

Renaissance **Business**

make your multipotentiality your day job



by Emilie Wapnick

To Mom and Dad, for teaching me to follow my heart, no matter how many directions it pulls me in.

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CHAPTER ONE

From Multipotentialite to
Professional Multipotentialite

CHAPTER ONE

From Multipotentialite to *Professional* Multipotentialite

It was a hot night in August. My sleeping bag was matted around me like a synthetic jail cell. I stared up at the ceiling. Sleep wasn't coming.

I had just arrived in Copenhagen for my final semester of law school. The semester abroad was meant to give me the physical and mental space to tackle a certain problem: *now that graduation was looming near, what the hell was I doing with my life?*

When I made my plan to leave, I had all of these ideas brewing in my head. I wanted to write a book, create a web series about 20-something expats in Berlin, become a personal development coach, fight for copyright reform, be the show-runner in a writers' room for a teen drama, start an online art collective and research the late 14th century queer scene in Florence, Italy.

My dreams terrified me for a few reasons:

First, none of these dreams came with a clear career path. Oh yeah, I'll just *apply* to the personal development certification institute and become Tony Robbins. Sounds like a plan...heh, no. That's not how it works. But *how does it work?* I had no clue.

Were my dreams all just unrealistic—a matter of luck more than anything? How does someone *become* any of these things? And even if I did follow my heart and strive for the impossible, **how would I support myself?** None of these dreams seemed particularly profitable, certainly not in the short run.

Secondly, I've never been able to stick with anything for more than a few years. Music, film, law—they all once fascinated me. I thought they were my "callings." But after a year or two of intense focus, I *always* got bored and lost interest. Every single time.

What if I was never able to stick with a decision?

Was I doomed to live a life of irregular income, jumping between odd jobs? Or would I eventually have to settle on one thing and just endure the inevitable boredom?

Time was ticking, and I was starting to freak out. The idea of doing one thing only—spending my life in a state of perpetual boredom—sounded unbearable!

Of course, what I didn't realize at the time was that I am a classic [multipotentialite](#) (*used interchangeably throughout this book with scanner, puttypeep and Renaissance soul*).

In fact, in a lot of ways, this book is about taking that thing that you once thought would ruin your life—your multipotentiality—and turning it into your greatest asset: the thing that *fuels* your work and your life.

Where Business Fits into All of This

During my hunt for answers, I stumbled upon Tim Ferriss' book, [The 4 Hour Workweek](#). The idea behind 4HWW seemed promising for someone like me. Instead of seeking out your dream job (which may or may not exist in the first place), you build an online business that requires minimal effort in terms of upkeep. That business then funds the rest of your life.

Tim used his nutritional supplements company to fund his mini-retirements and travels. What if I used my own little internet business to fund my personal projects? That way I wouldn't have to worry about each project being profitable and I could just explore freely. *Hm*.

I decided that if I was going to do this properly, I had better invest in some real education. I hired a business coach and enrolled in an online course about internet business. **However, it wasn't long before my multipotentiality got in the way again.**

My coach liked my plan to fund my projects with a small online business, but he didn't understand me. As we brainstormed ideas, he pushed me to specialize: *"you went to law school. Intellectual Property was your expertise. You should start a service similar to LegalZoom but for Copyright and Trademarks."*

Ugh. That sounded awful.

I mean, sure, copyright policy was an interest of mine at one time, but writing about copyright day-in-and-day-out? No thank you. If I wanted to do that, I'd have become a lawyer.

Meanwhile, I was finishing up the end of Module 2 in my online course, which was all about "niche selection." It was incredibly frustrating. All of these experts were telling me to position myself as an "authority" in something really specific. It was the same message I had grown up hearing my whole life: *choose, Emilie, choose. It's the only way to make it.*

Now, back to that restless night in Denmark

There I was, furiously thinking over all my interests. *What's my niche? What's my niche? What am I an "expert" at? Ahhhhhh!*

And then it hit me.

The only thing I'm an expert at is not being an expert in any one field. I know how to pursue many different projects and jump between wildly different paths. *That* is my "area of expertise." It's all I'd ever done.

And so, not knowing what a scanner or multipotentialite or Renaissance soul even was, I decided to launch a website for people like me; people determined to lead a life based around their many passions. *Maybe, just maybe,* I would have something useful to say on the topic...

That's how [Puttylike](#) was born.

The Revelation!!

A few weeks after launching Puttylike, I had a massive epiphany: **THIS WAS IT.**

This community I was building was the answer I had been looking for. It was the perfect vehicle for a scanner. It let me showcase my many interests, I got to use all kinds of skills I had collected over the years, and I could even acquire *new* skills and use them in my business!

Whoa...

Mind blown.

What is a Renaissance Business Anyway?

A Renaissance Business (the term I finally coined for this business model) is **a digital platform that features content on many different topics.** It is both a business and community, and it's based around one overarching theme.

It's the opposite of a niche site.

Why is the Renaissance Business Ideal for Multipotentialites?

When it comes to the RB, scanners have an unfair advantage over everyone else. Here's why:

1. The Renaissance Business allows you to showcase many interests

On Puttylike I write about creativity, self-employment, personal development, travel, scriptwriting, human psychology, and all of my personal projects and goals. I'm able to do this because I have a strong overarching theme that runs through everything I do. (I'll show you how to craft your own overarching theme later.)

2. The Renaissance Business allows you to use many of your existing skills on a regular basis

For me, this means writing, web design, teaching/coaching, collaborating, audio editing and my ability to synthesize ideas. If you don't have these particular skills, don't worry. We'll find ways for you to leverage the skills you do have.

3. The Renaissance Business allows you to develop new skills and explore new areas of interest

One of my goals is to become a better public speaker. So what did I do? I started a [podcast](#) and launched it through Puttylike.

Another goal of mine is to become a television writer. I began [chronicling my progress](#) on Puttylike, which provided me with support, accountability for my deadlines and opportunity. I linked up with my writing partner when an old friend from film school read about this dream of mine and emailed me. The two of us are now [developing a TV pilot](#) to pitch to production companies. The project is not only fulfilling for me on a personal level, but it actually fuels my business since it provides content for the site. Pretty rad.

Some Other Benefits of the Renaissance Business

After a few months of running Puttylike, I realized that I had essentially become a “fulltime multipotentialite.”

My week now revolves around as much or as little variety as I like. Some days I cycle through five different interests, other days I focus on one or two, depending on my mood. I also get to create constantly, which feels amazing.

But the best thing about running a Renaissance Business is the impact it can have on other people. From very early on, I began receiving messages from complete strangers; scanners from all walks of life, thanking me for my work.

Talk about rewarding! Not only do I get to do all the things I love, but I’m contributing to the world in a way that only I can. *(The convergence of these two things is what [Chris Guillebeau](#) refers to as “World Domination.” And yeah, that’s sort of how it feels...)*

What I realized shortly after launching Puttylike was that by sharing my ideas online, I had built something larger than myself. In fact, Puttylike wasn’t about me at all. It was about a bigger vision that my community shares: the idea that it’s not only *okay* to have many interests in life, but *a gift*, and that you can base your life around as many things as you like. You don’t have to choose.

Using a Renaissance Business to Fund Your Pursuits

From a business perspective, the Renaissance Business works really well because by building a community, you’re also building a built-in customer/client base. You can create products and services (books, art, videos, audio, freelancing services, consulting, courses, etc.) specifically designed to meet your community’s needs. You don’t have to advertise or track down potential customers the way a traditional business might.

Your customers are already right there in your community. And they’re people who love you and want to pay for your work because they know how wonderful it is. You’ve already proven that with your free content.

The Renaissance Business System

My goal with this book is to teach you how to use your unique interests and talents to build your own beautifully personalized Renaissance Business. I'm going to take you through a system I created while working one-on-one with my coaching students. This process has been honed, tweaked and tested over time, and is completely reproducible.

This book goes through the whole process, start to finish: from figuring out your passions and crafting an overarching theme, to branding, title selection, and all the nitty-gritty details of actually launching and growing a community.

The RB system is **designed specifically for scanners**. Unlike most material on this topic, the RB approach looks at business from a uniquely multipotentialite perspective. In other words, I will *never* push you to choose a niche!

Instead of “overcoming” your desire to do many things, we're going to *use* your multipotentiality as a foundation for your business. It's what will set you apart and lead to your success.

The Plan for Our Time Together

In the following pages, we're going to:

- ✦ Figure out what your current interests and skills are and what your ideal scanner lifestyle looks like.
- ✦ Come up with an overarching theme to bring many of your interests together in a way that makes sense logically.
- ✦ Craft a clever title, tagline and design, that clearly communicate your theme to your audience. **We'll make sure that your people arrive at your site for the first time and know that they're home.**
- ✦ Build and launch your site with maximum reach. You'll do this as simply as possible, focusing only on the most important actions. I'll get into all the specific details like where to get reliable, inexpensive hosting, what your best design options are, which plugins you absolutely must include on your site, whether or not you need an email newsletter, etc.
- ✦ Begin implementing specific strategies to grow a highly engaged community.
- ✦ Begin thinking about what products or services you'd like to offer through your platform.

Already Got a Blog?

If you already have a digital platform for your work and you're a multipotentialite, then **you need to read this book**.

Renaissance Business will help you strengthen your theme and ensure that your site feels cohesive to your audience. It will also help with branding (title, tagline, design) and community growth and engagement. This is really vital stuff that every multipotentialite blogger absolutely needs to know.

You'll Find Plenty of Examples in Renaissance Business

You'll find examples throughout RB that come straight from the trenches—intense coaching brainstorming I had with students, the evolution of taglines and themes, and so on. I also included several examples of other successful online communities that I would label “Renaissance Businesses,” in that they integrate many topics using one overarching theme.

A Quick Word on Fear, Before We Begin

This stuff is not technically difficult. Yes, it requires hard work, persistence, and some creativity. But the actual technical steps aren't that complicated.

The place where most people trip up is mindset. It's the inner fears and self-doubt that create resistance and get in the way.

These fears come along with putting yourself out there. They're unavoidable. (*And yes, I feel them too. All the time!*) In fact, I've never had a student who didn't struggle with some form of fear. Whether it's the “*who am I to be giving anyone advice?*” issue or the “*what if people think my site sucks?*” fear, I've seen (*and felt*) them all.

It would be a disservice to you (and to my renaissance nature/love of personal development) not to include some information on tackling fear and overcoming resistance.

Throughout this book, you'll find the occasional motivational riff to help you deal with common fears that arise. Be warned that these fears will likely arise again and again-- and this is a very good sign. It means that you're doing something important to your soul.

*Feeling fear is a sign that you're on the right track and that what you're doing **matters**.*

Still, you had better learn to recognize and manage your fears, because as long as you're doing meaningful work, they're not going away. Let's just call it the price of admission for living a truly exhilarating life.

Using Your Multipotentiality to Fund Your Multipotentiality

It's all very meta, I know. But the best thing about a community-funded platform like the RB, is that it runs on your personality. Your shape-shifting nature, your ability to think laterally and your drive to master new skills, will fuel your business and put you ahead of the specialists.

It's your puttylike nature that will make your site—and *life*—shine. ✨