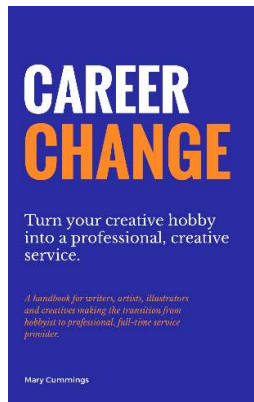


Career Change – turn your creative hobby into a professional, creative service

Mary Cummings



Paris, France, 2009

Rachida Dati, an attractive French Justice Minister, sparked a media furore by returning to work a mere 5 days after giving birth - by Caesarean section at that.

Beautifully made-up with a dazzling smile and worse, chic and svelte like a catwalk model, she strutted around unashamedly courting the paparazzi, incurring the wrath of high-profile mothers who were clearly not amused.

“How dare she look so good after just giving birth?”

“How dare she put her career ahead of her child?”

London, UK, 2009

Meanwhile, far from the paparazzi on a quiet leafy lane across the other side of the English Channel, a rather chubby, frazzled wreck had recently given birth too. Only this little momma had her newborn safely nestled in the crook of her left arm, while her right hand furiously tapped away at her computer keyboard to meet an impending writing deadline.

I had recently left a high-flying marketing career in an investment bank to start a new career as a freelance journalist, and in common with many new freelancers, naively expected my freelance freedom to be something of a doddle.

The rude awakening that followed – those testy years of juggling freelancing with kids in tow – was my baptism of fire, and I learned the most valuable lessons I have learned ever since.

- I learned to pare back and focus. You'll be surprised how much you can achieve in just two or three hours when you know it's all you have.
- I couldn't allow myself the luxury of fretting about how hard freelancing was, because I simply had to get on with it. This had to pay the bills. I learned to kick myself up the butt, step outside of my comfort zone, and seek new opportunities, even if they were a little out

of my grasp.

- Waiting around for inspiration is a luxury only unpaid artists can afford. "To stay ahead, you must have your next idea waiting in the wings." Rosabeth Moss Kanter.
- I learned to stop trying to attract clients and instead, create clients by having conversations. You can only do that by creating opportunities.
- And finally, possibly the most important lesson of all, I learned to specialise by ditching the generalist 'jack of all trades' in favour of a finely honed niche.