



# Fashion Means Business

# Noemie Schwaller

Founder / Editor-in-Chief  
DASH Magazine



Noemie Schwaller, taken from [www.beebuckster.ch](http://www.beebuckster.ch)

## Can you provide me with a description of your business?

DASH is a biannual fashion print company, distributed worldwide, with a new concept of visual language and specialising in illustration, particularly fashion art. Founded in 2012 to fill a gap in the fashion media market – which is saturated with prints featuring identical press images – DASH introduces a surprising visual experience by showcasing unconventional fashion art. DASH is fresh and smart with a wow-effect.

DASH survives in an industry that has moved away from overly experimental imagery by providing the full editorial and design package, while not forsaking its commercial aspects. Our challenge is to promote brands and artists, as well as embrace creation, by showing their work to the world.

## Does DASH have a stated mission statement, the reason that this business exists?

'Bringing fashion back to the drawing board'. DASH aims to support young talents and give fashion illustration the platform it deserves. Ever since reading magazines, I felt illustration was not given enough of a platform on the pages of fashion magazines. I created the biannual DASH Magazine to fill this gap in the market, distributed worldwide and unique in its visual approach.

## How did you get the background and skills necessary to run this type of business?

Common sense and learning by trial and error. My MA in Fashion Journalism at London College of Fashion, UAL, which I successfully graduated from with distinction in 2011, was a first step and helpful for sure, as was any advice I got from my business mentors, whether concerning the business itself or

finances, leadership, distribution, content or legal issues. Yet there is no better education than hands-on experience and trying time and again after hitting a wall. You might hit it again and again before you learn to just jump over.

## How has technology impacted on how you conduct business?

Artwork is sent through to us digitally, and digitally we submit the laid out pages to our pre-production company PH Media, who prepare the files for print. We work fast, due to digital technology. I could not live a day without my iPhone which is a faster and more flexible way of working.

All I need to know is on there: meetings, how to get there, what time to leave etc. Through the Dropbox app I have access to all the DASH files anywhere, anytime. A lot of work is done on the move, whether travelling or waiting for my coffee.

## What other fashion business' strategies have inspired you along the way?

I have met countless start-ups and young entrepreneurs, who probably all had an impact on me in one way or another. When you start out, it is all about giving and taking, sharing and helping each other out.

## What prior editorial experience did you have?

I worked for Architonic, an architecture and design resource, where I was responsible for their online magazine and monthly newsletter. I came to understand how to manage external contributors, plan topics and schedule features ahead, as well as how to liaise with new and existing clients and partners. I also worked for several other online publications linked to the fashion industry.

## Did you start trading with a three year business plan established? If not, did this come together?

The first business plan was a big challenge in particular predicting future business' developments. In the first years I came to understand how a business plan is crucial and how to work with it strategically.

## Where do you see your business in the next year? In the next ten years?

We had a really good year in 2014, but 2015 has been a struggle. I'd say: still fighting hard.

## Are there any ethical concerns that your type of business must deal with?

Every fashion or lifestyle publication carries the responsibility of deciding which body and beauty image it portrays to its readers; this especially concerns the body shapes and ethnicities showcased. Lifestyle media has a huge influence. Publishers should never forget that. Working in a sustainable way, for example using recycled paper for the print title or maintaining low energy usage in the office, are also relevant.

## Give an example of a time when you took a risk and the return exceeded expectations.

During London Fashion Week Spring / Summer 2012, with countless fashion events happening all over the city each night, no one knew DASH and hardly anyone knew me. I chose an art gallery in East London's Vyner Street to host the first ever DASH launch party. I hoped 50 people would turn up. We were completely overrun with more than 250 people queuing to join us. A huge success from the start, our parties have worked out well, with now over 1400 people on the guest list and wonderful sponsorship.

## What milestones turned out to be measurements of success?

Working with the British Fashion Council, and the Swiss Embassy in the UK, I was approached to co-host the International Fashion Showcase London (IFS) in 2012. In collaboration we exhibited young Swiss fashion talents at the IFS for three years.

## What's the highlight of your career to date?

Every day DASH is running is a highlight for me. Winning the Deutsche Bank Award for Creative Enterprises in 2012 and the Creative Enterprise Award in International Business in 2013 are highlights. Also being able to share my experiences with students and meeting so many wonderful professionals while travelling for DASH.

## How long do you plan to stay in this business for?

As long as the fire is burning. There is no point running an independent magazine if you are not passionate about and prepared to give everything for it.

## What are your businesses highest expenses?

Finding experienced, highly motivated staff is hard in itself, with or without financial boundaries. Professional fees, print, rent and mail costs are also high.

## What form of business ownership did you choose and why?

I chose a limited company and still run DASH as one. At the time a business accounting teacher advised me of its appropriateness.

## What practical business advice would you give someone who wants to set up their own business?

Looking back, I would try and find a business partner right from the start. Sharing challenges and successes together is nicer. I am lucky to have quite a few mentors and friends I can ask for advice. In the end the decision or risk taking is always on myself alone. I imagine being able to share thoughts and visions, to celebrate milestones and experience tough times makes doing business easier.

## What sort of training do you wish you had learnt in addition to your studies at LCF, before going into business?

Sales and accounting, networking and presentation skills.

## Is running your business harder than you thought it would be? If so, why?

I knew it would be hard and a lot of work, but thank heavens I didn't know how tough it really would be! I'm not saying it isn't rewarding. You have to give so much, your free time, your days, your nights, your weekends. You have to know yourself what you are prepared to lose for what you will gain.

