



FORGE

YESENIA THIBAUT-PICAZO
& IMMATTERS STUDIO

FORGE EDITION 1



Yesenia Thibault-Picazo is a French-born interdisciplinary designer exploring the narrative potential of materials through collaborations with experts in the fields of geology, anthropology and craft. She defines herself as a 'material teller', and she uses design as a tool to engage diverse audiences in contemporary ecological challenges. In 2012, she initiated the research-based project 'Craft in the Anthropocene': a material investigation that forecasts the future of geology, explores speculative narratives, and interrogates our evolving relationship with nature.

Since 2016, she is part of interdisciplinary collective CHAOÏDE, formed during the Lab of sustainable Cultures residency (2015-2016) curated by COAL (FR).

In parallel to her practice, Yesenia is co-founder of IMMATTERS, an art direction studio specialising in the creation of bespoke films and photography for the arts, craft, design and research. It is based between London (within the Blackhorse Lane Creative Enterprise Zone) and Paris. Founded in 2012 by H el ene Combal-Weiss and Yesenia Thibault-Picazo, this art studio presents and explains the research and the fabrication processes inherent of different disciplines in the creative industry.

KEY CHALLENGES & NEEDS

Yesenia has taken time to articulate both businesses, understand their commercial potential, and find a balance with the multiple projects to work on.

LACK OF MARKETING STRATEGY <<<

Despite her strong commitment, she identified that a lack of marketing techniques was a big reason her businesses were taking time to become profitable. As with many freelancers in the creative industries, she built her business knowledge on the go, with the diverse experiences and also by receiving advice and support (e.g. A Future Made 2017 – Crafts Council).

She felt she was not pitching clients and opportunities properly because of a lack of a clear strategy. IMMATTERS has been receiving commissions on a regular basis since 2012 from a close and regular network, but from a type of client that does not allow budgets to be ambitious enough.

LACK OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANNING <<<

Yesenia was also struggling to identify the activities that could be source of income in the long term within her practice, such as talks, workshops, selling pieces and photography, as well as funding.

USE OF FORGE

Yesenia Thibault-Picazo exceeded the minimum of 12 hours of business support, reaching 17 hours by participating in a range of activities:

BUSINESS GROWTH PLAN	DATE
WORKSHOPS	<p>Value Proposition Design & Brand Positioning - 21 March 2019</p> <p>Marketing Channels and Sales Strategy - 18 April 2019</p> <p>Implementation Capabilities - 02 May 2019</p> <p>Business Finance 2: Metrics and Growth Planning - 16 May 2019</p>
ONE-TO-ONE COACHING	<p>3 hours with James West:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 26/03/19• 30/04/19• 11/06/19
NET-WORKING EVENTS	<p>3 Networking events attended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pitching and Presenting with Confidence - 9 May 2019• Building Networks & Great Collaborations - 12 September 2019• A Step Up: Funding. Leasing and Licensing - 10 October 2019

1:1 ADVICE SESSIONS

The Business Advisor support was focused on finding relevant routes to confidently create a strategic plan for growth and sustainability.

The first session defined key business goals, with clear earning targets and expectations around working structure. The use of a decision-making matrix was also discussed, to better understand how to evaluate opportunities and how to move commissions from high profile/low pay into a more stable structure of income.

The main needs and problems of each sector were explored, alongside a basic competitor analysis, which made Yesenia realise the dangers of offering such a broad product mix and helped focus her mind on a need to position the business differently.

Yesenia agreed that the studio should focus on its strengths (video/film production) and then increase the focus of her personal practice as an expert in the field of visualisation. This approach resolved an earlier problem raised - how to grow her personal practice - and improved her understanding on how to market and differentiate herself.

The final session focused on identifying potential sponsors for new projects and how to sell products to them. James used a planning matrix tool with different steps, to allow to reflect on three stages:

- **STAGE 1: Identify possible supporters.**
- **STAGE 2: Map problems.**
- **STAGE 3: Pitch based on supporters needs.**

One of the best pieces of advice was: 'Always see your offer from supporters' eyes. Think 'what problems are they facing and how could my project offer a solution or part solution for them' (James West, personal quote).

Thanks to this short business mentoring, Yesenia digested the advice about focusing on her own expertise as a product / brand, rather than creating lots of personas for each service category. She identified her USP and has also implemented the advised changes for pitching new clients and approaching them.

Yesenia said:

"I definitely have more confidence in approaching clients or potential partners as I know better how to identify what they need that I'm able to propose to them.

As the one to one sessions were incredibly useful, I'd think more hours would be very beneficial to participants".

KEY BUSINESS OUTCOMES

Using the learning and advice provided on Forge, IMMATTERS Studio achieved:

- increasing its monthly turnover by 5%
- increasing capacity to meet demand (took 2 interns on board)
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- improved skills and confidence, notably in the following in areas (0 for low levels of skill or confidence, up to 5 for high levels):
 - Cashflow forecasting, up from 1 to 4
 - Marketing & sales, up from 1 to 4
 - HR & recruitment, up from 1 to 3

See graph below for more.

