

**HOW TO**

→ **THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO**

**HAVE A**

→ **MAKING YOUR IDEAS HAPPEN**

**HAPPY**

→ **BEC EVANS**

**HUSTLE**

*'Genuinely fresh and jargon-free' Financial Times*

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# INTRODUCTION

## TO BE HAPPY

At school, when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I replied that I wanted to be happy.

Not a helpful response for my teacher who was desperately trying to organise my Year 10 work placement. As a result, while my friends were channelling career goals by pulling on disposable gloves at the vets or chasing copy deadlines at the local paper, I spent the week working in a carpet shop. Unable to sell carpets, fit underlay, or do anything remotely useful, I failed to gain any adult life skills that week, though I did have a laugh with the carpet fitters.

Would that make me happy? It's the sort of question that has bothered philosophers for millennia. Take nineteenth-century thinker John Stuart Mill, who wrote that happy people are those:

‘who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way.’<sup>1</sup>

What Mill means is that the fulfilling kind of happiness – not the wave-your-arms-in-the-air-like-you-just-don't-care hedonistic kind, but the stuff

that will keep you going long term – doesn't happen when you aim for it. Happiness happens when you're doing something else, ideally something with a purpose. While office banter passes the time when you're trapped in a daily drudge, the frequency of workplace giggles isn't the kind of happiness that keeps us engaged in our work. Stop wasting time and instead make some art, build something or help others.

## **HUSTLING YOUR WAY TO FULFILMENT**

Many of us want to do and be more. We want to have ideas, create something new, go beyond the confines of our job and start something of our own.

Researching this book, I asked people why they wanted to get their ideas into the world. What surprised me was that most didn't want extra cash, to gain new skills for a promotion or to leave their current job, or even to start a new business. Instead, the top reason given – by a long shot – was self-fulfilment (otherwise known as happiness).

What would I tell my teenage self, kicking her heels in a carpet shop? I'd tell her this: while being happy is a laudable aim, it will escape your clutches if you reach for it alone. True fulfilment only comes as a byproduct of doing something which stretches you. I'd tell myself to find a side hustle.

Helping you find your hustle is what this book is all about.

If you have a vague ambition or an inkling of an idea, pursue it, even if it might fail, because you'll find happiness along the way, often in ways you weren't expecting. This book is for you if:

- You dream of having ideas but don't know how to start.
- You have the beginning of concept but got stuck making it happen.
- You imagine fulfilment lies beyond the 9–5 career-track but don't know where to look.
- You have an aspiration for a side hustle or startup but lack the confidence, skills, time or money.

## HOW TO HAVE A HAPPY HUSTLE

I'm not going to sugar-coat it. Making ideas happen is tough – that's why it's a *hustle*. Hustling involves time, effort and hard work, often done as a side project alongside your other commitments.

Even if you have a corker of a concept, it's tough developing it and getting it into the world, and when it's there, it might not find a market. If you're hankering for startup success, you're best placing your bets elsewhere as the odds are stacked against you – the sad fact is 90 per cent of startups will fail.

The point of a happy hustle is not that it's hard (there are enough startup books about that) but that trying to make ideas happen will give you great pleasure and fulfilment.

There are five principles that underpin a happy hustle:

- 1. Dream big but start small.** Ambition is great – it gets us out of bed in the morning and striving for more. But without a plan, your dreams can come to nothing. You have to start. And by starting small you bypass the fear centres of the

brain, lower the stakes, and are more likely to rack up the wins that will keep you motivated, positive and moving forward.

2. **Don't fall in love with your idea.** Founder bias can blind you to feedback and keep you forging ahead with a failed plan when the evidence tells you to quit. Instead, fall in love with the problem your idea solves. Fall in love with the people who have the problem and the customers who use your solution – they will guide you to a better idea.
3. **Ship before you're ready.** Forget perfectionism – you don't have the time or money to keep tinkering. Make something and get it out to people quickly and often. Think of each version as an experiment to gather data to inform what you're doing next. By having tight feedback loops you learn fast and improve your idea as it takes shape in the world.
4. **Connect with others.** Working in isolation is the worst thing you can do for your idea's survival. So, find friends and peers who can support you, early users who can test and feed back, communities of people who are interested in what you do, and networks of people on a similar journey. Relationships will help you and your idea thrive.
5. **Focus on the process not the outcome.** Most ideas will fail, so don't aim for a narrow end point of success. As you build and test your idea, learn from the experience, notice what you enjoy, reflect on what works and what you'd like to do more of, seek out engagement, and be motivated by what excites, challenges

and stimulates you. And when things go wrong, you'll have the resilience to keep going.

These approaches will help you overcome the barriers many of us face when starting something. They will help you start, build momentum and keep going. You just need to start.

## **SO, WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?**

You might be thinking: it's all well and good taking small steps and learning along the way, but how the hell am I going to find the time?

You're right, your life is full of important and urgent things to do. 'Busy' doesn't even describe the demands on your time and attention. To fit a side project into your schedule you must make the time. That isn't easy. It involves saying 'no' to nice offers, setting boundaries, and reprioritising what's in your schedule so there's space to make things happen.

Let's dive in with a quick exercise. Think: how do you currently spend your time? Look back on the past week and consider what's getting your attention or, even better, log your day-to-day activity as you do it to build up an accurate picture. Then, imagine you could re-live that week bearing in mind your current commitments. How would you reorganise your schedule? What different choices would you make with your time? Were there opportunities you missed to work on your idea? Hindsight is indeed a wonderful thing.

With that knowledge in mind, let's look ahead. Plan when you can make time. Grab your calendar or draw a weekly schedule like the one below:

- Fill in days across the top and your normal waking hours down the side.
- Block out all the times you are already committed to things like work, childcare, exercise.
- What's left? Are there any opportunities? If yes, book in some idea time.
- Not found any time? Reschedule other tasks to free up time. What can you stop doing or delegate? Can you get up earlier, go to work later? This is tough, but you can do it.
- Commit to your schedule. Book time for your idea like any other appointment and don't get distracted.

Ⓢ	Sun	Mon	Tues
6:00	↑ 2 <sup>nd</sup>		
7:00	sleep	breakfast	breakfast
8:00	↓	commute	commute
9:00	(FAMILY TIME)	WORK	WORK
10:00		↓	↓
11:00	boxercise		
12:00	lunch	lunch	lunch
13:00	↓	WORK	WORK
14:00	↑ Kids do		
15:00	↓ homework		
16:00	TV +		
17:00	CHILL	↓	↓
18:00	Dinner	commute	commute
19:00	school bag	cook/eat	cook/eat
20:00	TV +	TV	TV
21:00	CHILL	TV	TV

*get up early*

*take longer lunch → go to cafe*

*while dinner cooks + Kids watch TV*

*Don't watch TV!!*

The internet is full of self-proclaimed productivity gurus sharing their secret to making time; often it involves getting up at the godforsaken hour of 5am.



Great for them, but it might not work for you, your family and your well-being.

No one knows how long it will take you to make your idea happen – just as your idea is unique, so is your approach to creating it. The goal is to make progress regularly, so don't worry about project planning just yet, and instead build momentum bit by bit.

I've found four distinct time patterns to how people move their passion projects and side hustles ahead.

1. The **daily doer** has a regular routine, often working in the same time and place, to nudge forward their idea.
2. The **scheduler** looks ahead a week or two and blocks time into their calendar. They take a realistic and practical approach to planning and getting things done.
3. The **spontaneous hustler** grabs any opportunity as it appears, making the most of delayed trains, cancelled meetings and sleeping children.
4. The **binger's** life is chock-full, so instead of a daily or weekly hustle, they binge every month or so on uninterrupted deep work, a progress-making day or days that are as productive as they are rare.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to making time; the important thing is just to do it. Don't feel bad when you really don't have the time, but make the most of when you do. You'll surprise yourself by what you can achieve, even when you're feeling tired and uninspired. While common sense suggests that you create best when you're at your most alert and awake, researchers have found the opposite, saying that:

‘tasks involving creativity might benefit from a non-optimal time of day.’<sup>2</sup> Perhaps those internet gurus were right about 5am after all?

Now you’ve found some time, read on to get the inside track on what to do and how other people have done it.

This book shares tried and tested techniques from my work in business innovation to turn you into an ideas machine. I’ll guide you step by step with super-practical advice to build your skills and confidence as you make things happen. The book uses my experience turning a side hustle into a startup, alongside stories of founders who have led the way, so you can learn from others’ success – and failures. It is supported by expert advice and research-backed tips on how to make the most of the process.

I’ll show you how to be happy as you work to make your idea happen, regardless of whether your idea fails or takes off.

Let’s get to it. It’s time to hustle.

## CHAPTER ONE

# Problems

It all started, much like every other day, with Jo Caley getting dressed. That fateful morning, she put her foot through the knee of her favourite pair of jeans, ripping them beyond repair. Her jeans were wrecked but she was about to discover her big idea – and it all began with her hatred of shopping.

‘I was gutted,’ she says. ‘I’d have to spend hours traipsing around the shops feeling inadequate, that nothing fits me, and I can’t afford anything that I like.’

To avoid the misery of the high street, Caley decided to buy her jeans online, but the more websites she searched the more confusing it got.

To understand why she hates shopping, take a peek inside her wardrobe. Open the doors and you’ll find clothes ranging in size from a UK 6 to 14. Perhaps she’s got an issue with her weight, perhaps she’s a yo-yo dieter? No, her weight and figure have been consistent for years. Caley’s real problem is that in one shop she’s petite but when she goes to another shop she’s pushing large. Each retailer uses a different set of measurements to clothe her same-sized body. And it’s not just interpretation of sizing standards, there are a whole bunch of alternative systems including UK, US and European sizes; small, medium and large options; waist measurement and

leg lengths; and then there are shops with their own unique numbering systems.

But, in the midst of her jeans shopping nightmare, her despair turned into curiosity. ‘I realised my problem, and then I thought, this is quite interesting. This must be really annoying for everybody, not just me.’

Caley was right. She realised she was part of a much wider trend. Nearly 60 per cent of British women struggle to find the right size clothes.<sup>3</sup> Caley had encountered ‘vanity sizing’, a problem that millions of women face.

‘Poor bloody women,’ she tells me. ‘Who has time to find a pair of jeans that not only fits them, but fits their budget, that they like the look of, and does everything else that they want a pair of jeans to do?’

She was determined to help. But before we hear about her solution, let’s spend a bit more time with her as she stands half dressed, holding her torn jeans, feeling annoyed and upset.

## **WHY PROBLEMS?**

Caley was in the right place to have an idea.

Before you fling off your clothes and wait for inspiration in your underpants, let’s find out what that means.

Y Combinator is the largest and most successful startup accelerator in the world. It has helped thousands of people turn their ideas into fast-growing technology businesses worth millions, and its investment portfolio includes big names like

Airbnb, Reddit, Dropbox and Stripe. Its co-founder Paul Graham has simple advice for generating ideas:

‘The way to get startup ideas is not to try to think of startup ideas. It’s to look for problems, preferably problems you have yourself.’<sup>4</sup>

Caley had a problem. She found out other people shared it, and she got super interested in solving it. She did all of that before spending any time generating ideas or finding solutions.

The best way to have an idea is to start with a problem. The best way to find problems is to get curious.

Throughout this book, you will meet people with inspiring side hustles, founders who turned dilemmas into successful startups, professionals who problem-solve for clients every day, and idea-makers who help people to design and create solutions. Together, we’ll crush the myth of the lone inventor – because no one plucks fully formed ideas from some mysterious place in the sky. Instead, you’ll get a team of advisers with expertise and advice to turn you into an ideas machine.

## **BE CURIOUS**

Have a problem? Don’t fret. Be curious instead.

Curiosity will help you hunt down problems and keep you interested as you explore them and decide which one to focus on. Once you’ve found a problem, you’ll generate solutions that people want, need and will pay for.

So, let's get problematic. Over the coming chapter, you'll:

- Stop waiting for inspiration.
- Become a problem seeker and find what's bugging you.
- Choose the most exciting problem.
- Finish up with a problem statement.

‘Offers clear step-by-step advice on the process for finding – and choosing – the idea that might just make you money, or might just make you happy ... Her approach is relevant to real people trying out new ideas. It is interesting even if you are not in any danger of conjuring up a unicorn ... and her style is genuinely fresh and jargon-free.’ — **The Financial Times**

‘Who says making your ideas happen has to be stressful? Tech startup founder Bec Evans takes you through the process in simple steps, emphasising the enjoyment.’ — **Red Magazine**

‘The side hustle – the thing you love but that you do when you’re not doing your day job – is becoming more and more popular. But it can sometimes be difficult to focus on your side hustle when you’re held back by lack of experience, time or money. Bec Evans offers practical tools, research and guidance to help you build it.’ — **Stylist**

‘Bec collates all of her own experiences and the secrets of other start-up founders and innovation experts to bring you the ultimate guide to making your ideas happen.’ — **Living North**

‘Bec Evans’ book opens the mind to a new way of thinking about startups and creativity. It’s not a business you are building, it’s a life you are discovering – and that is priceless.’ — **Dr Stephen King, associate professor in enterprise and innovation, University of Leeds**

‘This book puts in one place everything that people need to know about starting a business or following a passion for a side project. The presentation is crisp and accessible, the sources and suggestions are top quality and the structure is excellent, and will hopefully launch many people on the path to their own entrepreneurship.’ — **Ramona Liberoff, investor, mentor and non-executive director**

‘This is a startup book for human beings, full of useful tips and devoid of the usual macho nonsense. If you want to start something new but keep your friends, your relationships, and your sanity, then this is the book for you.’ — **Tom Cheesewright, applied futurist and author of High Frequency Change**

‘It’s impossible to read this book without being inspired and energised. Essential reading for any startup or entrepreneur, at any stage of the journey.’ — **Alison Jones, host of The Extraordinary Business Book Club podcast and author of *This Book Means Business***

‘With this book, Bec has achieved a rare thing – real insights presented in an engaging and accessible way. There are so many useful ideas in this book to support you in taking action.’ — **Nigel Lockett, professor of entrepreneurship, University of Strathclyde**

‘A great manual for how to turn your passion into a sustainable side project without capitulating to brogrammer-driven, unicorn-chasing, growth-obsessed Silicon Valley startup culture.’ — **Molly Flatt, tech and culture journalist, comment editor of *The Bookseller* and author**

‘A refreshing approach to the startup hustle, Bec offers a compelling blend of practical advice and inspiration. Start your hustle today!’ — **Stuart Clarke, festival director of Leeds Digital Festival**

‘The book I wish I’d had twenty years ago when I developed my side hustle that then developed into my first business. All the advice you need to set up a side hustle and make your ideas happen. I love it.’ — **Jane Barrett, host of *Grow Your Own Career* podcast**

‘Starting a startup is one thing, surviving your startup is a whole other thing. Bec Evans shows you how to build your startups and stay happy and sane.’ — **Richard Nash, serial entrepreneur and executive coach**

‘A thoughtful and comprehensive playbook for turning your ideas into reality.’ — **Mark Watkins, founder of Bookship**

‘The best action-oriented pep talk I’ve seen in a while ... With practical examples from people who’ve managed to turn their hustles into more than viable jobs, products or services, *How to Have a Happy Hustle* is likely to be well-thumbed by all those who come across it. Done is better than perfect – as Bec says, what are you waiting for?’ — **Anjali Ramachandran, director of Storythings and co-founder of Ada’s List**



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