

## **Creating work for oneself**

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Setting up a business from scratch is not exactly an easy task, but neither it seems to me, is setting up a career. Both require a degree of self-promotion, and perhaps most importantly time to grow. "Creating work for oneself" is not a phrase normally associated with a positive connotation, but it is, looking back, something I seem to have always been drawn towards. And now, as the projects get bigger, and I hire other creatives in I have the privilege to create work for others.

### **Watford Grammar School for Boys**

The exact chronology of my story is not quite as neat as this article might suggest but sometime before starting my G.C.S.Es at the school I turned my hobby for magic from lunchtime parlour tricks to prestidigitation for a fee at functions, performing at weddings and parties.

I remember my attention towards school work seemed to pale in comparison to this exciting world of earning money for your time. I would often seek out distractions which I felt helped develop more real world skills than learning how to solve quadratic equations - and that was when I heard about the Young Enterprise scheme.

A group of my friends and I set up a team. We weren't actually accepted at first, which is probably fair - our pitch was for a Power Saving energy device (when the sample arrived from China we cracked it open in the DT department and it turned out to be a rather expensive set of flashing lights).

I think it was the rejection that pushed us further - we spent a fair few lunchtimes planning to set up our own company outside the scheme, and I think this must have inspired someone somewhere as those running Young Enterprise heard about our activities and found a business mentor for us.

### **The Young Enterprise Scheme**

Our business mentor suggested we visit a trade fair in London in the hope to be inspired and it was there we bumped into a contestant from the Apprentice - whose name escapes me. He was setting up a web design business. And it struck us we didn't need a physical product. A few of us could code, we could provide web design as a service, and we figured we wouldn't even need some gimmicky USP, we just need to be better [and cheaper] than everyone else.

And it seemed to work, from small CV style personal websites that we sold to students to websites for larger companies including an international charity, for which Dr. Watson of the Physics Department was a trustee.

We were crowned Best Company in the Watford area, and ended up winning Best Presentation and Best Website [thank goodness for that!] at the Hertfordshire finals. One of the judges was so impressed we got chatting afterwards and he offered us a SEO contract (Search Engine Optimisation) for his company. But the YE scheme had come to an end and the company had to be liquidated.

So here was this potential contract, which seemed to me the fruit of the last years work. But no one else was interested in doing further work. So I thought, you know what - I'll do it myself. And I did, and that client passed on my name to a few others and my web design contracts saw me through University.

However, as a result of the Young Enterprise scheme, I also met Paul Shearring, whom I'm sure many of you will know. On the board of trustees, and an Old Fullarian himself, he came down to the Hertfordshire finals and approached me afterwards. He offered to let me come down for a week to the outdoor media agency he ran to gain an insight into the industry.

I genuinely look back on this gesture as one of the defining moments in my decision to pursue a career in the media world. Having a strong knowledge of web design, social media marketing by that point, that week of work experience is imprinted in my memory, and it encouraged me to go and explore what else was out there.

In fact, it was one of Paul's colleague I met there, a copywriter, who gave me the invaluable advice to not to study media, but to study something like English or Law, and to keep my creative endeavours separate from academia.

### **University**

So I went to Uni to read English, but getting my 2:1 was very much the side story, as it was here that I discovered an underlying passion for filmmaking. I joined the student television station, which I later went on to manage with my soon-to-be business partner. It was a great sandbox, but we figured, if we were going to spend all this time not working on our degrees we should probably try to get some sort of remuneration. So we set up MotionBlurr studios in our final year of University and had the great fortune to work with Red Bull, Microsoft and EMI.

### **Pinewood Studios**

We moved into our offices at Pinewood this summer, which was the natural home for our company. Our aim is to be like a traditional movie studio, modular in design - we put a bespoke team together for each project, drawing from a collective of artists: cinematographers, animators, make-up artists, and composers.

As one can imagine networking is key to what we do, we actively go out to find people with really specific specialisms, but who are the best at what they do. Being on the lot at Pinewood gives us access to everything a production will need.

Just the other day some post was delivered whilst we were out to a neighbouring company, but all I had was a name. So I searched LinkedIn for someone by that name at Pinewood, and low and behold the guy came up on the search and I had the name of the company he ran. Aside from the wonders of LinkedIn for tracking lost mail, I noticed something else. This guy, in an office on the floor below me, whom I may have never spoken to, went to Watford Boys. It was there in black and white staring at me on his LinkedIn profile, his last year at the school was my first year.

Needless to say we had a good chat about Mr. Post, Mr. Evans and some of the other teachers we had in common, and even found a way we could help each other out. And I think this point is very much the crux of why I chose to write this article.

The Old Fullarians isn't something that just exists for annual dinners, sport matches, or even careers events, it's there right now, as you read this article.

As much as Pinewood is a creative hub for the film industry, the Old Fullarians is a hub for every discipline, and whether one is growing a company, or shaping their career, why make more work for yourself than you need to. The connections are out there, waiting to be made.

<http://www.motionblurr.co.uk/>

*(1,193 words)*