STORY 4 - QUARTER 1, 2023

MY JOURNEY TO SELF EMPLOYMENT

Enda Reid, Oldboy Campers

Please introduce yourself and your business...
My name is Enda but most of my friends call me Reido. I live in a small, quiet rural cottage in Mayo Abbey, just outside Claremorris town with my wife Gaby, my dog Bailey and our cat named Ériu. I enjoy music, film, and building things.

Why did you decide to go into self employment?
After spending 15 years living in Dublin and working in digital media and marketing, I decided I needed a change and a job away from a computer all day. A friend of mine asked me if I would help her to convert a van into a campervan and I have never looked back!

What is your business?
I convert regular panel vans into rustic campervans for clients from all over the country. You can think of it like building a tiny home, but on wheels.
Similar to a home the build incorporates insulation, plumbing, gas, electrics, cooking, sleeping, etc. but on a much smaller scale.
I became self employed as a sole trader in 2019. My workshop is located in Harefield, Mayo Abbey, Co. Mayo.

What advice would you give to someone starting a new business?
My main advice would be do lots and lots of research. Know as much as you can about the market you are entering and get out there and talked to people who have already gone the path you are about to take. People are always ready to help or give advice and you need to soak up as much of this as possible.

After that I would advise you not to be too hard on yourself when things go wrong or you miss a deadline etc. It's how you deal with these issues that counts and beating yourself up won't change anything.

Look after your mental and physical health first and foremost and don't lose track of why you wanted to work for yourself in the first place. Being stressed all the time or working every hour under the sun will very quickly catch up with you.
Finally, set yourself regular achievable goals, and work towards them.

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What challenges have I faced?
For me, every build is made up of hundreds of different challenges, but problem solving is what I love about my job.

I wasn't long set up in my business when Brexit happened and this seriously disrupted my supply lines. It felt like someone had pulled the rug out from under my feet. Next Covid-19 and lockdowns came along and this also was a major disruption. Both of these were then followed closely by massive cost increases and serious delays with deliveries which caused obvious implications.

You could say I have had a tougher introduction to self-employment than others before me due to these world world events, but ultimately things will come up and completely disrupt your plans one way or another, so you have to just take things in your stride and try and find solutions as best you can. Don't worry about what you cannot control and try to focus on fixing or improving what you can.

What supports have I received to assist me with my self-employment set up?
I was on the Back To Work Enterprise Allowance (BTWEA) scheme through DEASP for two years and this massively helped me with getting my business up and running. As most self-employed people know, there isn't much money coming in when you start off, so knowing I had some steady income was a massive benefit to me.

I also availed of the enterprise support grant which allowed me to invest in areas that helped improve my business. The team at the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) were a big help and of course my Local Development Company, South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDC). My wife, friends and family were a huge help to me along my journey and I couldn't have done it without them.

One of the more enjoyable aspects back when I was planning on starting out was a course organised by the LEO on Starting Your Own Business (SYOB). There is so much support and willingness to help out there available through LEO and DEASP, SWMDC and numerous other agencies and these guys are always willing to get involved and assist you.

It's been an amazing journey so far for me. Oldboy Campers and I look forward to seeing what comes next!

GET IN TOUCH...

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Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
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The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is funded by the Irish Government through the Department of Rural and Community Development and co-funded by the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020