (Weiss) 105–106
value-based pricing 105–106, 107
value creation 16
Vancouver is Awesome network 197
Van Leeuwen, Justin 98
Vaynerchuk, Gary 213
video conferencing 51
video games 257
videos 216, 218, 225
video testimonials 175
viral marketing 173, 220
virtual conferences 51
visuals 132, 226, 245
volunteering 76, 106, 144

W

- Walk & Talk time 156, 157
- wardrobe 36, 58, 98–99, 127
- War of Art, The* (Pressfield) 258
- weaknesses 31
- Wealth of Nations, The* (Smith) 103
- web bookmarks 40
- web browsers 226
- webchick 210, 217
- web domain names 226, 227
- Web Guy, That 71
- web hosting 226
- webkits 226
- web presence 209–231. *See also* websites
 - common mistakes with 213
 - components of 222
 - leveraging 222–231
 - recommended resources 224, 226–227
 - setting expectations for 211, 212
- web services 39
- websites. *See also* web presence
 - as digital home base 225
 - key components of 225–226
 - publishing prices on 104
 - updating 144, 225
- Weintraub, Jerry xvii
- Weiss, Alan 105
- When I Stop Talking, You'll Know I'm Dead* (Weintraub) xvii
- whiteboards 55, 182
- Williams, Kerry 90–91
- Win Without Pitching Manifesto 62
- word-of-mouth marketing 170–175, 194
- WordPress
 - creating websites with 225
 - developer 71, 73
 - Google+Blog plug-in 223
 - social media widgets 220
 - workshop for photographers 214
- work environment 38–40
- workflow 14–15, 35
- Work for Money, Design for Love* (Airey) 135
- work-life balance 22, 35, 43
- workspaces 15, 34, 38–40
- workstations 38, 39
- World Domination Summit 138
- worries 30
- WOW Branding worksheets 133
- writing 22

Y

- Yelp.com 82
- Young, Drew 166
- Young, Nicole S. 223

Z

- Zenfolio 225