

Pursuing a passion for photography with NAE and The Big House

On retiring from a successful IT career, Nottingham based photographer, Mann Hans, turned his lifetime passion into a profitable business, with start up support from New Art Exchange and The Big House.

Mann Hans says: "The Big House has helped me establish my business more quickly than on my own."



Mann Hans retired in 2016 following a 25-year career as an IT Product Manager for BT and a decade as a secondary school teacher of science and computing prior to that. Leaving university in 1979 with a degree in Biochemistry & Physiology, he wanted to be a photographer, but this was considered too 'left field' at the time and he decided to get a 'proper job'.

Nearly 40 years later, with an MBA, MSc in Computer Science and a rich and varied career that has taken him to the US and around Europe, Mann was ready to revisit his passion. He wanted to turn his long-held hobby into a business and has a 10 year plan to achieve his ambitions.

A chance meeting with the team at New Art Exchange (NAE) opened up the free business support opportunities available at The Big House and helped him to shape his plans.

Trading for less than six months, yet with over 45 years' photography experience, Mann specialises in still life and portraiture, corporate profiles and people, as well as products. Mann also covers weddings and has his own portable studio with lights and backdrops, so can set up anywhere a photographer is required.



In addition to his day to day assignments, Mann runs a photography class for adults over 50 at the Indian Community Centre on Hucknall Road, on a pay it forward basis. He sees this as a positive way of giving back to his local community, as well as an opportunity to grow his contacts.

"Now I've retired, I could just wither away and live frugally on my pension but I'm as excited now as when I was 21. I've got a 10-year plan to develop my passion for photography into a business and I am loving executing it."

Support from The Big House team

Mann has benefited from a range of support from The Big House and its partners, including the Start-up Boot Camp, digital marketing workshops such as *Optimising your website*, *Social Media Goggles* and *Creating Content for Digital PR*.

"The workshops have been brilliant. I got loads of advice, tips, insightful details for marketing my business. I learnt ways to improve my website and now understand Google Analytics to help measure performance and trends. "



"Although I want the business to be a success, I am not motivated by money. I'm doing it for the love of it and the challenge of using my skills and talents in a new way. It's about keeping my brain active, getting out and seeing people and putting my experience to good use."



Would you recommend The Big House to others looking to start or grow a creative or digital business?

“Yes I would, because it opens up doors. If you are looking to build business skills it is a good way in. Also, you are not working in isolation and get to collaborate with other people.

“The Big House gives you a yardstick as an individual of where you are as a business on your journey. It helps you hone ideas and focus on whether you are serious about your business or not.”

What advice would you give to people thinking of starting a business?

“Never underestimate the power of networking and getting out and about. The Big House emphasised the need to grow networks and build contacts.”

Support Outcomes

- Attended a range of networking opportunities to grow contacts and expand a potential customer base
- Raised the profile of the business to a wider audience
- Attended Start-up Boot Camp to develop practical business planning skills
- Opened up the possibilities available through digital marketing and has built a website, started an Instagram account and developed a digital portfolio
- Offered practical steps to talk about photography as a business rather than a hobby
- Access to templates for practical implementation for your business plans

The Big House provides business support, events, grants and professional advice for creative and digital businesses in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

For more information about The Big House: <https://bighouse.org.uk/>

Supported by

New Art Exchange: <https://bighouse.org.uk/partners/new-art-exchange>

The Creative Quarter: <https://bighouse.org.uk/partners/the-creative-quarter>

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