

Part Time Student

Focus



PSC student Maya Dewi (right) with Aviva Minc (left)

Names: Maya Dewi + Aviva Minc

Co-Founders and Creative Partners of Agent Morphe Design

Q: When and how did your passion for photography and design begin?

Maya Dewi: Many years ago when I was working as an Event Manager in a Travel & Lifestyle Magazine back in Jakarta, Indonesia. I couldn't seem to stop looking at the beautiful photographs every time we had a new edition coming out.

Aviva Minc: It was never really a sudden realisation or a light bulb moment for me. I never knew what I wanted to do career wise until I went back to school to learn multimedia. Now as a designer, I love doing my web design interfaces, logo designs and artwork that entail detail.

Q: Tell us about your experiences with establishing your business

Hardest to set up: when you have to balance working part time, setting up a business and studying part time at the same time. It's like this: working part time + setting up a business + studying part time + limited resources = no life. It was also extremely overwhelming - not knowing where to start with the extremely LONG to do list that is involved in starting up a business.

It was challenging to come up with a brand, including our business name, our logo, our look and feel and the business goals. For us it was personal, so we changed and mulled over it many times until we were completely happy. And we do not regret any of that time, because now we love it!

Changing careers - we both completely did a 360-degree turn on our careers and went back to school in order to start the business. THIS was challenging but so exciting too.

The easiest part was getting up in the morning - as you are getting up to do something you love doing.

Q: How do you go about marketing and networking?

We believe that you can market yourself with what you have. We know for a fact and have seen that 85% plus of small business income comes from networking and word of mouth. With this in mind, we spend approximately 50-60% of our time marketing ourselves face-to-face and via phone or online

We go door to door dropping off business cards, local networking and Small Business Victoria networking events. We also spend a large amount of time engaging our target market by sharing what we do or projects we work on through our blog and social media such as Facebook, Twitter & Vimeo. We join online groups on these platforms and people start sharing our work - then things spread.

It's funny how you get into the habit of telling "everyone" about your business when you are just speaking to anyone. We go for coffees and ask people if they have a website and have received a lot of work this way. We carry our business cards and brochures with us ALL the time - you'll never know when you will need them or who you will meet!

Q: How different is your photography & conceptual skill now compared when you first started studying?

Loads!! Put it this way... previously I always managed to get my subject matter smack bang in the middle of a photograph! And now I've learnt to design a concept behind every photograph. With every shoot I work on, I am learning something new.

Q: What has been your greatest challenge/achievement?

The greatest challenge is having to rely on the business as our only source of income, and its irregular nature. To do a lot of things with the little resources we have. To switch off from the 365 days of talking and thinking business. And trusting ourselves that we can do this, and that everything will be okay. The greatest achievement is to dare to take the plunge when most people were still talking it. We went back to study and started the business with what we learnt.

Q: Describe your first impression of PSC

I missed the Open Day but managed to get an appointment to see the very qualified and friendly staff at PSC. Carmen's knowledge of the industry, ability to answer my questions and her relaxed and professional mannerism contributed to my decision to study at PSC.

Q: What do you like most about PSC?

Maya: On a personal level, I like the like-minded mature-age students; the helpful and friendly staff; the qualified and experienced lecturers; as well as the relaxed atmosphere. On a professional level, PSC is recognised in its reputation for producing 'high quality photographers and, of course, its prime city location.



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Q: What would you say has been your best learning experience?

One of our very first lessons was that we had to learn to say NO to people. Often because we wanted to do favours for friends and help other businesses grow, we forgot that this is a business, not a hobby. We had to value the work we were doing and charge accordingly, as opposed to doing work for nothing.

The second best learning experience is experience itself. It is through the time that has passed and the people we meet, that we have learnt to really value ourselves, the work we produce and the energy that we put into it.

The third one was the realisation that we are able to take the business as far as we wanted it to go. We were able to take things into our own two hands. We decided what we really wanted to do, who are our target market was, how we wanted to do our business and who we wanted to do business with. These are attributes that are not possible when you are working for someone else.

The fourth one is that the amount of energy you directly put into the business is the exact or greater amount of energy you get back. Even though you may not see your rewards from the hard work you put in immediately, everything you put in will come back to you in the future.

Q: Based on your experience to date, what tips can you give for a successful business?

1. Find something that you love doing. Because for every single obstacle that you encounter along the way, you will see it as a challenge to overcome and excel at. It will be the difference between throwing the towel in and hanging on.
2. Don't feel discouraged if you are starting out small. All the big businesses out there had to start from somewhere!
3. Team Up! Having a home-based small business can be lonely at times. Network, find projects to do, build your portfolio. See the sun!
4. Get organised! Branding is VERY IMPORTANT. Business name, logo, business card, website - all is a part of YOUR IDENTITY and therefore how you introduce yourself to the world and how the world sees you.

5. Don't be scared to ask for help! There are a lot of resources out there for small business start-ups through the government and in your local community.
6. Never de-value yourself and the work you do. Sometimes when starting a business you need to barter and volunteer for projects. But there is a fine line in getting your name out there. You always want to appear valuable, so never under sell yourself.
7. Never see competition as a threat. Fear is disabling and comes from a place of feeling you are not as good as your competitors. Instead, looking at it as an opportunity to collaborate, because everyone is different, everyone has strength and focusing on that puts you above everything else.
8. Be humble. Never forget the little people because they are the ones that contributed to who and where you are today.

Q: What's your dream job?

We are currently living our dream job right now.

Q: What advice would you give to future photographers & designers?

Be open-minded but stick to your guns. Life is too short to do something that you don't enjoy. Don't worry about what other people are doing, or what their opinion is of your work. Design and photography is something that comes from a personal place, so there is never right or wrong. You just have to find the right target market that suits you and your style. Always believe in yourself. Just be you and the rest will fall into place!!

