



Founded in 2022, MNB Scotland CIC (aka MNB) is a free-spirited, non-profit craft markets and makers community based in the heart of Edinburgh.

Small Business Starter Guide



**A friendly
guide for
makers, artists
& independent
business
owners**



Before You sell

ask yourself:

01

What do I love making?

02

Would I still enjoy making it repeatedly?

03

Does it solve a problem or make people smile?

04

Can I realistically make enough to sell?

Starting a small business can feel exciting... and terrifying.

Whether you're selling your art, crochet, jewellery, candles, prints, pottery, baked goods, or turning a hobby into something more, remember: Every successful business started with someone deciding to give it a go.

This guide covers the basics to help you start with confidence.

Remember:

You don't need hundreds of products. It's much better to have 10 amazing products than 100 rushed ones.



There are a few important steps that can help you prepare, build confidence, and give your new venture the best possible start.

Don't worry if it all seems like a lot to take in, every successful small business started exactly where you are now. Take things one step at a time, keep learning, and remember that progress matters more than perfection.

We've shared practical tips, ideas, and resources to help you along the way. They're not strict rules, and every business will have its own path, but we hope this gives you a friendly starting point and a little extra confidence as you begin your journey.



Build Your Brand

**People buy from people.
Think about:**

- 01** Your business name.
- 02** Your logo.
- 03** Colours.
- 04** Packaging.
- 05** Tone of voice.

Most importantly...

Be yourself.

**Authenticity always beats trying
to copy someone else.**

**And don't worry, no one
is expecting you to nail
everything down on day
one. Many brands find
their fit years and years
after trying. There is no
deadline!**

You don't need an expensive camera or experience in photography.

Natural daylight is usually enough, yes sometimes it's hard with our weather but hey you can try!

There are many free online apps and platforms available to edit your photos, they also offer mock-ups!

If you are using tools for product photos and editing always avoid using AI tools, there are many free options that will be more conscious! Can't do it yourself? Reach out to small businesses who are skilled for this specific activity. Creative community will always help you out.



Good Photos Matter

- 01 Keep backgrounds clean.
- 02 Show different angles.
- 03 Include close-ups.
- 04 Show the product in use.

More than one image per product always helps customers to see that you are a legitimate and reliable small business.



Remember, you're not a global brand with a huge marketing budget or an in-house creative team, and that's perfectly okay. Your customers aren't expecting magazine-quality photography. They simply want clear, honest images that show your products from different angles so they can feel confident about what they're buying.



One of the biggest mistakes new businesses make is charging too little.

Yes, you heard it right **TOO LITTLE!**

What you are selling isn't a pre-made item! Every piece you make has raw material costs, your effort, your time, value of the handmade (which is never an exact cost because you are creating!).

So make sure to charge what you think is the value. Some small businesses adapt their prices after a few sales or events, because customer feedback and sales performance is good to have on-board.



Pricing Your Work

- 01 Materials & packaging.
- 02 Equipment & tools.
- 03 Market fees.
- 04 Website fees, transaction costs.
- 05 Your time and profit.

Your time has value.

Never apologise for charging fairly.

People might say, "That's too expensive."

Don't let that make you doubt the value of your work. You may hear comparisons to Amazon, Temu or AliExpress, but those are mass-produced products. What you're selling is your creativity, your skill, your time, and something made with care. Handmade will never compete on price with factory-made goods, and it shouldn't have to.

Your customers are the people who appreciate the value of handmade and are happy to support independent makers.

UK Legal Essentials

Depending on your business, you may need to:

- 01** Register as self-employed if required.
- 02** Keep records of your income and expenses.
- 03** Get PLI to sell at events (single day ones are also available).
- 04** Follow product safety requirements where applicable.
- 05** Display prices clearly.

If you're unsure, ask your local authority or seek professional advice.

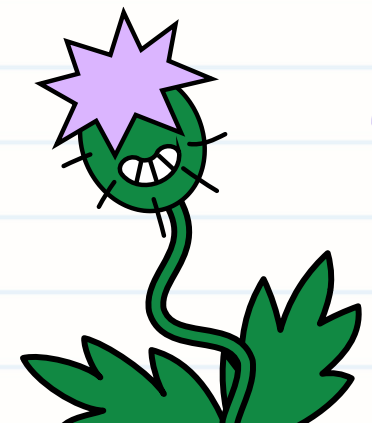
Yes, this is the boring bit, we know!

But the legal side of running a business isn't optional, and being prepared now can save you a lot of stress later.

From public liability insurance and taxes to product certifications and legal requirements, it's important to understand your responsibilities.

We've shared a few essential tips to help you get started, but if you're ever unsure, don't be afraid to seek professional advice.

Understand your responsibilities if selling food, cosmetics, toys, candles, electrical goods or children's products.



Social Media Tips

Don't just post product pictures.
People love seeing:

- 01 Behind the scenes.
- 02 Your workspace, even if it's chaotic.
- 03 Packing orders.
- 04 New ideas.
- 05 And your story.

People connect with the maker just as much as the products.

Our love-hate relationship with social media is undeniable, but there's no escaping the fact that it plays an important role in running a small business.

We're not saying you need to spend hours online every day, but we wouldn't recommend ignoring it either. A consistent presence, even if it's just a few posts a week, can make a big difference.

There are plenty of platforms to choose from. You can save time by scheduling posts in advance, and some, like Facebook and Instagram, let you post to both at once. Others, such as TikTok, take a bit more time and creativity to grow, while platforms like Bluesky can be a fun way to connect with your community. The key is to choose the ones that work best for you, you don't need to be everywhere.



Have more than one link to share? Website, online shop, patreon, ko-fi...

You can use platforms like Carrd to create a custom link landing page where people can find all your details.





This is a section that's especially close to our hearts, we've been there too!

Markets are one of the best ways to meet customers, grow your confidence, and build your business. They can also introduce you to fellow makers, potential collaborators, stockists, and loyal returning customers.

Before you book your events, though, there are a few important things to check. Trust us, they're well worth it!

Don't shy away from asking, you are putting a lot of time and effort on these events! ASK ASK ASK!



Trading at Markets

Before applying:

- 01** Read the organiser's rules.
- 02** Look at previous events.
- 03** Ask about their marketing activities.
- 04** Check the venue.
- 05** Understand cancellation policies.

Still not sure? Reach out to other artists and makers and ask for their honest feedback. The community is full of supportive people who are happy to share their experiences and help each other grow.



Always bring:

- Card reader
- Cash float
- Power bank
- Tablecloth
- Visible price labels
- Business cards
- Water & snacks



Finding Good Craft Markets

A few well-known places to discover markets include:

- 01 Pedddle.
- 02 Local event listings or FB groups.
- 03 Community arts centres.
- 04 Independent venue social media pages.

Professional organisers are transparent, communicate clearly and genuinely care about both traders and visitors.

We know booking an event with an organiser for the first time is stressful. Maybe you have heard mixed feedback about them or simply unsure.

Remember that there are some red flags worth checking!

Think carefully before booking if an organiser:

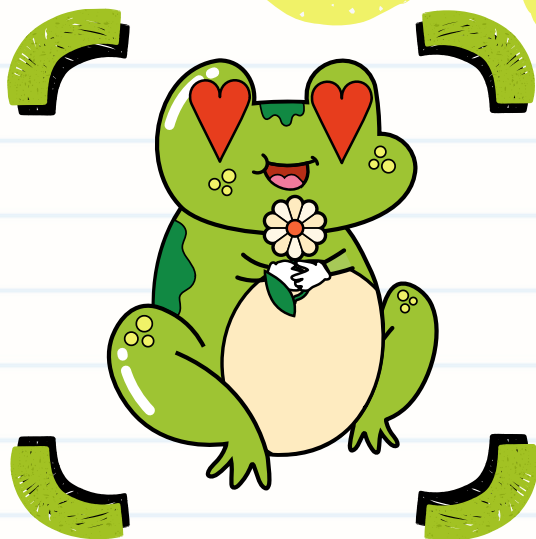
- Promises unrealistic visitor numbers.
- Never shows photos from previous events.
- Has poor communication.
- Doesn't explain stall fees.
- Allows obvious resellers or dropshippers at "handmade" events.
- Doesn't provide terms and conditions



Before booking any market:

- Check previous events.
- Look at real visitor photos.
- Read reviews.
- Make sure organisers clearly explain fees and what's included.
- Not convinced? Visit as a spectator.

Don't be afraid to ask the organiser if the venue is accessible. It is your right to know it!



- Nobody starts as an expert.
- Your first market won't be perfect.
- Your first logo won't be perfect.
- Your first product probably won't be perfect.

That's completely normal! Every successful small business you admire started exactly where you are now.

- Keep making.
- Keep learning.
- Keep showing up.

You never know where your little idea might take you.

Support Other Businesses

The handmade community grows stronger together.

- Celebrate other makers.
- Recommend businesses you love.
- Collaborate.
- Cheer people on.
- There's room for everyone.

Remember...

Every venue, event and town has its own vibe, and not every market will be the right fit for your business, and that's okay.

There are people out there who will love what you create. Keep trying new events, stay curious, chat to other makers, and keep your ear to the ground for new opportunities. Over time, you'll discover where your products shine and, most importantly, your people will find you.

Don'ts

01 Compare yourself to everyone else.

02 Copy another artist's work.

03 Undervalue yourself.

04 Forget your health.

05 Expect overnight success.

Every business grows at its own pace.