



International Case Study

Bringing Your Idea to Life

Emilie Mendy – Bizzie Bodies

South London, UK

Bizzie Bodies is a community interest company that organises a wide range of creative workshops while encouraging children aged between 6 to 11 years old to learn a language by stimulating their creativity. The company aims to facilitate social inclusion in multi-cultural societies and provide opportunities for children who would otherwise have minimal access to creative learning outside of their school education.



bizzie bodies

Emilie Mendy is a UK based creative social entrepreneur. She is passionate about culture, community building and new technologies, and what these things can bring to people's lives. Born in France of West African Origin, now living and working in South London, UK

What sort of creative entrepreneur are you?

I am in a sense not limited by my creativity and the boundaries that come from working with other people. I do not see the point of being an entrepreneur unless I am developing and growing as I meet new people. Boundaries are important in this from the start.

What does innovation mean to you?

New ways of thinking, transforming the past, technology, designing, collaboration and expression. Experiential learning, learning through doing, action and continuous improvement and change throughout the cycle of learning.

Bizzie Bodies supports the human. It is about the magic of finding the people and discovering their problems and then using creativity to solve those problems. At Bizzie Bodies we started out teaching French with arts for young people, because there are many ways of working with language learning.

Our creative tools were key to helping us innovate, especially by bringing tech into the community. This was the innovation which has enabled us then to bring tech into the school, the community centre, the shed. By bringing in these new tools into an existing community this allows for innovation, it is important for the values and this enables people to re-look at the familiar in new ways. By seeing the places in new ways, this helps to inspire change in the individual participants. By expanding through creative arts we are part of re-designing the cultures within the community.

Creativity is the tool to bring people to together and this enables empowerment for change.

From your initial idea how has Bizzie Bodies grown and pivoted to respond to different needs?

This is linked to responding to the challenges. When you start out, being with your heart and passion. Passion alone is not necessarily going to mean you will succeed. In business you will need to respond to the challenges; for example, if the participants arrive with limited access to holding a pen, or English speaking before the French language you plan to deliver, then these steps need to be addressed before moving onto teaching the French language classes. Over time I decided we needed to adapt, to respond to the need of my communities, using the creative tools for other needs as well as language learning.

How does Design Thinking work in your business?

Design Thinking is something that comes naturally within the ways we are working at Bizzie Bodies. We are running a project with Design Thinking at the heart project using science, maths, arts and tech. We want the young people to take control, to take leadership in their life. By using empathy and caring language we aim to take their exercises in leadership to help them open up, use their voices to write and record their experiences.

We use the body of the work they make at each stage to build next stage of the project. By using each stage of Design Thinking the young people test out their ideas and end the process with a portfolio, linked to their own words to describe their emotions and feelings of pride. Evaluation includes with the young people recording the process and how it works for them, and how it affects them. We are currently developing the Let Them Talk project linked to language of care. It is such a responsive, instinctive project and once on the course the young people really get the Design Thinking steps. Using Design Thinking is leading to the young people leading in their own lives, with their peers, parents

What business model have you developed for business?

I was a freelancer when I started, and I researched the different legal structures. I decided to form Bizzie Bodies as a Community Interest Company (CIC). This allowed me to be in control and take all the decisions for a more community designed model of business; including supporting young people and their families more directly. The CIC is for the interest of the community. It helps to form a structure around the business, you are not a charity, can make profit and it allows me to choose who I work with. We work with a range of funders who want to make sure our model matches their values. Core to the business model are the freelance artists we work with, enabling us to offer a variety of visual arts, performing arts and tech skills.

I am consistently asking myself how I can bring people together whilst enjoying what I do, empowering our artists and community members. Our values are very key to the business model. As we evolve, I am still developing the terms of our engagement with funders and community for a more 'commons' approach.

What advice would you give you people who are curious about starting up that you wish you had known before starting up?

- ✚ Take care of yourself, be a go getter, have your own voice.
- ✚ Be ok with feeling emotional about the process as you will face into skills gaps and leaps beyond your current knowledge level.
- ✚ There is always the right mentor and circle for you, so make sure you have people to talk to, and understand each other. It is especially useful if you can be supported via your existing network via your college or university or work mates - these are your easy gain network.
- ✚ Definitely research within your sector, and build on who you are

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- ✚ Update yourself with training and continuing professional development (CPD) i.e. first aid, safeguarding or software linked to your sector, risk assessment, your local ways of making sure you are compliant with criminal records register. In the UK this involves getting a Disclosure Barring Scheme (DBS) enhanced check to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
 - ✚ Start thinking about your next steps beyond making money for bills.
 - ✚ Value your own skills and keep growing yourself.
 - ✚ Trade from the beginning in taking value for yourself, skills and your time.
 - ✚ Create a network around you - used LinkedIn, Facebook pages or profiles.
 - ✚ Be prepare for your family and friends to not understand you until you make money or have your picture in the paper.

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Company Instagram [@bizziebodies](https://www.instagram.com/bizziebodies)

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