

CulturePEI hosted a Cultural Forum at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown on September 24th. A panel of Island entrepreneurs shared experiences and strategies on managing a career in arts & culture. BJ Sandiford of Happy Glass studio was one of the panelists, along with performer Patrick Ledwell and writer/publisher Jordan McIntyre. They were all very forthcoming and generous with their perspectives. Here is part of BJ's presentation:

The Happy Glass Recipe for Managing a Cultural Career

Be **original** - no one else can make it like you do, so optimize your niche

Be **focused** - do one thing, and do it really well

- my core thing is "happy" and "glass", so everything I do reflects that

Be **adaptable** to change, i.e. direction, product, methods

Be **brave** – a cultural career is not for the faint of heart, so have another source of income for the first few years

Be **patient** – this is a slow process

Enjoy your customers – that's the joy of it

Be **kind** and **honest** – your reputation is E V E R Y T H I N G

Be **consistent** with your branding. Your enterprise should look like a mirror room.

Understand and pay attention to bookkeeping from the beginning– it's not your sales, but your sales minus your expenses that tell the real story. Monitor it, and consult it.

Be **proud** - charge what you're worth, price appropriately

Be **frugal** - only buy what you need to make what you can sell

Pay yourself so you will not give yourself a false sense that you are making money, when you are not

Be **generous** with your time, knowledge and skills – that's the reward – there's a medium of value that is shared, that isn't valued in money

Lessons Learned

Work /Life Balance: Yesterday, I was a prime example of "out of balance." I am completely worn out after a crazy summer. When I'm tired I worry, I'm negative and over-emotional. By 2 o'clock, I put a notice on the door and cried all the way to the beach.

Fail quickly. If it isn't working, stop doing it and refocus your effort. I kept hoping it would get better. I should have adapted more quickly.

I am part of the Olde Charlottetown Artisan Studio Group. It is a symbiotic relationship with a group of like-minded artisans.

Be physically fit and eat well. Having no energy results in a negative outcome.

Get square with the idea that you are running a business based solely on what you can produce with your own time, energy, skill and talent and that's all. The only way you can make more money is to get people to pay more for your products, so you have to do the math.

It drives me absolutely nuts when I see people undercharging. It's a recipe for failure, and it poisons the marketplace.

I'm still making these mistakes. I'm still not making what I'm worth, so I still haven't solved this puzzle.