

A smiling woman with curly hair is working at a desk. She is wearing a light-colored shirt and a necklace. In front of her is a laptop and a tablet. There are some papers and a pen on the desk. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall. A large, stylized speech bubble with a gradient from orange to white is overlaid on the image, containing the title and subtitle. There are also some teal-colored decorative elements: a wavy line at the top, a curved line at the bottom left, and two circles on the right side.

RENAISSANCE BUSINESS

Turn ALL of Your Passions into One Business

By Emilie Wapnick

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

Note from Emilie and Forward to the New Edition

Renaissance Business was first published in 2011, and has continued to sell well, month after month, year after year. I have been somewhat amazed by this fact, not because I don't believe in the guide (I do, with all my heart), but because it's not the trajectory that digital products usually follow. Typically, a digital guide will be released and it will sell very well for the first few years, then taper off.

Not only has RB continued to sell at a shockingly stable rate, I continue to get emails from multipotentialites telling me that it made their entrepreneurial aspirations possible. That, without Renaissance Business, they would still be jumping from niche business to niche business, never feeling as though their work was a full representation of who they are, or that they might have have given up entirely.

The principles in Renaissance Business are timeless. The exercises to help you collect and combine your many passions worked in 2011, they work now, and they will continue to work.

However, Renaissance Business is also about building a digital platform, and technology evolves quickly. This new version is heavily updated and includes my latest recommendations for building your website and bringing your business to life.

In the pages that follow, you will find a comprehensive guide that takes you through the process of unpacking your many interests, combining them under a unified theme, building your website and launching your digital business into the world. Trust the process. This is a powerful little guide that can change your life.

And when you do launch your business, [email me](#) and tell me about it!

Your pal and fellow multipotentialite,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emilie', with a stylized, cursive script.

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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 Karamo Brown. 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 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 multipod, scanner 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 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, and that business then “funds” the rest of your life.

Tim used his nutritional supplements company to support himself and meet his financial goals. 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 a course about digital entrepreneurship. **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 Two 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? Ahhhhhhh!*

And then it hit me.

The only thing I am 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 create 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.

Of course, I didn't have all the answers back then. I certainly wanted to talk about my own experiences, normalize the idea of having multiple passions, and empower other multipods to embrace who they are. But the best thing about running Puttylike, is that it put me in contact with thousands of other multipotentialites, many of whom were a lot more successful than I was, and had figured out how to integrate their many loves into their lives and careers.

I took the opportunity to talk with, survey and interview as many of these happy and successful multipotentialites as I could, and I began sharing what I was learning on Puttylike. I knew when I started the site that there had to be a way to make “the multipod lifestyle” work practically—a way to be the curious, complex, multifaceted person that you are AND make a good living. It turns out there are multiple ways to make it work (surprise!).

A Renaissance Business is just one of the ways that multipotentialites integrate many subjects into one career, but it's a popular one. The idea of being your own boss, wearing many hats, and crafting something that is a perfect blend of your passions and a real representation of you, is appealing to many of us. We often end up starting our own businesses because we have a vision for something that's too big to fit within someone else's container.

Now, as multipods, we don't want to end up niching ourselves into an entrepreneurial box. And we don't want to confuse our customers with very different, seemingly unrelated offerings either. That's why it's important to have a clear overarching theme that brings your diverse topics together and provides a cohesive foundation for your business. (More on this soon.)

The Business Model

We'll spend most of this book working through your interests and figuring out some possible overarching themes. But first, let's do a quick overview of the business model, so you know exactly what we're creating here.

There are three basic components to a successful online business.

Component #1: Regular content that you put out to the world for free

In previous versions of this ebook, I wrote about the importance of blogging. However, things have changed a lot since the first edition of this book came out! You no longer need to publish blog posts on your website to build a Renaissance Business, you just need **some form of free, helpful or inspiring content that you put out to the world on a regular basis.**

This content can take the form of writing. It could also take the form of audio, video, photography, etc. You can publish the content on your self-hosted website and/or you can publish content on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok or YouTube. You can create your own podcast. You can even communicate with people solely in their inboxes, using a service like Substack.

There are so many ways to put free content out into the world these days, and you get to choose what medium(s) and platform(s) works best for you. You *can* have a presence on multiple platforms, but you really don't need to use them all. One platform can be enough.

Regardless, of which medium(s) and platform(s) you choose, you do need to put out some form of content regularly.

If you don't want to create all of your own content, find yourself some help! There are plenty of writers, artists and social media wizzes out there. And if you don't have the funds to hire a helper or team right now, then make it a goal to move toward as your business grows.

Component #2: An email list to deepen your relationship with your community

I've been running my business for over a decade. That's like 100 years in internet time. I've seen new technologies and business models come and go. I still firmly believe that an email list is essential. Sure, you can sell products using online advertising or social media, but it just isn't as *consistently* effective as being in someone's inbox (a very personal space) week after week and building trust with them.

This is why you need a website—even a very simple one—and a way of capturing people's email addresses (like an opt-in form) and you need to engage with your community regularly in their inboxes. That way when your first product or service is ready, you'll have some people to share it with. And these will be people who are used to opening your emails and are already familiar with your brilliant work.

Component #3: Offerings that solve a problem or provide a delight

Ideally, members of your community can consume your super helpful content, read your weekly emails and never spend a dime. But for folks who want more help (AND to officially make this project more than a fun hobby for you), you'll need a product and/or service to sell.

This offering can be a course, workshop, ebook, coaching, membership site, even a physical product or in-person event. It can really can be anything that speaks to your audience's needs and desires.

If you've cultivated an email list, then your customers are already right there in your community. There are likely to be folks on your list 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.

These three components: regular free content, an email list and paid offerings that speak to your audience's needs or desires, are the core foundation of this business model. However, they say nothing about the task of fitting multiple interests into one cohesive container. For that, we need to look at the Renaissance Business approach.

What is a Renaissance Business?

A Renaissance Business is **a digital business that features many different topics**. It is 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, multipods have an unfair advantage over everyone else. Here's why:

1. The Renaissance Business allows you to showcase many interests

On Puttylike, we publish articles about creativity, work, business, mental health, social justice, relationships, and more. We're able to do this because the site has a strong overarching theme that runs through all of the content. **Everything discussed is of concern to multipotentialites and is about building a life around multiple passions.**

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, speaking, coaching, audio and video 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

Back in 2012, one of my goals was to become a better public speaker. So what did I do? I booked a room at a local college, put up flyers around campus and put on my first Puttylike seminar for \$10 a ticket. Three years later, I was up on that TEDx stage and then I was being invited to speak at conferences around the world. Public speaking was a skill I wanted to learn so I used Puttylike (and this message I cared so much about spreading) as an excuse to develop those skills and then work them into my business.

Through my work at Puttylike, I've learned how to run effective marketing campaigns and launches. I did the research and experimented again and again until I found an approach that worked and felt good (marketing can be tough, but if you do it with integrity and heart, it doesn't have to feel bad).

If there are skills you're itching to learn, there very well may be space to use those skills in your business. I know business owners who have integrated their new love of ukulele or dance into their marketing efforts, with great success.

Some Other Benefits of the Renaissance Business

After a few years of running Puttylike, I realized that I had essentially become a "full-time 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 as much as I like, 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; multipotentialites 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 super power*, and that you can integrate multiple passions into your life. You don't have to choose just one.

The Renaissance Business System

My goal with this guide 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 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, business name selection, and all the nitty-gritty details of actually launching and growing a community.

The RB system is **designed specifically for multipotentialites**. Unlike most material on this topic, the RB approach looks at business from a uniquely multipotentialite perspective. In other words, I will *never* pressure 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 make you stand out.

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 multipod lifestyle looks like.
- ✱ Come up with an overarching theme to bring many of your interests together in a way that makes sense to potential clients.
- ✱ Craft a clever business name, tagline and design, that communicate your theme. **We'll make sure that your right 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 email newsletter provider to use, 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 Business?

If you already have an online business and you're a multipotentialite, then **you need to read this book.**

Renaissance Business will help you strengthen your brand and ensure that your site feels cohesive to your audience. It will also help with branding, community growth and engagement. This is really vital stuff that every multipotentialite creator needs to know.

You'll Find Plenty of Examples in Renaissance Business

You'll find examples throughout RB that come straight from the intense coaching brainstorm 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 under 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 fear. It's the inner self-doubt that create resistance and gets 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 website sucks?"* fear, I've seen *(and felt)* them all.

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

Throughout this book, you'll find the occasional inspirational 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 that's deeply important to you.

If you feel fear when engaging with a creative project, that's usually a sign that you're on the right track and that what you're doing matters.

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 business—*and life*—shine. 🌱