Atelier Marco Turco

Company description:
Handmade jewellery shop opened in 2008 by Marco and Vanessa in Locarno.
The jewels offered are made of copper, silver and semi-precious stones.
Since 2009, Marco runs the shop alone, He takes care of everything: rough material supplies, jewellery production, sales and administration.
Marco goes to India once every two years to buy the stones needed.

What were you doing before? Why you became an independent entrepreneur?
I have been a carpenter for 10 years, the wage was good and I liked the job. But the age of 24 I decided to change, the work was always the same, I had arrived at the peak of my career and I wanted to travel. So I left my job and went to Asia for a long trip with one goal: find what to do!
In Bangkok I met Rosi, she was a traveller from Switzerland. We got married and we decided to become independent entrepreneurs: so we could travel a lot. At the beginning we bought home accessories and silver jewellery in Asia and then sold them in Switzerland, at street markets and fairs.

Why you began to make the jewellery by yourself? How were you organized?
We were interested in the manufacture of jewellery we were selling and so we learned how to make them. We started doing our product because we wanted to offer jewels of different shapes and material, original and modern, pointing to diversity.
To reduce making costs we used poor material (copper) and bought the stones directly from wholesalers in India.
We started slowly offering them at the market, we put them in between other products we had, to see our customer's reactions. Feedbacks were good and after a while we stopped offering other products, focusing only on our ideas.

Why did you open a shop? Where did you open?
Our jewels were very easy to sell and also we needed a lab, so we decided to open a shop where we could also work in, like a laboratory with a window!
We opened "La Signora degli anelli" in Lugano. For the shop wasn't in the center of the city after a while we asked for a loan and we moved in a central shop, that worked a lot. We run this shop for 4 years then we decided to travel again, we left the shop management to a girl and we went to Ibiza to open another shop. In Ibiza didn't work... we made a wrong assessment of the market (less revenue, too expensive).
After a year me and Rosi we separated, I went back home and I started to make my jewellery, selling them at the market again. I met Vanessa (my new girlfriend) and she started working with me, together we have done many exhibitions in Europe and in 2008 we opened the shop "Atelier" in Locarno.

How long did it take to open "Atelier"?
When I came back from Ibiza I did not have the budget to open a shop, the Swiss market was changed. It took us about 3 years to make the budget to open a new shop.

What was the main problem / what you missed at the beginning?
Pricing my jewellery. At the beginning we only covers rough materials costs, not even our job.

I always had problems in asset management… I did not know how many pieces I needed to sell in a month, how much my customer would spend for a jewel, and so on.

How is going now the shop "Atelier"? What would you change?
The shop is now working good, I should be able to produce more jewellery, greater choice. I have to reorganize the production system while maintaining the character of my products.

You did a business plan before opening?
No, I did not think to do one, I thought the experience was enough. I thought I knew how to do because I did it before but this wasn't enough!
Finally last year we did a business plan and I think it is very useful, it gives you an idea of the economic possibilities in your sector/geographical area and it shows problems that may occur in your production system.

What is the greatest satisfaction in being independent?
Do not depend on anybody, to be the boss of myself and to live with my ideas.

What advice would you give to anyone thinking of opening an independent business?
To have courage and above all to be able to offer something different from what already exists.