



## Transitioning from Side Hustle FullTime Independent

Obviously this transition is going to need to be highly customized and individual according to **your** situation but in this article I am going to try and help you out by laying out my experience and giving some advice from lessons I learned! Let's get started!

## My story/experience:



I'm my early 20s I landed in the game industry as a vfx artist. I thought it was my dream job and I had made it. And then I started getting into digital art and illustration... and suddenly I had a new dream that fulfilled me way more than my studio job. Then began my journey of growing the side hustle so that eventually I could make the leap to making my own artwork fulltime someday!

## Stage 1: Focus on Skills, Audience and Experimentation



At this stage, I focused on building my skills, my audience, and experimenting with ways that I could earn an income from my side hustle. I tried not to be overly concerned with the actual financial aspect in this stage, since it is more about exploring, and learning. There are many directions to go; some of them resonated and others didn't.

It is fun to dream about taking the leap at this stage but what's most important is to take the time to grow and experiment. Figure out that you really want your eventual business to look like and what you actually want to do!

## Stage 2: Hone in on What Resonates

I began to build more confidence in my skills, and a core audience (it doesn't have to be huge! What's more important than the actual number is how invested and connected your audience feels to you and your art.). I also had been experimenting with a variety of potential ways to monetize, started to hone in on what both seemed to work best and resonate with me.



This is where you start to [build your Income Streams](#). If you haven't already read this article, now is the time to check it out because THIS is the stage for you to start building the foundations of how you are actually going to earn a living from

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your business. You can't do it everything, so this is the stage where you can decide what is actually a priority and what isn't.

## Stage 3: Long-game growth and dedication

For me, this might be the longest and toughest part of the process. This is the stage where I [juggled a job and growing the side hustle at the same time](#), focusing on growing my chosen income streams and making my foundation more solid. The key to this stage is consistency. It is a marathon, not a sprint.

This stage can be really frustrating and exhausting because things might (and probably will be) slow growing. The novelty of making a little side income off of your art starts to wear off, and you can become impatient, wondering when things will grow ENOUGH.

It's at this stage where you have to balance setting a long term goal, (maybe "the financial number" you need to reach before you take the leap), between just enjoying the process and trying to stay in the present without worrying too much about the outcome.

Being in the moment, and focusing on the ACTION rather than the outcome can help you consistently keep going. And consistency is one of the most important factors when it comes to growing something like this. A little bit every day, every week, every month, every year. It adds up.

### Start Saving



If you are balancing another job ([make sure to read the balancing a job article](#)), this is also the stage where you need to start building a cushion of savings for when you eventually do take the leap. Again, consistency that is important here. Even if you can only save a little bit each month.

### Calculate your Monthly Spending

On the practical side, take a look at your monthly expenses and figure out your spendings.

If you don't have another income helping support your household (like a working spouse or parent), I recommend having somewhere between 6-12 months saved up before taking the leap.

Ideally you will have grown your business enough that you won't have to use all of it, but you also never know what will happen, so it is very important to have a fallback.

Another benefit of calculating your monthly expenses is that you can start to see how close you are to being able to cover them with your art business.

## Important to Remember: gross vs net income and taxes



When it comes to your business, you must remember to **calculate your expenses** and **subtract those from the total amount that you are paid** for commissions, or a store, or Patreon rewards, or whatever it is. It can be easy to ignore and miss, especially when you are relying on a salary or hourly job at the moment.

On top of subtracting your expenses, you must remember that you will need to pay **taxes** on your business income, and the business taxes are typically more than you expect.

A good rule of thumb is to look at your business income and basically cut it in half and set half aside for taxes. I know it might seem extreme, but it helps prevent any expensive unexpected tax bills. If you are lucky, you will have overestimated and might be left with some extra after filing.

Learning the ropes of navigating taxes and business licenses in your country is perfect for this stage of the process. You can also find help from professionals to help you through the hoops of laws and taxes and other stuff that I personally love complaining about.

## Stage 4: Taking the Leap *(Or maybe a Staged Transition)*



Eventually after spending (potentially) a lot of time in stage 3, your business and your savings have grown to the point where it might be time to take the leap.

How much trepidation you feel depends completely on the individual. Some people are daredevils and are totally fine taking the leap, others, will be afraid and linger in stage 3 for longer.

### Avoid Moving the Goal Post

There's the problem of the **moving goal post** that can keep you stuck in stage 3. You can always grow a little more, a little more and THEN you think it will be more stable for you to take the leap. The problem is that the goal post will just keep moving and you'll never take the chance.

### Make a plan:

- What are THE numbers you need to pull this off? Once decided. Stick to it.
- Will you be jumping full time to your business right away or will you phase into it by reducing your day job hours to part time for a while before making the full leap?
- What is the backup plan if things aren't growing as you had hoped? Let's be realistic but not catastrophic.

About 4 years ago, I took the leap from my full time studio job to full time independent art. At that time, I was lucky to have savings set aside and a working spouse, so financially I felt stable enough to not phase down my hours slowly, and instead just quit outright.

I made most of my income by selling my artwork at comic cons. Things were going well! But then I suddenly moved to another country where instead of having a convention about every other weekend, there was only about 2 a year

and they were much smaller... (plus about a year later the pandemic hit and then NOWHERE had any conventions).

In addition of the foundation of my income basically vanishing when I moved, the company my spouse worked for that had moved us overseas was suddenly in a lot of facing bankruptcy and possible closure. So my spouse' stable job, suddenly wasn't so stable after all.

I panicked a little and realized that this leap I took to independent art might not need to be a permanent thing. That I could, and frankly *needed* to find another job. So I re-entered the game industry after about a year and a half of working for myself. I essentially was forced to move back into **stage 3** of this article, and was back to balancing a day-job and growing my art business in a different direction so that it could survive in this new situation.

My point in telling this story is to show you that this process is not always linear.

After you take the leap something COULD happen that makes you have to pick up a day job or a part-time job again to make ends meet. **That is OK!**

It is NOT a failure! It is being FLEXIBLE.

## Do not Burn your Bridges

With that in mind, Do Not Burn your Bridges when you quit. Do what you can to make a graceful exit. In some toxic work environments that's not always easy or possible, but where it is possible, try your best.

## Stage 5: Full Time Independent and Good Habits

### Work Hours



Now that you are on your own, you are free to choose your own work hours, hooray! What that actually means for a lot of folks, if they aren't careful, is that they are free to work at **ALL** hours!!

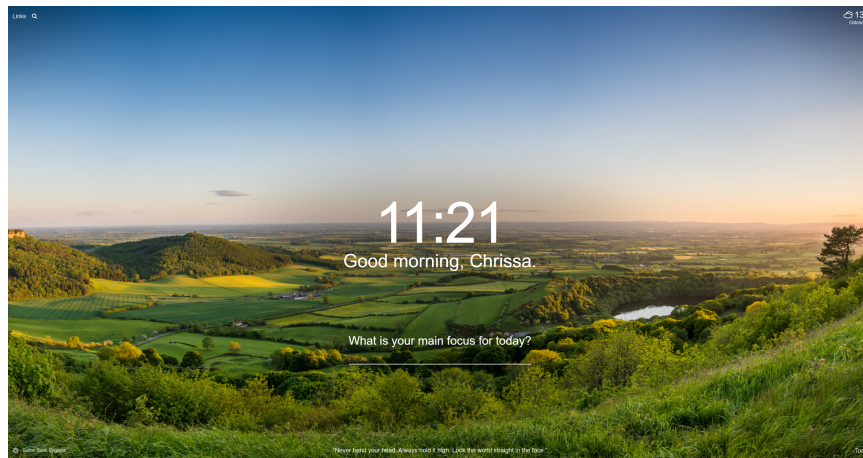
Find some semblance of structure and schedule.

How much structure someone needs is entirely individual. Some people do really well with **meticulous day planners**, while others prefer a more **general approach**. I personally try to structure my day to somewhat match a regular work day, that way I'm not totally out of sync with my spouse, who does have a 9-5/6 style work schedule.

I need structure but I can get overwhelmed or bogged down by too many details, so I prefer a slightly more general approach.

I try to have consistent **work hours** and I have a **to do list**. In the morning, I choose which items on my list to focus on for the day

One of my favorite google chrome plugins to use is [Momentum](#). It is simply a nice looking home page that shows up whenever I open a new tab. I choose my focus for the day and keep my to-do list stored in this plugin. I also just use the free version.



My ideal Daily structure would look something like:

- 7am wake up and meditate
- 7:30 exercise outside
- 8 shower and get ready for the day
- 9-12 work
- 12 lunch AWAY from my desk
- 13-18 work
- 18-22 dinner and wind down

Of course this can vary. Sometimes I stay up late streaming, or sometimes I want to stay outside for longer during the day so I have to shift my hours later.

It will probably take some experimenting to see what works best for you but having some form of consistent structure is crucial to stay on track.

## Using a Calendar to Stay on Schedule

Along with having a daily structure, I keep a monthly calendar with deadlines I set for myself for certain tasks. I do this to try and minimize the mad rush to get everything done at the end of the month. It doesn't always work, but I feel that it helps keep me on track and I know what I need to work on.

## Schedule your downtime

Trust me, if you are like me and do not schedule your downtime as part of your work, you run a serious risk of not giving yourself **ANY** downtime. **You** are your business, so if you don't take care of yourself then not only will **you** suffer but so will this business you are trying to build.

## In conclusion

This is obviously a huge topic and I have tried to lay out my journey and advice mixed together in this article for you, but keep in mind that flexibility is important because every situation is different. Take useful nuggets from this article and adjust them to your own situation.

## Patience and Consistency

Remember patience and consistency is key. It is important to be **courageous** when making your leap, but **not reckless**.

I have made my fair share of reckless mistakes and what I am beginning to learn is that there is not a rush. The only rush that is the one that I have been creating in my mind. There is room for mistakes, there is room for experimentation, and it's not a race.



Many will give up on this journey or maybe just find it isn't for them. The people who have a higher chance of "success" are the ones who keep trying and learning despite setbacks.

