The Placement Diaries: Week 6 - Having Two Business Ideas, a Dilemma, and Half a Pitch

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Right, after parking my original idea of creating the experimental web design agency, I decided to kind of resurrect it (mainly because I watched half of *The Billion Dollar Code* on Netflix, where one of the protagonists was an art student from the 90's who wanted to use technology as a creative medium, and I could actually relate to that since that's pretty much the situation that I'm currently in at the moment, just 30 years apart (although in my mind "30 years ago" is the 1970's and not the 90's since that feels like 10 years ago to me), also because I looked at some old research notes and interests, and realised that I should at least decide to run a business based on my research interests), only to realise that I couldn't because, again, it was too hard, too unrealistic, and a tad bit outdated (websites, which aren't available on the internet, as art pieces loaded onto an SD card (acting as the modern day floppy disk), anyone?) as well as realising that there was virtually no demand for the products and services that I would have offered within my experimental web design business, as well as there being no competitors at all.

There's a saying that a business isn't worth it if there's no competitors, and I think that this might be the case because the niche for my original idea was way too obscure to the point where the average person simply wouldn't be interested in what I would offer at all since they would want a website that just works. I also have a feeling that this original idea of mine felt a bit pretentious and elitist, like you'd have to know how to go about if you'd want to even know what the business was about, so at the moment, I've parked it again and put it away on a shelf for a while, since this business would be harder to pull off.

At the same time, I've also developed the Business Model Canvas for my design and illustration business (where the idea itself isn't really that original, the industry is highly competitive, but this is something that feels a lot more practical and realistic for me since it's not only something that I'm good at, but also something that I'm passionate about), which to me, feels a lot easier to pull off.

Heck, I could even have it up and running by around the new year, but let's not get our hopes up just yet, since I'd have to actually stick with this idea through and through (try not to change my mind too much, which is a lot easier said than done), as well as buying any relevant things in order to actually run the business effectively (such as a graphics tablet, an Adobe Creative Cloud subscription, and possibly a Mac to hook up

to a TV, or getting an iPad Pro, an Apple Pencil, and Procreate, none of which or cheap, since this will make me and my bank account cry because these things will cost at least £1000 in total, if not more) because I don't think anyone would appreciate it if I did work using free and open-source alternatives (in this case, I'm using Figma for more design based work, as well as Inkscape and Krita, which are both Adobe Illustrator alternatives), especially without a graphics tablet.

I mean, I could get away without having to use a drawing tablet, but it's going to be a lot harder when it doesn't have to. Maybe I should just stop being cheap and actually invest in the things that will help me run my business effectively, or I guess I could say that I use the free open-source software (well, Figma's free to use, but I don't think it's open-source) for sustainability reasons (i.e. trying to keep the overhead cost as low as possible as well as giving back to the community by actively supporting independent creators and projects, which makes sense since I'm essentially targeting small businesses and independent creators, as well as the people who enjoy those kind of things), but trying to say it in a way which doesn't sound like far fetched BS, or in a way that screams "I'm cheap and I don't care about my business enough to get the professional tools!" because that would obviously look bad, but then again, I don't want to be a victim to the corporate overlords, but then again, I have to since that's really the only option, which leads me to my dilemma.

For my web design business idea, this would have been a hell of a lot easier since I would have used FOSS (free open-source software) tools, and no one would have batted an eyelid, since it would have been normal and almost encouraged to use those tools, but for my design and illustration business idea, it's a lot harder since everyone is expected to use Adobe software in order to be taken seriously (since only the hobbyists and amateurs only use the FOSS tools) if they want to get anywhere within the professional creative industries, and I'm not sure how I feel about basing my entire career on a subscription service that's apparently very hard to get out of, and that's my dilemma, along with the fact that my original business idea (the experimental web design one) seems very interesting in theory, but me not having the skills, the experience, or all of the passion to actually pull it off, whereas the illustration business idea has been thought of a million times over (almost like me going down a very well trodden path only to say "been there, done that"), but is something that I actually have the skills, the experience, and the passion to pull it off. Maybe I could combine the two, but I have a feeling that it'd be very hard to do (I guess I could create the website for my illustration business and see where it goes from there).

In short, my dilemma is to either create a business based on my research interests (but it probably won't be commercially viable, but it could become really interesting), along

with the skills and the experience that I'm currently trying to get and having virtually no demand at all, as well as it feeling forced since it doesn't really feel that natural to me along with having to actually muster up the effort to do it at a commercial level, or to go down the boring old commercial path where it's been tried and tested time and time again, but it being something where my actual skills and experience lie, as well as there being a demand for them and it being something that comes naturally to me.

With my two business ideas, and my one dilemma, I managed to write half a pitch. It isn't brilliant, but then again, it's my first draft, and you have to start somewhere. I actually wrote pitches for both of my business ideas, but the one for the experimental web design idea felt a bit too pretentious, so I got rid of that one, and focused on writing the pitch for my illustration business instead. I say it's half a pitch because I tell the audience what I offer, and which contexts my work will exist in, but I don't tell them who I am, what the business is about (or even what it's called, but I've got a working title (*Creative Block Studios* is what I'm thinking of calling it) so far, so at least it's something), and give them a call to action to find out more about the business but not in a forceful salesy way because that would just put them off.

So, there you have it. Two business ideas, one dilemma, and half a pitch. It's a start, and it feels like I've been in research land forever, but I guess it's all a part of the process of creating a business, and if you don't do your research, the business probably won't last that long, so I think researching it (and seeing if people actually want your products and services, as well as those things to not look outdated unless you're specifically launching the business for nostalgic reasons, such as retro gaming and computing (which, ironically, are some of my interests), in which you can just about get away with it) is very important if you want it to thrive, as well as having customers come to you. It's all one big thing for me at the moment, but I think I'm slowly getting the hang of it, and seeing what works and what doesn't.

It feels like I've been going round in circles for the past 6 weeks, but then again, starting a business isn't a linear thing, and it will take time, like growing a plant or doing up your house. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it in the end (I'd hope so). I guess in order to solve my dilemma of having two business ideas, I could combine the two together and see what happens since they're both very contrasting, but also two very similar things at the same time. Maybe have the illustration business have an experimental but functional web design for the site itself (make it so that the users can not only interact with it, but so that they can easily navigate it and buy things from it), so at least my original idea hasn't completely gone out of the window, and so that I can make use of it. Only time will tell...