



# RISE:

PRINCIPLES

TO GROW

YOUR

CREATIVE

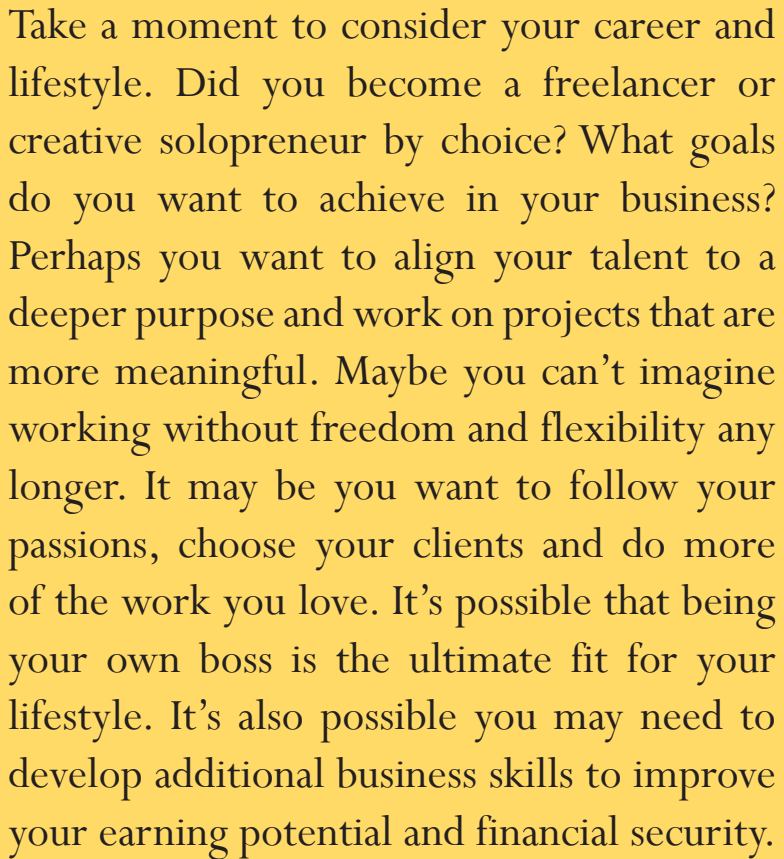
BUSINESS

PRACTICE



This book is for  
creative trailblazers  
who want to rise up in a  
niche, do work they love  
and make an impact.

**START A  
JOURNEY  
TO GAIN  
MORE  
PURPOSE,  
FREEDOM  
AND  
SECURITY**




Take a moment to consider your career and lifestyle. Did you become a freelancer or creative solopreneur by choice? What goals do you want to achieve in your business? Perhaps you want to align your talent to a deeper purpose and work on projects that are more meaningful. Maybe you can't imagine working without freedom and flexibility any longer. It may be you want to follow your passions, choose your clients and do more of the work you love. It's possible that being your own boss is the ultimate fit for your lifestyle. It's also possible you may need to develop additional business skills to improve your earning potential and financial security.



It's never too late to act and pursue your goals. Ask yourself what you are willing to do to achieve them. What will you change in your business? How will you find and win clients? Will you choose to patiently invest your time to build a roster of clientele in a special niche you care about? What path is right for you?

**SEARCH  
YOUR  
INNER  
LIFE FOR  
DIRECTION**



Are you reaching your potential or is something missing? Building a thriving enterprise doesn't mean you need to follow someone else's playbook or set of rules. You can develop your own guide inspired by what you want to create and build. How will you shape your legacy?

You could easily spend a lifetime searching and sifting through business information and career advice. It takes seconds to receive an overwhelming amount of information from an Internet search. And the results are often disappointing. Because how much of the content closely matches the context of what you want to accomplish in your creative career and your business?

Engage in a radical act to ignore the noise and notifications in modern life. Deliberately set aside time to turn off your mobile device for solitude to examine your thoughts, feelings, and dreams. Where might these internal beacons lead you? Possibly, they'll shine a light on your calling. Maybe uncover a brave compulsion to pursue an unrealized dream. What fire might ignite from within? Trust in your ability to focus, move ahead and figure things out in your life's journey.





**CLAIM  
A SMALL  
SPACE  
AWAY  
FROM THE  
CROWD**

It's common for independent creatives to serve small businesses and nonprofits. But, it can be difficult to attract clients when many compete in the same sectors. And while it may be easier to sell to them, these organizations may lack funding to hire you and pay a fair market rate for your expertise. So what's the alternative? Pursue a strategy to develop an untapped, niche market for your creative talents and services instead.




A best practice for developing a thriving creative business is to focus on a **speciality market** and hone your creative skills to a level of expertise that is difficult to copy. There are successful creatives that follow this approach like Jennifer May, a food and portrait photographer with photography credits in over 25 cookbooks and counting. Or Chank Diesel, an artist who specializes in designing fonts. He crafts fonts from scratch that are used to title books, buildings and films.

It's possible for you to adopt this practice, too. You can narrow your focus, develop extraordinary expertise, and build a remarkable reputation. It starts with viewing a small marketplace through the lens of your unique expertise and finding a difficult problem that businesses in this niche will gladly pay to solve.



# APPLY A FORM TO GUIDE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



In order to sustain a creative practice, it helps to follow a strategy for business development. What are your building blocks to gain more control over your business and improve your lifestyle? What specialized creative services do you offer? How do you clearly provide value to your clients? How do you market yourself and tell a story to connect and build relationships?

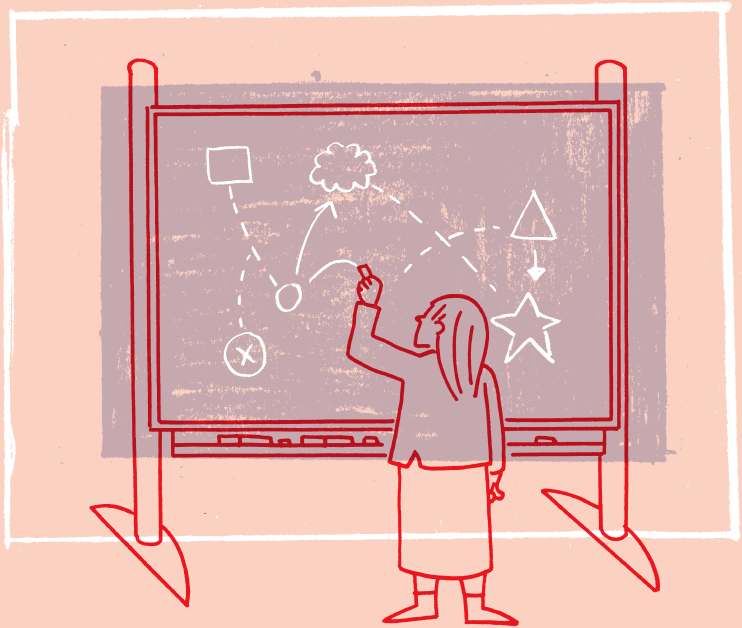
These building blocks for business are not unlike how art gets made and stories get written. At the core of each is a form. As a creative you are familiar with how form provides a helpful structure to get your work done. Its borders help you to focus and give shape to your ideas. These useful constraints help you to produce remarkable artworks.

Form is also essential in growing a business. A strategy is simply a form or structure that influences how you make choices and decisions for your business like choosing which market to enter, develop and serve. A plan helps you set goals for marketing and selling. It helps you to manage your time and resources to achieve more.

Consider investing in developing a strategy and plan to improve your business. It's doesn't need to be intimidating. Create a one-page plan to start so it's manageable and actionable.



# **BUILD A MARKETING STRATEGY AND SYSTEM**



Do you feel pressured to experiment with random marketing tactics and social media because you've read incredible stories about overnight successes? Have you been satisfied or disappointed with your marketing experiments and the results? It's all right to look for examples to become inspired and spark ideas.



Before you invest your time and money in tactics like advertising and social media, it's wise to develop a strategy that fits you and your unique context for growing your creative business. Once you have cohesive alignment between strategy and marketing tactics, you'll be able to achieve stronger outcomes.

Marketing with a strategic framework and system can help you to maximize your time, effort and budget as a creative solopreneur. It's worth developing a strategy and system designed just for you and your business goals. Creating a marketing strategy begins with answering key questions around your market niche, the people in it and their problems, and of course, the funds and authority to spend them.





# KEY QUESTIONS TO BUILD A MARKETING STRATEGY

Who do you want to buy your creative services?  
What are their job titles and responsibilities?  
Do they have a budget and authority to spend it?

Why should they buy from you  
to solve their problems?

What influences them?  
Who do they trust and follow?  
Where do they hang out?

What is the desired action you want your  
prospective clients to take?

*Join your email list? • View your portfolio?*  
*Request a meeting? • Request a proposal?*





# KEY QUESTIONS TO BUILD A SYSTEM OF MARKETING TACTICS

What content will you create, publish or curate to demonstrate your expertise?

*What story does your portfolio or writing examples tell?*

*What will attract attention?*

*What will generate leads?*

How will you get the word out about your expertise?

*Email marketing and eNewsletters*

*Blog, videos, and podcasts*

*Web and social media presence*

*Events and advertising*

What level of frequency for marketing activity (daily, weekly, etc.)?

*How will you measure success?*



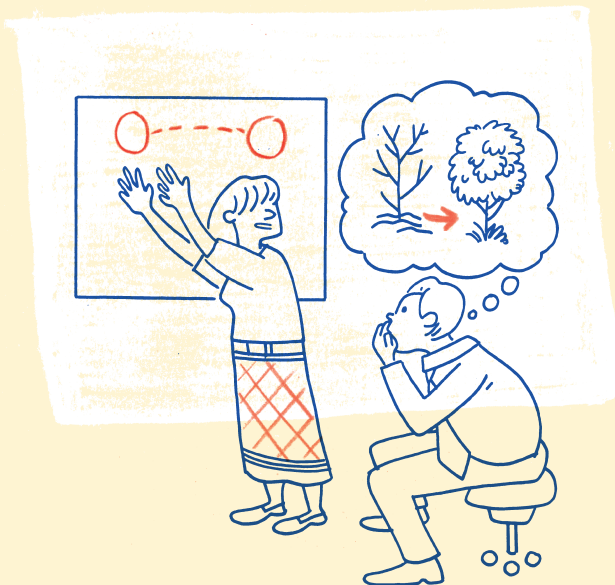
**CRAFT  
A STORY  
THAT  
CONNECTS  
AND  
RESONATES**

Every creative brand has an opportunity to tell a story and offer a brand promise. Adobe promises to enable people and organizations to create engaging experiences. Squarespace promises to empower people with creative ideas to succeed.

What's your story and brand promise? As a creative professional, you can purposefully build a memorable brand and find a story hook — one that will influence, persuade and stick with an audience. Maybe you want to be recognized as the go-to freelance photographer with industry expertise and reputation for introducing and establishing new food brands. Maybe you want to become known as the in-demand freelance graphic designer with a unique visual language and design style that attracts attention and amplifies fashion brands.




It's up to you to craft a story and a promise. Here's a guiding framework for you. First, write a narrative that describes how your work will impact your clients. Don't forget to show your empathy and understanding for what their world is like and how working with you will make it even better. Next, develop a brand promise that you can deliver and stand behind. Finally, consider how your story will elicit emotions and feelings that deepen connections and trust.



# PROSPECT FOR ENLIGHTENMENT AND SALES





Many creatives find the task of prospecting for business to be intimidating. You may feel like the people who can hire you for a project or a retainer hold all the power to say no. You may fear rejection of your offer.

Prospecting is an activity filled with learning possibilities. You possess power to choose who you want to work with and on what type of projects. You can embrace the point of view that prospecting is illuminating. Prospecting is simply a series of low-stakes attempts to find the right client fit in your niche market.




It starts with dedicating time to prepare and to talk to the right prospects. Find out what they read to stay informed. Research where they like to meet up at events or hang out online. Listen to their discussions and learn what they care about. Go and meet them, make connections and start building relationships.

Every interaction is an opportunity to listen and to empathize with their problems and needs. You can engage in the fundamental work of establishing your name and building trust so that when they're ready to say yes they know who to call.

All these moments will add up and deepen your understanding of your market and how to win sales. You will be able to assess which prospects you want to work with or walk away from.

**FIND  
YOUR  
RHYTHM**





Do you feel hesitant to promote your creative services? Do you procrastinate or avoid tasks that would help you market yourself — even when you have downtime from completing your projects? If so, something might be holding you back. Perhaps you feel stuck. Maybe you're imagining doom from the worst possible scenarios because you're clever with a frightful imagination. Fear, anxiety and the inner critic are all demanding you stop what you are doing to evolve and grow. What they want is for you to join them in the dance of doubt so things stay the same.

In moments like this, it's good to acknowledge your fears but don't let them stop you from taking steps to achieve your goals. Sometimes it can help to make a move and to act. Do anything that will help you find a different rhythm and breakout your inner artist. Take a walk around the lake. Cook a dish you love. Sing out loud to a favorite song. Go for a drive. Plant flowers. Call a friend. Write a journal entry. Send a card. Draw a sketch. Paint a canvas. Take some street photos. Visit a taproom with friends and give a toast.

Act until you move past that inner critic that is afraid and thinks you're not good enough. Because you are good enough. Trigger your inner artist with action and find yourself moving in moments of creative flow instead. And then get back to learning, growing and working.



**CHOOSE TO  
BUILD AN  
EMPOWERING  
HABIT**




What are you willing to do to build a successful freelance career and to achieve security on your own terms? It's tempting to give up on the pursuit of being your own boss and creating your own roster of clients when it looks far easier to succumb to a traditional job because of the perceived security it provides. If you consider business development a hassle (instead of a means to pursue your own path), being a solopreneur may not be right for you. Ask yourself this question: is a steady income a tradeoff you're willing to accept in exchange for pursuing your own projects, freedom and security?

Feeling more secure in your creative business involves forming habits for establishing a consistent and trusted presence in your market niche. What daily task will help you build awareness or make connections with the audience you want to serve? Will you blog? Connect with email or social media? What fits best with your personality, strategy and motivation?

You can choose to commit to a daily ritual to move your business forward. It will help you to manage an unpredictable income. Continually engaging in marketing will help you to minimize the peaks and valleys in your business and develop a stronger stream of clients and projects.




**RISE  
AND  
THRIVE**



Are you ready to become a creative trailblazer? It's possible to invent your own path, find your niche and follow it to achieve business success. You can overcome the challenges, the chaos and roadblocks getting in your way. You can attain your goals to grow by taking incremental steps and completing actions across time. The guiding principles are to set a vision and goals, practice to achieve mastery, and trust in yourself to learn and adapt as you go. It's a sound method to rise up to your potential and thrive.

When did you last use an approach like this to move up and achieve something you want on purpose? You likely followed this method to earn a college degree. You probably used it to learn the craft you love. To publish your first book. To complete a series of art for a gallery show. And you can apply it to grow your creative business, too. What will you seek to create next? You're capable of forming a long-term vision. You're capable of achieving focus. You're able to commit to doing the work. Now is the time to rise up and do more work you'll love.







Think Upswing is a marketing consultancy for independent creatives and solopreneurs who want to find better projects and gigs, who want to intentionally pursue a strategy to stand apart from the crowd and attract clients they'll love to work with instead. Think Upswing represents a frame of mind to act, learn and grow enabling bright creatives to pursue deeper purpose, freedom, and security.

**THINKUPSWING.COM**