

Creativity into profitability in 2014

By Heather Allen,

My, has the year passed by quickly! For many, the season is ripe with activity and the immediate future is occupied with preparing for feasts and sharing with loved ones. Extended hours of darkness give ample time for taking stock of months gone by, crossing-off final to-do's and gearing up for the year ahead. It's a preparatory time as this year transitions into the next. A transition many gladly welcome.

In our working lives this year, people have experienced change in good ways and in bad. But despite the uncertainties that accompanied 2013—undetermined health care options, diminished budgets and challenged policies—a New Year always brings renewed enthusiasm and zeal. This New Year, however, could be strikingly different from those gone by—it could in fact be the best year yet. It could be the year that uncertainty takes a back seat to possibility.

The year 2014 will be one in which more people find themselves able to break from stuck systems by embracing opportunities to turn their passions into profits and let their creativity work for them. What I'm talking about specifically is the vast opportunity many Americans have yet to explore online as it relates to their livelihood and financial stability. Opportunities to make use of the Internet for expanded income are increasingly more accessible. And in 2014, people are

expected to include earnings from simple service technologies and the Internet into their household income more than ever before.

As technology advances, old systems are toppling down from the top while new systems are being formed from the ground up. People are creating their own paths for happiness, financial independence and abundance from what they can do, make, share and teach. The Internet has provided opportunities in e-commerce sales, e-learning and expanded business marketing platforms for nearly a decade. However, only within the past year or two have online opportunities for solopreneurs and micro businesses become infinitely more accessible than ever before.

The focus on mobile technologies and apps such as Square for payment processing and both Instagram and Twitter for immediate marketing, has made having a location-independent business easier to achieve. People can run their businesses through their phones, which means business can happen anywhere.

Artists and craftspeople are especially well-positioned to take advantage of these freeing opportunities thanks to the fine-tuned platforms available for showing and selling one's craft. Success doesn't happen overnight, but dedication to exploring and making use of online opportunities and mobile technologies gets creative people closer to career success.

Take, for example, the connectivity found in a simple blog. Events that were once confined

to a single weekend—like a craft show—can be shared with buyers, other artists and fans long after the event is over. Storytelling and sharing milestones via the Internet and social media expand opportunities to engage while fostering relationships with those who care. The sharing of career-related information signifies a professional artist, and can be the tipping point for fans to go from liking artwork to buying artwork.

Speaking of buying opportunities, in no other time have opportunities to sell creative work been as prevalent as they are today. The Internet opens new channels for sales that are further reinforced by sales in physical locations. Multiple avenues for creative work to be seen and sold online and in stores mean more people get to enjoy the fruit of creative laborers.

At this very moment, it is more possible than ever to buffer against uncertainty by

creating predictability around what you do, make, share and teach. Which is why I encourage you to declare 2014 as the year to turn your creativity into profitability.

Those who pioneered online marketing and sales opened doors for a new kind of sharing and exchange. With a little preparation, the possibilities are endless. But a commitment to less than a handful can make the difference in one's creative career. Now more than ever, limitless possibilities are what keep uncertainties at bay, or with hope, altogether unnoticed.

Heather Allen is the author of Let Your Creativity Work for You. She is an entrepreneur and small business consultant for visual artists and craftspeople. Her business mission is to empower artists with marketing and business savvy to turn their creativity into profitability. Find more on her website, www.HeatherAllenOnline.com.

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