

The Inner Journey to Becoming an Entrepreneur

Image



It takes time to find your own voice: Griet Bouwen

Since Griet Bouwen chose to leave a stable job to work on her own more than two years ago, she's been struck with how challenging the inner journey has been for her. More than figuring out business plans or branding, the main struggle has been finding her own voice. But this spring, she feels she's finally come into her own. In this story she shares what's worked for her, as well as what she's still dreaming about.

The Outer Journey Begins

It was in 2012 that Griet, a resident of Belgium, began a transition from working with a team and organization to self-employment.

She had been inspired to merge two passions of her life — a love for words and writing, and an enthusiasm for organizational and community development — when she stumbled across the work of Axiom News. “I was already working in organizational and neighbourhood development,” she recalls. “But seeing (Axiom News) writing about these things and, by writing, creating these developments, that is what I wanted to do,” Griet says. “That’s where my journey began.”

Griet also strongly desired to create an environment in which she could develop herself in an authentic way, which she felt would happen through working as an entrepreneur. That, in fact, was her greater aspiration at the time. It has also been her greatest challenge, she says.

The Challenge of Finding Her own Voice

Griet was intrigued to discover how little has been written about the inner journey of making the move from working with a team to self-employment.

“There is a lot of reading about making a business plan, making marketing tools, personal branding,” Griet says. “But there is much less reading about what is happening inside of you when you are making the step from being employed in an organization, with a team, with a leader who is making some decisions on which you can rely, to the step of making this goal come true for yourself. That is an inner (process), and I have found it a difficult inner process.”

It is only now, more than two years later, that she finally feels she is able to rest inwardly with the change.

It’s no coincidence that spring was in the air, she says, when she finally felt energized to begin writing content for her [new website](#) which showcases her work as a generative news producer.

When she was done, Griet felt she had created something that was deeply aligned with who she truly is and what she wants to share with the world. She felt she had found her voice.

So what worked for her?

Time, Support and Waiting to Co-create

Simply giving the transition time has helped, Griet says. It's also made a difference to have a friend on the sidelines, in her case, her friend and partner Arno Vansichen. "Arno gave me confidence and also invited me to have patience and be proud of what I was already establishing," Griet says.

She also discovered that jumping into a kind of co-creative arrangement around her new venture too early did not work for her. "I tried to establish this kind of co-ownership team," she says. "But it was too soon for myself; I couldn't give it away at that point in time and it was also too soon for the others. They were already changing my concepts before we had tested them.

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"So I decided I am just going to create something as clear and aligned as possible with what I want to bring to the world. And now I feel I have that — the tone of voice

is right, the images are right, the vision is right.”

Based on what now exists, she says, this could be the point to begin co-creating with others.

Making the Work an Adventure

Another big learning for Griet over the past year has been discovering how much energy she derives from getting out into the community and meeting her clients face to face. Much of her work can be done just as easily, if not more easily, over the phone.

But Griet has always been an avid outdoors person who loves to pull on her backpack and head out with no plans for a destination. She is now translating that passion into her work where possible.

She leaves her car at home and either hops on her bike or takes public transit. Her assignments become an adventure of discovery, both with respect to the stories and concepts she collects and the new parts of her country she is able to see.

Griet takes great pleasure in seeing firsthand the happiness on the faces of those she listens to as she gathers material for her stories. And her stories are stronger, people are telling her.

“If I would count my turnover per hour, it’s much less than if I write stories through telephone interviews, but this feels so much better. This is pure, pure fun,” she says.

Griet’s current work includes producing a generative news service for a social housing organization as well as a tourism centre department with a mission to make holidays possible for people who are disadvantaged.

Additional projects are in the works, including a news service within the organization she left to become an entrepreneur.

She has also co-ordinated some “pop-up” news teams — groups of professional newsmakers as well as members of a client organization — who come together to create generative news content around a single event, such as a conference.

Her organization — currently housed within the enterprise she and Arno launched several years ago — is called Newmakers (or [Nieuwmakers](#) in Dutch). The “s” is intentionally missing. “That is what we are doing, we are making something new, story by story,” Griet says.

Still Dreaming

Looking ahead, Griet dreams of creating more space to use her gift for connecting the stories of what people are doing right now with her sense of how they relate to what could be possible in terms of making the world a better place.

She envisions exchanging learnings with others, such as the Axiom News team in Canada, to further explore how to bring that gift to full fruition.

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“In every story there is a spark, at least a small spark, of how the world could be, where these basic values of sustainability and sharing and social connectivity (exist),” Griet says. It’s knowing how to draw out that spark in a meaningful way, so that those possibilities are clearly seen and then hopefully acted upon — that’s the challenge and opportunity.

To help make use of that gift more fully, Griet suggests one question she needs to keep answering is “How do I create the time and inner space to think and experience more deeply?”

In some ways, that is her life question. “It’s all about creating simplicity in life and work — the best level of simplicity, in which our heart and mind have the time and opportunity to talk to us,” Griet says.

The Bigger Room

Griet is one of a growing number of people who are exploring the possibilities in generative media making for themselves, organizations and communities. It’s intriguing to see that the journey, dream and even business approach is very different for each person or group of people. We’ll be telling more of those stories in the coming days and weeks.

Click here to visit Griet’s [Nieuwmakers site](#).

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