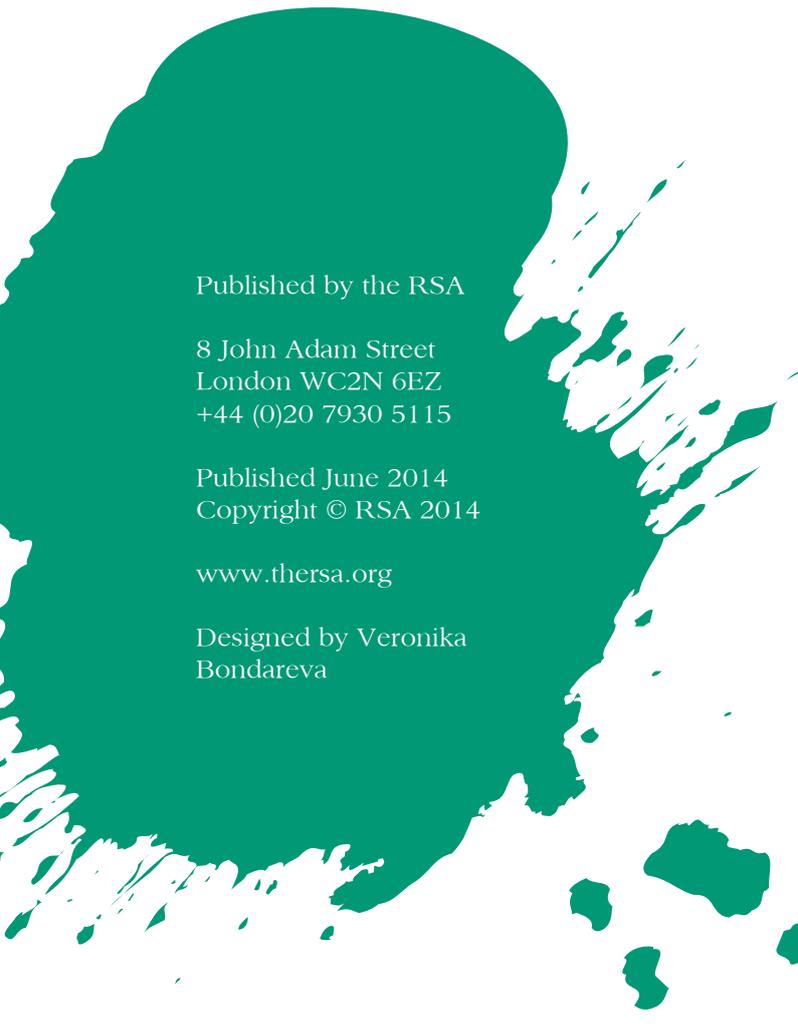




ARTISANS  
FROM THE  
FUTURE

how a changing world and developing technologies  
are shaping the picture of artisans in the 21st century





Published by the RSA

8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
+44 (0)20 7930 5115

Published June 2014  
Copyright © RSA 2014

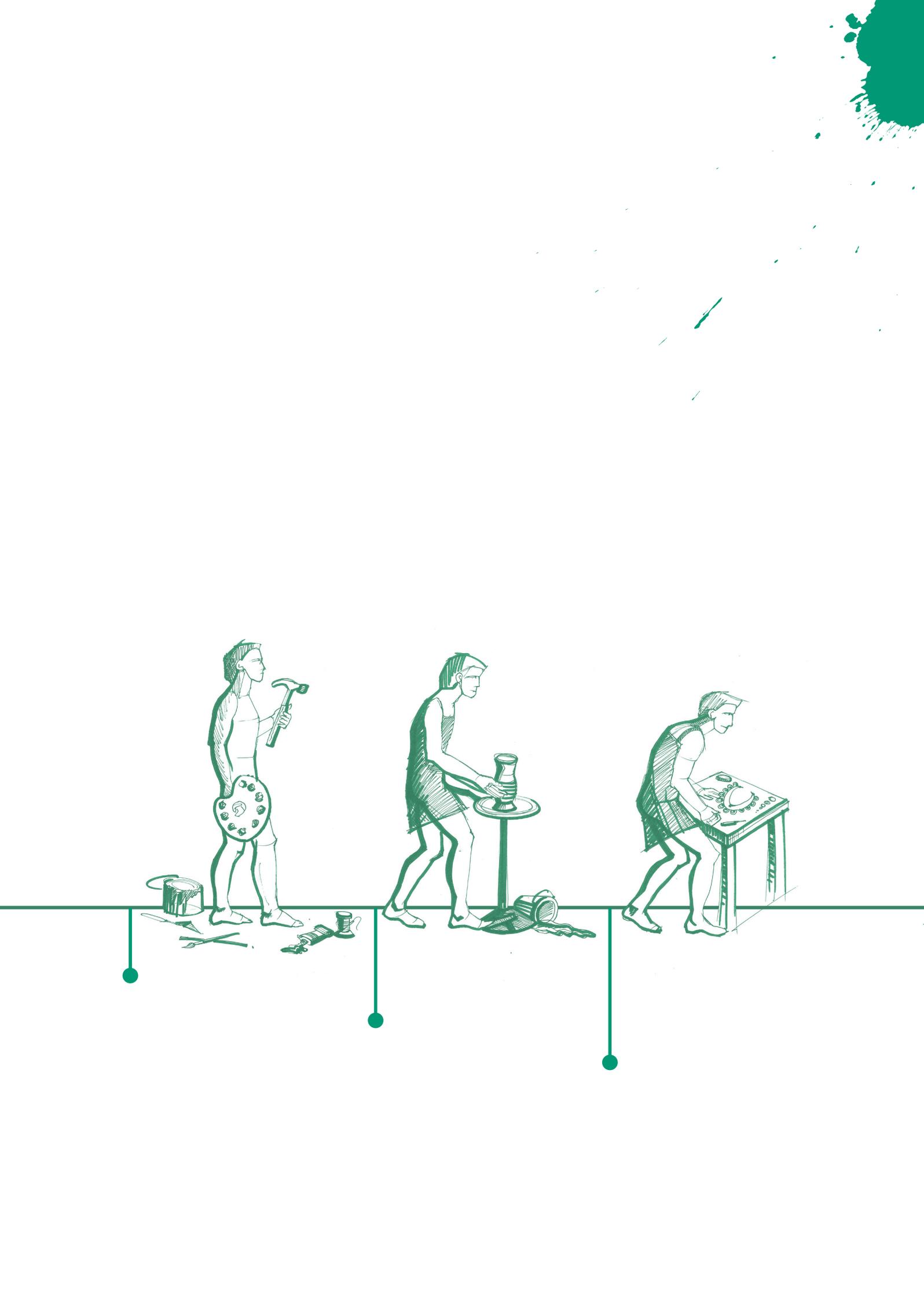
[www.thersa.org](http://www.thersa.org)

Designed by Veronika  
Bondareva



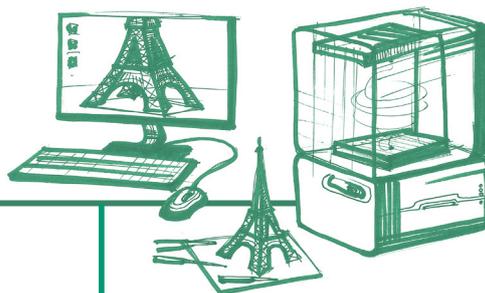
# Artisan 21 Report:

how a changing world and developing technologies are shaping the picture of artisans in the 21st century

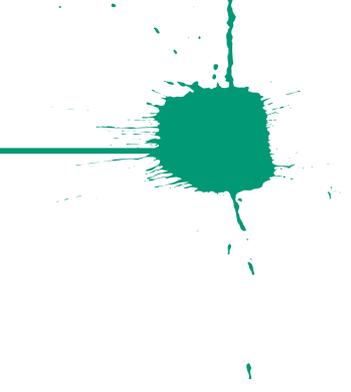


# Contents

Acknowledgements	7
About the RSA	7
Foreword	8
Project Overview	8
Methodology	9
Who and For Whom?	9
Executive Summary	10
Who are the Artisans of the 21st century?	12
Start small	16
Start as soon as possible	17
Test your business	18
Make yourself visible and your product desirable	18
Collaborate	22
Promote	26
Product	26
Market	26
Pricing	27
Storytelling	27
Going online	29
Innovate	30
Develop	32
Design the future	36







## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following individuals who contributed their valuable knowledge, encouragement, ideas and challenges to the creation of this report: Ann Marie Shillito, Benedict Dellot, Bill Good, Chris Bilton, Chris Smith, Daniel Carins, Ruth Leary, Gemma Ince, Glen Buglass, Jutta Stahlhacke, Jeanne Booth and Richard Pickford. Especially, we would like to thank the University of Warwick for helping to recruit the researchers and the report's graphic designer, for providing guidance on the research report and for hosting the RSA West Midlands: "Back to the Future? The Growing Importance of Artisans" event in June 2014.

The full title of the RSA is the Royal Society for the encouragement Arts, Manufacture and Commerce and it is the latter two that provide the impetus for this report, although one could argue that true artisanship is not possible without the 'art!'.

Its setting has emerged from a number of strands currently being undertaken by RSA West Midlands. Over the last couple of years there has been a focus on the industry and commerce of the region and in particular its variety and depth. However, given the advent and development of robots to actually undertake much of the work, it is clear that the prospect of a re-emergence of mass production involving thousands of workers on a factory floor is an extremely remote prospect. So, with a nod to our region being the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and the small scale operation of those early industrial pioneers, we asked the question 'is the role of the artisan one of the ways to re-energise the opportunities for employment in the 21st Century?'

This report, in partnership with Warwick University and funded by the RSA, explores ways in which this might happen. It is not intended as a universal panacea but as a starting point for would-be artisan entrepreneurs and perhaps the basis of further research in the area so as to maximise the potential that the role of the artisan offers.

## About the RSA

The RSA: an enlightenment organisation committed to finding innovative practical solutions to today's social challenges. Through its ideas, research and 27,000-strong Fellowship it seeks to understand and enhance human capability so we can close the gap between today's reality and people's hopes for a better world.



## Foreword

The world is undergoing dramatic changes in its all-different spheres: the development of technology shapes the demands of the society and people's lifestyles. As a result of transformations in technology, society, economy and culture, the arts and craft sector is adopting diversified forms. These latest manifestations differ from what has gone before. They lead to a change in the nature of craftsmanship in general, and craft-makers specifically. This project reflects the latest developments and considers the emergence of the artisan as an entrepreneur, combining creative imagination with business skills and emerging technology.

## Project Overview

One of the core commitments of the RSA (The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) is to find innovative and practical solutions to current social challenges, therefore the RSA, jointly with the innovation practice, Digital Native Academy and the University of Warwick students, who are currently pursuing their Masters studies in the Creative and Media Enterprises, conducted the Artisan 21 survey in the craft sector. This project highlights the main shifts in craft industry, points out the key trends for the next several years and proposes business strategies for the craft-makers, who want to keep abreast with the changing times.

One of the core commitments of the RSA (The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) is to find innovative and practical solutions to current social challenges, therefore the RSA, jointly with the Digital Native Academy and the University of Warwick students, who are currently pursuing their Masters studies in the Creative and Media Enterprises, conducted the The Artisan 21 survey in the craft sector. This project highlights the main shifts in craft industry, points out the key trends for the next several years and proposes business strategies for the craft-makers, who want to keep abreast with the changing times.

## Methodology

The report, you are reading now, is based on the results of the Artisan 21 research. This research was conducted based on a literature review of the state of the craft sector in the UK (academic articles, organisational surveys and reports), and on semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Interview questions were adapted to the interviewee's occupation. The interviews were conducted with 20 individuals including craft-makers, local authority representatives, business coaches, successful entrepreneurs and experts in design technology, marketing and IP protection.

The craft-makers were asked a number of specific questions related to their personal stories:

- starting point of producing craft works
- main barriers in the craft-making process
- business management and development issues
- uniqueness of their product
- role of technology in both their business promotion and product-making process
- collaboration with other people in their sector
- involvement in teaching programs, training and workshops.

To provide the pithiest overview of the craft industry, each interview with the craft-makers highlights the core challenges they face on a daily basis, followed by interviews with relevant experts in these fields, either to propose solutions or to provide a wider context for the experience of craft-makers in their entrepreneurial activity.

Therefore local authority representatives described how they can support craft-makers, for instance, providing work spaces, business coaches suggested how to develop basic business skills and push forward a sustainable enterprise; experts in design technology shared their knowledge of using technologies such as 3D printing and laser cutting; experts in marketing advised how to promote the business effectively and attract a target audience; IP protection experts notified how to avoid design rights infringement.

## Who and For Whom?

This Artisan 21 Report will serve as an inspiring toolkit for traditional craft-makers and those who are undertaking first steps in engaging in the crafts sector and in launching their own creative business. It is a guideline for those who are creatively driven and want to be entrepreneurially active and successful, who want to develop their technological skills and apply them on a daily basis.

This research was conducted by:

**Keith Horsfall** is chair of the RSA West Midlands and CEO of the Leaps and Bounds Trust

**Geoff Henderson** is Director at Digital Native Academy

**Dana Muntean** and **Diana Trantina** are the RSA Fellows and research associates, currently students on the MA in Creative and Media Enterprises at University of Warwick Centre for Cultural Policy Studies

For further information please contact:

**Geoff Henderson** at [geoff@digitalnativeacademy.com](mailto:geoff@digitalnativeacademy.com) or

**Keith Horsfall** at [keith@leapsandbounds.org.uk](mailto:keith@leapsandbounds.org.uk)



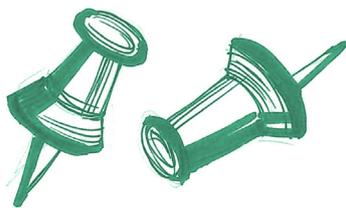
## Executive Summary

The UK has always been a great hub for creative and crafts industries. The findings of this report suggest that there is a significant opportunity to attract more young people into this rapidly evolving sector and transform present-day artisans into the successful entrepreneurs of the future. This could lead to substantial economic growth, which provides better living standards for all actors in the sector, and will enhance their drive for innovation in order to attract and retain new customers.

The above statement comes with a number of important caveats which need to be addressed to bring about a successful **ARTISAN EVOLUTION**. Not least is the pressing need for craft-makers and artisans to sharpen their business skills. Even if they enjoy their rewarding lifestyle and the making process itself, they would be delighted if they could better manage the business and delegate the more administrative part of their work to someone else.

The report features a craft business 'roadmap' for helping individuals start up a craft business and which encompasses a **'10 GOLDEN RULES' GUIDE** and a **'3BS' FORMULA** to help start-up businesses succeed in the sector. These rules and formula were derived from the main findings of our interviews with craftsmen.

The findings highlight the importance of **COLLABORATION** whereby individual artisans can come together to benefit each other through ideas and skills exchange. The results of the research draw attention to the advantages of artisan collaboration such as finding sources of inspiration and support, meeting like-minded people, sharing ideas and learning new skills. Even though everyone agrees that collaboration can give artisans a lot of advantages, there are still some limitations on the way to build it up. A crucial constraint in this sense is the lack of physical spaces where ideas could be shared, skills could be exchanged and the attention of customers would be acquired.



**PROMOTION** emerges as one of the key challenges that craft-makers face on a daily basis - marketing and promotion of their crafts objects. The research

has revealed that in order to have a competitive advantage in the crafts industry, it is crucial to have customised, personalised and unique products. Also, in order to find the right market, a lot of attention needs to be focused on understanding the customers' profile and implementing the relationship marketing strategy in order to retain them. The research interviews also highlight the critical selling power of **STORYTELLING** and provides recommendations on how to use stories in order to capture the attention of consumers and to give them an emotional link to the crafts process.

Attention is drawn to the role of **INNOVATION** and digital technology that are beginning to have a great impact on the craft sector, and fundamentally changing its nature. Many of the interviewed craft-makers stated that they are already using technology to reach their audience and promote their products. Although social media and online technology are not the only types of technology influencing the craft production and selling processes, successful craft-makers are proving to be those who manage to effectively combine traditional skills with new and emerging technologies. However, not all craft-makers who would be interested in applying new technologies are able to do so either because of the price of new technologies and materials or because of the lack of knowledge and skills as to how to use it.

Additional issues identified and addressed are the need to pay attention to protect your unique artisan products through **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS** and the considerations that need to be considered when growing the business beyond the single craftsperson.

The report concludes with a '**DESIGN THE FUTURE**' prediction by drawing the portrait of artisans of the future and brings to light the four main challenges that craft-makers face on a daily basis, which prevents them attaining this ideal picture. It also provides recommendations in order to redress this.

According to our research findings, the core challenges that artisans currently face the:

- Absence of spaces for collaboration
- Limited access to high technology equipment and skills
- Lack of knowledge on how to protect their creative products
- Narrow understanding on how to tell the story around their products

Below are a number of recommendations that could help to overcome these challenges and help contribute to a regional enterprise model for artisan development:

- There is a need for designing efficient strategies to build maker spaces in order to provide better collaboration platforms for craft-makers
- There is a latent demand for bespoke training programs which would provide personalised training for all those interested in participating in the crafts sector or for those already in but want to develop further.
- Ways should be found to open access to new technologies and related skills to use them more effectively in the crafts sector.



# Who are **THE ARTISANS** of the 21st century?

The importance of craft sector development cannot be underestimated. The craft sector plays a significant role in the creative and cultural industries in the UK: its contribution is £3 billion GVA to the UK economy every year. Almost 90,000 people are working in the craft sector and it represents 13% of all those who are employed in the creative and cultural industries<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore an important question arises: what is the definition of craft and who could be considered as a craft-maker? There is no only single easy answer to this – the definition of craft and craft-makers is ambiguous, they were defined in a number of diverse ways by different cultural organisations, by people from related fields and even by craft-producers themselves.

Diverse organisations and their representatives gave their own definition as to what is meant by 'craft'.

Thus, The Crafts Council makes an attempt to define craft as following:

*“Contemporary craft is about making things. It is an intellectual and physical activity where the maker explores the infinite possibilities of materials and processes to produce unique objects. To see craft is to enter a world of wonderful things which can be challenging, beautiful, sometimes useful, tactile, extraordinary, and to understand and enjoy and enjoy the energy and care which has gone into their making.”*  
Rosy Greenlees, Director, Crafts Council

Art Council England offers another definition:  
*“Contemporary craft work that is cutting-edge and ensures the highest standard of workmanship. Work that must not seek to reproduce or restore, but rather must be innovative in its use of materials and aesthetic vision. Work that not only reflects the signature of the individual maker, but also demonstrates investigation of the processes and critical enquiry.”*  
Arts Council England definition of contemporary fine craft

Academic researchers define craft as follows:

*“Craft is taken to mean an object which must have a high degree of hand-made input, but not necessarily having been produced or designed using traditional materials, produced as a one-off or as part of a small batch, the design of which may or may not be culturally embedded in the country of production, and which is sold for profit.”*

From Careers and Lifestyles of Craft Makers in the 21st Century – Andrew McAuley & Ian Fillis, in Cultural Trends - Vol 14 (2) June 2005, Routledge

As we can see all the definitions are quite different but there is something that unites them all and therefore this research is based on the following definition of craft and craft-maker which are inseparable:

*Craft is about making and producing creative, innovative and peculiar things using diversity of materials, tools and techniques, both traditional and contemporary, which usually reflects the culture and personality of the maker and has a story to tell behind the product.*

What can be considered as a craft is becoming clearer now but the question: Who are the craft-makers? still remains open. The definition of craftsmen can vary according to a list of different aspects: demographic, business profile, technological skills, employment time, qualifications, materials used and range of interests.

The recent *Craft in an Age of Change* (2012)<sup>2</sup> survey draws the following profile of craftsmen in the UK: ‘The vast majority of craft-makers who took part in the research are white (81%) and female (69%) aged on average 50 years old, they spend about 40 hours per week on making, selling and other craft-related activities, mostly they are preferring to work at home, 88% of craft-makers are sole traders, more than a half (57%) of interviewed craft-makers are using digital technology on a daily basis and about half of them (50%) chose craft over their first career path’.

1 Creative and Cultural Skills. (2009) The Craft Blueprint. URL [<http://creative-blueprint.co.uk/library/item/the-craft-blueprint-a-workforce-development-plan-for-craft-in-the-uk>]

2 Craft Council. (2012) Craft in an Age of Change. URL [<http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/downloads/craft-in-an-age-of-change>]



*The Craft in an Age of Change* survey providing four profiles of craft-makers, dependent on their level of craft education and whether craft is their first career or not: Craft careerists, Artisans, Career changers and Returners.

- **CRAFT CAREERISTS:** committed to the idea of craft as a career, they move to start their businesses shortly after finishing their first (or second) degrees in craft-related subjects.
- **ARTISANS:** do not have academic degrees in the subject but nevertheless have made craft their first career.
- **CAREER CHANGERS:** begin their working lives in other careers before taking up craft as a profession, often in mid-life.
- **RETURNERS:** makers who trained in art, craft or design, but who followed another career path before 'returning' to craft later on

*For further information about this classification see Craft in an Age of Change report from 2012.*

A jewellery and metalwork design maker we interviewed defined craft as inseparable from the features of the artisan:

*"It is somebody who makes, and doesn't necessarily put design into it, usually is working much more in traditional designs, someone, for example, who is making baskets – they will make them in a way they have been done for generations."*

For purposes of this report, we include these categories under the general term of 'craft-maker', whilst recognising the significant variations in background, aims and experience.

In the framework of this report it is assumed that the main difference between artisans and craft-makers is that traditional artisans make things but not necessarily put design into it and often do not have academic qualifications in the subject. Moreover, the artisans of the 21st century are different from traditional artisans, due to the fact that they take advantage of technological innovation, collaboration, and protection of their creations, but nonetheless relying on their heritage skills. This is what makes the Artisans of the 21st century share the same features with the craft-makers.

Craft-makers can use a range of materials in the production process: ceramics, glass, clay, textiles, iron, stone, wood, paper, leather, synthetic materials, gold, silver and other metals. Jewellery, furniture, musical instrument-making and such graphic crafts as, for instance, bookbinding, calligraphy and illustration can be related to the craft disciplines.

In the framework of a changing society and the development of technologies the range of the craft disciplines can be expanded and include such activities, as graphic or web design, video games creation and software development. The definition of artisans of the 21st century is no longer single-sided, according to one of the interviewees, it is a combination of heritage skills and the new making skills, where the first one might refer to the old craft skills (construction skills), like threading looms or stone carving, and the latter refers to the skills developed through usage of new technologies like 3D printing, modelling software and digital media, which have created new opportunities for craft-makers.

The definition of craft and craft-makers is not constant; it is dynamic and changing all the time with the newly evolving materials and/or technique. What stays immutable is the innovation and uniqueness as a core concept of successful craft business. Technology will not oust the heritage skills but they will advance them and bring to a new level of implementation. The younger generation of craft-makers would combine knowledge and benefits of new technologies with the traditional skills.



Rebecca Emery ■ Fika Print Design <http://fikaprintdesign.co.uk>



Rebecca Emery ▪ Fika Print Design <http://fikaprintdesign.co.uk>

# Start small

## Jump Starting the Artisan 21 Economy

Based on our initial research and with input from business support agencies and personnel we have set out below a range of tentative steps that potential artisans should consider when contemplating setting up a craft/making business. These steps should not be considered as a definitive toolkit but perhaps as a guide or as a set of basic 'tools' which will be supplemented by further research and guidance.

That's why launching a micro business might not be as scary, especially to young people, as most of us might think. Of course it involves risk, effort, time and money, but once started, a world full of opportunities might be discovered.

All craft-makers we met, when asked if they would recommend anyone to start their activity or business in crafts industries, answered unanimously



## Why crafts?

Craft industry is a vibrant and dynamic sector in the UK. According to Creative and Cultural Skills report (2009), there are around 11.000 businesses working in the traditional, heritage and contemporary crafts sector.

It is a lifestyle that brings a lot of joy, fulfilment, and self-satisfaction, a sense of achievement that can't be described in words alone. As a textile artist and teacher from Walsall told us: *"I breath arts. It's inside me."* According to our observations, some craftsmen consider themselves as artists, but what distinguishes them is that they do not only create something that is beautiful and aesthetic as artists do, but also useful in everyday life. This is where commercial acumen and business expertise comes in.



This report presents the steps to launch a business in the crafts industries, which was based on our interviews. These steps should be taken slowly, as interviewed craft-makers recommend:

**DON'T JUMP TOO FAST, AND GET ADVICE ALONG THE WAY, IF YOU CAN.**

A step-by-step guide to building an artisan enterprise:

## 1. Start as soon as possible

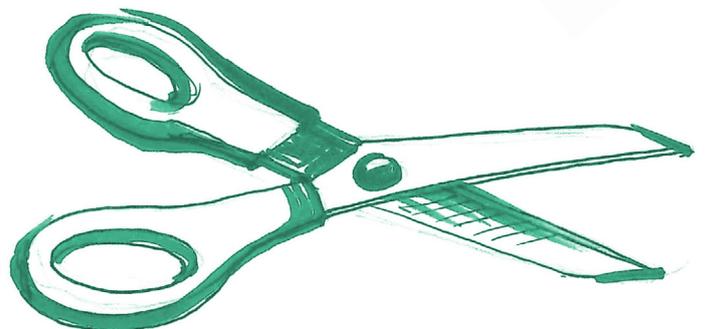
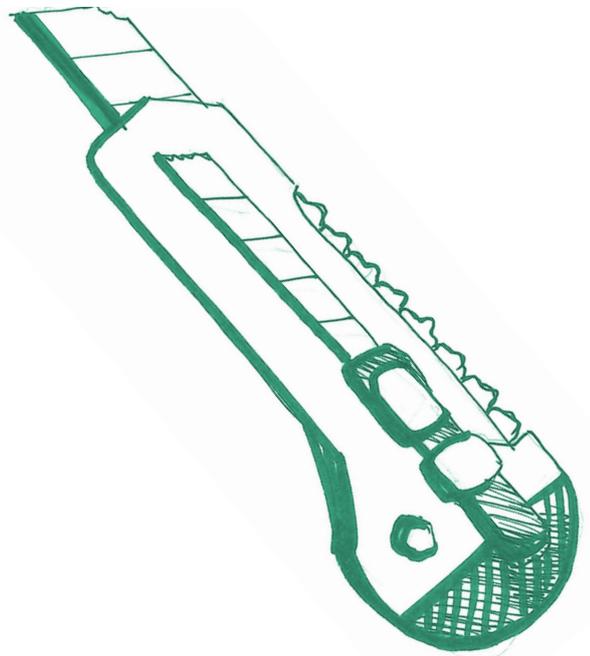
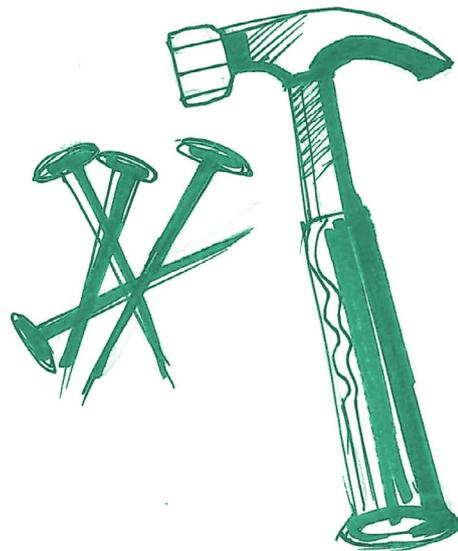
Making the right decisions at the start is crucial to future success. Firstly, craft-makers should always remember that if they want to get into the craft sector, to make money and their living of it, it definitely needs to be something they enjoy, they have a passion for, and they are good at it.

The second advice to address any lack of specialist skills is to take some classes/workshops/master-classes or become an apprentice or talk to and learn from seasoned practitioners (More on p. Collaborate).

Working space should not be considered as a significant problem at the initial stage of involvement in the craft sector. Based on the experience of many interviewed craft-makers, anyone can use their private household as a workspace. One local authority adviser emphasized that makers should not give up on the idea of finding a space. There are a number of options like: sharing a space with other craft-makers, working with a university enterprise centre, or using support organisations like [Sweda](#) or [Talent Navigator](#) which allow users to rent a desk or a meeting room, and provide craft-makers with business support included in their monthly rent. The last, but not the least note of advice came from a business coach who advised against an overoptimistic approach:

*“Prepare for the fact that it’s not going to be profitable for a couple of years. Be realistic.”*

Business coach



## 2. Test your business

The most frequent advice from the people we interviewed is for budding artisans to do as much research as you can about the market, especially a reality check to understand whether the product is viable. Before starting it is important first to identify what people really want and what they value about your product. Spending time making something that no one wants is one of the best ways to waste time and kill somebody's business.

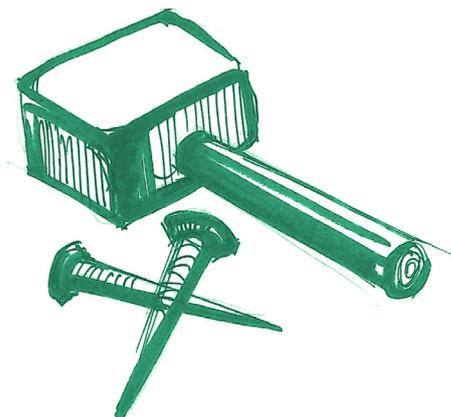
A new approach that could be used to test the business idea is [the Lean Start-up model](#). This is a new methodology which emphasises concepts such as “pivoting” and “experimentation” over elaborate planning, “customer feedback” over intuition, and trying out prototypes and adapting the product rather than investing in a predefined product from the outset. This model is starting to be adapted by some business schools.

This model helps to foresee whether people would be interested in the new business idea, and in purchasing a product. Therefore the risk of spending money in launching a business, which might be potentially inefficient, is diminished. New craft-makers need to try something before getting excited about money, profit, or writing a business plan.

One example of this market-testing approach is the experience of craft-makers who started crafts as a hobby, producing handmade objects for themselves, and after they observed that their products triggered the interest of others, they decided to make them for clients as well.

*“You have to ask yourself what people want to buy rather than what you want to sell. Be brutal with your idea, because in the end you want to make sure you are not going to get in debt.”*

Local council adviser



*“A real challenge for the craft-makers is that they are interested only in making what they love to make, and they are not interested in making what people might buy.”*

Business coach

Most craft-makers we interviewed, started their activity as a part-time job, which confirms the findings of the Creative & Cultural Skills (2009) that one fifth of those working in crafts do it in a limited capacity. This gives new craft-makers a chance to test their product and the market until they finally decide to dedicate themselves to their own craft business.

*“Start it along with a part-time job, because financially it will take a while to build up your customers. It is not an instant inflow of money.”*

Glass painter

Our research has shown that the following concerns should precede the business launch:

- Focus on what it is that you are about
- Work out why customers would buy your product, but not your competitors’
- Determine what makes you stand out from the crowd
- Notice if customers are interested and willing to pay for your products.
- Identify whether this is a price that is sustainable for the business and acceptable for your customers.

*“You shouldn’t do it, if you only lose money by producing it.”*

Felt maker

## 3. Make yourself visible and your product desirable

People have unlimited desires and dreams and an aspiring entrepreneur has to learn how to make his/her product appealing to them. People buy a ‘story’, a lifestyle, an image, a purpose, an idea of being part of an exclusive community – they want to be different (See chapter Promote). In the age of mass-production, many customers want high quality, individual products, and craft-makers can offer them, because they create something unique, handmade, personalized and innovative.

For craft producers it is better not to compromise on quality, but rather focus their efforts on selling

the 'story' that fits their customers' dreams. The craft product comes from within, that is why craft-makers should learn how to persuade their client to believe that it has a huge value for them too. But before that, they need to ensure that they really know their customers, and that they really understand their customers' values and motives.

Our research findings highlight **10 GOLDEN RULES** for those who are just starting:

1. You are not alone in this business: there are a lot of makers like you, who have faced the same challenges of launching a small business.
2. Having a genuine passion for your occupation is good, but not enough – making money is essential as well.
3. You are not producing for mass-market, but for real connoisseurs.
4. Don't give up if others will not immediately share your feelings about what you make – you will find your customers eventually.
5. It's better to gain five loyal customers each month, than hundreds that are hard to reach.
6. You have to be honest with your customers and responsible for your words: saying that your product is eco-friendly, means it has to be so. This allows deeply trusted relationships with your customers to be built. This allows building deeply trusted relationships with your customers.
7. In the crafts industry, even if you use the same techniques and materials, your personal touch is indispensable.
8. Don't fear competition. The longer competitors have been in the sector does not guarantee their ongoing success: they might face stagnation caused by less flexibility, an out-dated business model or slow speed of adopting innovation.
9. Don't try to copy others. Look for opportunities to distinguish yourself from others, by identifying how you could be different.
10. There is no success and innovation without risk taking.

### Sharing personal experience:

A Creative Development Team Manager who reflected on his past experience, emphasized how important it is to envision the future. He was involved in a couple of small businesses when he was young, and he realised that they weren't particularly successful, primarily because at that point in time they didn't know how the business would grow. "It's not necessary the product, or the enthusiasm, or the drive to do it. It's the speed to see in the future. When you look from my age, I can see it back then, if you just get out of university - few are able to see it in the future." Be patient to see what others don't have time to think about. Design the future.

Based on the retrospective story in the box above **THE '3BS' SUCCESS FORMULA** was derived:

- B**e visionary and think about the future.
- B**e open-minded to learn new skills and use new technologies in making process.
- B**e patient and ready not to make money in the first months, sometimes even in the first year.



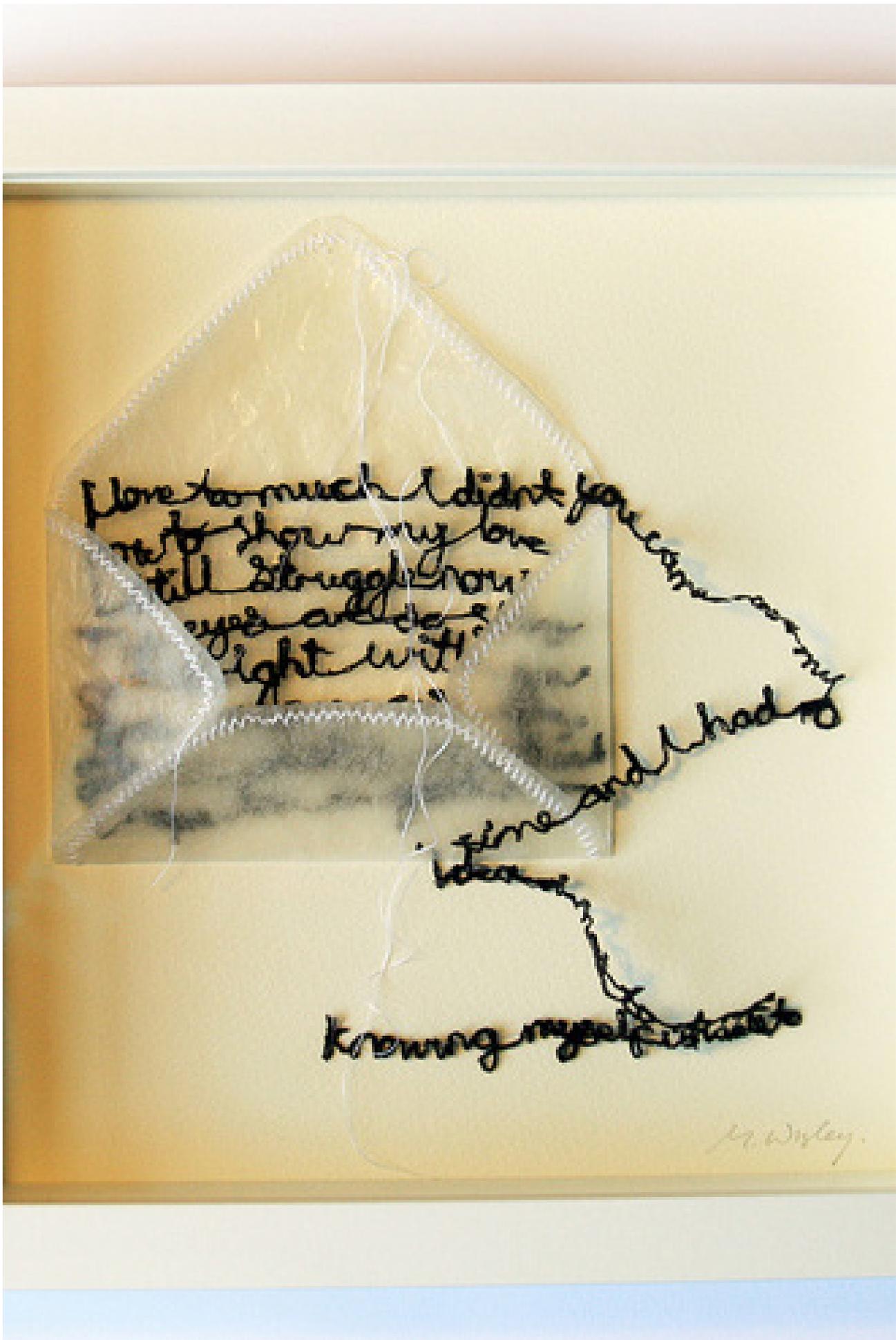
WE LIVE IN A RICKETY HOUSE  
We live in a rickety house,  
In a dirty dismal street,  
Where the naked hide from day,  
And thieves and drunkards meet.  
And pious folk with their tracts,  
When our dens they entre in,  
They point to our shirtless backs,  
As the fruits of beer and gin.



And they quote us to  
to prove That our  
hearts are hard as  
Stone, And they feed us with  
the fact that  
The fault is all  
our own.

It will be long ere the  
Will learn their crop to  
While it's raiment, food  
And religion all in  
I wonder some pious folks  
Can look us straight in the face,  
For our ignorance and crime  
Are the Church's shame and disgrace.  
We live in a rickety house,  
In a dirty dismal street,  
Where the naked hide from day,  
And thieves and drunkards meet.

ALEXANDER POPE



# Collaborate

*“If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.”*

George Bernard Shaw

Collaboration is perceived as another immediate constituent of success – craft-makers are advised by our interviewees and experts not to be afraid to step up and make new connections with other people involved in the craft sector. These people could be other craft-makers, but also they could be suppliers, coaches, representatives of local authorities and public spaces administration and design technology practitioners.

One of the business advisor interviewees states that the idea of cooperation is not deeply rooted in the nature of this country, because usually everyone sees each other as competitors rather than partners. The craft sector might be an exception however, because people tend to share and work together more frequently in this sector setting.

At the same time he also underlines that **“COOPERATION IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT”**: it gives an opportunity to refine emerging ideas through discussing them with others and increases likelihood that these ideas will turn into reality rather than will be lost among others.

Craft-makers, whom we interviewed, unanimously expressed a desire to collaborate with other people in the sector. Moreover they do not see them as a potential threat to their own business, on the contrary, they would even recommend other craft-makers to their customers in the case when they cannot meet needs of their customers, or if their customers are looking for complementary products. Some of them mentioned that they are finding **INSPIRATION** in the work of other makers, when they are visiting craft fairs or exhibitions, or just browsing in the Internet, even if they are working with different materials and tools.

*“I do collaborate with suppliers on a daily basis. I also go on Etsy forum and chat with other craft makers [...] I would like to collaborate with other artists, and I do actually with those who are making bridal shoes, jackets or tiaras.”*

*“I would recommend if somebody ask me advice, for example, a good jewellery shop on Etsy...”*

Textile artist

*“I think the idea of cooperation is fantastic. That is why I want to get into the gallery, because there are painters there, sculpture going on. It is a completely different environment with a lot of people like-minded, really.”*

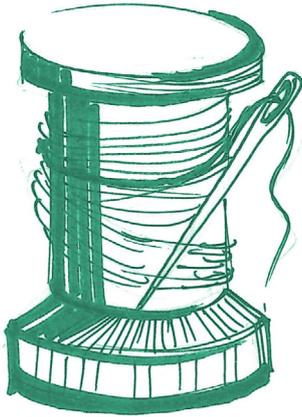
Glass beads maker

*“Of course I would recommend to my customers other shops or craftsmen, if it is a community, and I knew someone, I would definitely pass the information on. I think it is a must.”*

Glass beads maker

Craft-makers see collaboration as a source of meeting **like-minded people**, a source of **support**, that is needed to feel more self-confident, especially if you have only recently got involved in craft making; it is an opportunity to **share ideas** and **ask for advice**. These all create a community environment in the craft sector. In addition, cooperation is a chance to diminish psychological barriers that keep people from starting and growing their business. Collaboration provides opportunities **to learn new skills** or to combine them with the skills, styles and techniques of others, and





therefore to innovate.

The interview with the professional coach in the craft sector highlighted the importance of expanding beyond your possibilities and overcoming the limitation of mixing with only like-minded people with similar skills. This opens up doors to a new market.

*“There is a need to provide opportunities for craft-makers to meet people from a completely different sector –this is the way new markets could be created.”*

Professional coach

Local authorities, for instance, are holding networking events to bring together different people and organisations, which can help them benefit from each other's activity, because many of the enquiries that local councils receive are referring to a lack of knowledge about whom to contact if a craft-maker is seeking business support or looking for premises and facilities. Even though there are some areas and spaces that could be used as studios, the key challenge to sustain this community environment in the craft sector is still the lack of spaces and sometimes the lack of sources of information about their availability. Craft-makers are pointing out an urgent need for spaces, where they can work, because the majority of craft production is not convenient to operate from home. They need spaces not only where they could meet and share ideas, but also public spaces, where they would be able to sell or exhibit their products and acquire the attention of potential customers by communicating directly with them.

The best solution for it might be the formation of creative clusters where craft-makers would be able to benefit from all the advantages of collaboration in one space. Clusters are *“geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field”*, they are usually tightly connected with governmental and other institutions that

provide educational, informational and technical support. (Porter, 1998, p. 78)

*The latest Creative Clusters and Innovation* (2010) NESTA report refers to a cluster as a synthesizer of:

1. A community of ‘creative people’ who share an interest in novelty but not necessarily in the same subject.
2. A catalysing place where people, relationships, ideas and talents can spark each other.
3. An environment that offers diversity, stimuli and freedom of expression.
4. A thick, open and ever-changing network of inter-personal exchanges that nurture individuals’ uniqueness and identity.

Being part of a cluster, in this particular case being part of a craft-creative cluster, means:

- The opportunity to have and use a space for the craft production process
- Access to facilities and information
- Easy access to needed institutions and workshops
- The ability to freely use new technologies, tools and materials
- Direct contact with suppliers and specialists in diverse fields
- The interchange of knowledge with all the cluster's members (craft-makers, suppliers, support organisations, creative hubs, apprentices) on a daily basis
- The possibility to start joint projects.

A good practice is the creation of Fab Labs. The concept of Fab Labs is originally from the USA, and it could be applied to the craft sector in the UK as well, especially because it incorporates two basic needs of the craft-makers of the XXI century: collaboration and technology. Activities in Fab Labs range from technological empowerment to peer-to-peer project-based technical training. A relevant example is the Spike Island Artspace in Bristol, which is a vibrant hub and home to a gallery, café and working space for artists, designers and creative businesses. It is a space that offers opportunities for audiences to engage directly with creative practices through participation and discussion. All these features reflect the vision of the interviewed craft-makers about the most desirable and convenient space to work in.



Annabel Potter ■ <http://www.animalglassdesigns.co.uk>

Another important source of collaboration, skills acquisition and exchange opportunity are apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeships also play a significant role in economic development helping to address problems of unemployment and training.

Apprenticeship programs are intended for both young people – seeking for applied knowledge and skills, that will be paid or rewarded afterwards, and older people – retired or those who decided to change their careers. Apprenticeship programs are supported by diverse organisations, for instance Walsall Council is bringing together young unemployed people who are interested in apprenticeship opportunities and companies interested in hiring them.

There are a number of limitations that might prevent some businesses opening apprenticeship programmes: either they might be reluctant to take apprentices, because they eventually may compete for a limited market, especially in the craft-making sector or they do not have enough money to pay to apprentices. The issue of skills transmission and declining markets has a special significance for the craft sector – if skills and knowledge are not transmitted there is a risk that they might eventually disappear entirely. Concerning the lack of funding to pay for apprenticeships some initiatives have been developed to help overcome the challenge of lack of money to hire young people.

One of those initiatives is the programme for unemployed and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) young people from 16 to 24 year old called the Youth Contract Programme, where the government is paying organisations for recruiting 18-24 year olds. Such wage incentives programmes are mutually beneficial for companies, who want to hire and train young people but cannot afford it, and for government that intends to address the problem of youth unemployment. Nonetheless, the interviewed craft-makers highlighted the difficulties of applying current apprenticeship schemes to the crafts sector as well, because the sector needs a more ‘bespoke’ one-to-one apprenticeship between master and apprentice, in order to facilitate the skills transmission, individual development, and support for the sector.

Many of the interviewed craft-makers claimed that they would like to be involved in apprenticeship programs either as apprentices - to improve their skills or as masters, to teach others - underlining that there is no threat of competition, because eventually everyone has their own unique style.

*“I’d love to have apprentices. When you do things, you learn more in practice than in the period of studies.”*  
Graphic Designer

*“I would probably be interested to become a master: you transfer knowledge; you pick up a lot of techniques. In terms of teaching it, financially it might help, and you learn a lot from your students, but also it would mean less time for your own work.”*

Glass Painter

*“I didn’t think about being involved in apprenticeship as a master before, but yes, it could be interesting.”*

Textile artist

The main reason they are still not involved in apprenticeship programs either as apprentice or ‘master’ is the lack of awareness of existing opportunities.

*“I’ve heard about the apprenticeship, but not in relations to crafts, in terms of engineering or other jobs.”*

Glass Painter

*“I know what an apprenticeship is, but only in other sectors (silver or pottery) but not in what I’m doing.”*

Textile artist

*“I have heard about apprenticeships before but not really in pottery. I would be interested in an apprenticeship program if it existed in pottery, because I like to do pottery all the time and I would like to increase my skills.”*

Pottery maker

## BOX OF COLLABORATION ADVANTAGES:

- ✓ Meet like-minded people
- ✓ Get support within the craft-community
- ✓ Acquire new knowledge
- ✓ Exchange ideas and skills
- ✓ Find inspiration



# Promote

When asked what is the main challenge they face on a daily basis, all 12 artisans we interviewed, answered that marketing is what they are mostly concerned about. This can be explained by the blurred line between crafts as a hobby and/or a lifestyle and crafts as a business. This leads to the craft-makers' dilemma: What is a fair price for the products they create with love?. Sometimes they might under or overprice them.

## PRODUCT

The success stories of our interviewees were mostly based on the customisation and personalisation of their products. If you want to stand out, you really need to create authentic handmade objects.

*"I don't repeat what I make, moreover, I think I have reached the level of skills that put me not at the top of the game, but certainly closer. I put my heart and soul into it. I have improved over the years."*

Glass beads maker

In the first place, craft-makers should avoid spending too much money on supplies. From a hat maker's experience, it is a big risk for makers to carry lots of materials and supplies, because these funds are tied up before they can be transformed into profit and it is a liability for the business as long as it carries those materials. That's a hard lesson to learn about the relationship between how much a craft-maker needs in terms of supply and the demand from consumers at the other end.



Aspiring craft-makers should create customised, personalised and unique products. That's could become their main competitive advantage. Also, they should try out new technologies to keep abreast with the changing time (See chapter Innovate).

## MARKET

Are you product led or market led? It's the old dilemma of any cultural product. In the end, what differentiates a craft product and any other types of product is that, to some extent, it is product and producer led. A lot of crafts are hybrids between the useful and the beautiful, the enjoyment of everyday objects, which delivers a story and meaning. From a marketing point of view, a craft-maker could be customer-focused and oriented, without being customer-led. Makers should 'talk' to people and try to understand the reason why nobody wants to buy their products or could identify what they love about their objects and focus more attention on those details.

The profile of potential customers of craft products might look as following:

- Visually literate and reflective customers
- Caring about how things look like
- Having some understanding of the process
- Willing to pay for high-quality products
- Attached to things and their relationship with things
- Willing to spend more time choosing a product than the average customer

Ultimately, craft-makers should strive to build individual embedded relationships within the market, rather than having 50 random people in their newsletter list, they should try to aim small, and acquire five loyal customers per month who understand, love and value what they do. But that is not enough; the hardest work is in retaining them, that's why craft-makers should focus their efforts on keeping personal interactions with each of their customers, a key feature of the relationship marketing. This is one area where small, 'bespoke' enterprises like crafts-makers have an advantage over big business.

Word of mouth is important. It is not enough to be a great producer, craft-makers need to go out of

their studios and market their products. People buy from people. They trust them. They need to go to exhibitions, networking and community events, to get their products out there.

There are some advantages in the small production of unique objects: it means a much more individualised approach to marketing. According to the marketing expert we talked to, the idea of personalisation is the key.

## PRICING

Crafts objects are unique and are not mass-produced, that is why many craft-makers find it difficult and even feel uncomfortable when it comes to price them, because they feel alienated when their handmade products are transformed into commodities: this scares them. Before setting a price, they should design their pricing strategy based on the answers to these questions:

- ✓ Is it a unique self-expression or is it a commodity?
- ✓ What is the core value of the product: personal, user or financial value?
- ✓ What is the crucial priority in setting the price: time, effort, experience or training?
- ✓ How much is the consumer willing to pay?
- ✓ How much value does it brings?

If craft-makers reach the point when they understand that the inputs are much higher than the output, it means that they do not have a viable product or business. If consumers are more inclined to buy cheaper copies of similar products, it might mean that craft-makers should treat their activity as an art. In that case, they should focus on a different market and use an elitist marketing approach, by focusing on promoting their works in galleries, where they could get exposure to people who are collectors and are willing to pay a special price for exclusive products.

Sometimes higher prices bring an added value to products, and selling too cheap might be a real issue. It is easy to drop the price, but it is almost impossible to put it up again. In the case craft-makers produce a high quality product, they

shouldn't undermine its value. And if they present the product value through special promotion and targeted marketing strategies they will manage to sell them for a fair price. At the same time, craft-makers should be pragmatic, and this is the main challenge – to keep a balance between the two.

*“One entrepreneur launched their product and it didn't work out. Five years later, they re-launched it at a double price. It is one of their bestsellers, even today. If you sell quality at cheap price, people don't think it's qualitative. They think: “It's cheap”.*

Business Advisor

A good strategy might be to have a range of products at different prices. For instance a craft maker could have a beautiful 'table' that costs £1000, but also a 'silver napkin ring' that is £50. Even if they can't afford the 'table', they would like to acquire at least something like the 'silver napkin ring' from a maker who has the credibility and integrity of really expensive and high quality products. Even that little object purchased from him will have a special value for his customers.

Craft-makers should be careful with small incentives (i.e. buy one, get one free), because they don't want people to think that they are acting like a supermarket. Giving something for free is a good way of establishing a reciprocal relationship (obligation) with somebody.

*“The whole idea of craft and gift economy is that a gift is something that is freely given and there is a mutual respect and joy in exchange.”*

Marketing Expert

In conclusion, the only way people can compete now is not just on price, but on how products themselves make people feel.

## STORYTELLING

People like stories and subconsciously they are willing to pay for them. That's why it's crucial to increase customers' awareness about the creative and making process around products, by telling them their story. Craft-makers should quantify the



Wendy Willmott ■ [www.etsy.com/people/CreekyBeads](http://www.etsy.com/people/CreekyBeads)

amount of work spent on every item, and tell their customers where they got their inspiration.

They need to help customers realise the value of their products, by showing them their work in an animated way. They can organise open studio events, where customers could have a 'smell' and 'taste' of their studio, see the mess in the studio - see the materials lying around, and the tools used. That might excite and interest the customers. They could have a feeling of the whole process around a craft object, not just the object itself, and that's what makes them love it when they look at it.

Unfortunately, most gallery displays take away the object from the making process and the context through which it is made. Thus, craft-makers should aim to tell their story outside the gallery environment (for example country fairs, cafes, festivals and markets), where they can show how they are making their unique objects.

And if you don't know the story about the product, probably you don't value it in the same way as the maker does. Craft-makers need to experiment, they could write a note, or a bio along with their crafts objects. For instance, they could create and attach a QR code to their products, which would direct their customers to the website where they can discover more about the craft-maker and his/her story. A good example here is the platform called Provenance, where creators share their stories, and where customers can discover the materials, processes, places and people that make products with purpose.

In order to create a meaningful story, you need to explain to your customers:

- How does this product reflect my own personal story?
- How was your product made?
- What are you trying to express?
- What is your object's use?
- What traditions are you drawing upon?
- What special details does it have?

Sometimes it is underestimated how interesting a story is to people, until craft-makers actually tell it. In the end, people are buying the personal relationship between the crafts person and the crafts object. They are buying the craft-maker's forms of expression, which are in turn a reflection of his/her personality and story. That's what most distinguishes a craft-maker from a mass-producer,

the latter sells commodities with the stories of making unique and beautiful craft objects.

## GOING ONLINE

Whether someone intends to become a craft-maker or is already an established one, the work should be promoted in the online world as well. Any craft-maker should consider having a website or a blog, where they could present pictures and videos of the working process, and possibly footage of new products. It is important to interact with customers online, and to allow them to ask questions and to engage them into an interactive dialogue about work. Online a craft-maker can extend his/her reach beyond the limitation between one-to-one marketing.

As one craft-makers commented, *“With Etsy now, there are blogs, forums, you can get involved in. The danger is that if you have too much publicity and might end up not being able to cope with the volume of work.”*

Glass beads maker

Some platforms we would recommend to start with are:

**ETSY** – It has some good features for discovering new things. It effectively promotes its 400,000 international craft makers (shops). Half of the craft-makers we interviewed are fond of Etsy:

*“It is a very user friendly website. A very good starting point. Basically that’s why I like Etsy – they find me. They are actually searching for handmade items on Etsy and my Etsy page optimisation is good, pictures are looking great – that’s what brings them to me. That’s how they will click on the magic “buy” button. So far that works for me.”*

Pottery maker

**DAWANDA** - With nearly 1,000,000 products for sale, DaWanda is a European powerhouse in the handmade arena.

*“I opened a shop on the DaWanda which is like a European Etsy. It is mainly German market led. You have to promote your products in the language of the country, so I do it in English and German, thus I sell to Germany, Austria, Switzerland through it. Nevertheless I do it along with Etsy.”*

Textile artist

**FOLKSY** - a modern British crafts webstore, in addition to e-commerce functionality, it also offers free how-to guides for making crafty goods.

If craft-makers have their own websites - it is much harder to make themselves visible, but it is still possible, if they know how to design a good website, and learn how to use SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) techniques.

The limitation of selling online is that the real craft experience is in its feeling, touch and appeal. If customers already know about a craft-maker, they might also look for him/her online. The whole process of buying a craft object might be considered a ritual and online selling is unlikely to work in isolation. Therefore a wise strategy is to combine online and offline marketing.

## CREATIVE MARKETING APPROACH

It is a good idea to talk to managers of public places that need to be decorated, for instance, cafes and restaurants. This strategy is mutually beneficial: the venues will get a nice atmosphere, and a craft-maker will get a great exposure.

Attaching a nice tag with the maker’s contact details along with the works is highly efficient, because that will allow visitors of the place to discover more about the craft-maker’s activity.

# Innovate

Innovations and digital technology development signal a new era in the story of the craft-making sector. As previously noted, craft is a dynamic and changing sector. These changes take place according to newly evolving materials and/or techniques. Nowadays craft-makers along with the know-how of making things have to learn how to use emerging technology to their advantage in the design, production and promotion process.

Craft-makers interviewed stated that they are using Internet resources on a daily basis: many of them have their own websites, blogs on Tumblr, or Facebook and Twitter pages. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are shaping the way of contacting and reaching their audience, promoting their products and craft-related events. Many of the craft-makers prefer to sell their products online through platforms such as Etsy, DaWanda and Folksy, even though some of them find it more difficult and time consuming than others. New technologies, such as social media, play a key role in networking, finding new techniques and inspiration, learning how to create a new product.

*“Selling online is very helpful and useful - but is time-consuming, maybe the young generation will find it easier than I do. Blogging - I think that helps people to find you in searches on Google.”*

Glass Painter

*“I think the Internet is quite important. I can't imagine doing something I do without it. It's great.”*

Textile artist



*“Creating websites, which is quite easy to do now, or using existing websites such as Etsy make the process of selling easier now.”*

Pottery Maker

Usually, craft-makers see new technologies as a useful tool in their activity rather than as a disruptive power, but debates continue among craft-makers as to whether the implementation of new technologies, such as 3D printing or laser cutting, for instance, undermines the notion of craft objects as handmade and not mass-produced products.

Craft-makers sometimes argue that these technologies may bring a feeling of alienation as a result of the making process. The best strategy in this case is to combine both traditional and new technologies in the making process, sometimes at different stages.

*“We need to move forward. If there is something invented to make it easier and faster to do, then obviously there could be a financial advantage. However, sometimes it's good to go back to the technology that you know properly. It should be a combination of new tools combined with the traditional ones.”*

Glass Beads Maker

Nevertheless such technologies as 3D printing and laser cutting are part of the craft industry's contemporary reality. Craft-makers who want to keep abreast of the changing time, to succeed and innovate should use the benefits of these technologies and find ways of integrating them into the making process. For example 3D printing allows a maker to diversify into different materials, such as: plastic, gold, silver and many other metals, while retaining the design and feel of an original product.

The findings of our research highlight two key issues which arise in the framework of the willingness to use technologies such as 3D printing and laser cutting by craft-makers in their activity. The first one is related to the access problem while the second is the knowledge gap between young and old generations regarding technologies.

The access problem derives firstly from the price of such technological equipment and, secondly, from the information asymmetry. A lead practitioner for

design technology in the interview pointed out that, at first, the limitation of 3D printing usage was the price of the printers themselves, whereas now, when anyone can purchase such a printer, the problem is in the price of materials – they might be very expensive and difficult to store for a long time. This means that a sole craft-maker either cannot purchase it for him/herself or they cannot afford to experiment in the making process. Therefore he claimed that laser cutting is a more reliable technology than 3D printing that is still developing and very expensive to use; but laser cutting has its own limitations as well – it cuts only right and exact shapes which do not always respond to craft-makers’ needs.

*“There are some not very expensive 3D printers that you can buy on the High Street, but there is a difficulty in the knowledge absence and it’s not that easy in usage, it’s not perfect yet, because it is still emerging technology: every time you go with laser cutter you get good results, with 3D printer you can’t be sure.”*

Lead practitioner for design technology

Mostly 3D printing and laser cutting technologies are not available for public usage, only at educational institutions or in companies, and mainly for staff. However some organisations provide public access to them. Thus the second aforementioned access barrier to 3D printing and laser cutting i.e. information asymmetry – there are a number of places and organisations that provide facilities to use these technologies but most craft-makers are unaware of these opportunities.

The generation gap between old and young craft-makers is closely connected with and derives from the access problem. The problem is not only lack of access to facilities but also absence of skills and knowledge. Young people are acquiring this

knowledge and skills such as use of 3D printing and laser cutting in educational centres where they also can practise, while the older generation does not have that kind of opportunity to learn and apply their knowledge. It is worth mentioning that this issue might be overcome by outsourcing possibilities - printing could be ordered somewhere in a specialized organisation even in other countries. Also there are examples of specialist design software such as that offered by the company, [Anarkik3D](#) who also provide courses for creative people on how to design in 3D without being a 3D specialist. The courses are suitable both for younger and older generations, and for both amateurs and professionals in the craft sector, who want to learn about 3D digital modelling for 3D printing

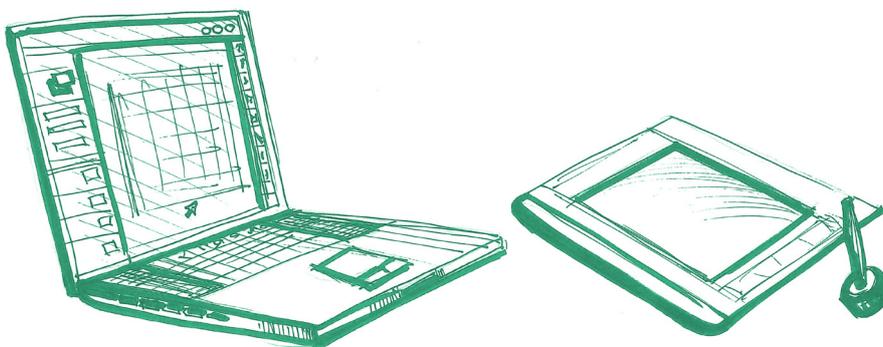
### ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF 3D PRINTING

- ✦ Broad field for creativity
- ✦ Printing everything from plastic to metals
- ✦ Outsourcing
- ✦ Expensive materials
- ✦ Difficult accessibility
- ✦ Specific skills

PRICE OF 3D PRINTERS

One solution to overcome these problems might be to form a creative cluster for craft-makers which would concentrate in one place all the necessary information about technologies such as 3D printing and laser cutting, facilities accessible to craft-makers, and appropriate training in the use of 3D modelling techniques. Another solution would be to make existing facilities, which are currently restricted based on age or cost available to all interested parties.

The above might help address some of the barriers that craft-makers face while implementing new technologies into their production process.



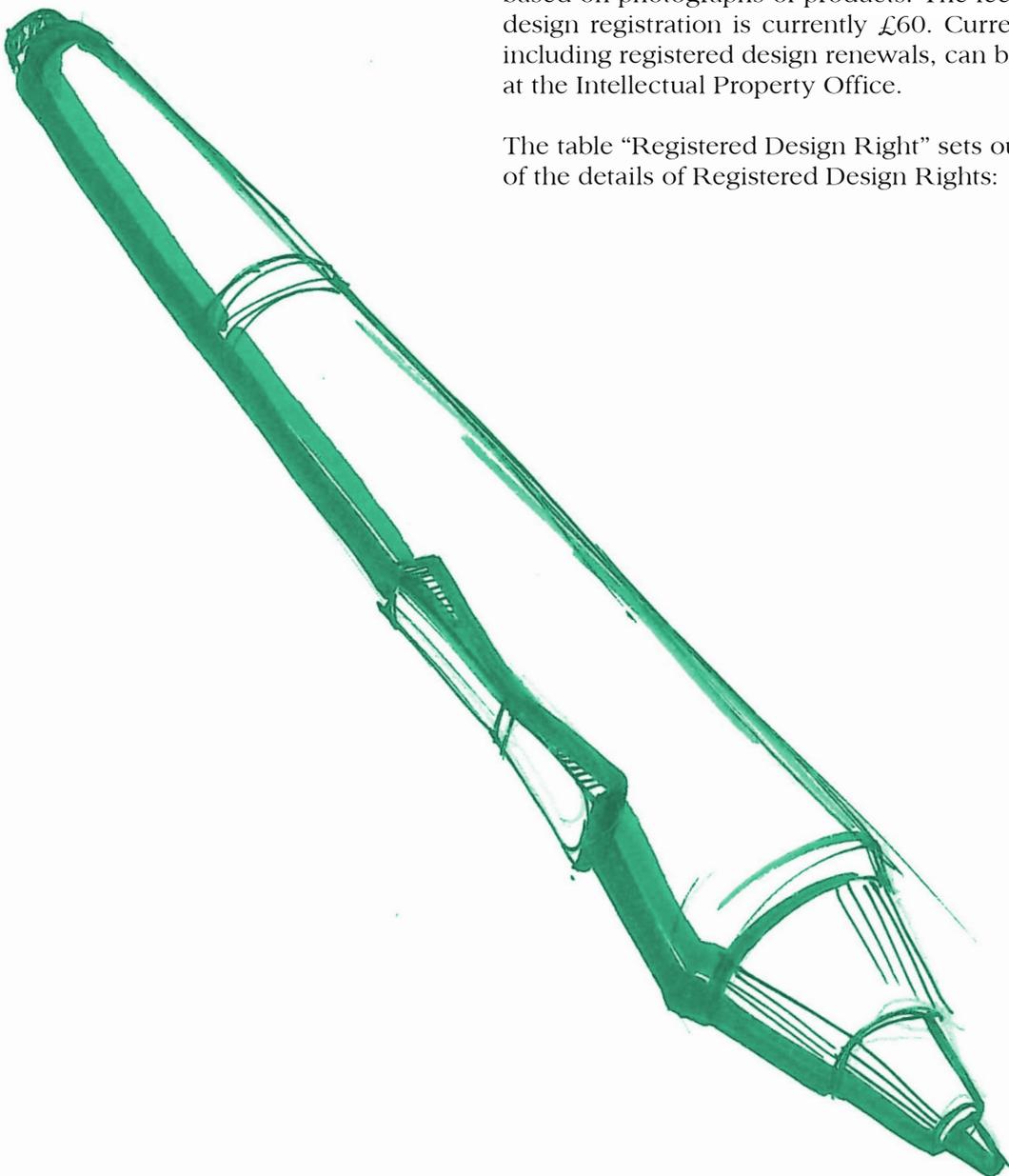
# Develop

## BECOME AN INNOVATOR AND A PROTECTOR

Usually, when people are starting to copy someone's work, it means that this person is widely recognised by the community, that he/she sets the trend by creating something innovative and valuable. Innovation is always a balance between failure and success, and therefore risk and challenge go hand in hand with innovation. In this case it is highly important for a craft-maker to emphasize that he/she is a pioneer.

One of the good strategies to grow a crafts business is to use intellectual property (IP) rights as a valuable business asset. The important thing is to know how to protect IP rights. It's a very simple and cost-efficient process to register, which can be based on photographs of products. The fee for UK design registration is currently £60. Current fees, including registered design renewals, can be found at the Intellectual Property Office.

The table "Registered Design Right" sets out some of the details of Registered Design Rights:



## REGISTERED DESIGN RIGHT

**TERM:** The protection lasts initially for 5 years, and you can renew it every 5 years for up to 25 years. You can apply for the IP right at the Design Registry where you'll have to pay a fee, which is not an automatic right. You are allowed to register your design right within a year from the date when your design was first made public.

**PROTECTION:** Throughout the UK

**PROTECTS AGAINST:** Your product being copied, manufactured, sold or imported by others. It covers only the 3D aspects of the object, and does not protect the surface decoration or any 2D pattern of the product.

**WHAT IS PROTECTED?** The visual appearance of your product, part of a product or its ornamentation. The appearance can be affected by a number of contributory features such as: lines, contours, colours, shape, texture, and material.

To qualify for these IP rights, your design must be:

### NEW

- ✓ Not be the same as any design which has already been made available to public
- ✓ Pass the 'deja vu' test

### INDIVIDUAL IN CHARACTER

- ✓ The overall impression that an informed user gets from the design is that it is different from any previous designs
- ✓ It expresses the degree of freedom the designer had in crafting the appearance of the design

Source: <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/design.htm>

Some of the craft-makers we had the chance to interview expressed their interest in protecting the method they use to produce their crafts products. The IP expert we consulted on this point commented that it is very difficult to protect method, because the law does not seek to prevent future innovation by others using a similar process. Only if a craft-maker has a truly innovative method, could he/she think of patenting it, especially if there is some scientific knowledge involved. The best available strategy in this instance is through a non-disclosure agreement, or making information about the method subject to a contractual agreement.

Our expert emphasised that a lot of makers and craft-makers underestimate the power of trademarking and licensing. If they have a logo and a brand, they should protect it as well, because basically the brand icons become synonymous with their

name. For instance, Cath Kidston is well known for her textile design. This is her trademark. This is a strategic step to undertake for the developing business.

### BECOME AN EMPLOYER

If a craft-maker has the strategy of growing their business, even though mostly it is not the case, and they want to remain as SMEs, they need people to help them meet their orders. For instance a milliner had a great buzz around her unique products, but she couldn't meet the demand. Craft-makers are usually afraid that business might replace their desired lifestyle of making what they want when they want. Therefore, they agree to earn just enough to sustain their current lifestyle. They like to go with the flow:

*"It's growing by its own and I'm going with it at the moment. I made a break-even the past few months. If it continues like this, I will think over but at the moment I don't think I can expand much more being only myself."*

Muralist

But if a craft-maker wants to expand business, a strategy could be to hire apprentices to help out (See chapter Collaborate), or to find a partner that would commercialise what they make. Another method could be to teach themselves how to commercialise and sell, by attending different business training courses/workshops. There is no single one best strategy, and the solution is likely to depend upon individual preferences, values and lifestyles.



Bobbie Massey ■ ConstanceHandcrafted



Bobbie Massey ■ ConstanceHandcrafted

## Design the future

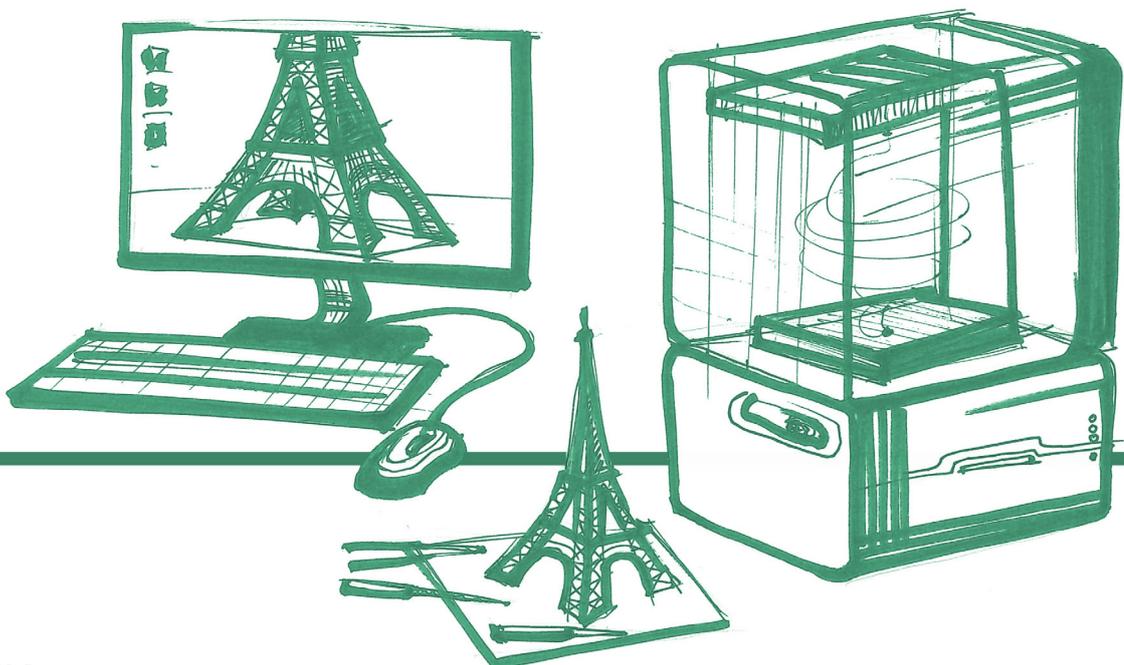
Based on the research findings the ideal portrait of Artisans of the 21st century could be described as following:

- They are ready to accept the challenges of the crafts sector's dynamic environment and to focus their efforts on the improvement of their techniques according to changing tools, diversification of materials and development of new technologies
- They make most of collaboration opportunities and IP protection
- They know how to deliver an intriguing and inspiring story around their product.

At the same time, this research brought to light four principal challenges that any contemporary artisan faces on a daily basis that prevents them to fulfil this portrait:

### 1. ABSENCE OF SPACES FOR COLLABORATION

Most of craft-makers expressed their concern about the lack of spaces where they could perform their craft activity, meet like-minded people and share their ideas and skills with them. Also, they believe that those spaces could be used to sell their unique craft objects and interact with their customers. As viable solutions, they expressed the possibility to



open co-operatives, rent studios or available spaces with others, and participate in creative clusters in general and Fab Labs specifically. Those spaces would be ideal to get access to high technology, so necessary to keep up to date with the latest developments.

## 2. LIMITED ACCESS TO HIGH TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT AND SKILLS

The high price of such technological equipment or materials limits the amount of people who can get access to use it on a daily basis and experiment in the making process. In most cases technologies such as 3D printing and laser cutting are available for usage only at educational institutions or companies. Even if the access issue would be overcome, the gap in knowledge and skills how to use it will still remain – the older generation has less possibilities to acquire these skills than do the younger generation.

## 3. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ON HOW TO PROTECT THEIR CREATIVE PRODUCTS

Intellectual property rights is an important business asset. The most important IP right that craft-makers could take advantage of is the design right, which is easy to obtain and not that expensive to maintain

in the case where the design is new and individual in character. Moreover, craft-makers should not underestimate the power of trademarking and licensing that could bring an added value to their branding and positioning strategy.

## 4. NARROW UNDERSTANDING ON HOW TO TELL THE STORY AROUND THEIR PRODUCTS

Our interview results revealed that price is not the crucial variable in enabling craft-makers to stand out from the competition, but the way products themselves make people feel. Thus, storytelling is essential in increasing customers' awareness about the creative and making process around products and in helping them realise the value of unique crafted objects. Craft-makers need to learn how to tell their story in an animated way, in order to engage and retain their customers.

These challenges and the ways to overcome them have been addressed in this report. Further in-depth research has to be done on finding: efficient strategies to build more maker spaces in order to provide better collaboration environments; possibilities to design bespoke apprenticeship programs which would provide personalised training, and ways to open access to new technologies and skills to use them to all interested parties.

CVF Ltd presents the

# CALDMORE AND PALFREY FESTIVAL

12-6pm

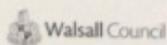
24<sup>th</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> may

Palfrey Park, Walsall WS1 4AN

Top Asian pop acts, including Tariq Khan and Mumzy Stranger.  
Music from a range of cultures and genres, dance, rides,  
stalls, children's activities, sports and food.

For information contact Glen Buglass on 01922 653114.  
For stalls & business opportunities call Akhlaq Hussain on 01922 642442.  
Or visit our blog on [caldmorevillagefestival.wordpress.com](http://caldmorevillagefestival.wordpress.com)

Over 10s £1 entry



Facebook Follow 'Caldmore Village Festival' on Facebook and Twitter



The RSA: meeting 21st century challenges by showcasing ideas, undertaking innovative research and building civic capacity around the world.



---

8 John Adam Street  
London WC2N 6EZ  
+44 (0)20 7930 5115

Registered as a charity  
in England and Wales  
no. 212424

Copyright © RSA 2014

[www.thersa.org](http://www.thersa.org)

---