# Craftsman Creative Revenue Blueprint

If you want to turn your craft into a business, you need these two things: audience, and revenue.

Without an audience, you'll never have anyone become your customers or clients. It all starts with having an audience – Click here to learn how to build an audience with the Craftsman Creative Audience Blueprint.

Without revenue, on the other hand, you'll struggle to "stay alive" in your business. Revenue – and consequently profit – is like oxygen.

And so, in this blueprint we'll cover 10 different ways to bring revenue into your creative business.

1. Freelancing (Hourly) ($/D)
2. Freelancing (Project-based) ($$/M)
3. Gigs ($/W)
4. Products ($-$$$/W-M)
5. Services ($$-$$$/W-M)
6. Advertising ($/D)
7. Affiliates ($/W)
8. Sponsors ($$-$$$/W-M)
9. Events ($$$/M)
10. Equity ($$$/Y)

Labels refer to revenue ranking ($ to $$$) and how long it takes to generate it (D/W/M/Y).

# Freelancing on an Hourly Basis

Freelancing or contract work is any work you do for a client. It can be done on an hourly/daily/weekly or project-based rate.

This section will cover the time-for-money version of freelancing.

The great thing about freelancing is that you can turn it on immediately. Say, you're a graphic designer: you could message 20 people online through email or DMs, offer your services for an hourly rate, and likely get 1-5 clients.

At $50/hour and 40 hours of work a week, you can make $100k gross revenue for your business. Not too shabby!

The hard parts about freelancing are getting to that rate and finding enough work, plus there's the downside of having a finite number of work hours in a given day or week.

When you're starting out, you likely aren't charging $50/hour. Look at what people on Upwork or Fiverr are charging for the type of work you do, or perform a quick Google search for what is typical for your industry.

To build up to the point where you're making $50/75/100+ per hour takes time and experience. It's doable, but will likely take a year or more of doing lots of projects and getting great feedback from clients.

My recommendation is to start just above the industry average that you find on those sites, and reach out directly to enough people per day to where the numbers work in your favor.

If you only talk to five people, it's unlikely that you'll get five clients. But if you talk to 25 people, it's possible.

If you talk to 100, it's nearly guaranteed as long as your offer isn't terrible. (For example, charging $100/hour when you're just starting and have no body of work).

To "turn on" this revenue stream, create an offer for your services, then directly reach out to people who are potentially willing and able to hire you.

Use a simple framework like "I offer [service] to [ideal client] who wants [outcome].

Then message at least five people per day with that offer, like this:

"Hey [Name]! Saw that you [are in X industry / just posted about Y / are a Z], and I wanted to reach out to offer my services. I help [people like you] get [outcome] by [service you provide].

Can I send over a few examples of work I've done for other [job titles]?"

Keep the message short, make it about them getting an outcome that they care about, and make it easy to say yes to a single ask, like "can I show you what I've done for others" or "are you trying to get this outcome?"

Then take it from there, offer your service to them for $XX/hour, and give them an idea of how many hours you expect it to take.

A few yes's a week can bring in some nice extra cash.

# Freelancing on a Project Basis

Another way to price your freelancing or contract work is on a project basis. Rather than saying you work for $XX per hour, you price your services based on the scope of a project, or, better yet, based on the value you're creating for the client.

**Project-based**

What freelancers will typically do is estimate the number of hours to complete a project, multiply that by their hourly rate, and then give that number to the client.

Please don't do this.

Why? Because you need to account for things like overhead, taxes, and profit margin.

The simple calculation is to multiply the result of hours x rate by two.

So instead of $25/hour x 10 hours = $250, you charge $500.

This gives you some breathing room in your business, profit-wise, and also gives you a buffer in case the project takes longer than you estimated.

You can use the same method you used to reach out to people in the hourly example, and just quote them an outcome for a price.

"I can deliver a book cover for $500"
"I can set up a welcome email series for new subscribers for $500"
"I will create a sample beat for you for $300"
etc.

It's less about how many hours it takes you and more about the value you're creating for the client.

Which brings us to...

**Value Based Pricing**

When you learn more about your clients and potential clients, you start to see the things they need in their business. Marketing, design, music, imagery, coding, etc.

And you can see what it would a) cost them if they hired a full-time employee to do it, and b) the value it creates for the company.

Say, for example, that you're in marketing. A typical salary is $50k/year. The cost to the *company* for that employee is generally 2.5-3x their salary to account for taxes, unemployment, equipment, overhead, etc.

So that $50k/year employee actually costs the company $125-150k per year.

So if you charge the equivalent of $60-100k per year (on a per-project or hourly basis), you're *saving* the company money.

But, since you're in marketing, you ask the company the average cost of acquiring a new customer. Maybe it's $20. So if you can deliver customers to them for *less* than $20 per person, you're saving them money on their acquisition cost while simultaneously helping bring more revenue into their business.

Price your services accordingly and you'll start getting into the $2,000+ per project range. A few of those a week, or a few clients that pay you a few thousand per month, leads to a nice healthy revenue.

# Making money through gigs

Musicians, filmmakers, event organizers, photographers, and other creative professionals make a large portion of their revenue from gigs.

In some ways a gig is just another term for freelance work on a project basis.

But it's more than that because in the arts a gig is more than just a project.

There's often some public aspect to it. You're not just providing a service for a client, you're interacting with an audience, a group of attendees, or a number of people at a company.

For some gigs you will get paid based on the number of people who show up, like a concert or a corporate headshot photo shoot.

For others you can charge a project rate – think of wedding photographers, music performances for corporate parties, and speaking at a conference.

Too many artists and creators rely far too heavily on gigs for their revenue. While they can be lucrative, they can also disappear for reasons outside your control. A pandemic, an event being canceled due to weather, a fickle client who changed their mind, or other unforeseen issues.

Still, the larger your audience, your expertise, and your popularity, the more you can charge.

When I was doing live audio for corporate events and conferences, it wasn't unheard of for comedians and speakers to get $50-100k for a single presentation, or for a band to get $200-300k for a private concert.

I reccomend  to create your base revenue using more consistent sources, and have gigs be a nice extra on top of it all, rather than your main source of revenue.

To find gigs, look at the people who are doing what you want to be doing. Who is hiring them? What *kinds* of people or job titles do the hiring and the paying? Is it marketing directors, venue owners, wedding planners, or individuals?

If you're a photographer, for example, and you are tired of not being able to get out of the "pricing dead zone" of $500-2,000 for a wedding, look at who is hiring photographers for $5,000-20,000. Wedding planners!

The same goes for other industries. Instead of connecting with venue owners, connect with booking agents.

There is a big difference in the size of the pocket books between an audience member and a company with a marketing budget.

You can get 1,000 people to come to your shows for $20 a ticket, or get one event planner to pay you $20,000 to play for an hour at their company retreat.

A mix of both is likely where you'll end up, but don't ignore those with more money to spend.

# Making Money Through Products

This is a *broad* category that covers anything that you make and charge money for on a per-purchase basis.

Your album. Prints of your photos. Your bundle of pre-made designs. An online course. A book.

These products can range anywhere from $1 to $1,000s of dollars, depending on the product and the customer buying it.

An online course is generally accepted to be more expensive than an album.

Then again, some people sell courses for $12 on Udemy while Wu-Tang Clan famously sold their album for $2M to a single buyer.

There are always exceptions to every "rule".

Too many freelancers and gig-economy workers ignore the revenue stream products can provide.

There are lots of freelance writers who have never written and self-published a book. Too many artists play gigs without recording and selling their songs.

It's not a matter of one being better than the other. It's that two streams are better than one.

Your industry generally dictates the products that you can sell. But beyond a book, an album, designs, photos, etc, you can also sell merchandise or other things that you make.

For example, I'm a *huge* Ben Folds fan. I own all of his albums, but I also have a signed copy of his book, as well as a photo print that I paid hundreds of dollars for.

Which one created more revenue for the artist most of us think of as a musician?

Yes, the print. And it's not even close.

Look at other people in your industry on Kickstarter to see what other products they are offering to get inspiration for other products you can add to your business.

Digital products are especially good because they don't cost anything to produce after

you've made the initial version. You can record an album once and sell it an infinite number of times. Same with an e-book, a digital download, and more.

To add this revenue stream, pick something simple and inexpensive to create, give yourself two weeks to create it, and start selling it to your audience. Apps like ConvertKit Commerce or Gumroad can help you sell it for free (just pay a small processing fee with each sale).

# Revenue Through Services

Services are a little different from freelancing in that it's the same service for each customer, rather than a different project each time.

Services include everything from coaching and consulting to teaching and providing your voice or likeness to a project.

If you're an actor, you've got a set rate for your acting services on a daily or project basis. This is similar to a "gig", but if you're a voice actor, for example, you would generally charge the same for your services no matter the project.

(Until, that is, you reach a point where you have enough demand to where you can charge differently based on the client…)

If you're a coach, you would sell a package of hourly, weekly, or monthly coaching for a set price. Same with consulting - the same price by the hour, day, or month.

Similar to products, you can list these services on your website and people can purchase them for a fixed price, rather than having to go through the typical back-and-forth of an hourly or project-based contract with a freelancer.

Similar to freelancing, you would set the rate for your service, publicize and market it to the intended audience, and then limit the amount available so that supply always is less than demand.

*This is important! You always want to have less supply than there is demand!*

The way I've done this is to use a "limited inventory" model. Taught to me by Joe Pulizzi, it means rather than pricing your services based on what everyone else is charging, or some metric like CPM, you just say "there are this many available".

I only take on one coaching client at a time.

I only have one ad slot available in my weekly newsletter. (This is advertising revenue, which I'll cover next, but still uses the same "limited inventory" model)

Whatever your service, don't say that there are unlimited amounts. That's giving your ideal client an opportunity to negotiate you down in price.

Think of what services your customers might need from you, and experiment by reaching out to some of your best clients and offering them your new service.

Tell them "you only have X slots available" so that they know there isn't much supply, and see how they respond.

# Advertising Revenue

Advertising is where people or companies pay you to put their brand in front of your audience.

They could pay to advertise in your newsletter, on your podcast, or on your YouTube channel.

Advertising differs from sponsors in that in advertising you generally want to see a return on investment, measured in a specific way. Clicks, views, etc are ways that advertisers measure the success of their ad campaigns.

For example, if I want to advertise on a newsletter and the price is $250, I'd want to see 200+ people clicking on a link to my site and at least 80 people sign up. Anything less than that and the price per new subscriber is too high.

Ideally, you want to find brands and people who are more interested in brand awareness, or who have a higher priced offer (buy my course! subscribe to my paid community!) where they are willing to spend tens or even hundreds of dollars to acquire a new lead or customer, especially when you're starting out.

This revenue stream requires that you have an audience somewhere - email or a social media or content platform like YouTube, a Podcast, etc.

Then you charge to talk about and promote a company or offer to your audience.

If you have a niche audience, this becomes easier. There are typically *dozens* of companies that would happily spend part of their ad budget this year to be in front of your audience and have you promote them, rather than giving it to Facebook and Google.

# Affiliate Revenue

Related to advertising revenue is affiliate revenue. This is where companies pay you a percentage of each sale *when the sale occurs*, where advertising is generally *before* the sale occurs.

Say you recommend another creator's online course that sells for $150. They offer a 35% affiliate fee for every course you sell on their behalf.

Each time someone buys from your link, you get $50. Simple!

Many creators with large audiences (email, YouTube, podcasts, etc) will use affiliate links every time they talk about a product they use. You can get a percentage from recommending books or products on Amazon, or a subscription fee for apps that charge a monthly fee, or for recommending products to your audience.

It relies much more on your ability to sell and promote the product, but it can be very lucrative, especially if you have a large audience that trusts you.

# Sponsor Revenue

Some of the most lucrative revenue opportunities exist in this category. I know creators who have had six-figure revenues from event sponsors, five-figure revenues from podcast sponsors, and more.

I only just discovered the power of this revenue stream, We sold three sponsors for a brand new podcast before we started producing it, and I got a $12k check in the mail before ever hitting the record button.

Whoa.

Look at the industry you're in and the audience you have built over your career. What companies exist in the same industry that are trying to reach the people you talk to on a regular basis?

List out 10/20/100 companies (the more the better), and then do some research. Who is already spending money sponsoring other creators and businesses? Who would benefit from being able to get in front of your audience? Who has outcomes that you can help them achieve through a sponsorship relationship?

Opportunities exist in every type of project and event. Jake Parker is the creator of Inktober, a global event each year where artists are given 31 different prompts, one per day, to draw and post online.

The site is full of sponsors and partners who want to get their products in front of those that participate in Inktober.

Podcasts, YouTube channels, Twitch streams, newsletters, and Instagram feeds are all opportunities for sponsorship revenue. You'll need to do a little outreach early on, but at some point in your journey you'll start getting brands and individuals reaching out to you with opportunities.

Grease the runway early on by having a page on your site where sponsors can learn about the opportunities that exist, and be sure to employ the same "limited inventory" model to keep the right balance of supply and demand. (More demand, less supply ;)

# Event Revenue

Event revenue is an exciting opportunity. Joe Pulizzi shared with me how, from a list of 20,000 people, he registered 600 to his first event for Content Marketing Institute, and along with the sponsor revenue generated $900k, $300k of which went to the bottom line.

Sam Parr with The Hustle shared a similar experience, how he was able to generate six-figures from his first event purely from email marketing.

With events, you have multiple revenue opportunities. You have the registration fees from those that will attend, and then you've got sponsorship revenue from partners that want to get their business in front of your audience.

I'm experimenting with this in 2023, and hope you'll come join us for the [10k Creator Challenge](#) starting in January, 2023.

# Equity

Likely the longest-term revenue stream, it also has one of the highest revenue potential of any option listed.

Owning a piece of a creative work - art, film, music, etc - or a business that can be sold or acquired can be extremely lucrative.

Imagine Dragons reportedly sold their music library in 2020 for over $100 Million. Depending on how the band split the royalties - assume 25% across the four band members - each would have walked away with $25M. (I'd also assume that their label had some ownership, as did any songwriters and producers outside of the band...)

MicroAquire is a site set up for indie creators to sell their companies. Generally these deals are much smaller than you'd see in the venture capital world of Silicon Valley, but many creators have had six- and seven-figure sales of their companies that they owned 100% of.

Imagine building up a website over a few years to a few thousand visitors a week and an email list of 10,000 people, and selling it to another company or creator for $250,000!

That's a lot of money to bring into your life in a single transaction. How many sponsors or products would you have to sell to make the same amount?

This isn't something that generally happens in a few months, but rather the 2-5+ year range. But when you start a new project or business, you can be thinking about an exit from the get-go in how you set up the business entity, how you build the company to work independently of you, and even how you name it.

What's easier to sell, darentsmith.com or craftsmancreative.co?

You can sell a product business, a service business, an event business, or even your library or catalog as an artist.

You'll likely want to retain ownership of your name and your core business for your working life, but even people like George Lucas and James Earl Jones have sold off their entire company or *the rights to their voice*.

# What do do now...

The lesson here, to wrap up, is that you can sell anything, as long as there is a buyer.

By creating *multiple* revenue streams for your business, it becomes not only more profitable, but more *resilient* as the world changes and the economy and your industry evolve.

My final recommendation is to start with one revenue stream and get it to a place where it's sustaining you on its own. Then start adding more and more as you see fit.

I made the mistake of creating *seven* different revenue streams, but only generating $1-5,000 per month combined.

It would have served me and my business much better had I focused on one stream until it was consistently bringing in $10,000/month or more, then adding another stream and getting it to $5-10k, then another, and another.

I may not have ever created seven streams, because three or four bringing in $10k/mo each would have been more than enough.

But here I am, with more supply than there is demand. Learn from me and start with a small-ticket item like a book, ebook, email course, or digital product that you can sell for $5-50. That product will help cover your customer acquisition cost if and when you start paying for leads through ads and sponsorships. Then, at the end of that product, add a call to action to buy your core offer, generally a product or service that doesn't cost much to produce but you can charge $150 to $500 for.

**Get that system generating one sale of your core offer per day before adding any other revenue streams.**

It's a simple numbers game. If you can sell 1% of your email list on the core offer, you need 100 people per day subscribing, getting a lead magnet, buying the low-price offer, and then purchasing your core offer.

**You now have two action items:**

1. From the options presented in this blueprint, create your product basket: a lead magnet, a low price product or service, and a core offer.
2. Use the [Audience Growth Blueprint](#) to create a system that predictably brings 100 or more people to your email list every week, and then every day.

I hope you enjoyed this blueprint. When you're ready, I've got two invitations for you, depending on how quickly you want results in your business:

**Now:** [Schedule a strategy call with me](#) to discover where you are, where you want to be, how to get there, and the constraints that are holding you back.

**Soon:** [Join the Society of Independent Creators](#), and get access to our annual 10k Creator Challenge, all of the courses I have and will produce, and grow your business along with other creative entrepreneurs who are supporting, teaching, growing, and investing together.

Questions? You can reach out to me any time at daren@craftsmancreative.co

Here's to being companions on the path…

**Daren**