



# **Sandcross Canada**

## **Business Plan**

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **1.0 Mission Statement**

To offer a graphic design & business consultancy service within the Ontario area of Canada that will offer both economic and cultural benefit to local businesses and individuals.

## **2.0 The Current Business & History**

I started Sandcress in the UK in September 2014 having just sold my previous business 'Bonkers about Babies'. Bonkers about Babies was a magazine designed and developed to support local parents who were pregnant or had a baby or young child. It gave information to them about local services available to them to access via articles and also advertisements from the local providers. I worked closely with the advertisers, often helping them to grow their business and providing additional graphic design services to them in the form of the design of adverts, logo design, leaflets, roller banners and more. When they became aware that I was selling the magazine, many asked if I would continue to help them with their design needs and businesses – I had particularly enjoyed this element of what I'd done with the magazine and so Sandcress seemed like a natural progression.

Initially I launched Sandcress Design & Print to only offer graphic design services. In continuing to help my previous clients and in offering general business advice to new clients I realised how much more I could be offering – and how much repeat business I was getting from the clients that I had helped with their business.

I created a new website and rebranded simply as Sandcress and included a page on the site that offered a service of free business advice. What happened next surprised me enormously – I was suddenly overwhelmed with clients seeking my advice to help them start their businesses, or to overcome problems they were having – and in nearly every instance that client also wanted help of a graphic design nature – logo, website, business cards, adverts, banners and so on. As their businesses became established, they came back to me time and again for more graphic design help.

I couldn't be happier – not only did I have more work than I knew what to do with, I was also getting to help people in a way that would have a significant impact on their lives. In time I further developed my website to have more of a focus on business support as this is where I get most of my clients from.

## **3.0 Sandcress Canada**

### **3.1 Business Description**

Sandcress UK has continued to be enormously successful and as my children have grown, I've had more and more time to dedicate to the business and to take on more clients. I work from home and consult with clients across the country via phone, WhatsApp or video conferencing. This in itself means that the business is easily portable and I can work anywhere. It would be my

intention to maintain my UK business while building a version of Sandcress in Canada. As Sandcress Canada grows I will be able to lesson my UK business until I am working entirely with Canadian businesses. The time difference would make maintaining the UK business on an ongoing basis a challenge (although far from complicated) so this is not something I would aim to be doing long term. Plus, I do enjoy being able to meet with clients face to face where it is possible depending on where they live. I would be aiming to get Sandcress Canada up and running as quickly as possible.

### ***3.1.1 Services that would be offered***

Much like Sandcress UK I would offer graphic design services as well as business consultancy to help local individuals to start and/or grow their small businesses. Graphic design services would include logos, leaflets, business cards, adverts for marketing, company brochures, banners, social media imagery, company clothing and anything else I'm asked for.

Business consultancy would include offering of a free consultation – this provides a great introduction to the client, enables me to offer them some initial advice and enables me to gain their trust and build credibility with them. Most importantly it also enables me to introduce my graphic design services.

### ***3.1.2 Target Market***

Again, much like I have done with Sandcress UK I would focus on individuals who are looking to start – or grow a small business. Generally, my clients are men or women aged between 23 and 60. I do always run a targeted marketing campaign to reach Mums who want to start or grow a small business. As a Mum of 3 children myself - and having started my first business with a 9-month-old baby - I know what a struggle it can be to do that, and how important the right support is. I also know how beneficial it has been to my family that I'm self-employed – I want that for as many other Mums as possible.

It is our intention to live in the Innisfil area within Ontario in Canada and that is where I would base Sandcress Canada.

## **3.2 Current Market & Market Research**

When exploring and researching the possibility of moving to Canada I needed to have confidence that a Canadian version of Sandcress would work as well and be as successful as Sandcress UK has been. I joined a number of community groups on social media in Innisfil in particular and Ontario in general to observe the interaction between members of the community and local businesses. Culturally the area is very similar to where we are from in the UK. Businesses have the same sorts of problems and need the same sort of support as they do here. One of the things I most commonly get told by

my clients is that having been looking for a business mentor, they haven't been able to find someone who is able to offer all the different skills required to start a business. By being able to offer graphic design as well as marketing knowledge (which incorporates running marketing campaigns where I design all the advertising and collateral) and designing and developing their website as well as generally supporting them in their journey, I'm able to help them in all elements.

I have researched the Ontario area and Innisfil in particular. There is enormous financial support for those wishing to start a business (much like there is in the UK) but very little one-to-one tailored help or mentoring. In the UK we have a service called Business Link who offer advisers and mentoring for new businesses but the service is very light touch and often doesn't provide enough support – and certainly it doesn't offer graphic design and marketing help. There seems to be a number of similar services in Canada so my services will complement these very well – as they do with Business Link in the UK.

#### **4.0 Opportunities**

There are lots of opportunities for this business in Canada as it grows:

##### **4.1 Employment of a team**

In the UK I have needed to employ an administrator as well as a junior website developer to help me. I recruited 2 local Mums that could do these jobs around their family life. As the demand for my services in Canada grew, I would look to again employ some help locally. With enough demand I would also employ a junior designer.

##### **4.2 Investment in client businesses**

Something that I've considered doing in the UK – but decided against due to our plans to move to Canada – is to choose a business that I'm particularly interested in and not only support their business in general but invest in their business too. In time I could do this on a repeated basis to provide even further support to these small business owners.

##### **4.3 Young Entrepreneur Programme**

Once Sandcress Canada was well established I would like to introduce a Young Entrepreneur Programme. I would offer a 'start up package' for young people that met a set of criteria where I would offer to design their logo and marketing collateral and support them in their business idea on a pro-bono basis. Clearly there would need to be a limit on the number of individuals this was offered to each year but I would aim for at least 6 each year.

#### **4.4 Business in a Box**

One of the things that works really well for Sandcress UK is the 'business in a box' package which includes the design of a logo, 250 business cards designed and delivered, 2000 leaflets designed and delivered and 2 consultations with me for a set fee. Once I have got Sandcress Canada established I would want to introduce this package there too.

### **5.0 Strengths**

#### **5.1 Sandcress UK**

Sandcress UK is already well established and successful. Given the similarities in culture between the UK and Canada, I am confident that I will be just as successful in establishing a successful Canadian version of the business.

#### **5.2 Previous Experience**

I have over 14 years' experience of being self-employed, in starting and successfully running my own businesses. All of this time has been focussed around the graphic design and marketing professions. This experience is incredibly valuable and over those years there are few challenges that I haven't encountered and overcome.....including a global pandemic!

### **6.0 Weaknesses, Threats and Challenges**

#### **6.1 Time Difference**

Starting the Canadian entity of Sandcress whilst still in the UK and then continuing the UK version once I'm based in Canada will provide a challenge when it comes to the time difference that will require careful structure in terms of scheduling of consults.

#### **6.2 Language & Cultural Differences**

While the culture in the UK and Canada is very similar and English is my first language, there will inevitably be idiosyncrasies of the culture and language that may need to impact my designs or how I interact with my clients. I will need to assess this and make changes as needed as quickly as possible to adapt.

#### **6.3 Transitioning**

Moving to a new country with a family will be a challenge in itself, having to settle the children into school etc and all the changes. Moving an existing business as well as developing a new business to the point that it can take over the revenue from the existing one whilst meeting all those changes will certainly present a challenge. Luckily my husband is very supportive (as is the whole family in fact). His current employer (who he will continue to work for if we move to Canada) are very used to

helping and supporting their employees in relocating to a new country. Additionally he will be able to take time off to support me as much as possible.

## **7.0 Cultural Contribution to Canada**

Going through the process of the application for PR status via the route of Cultural Arts Self Employment has given cause for significant consideration to all the different ways that I contribute to the culture of the UK and indeed how I will contribute to the culture of Canada. Of course, I always aim to give the best possible service to my clients and take pride in all the designs that I create. Certainly, I enjoy not only creating designs for my clients but also being able to help individuals across the country to start their own businesses – which supports the economy in general as well as locally to that individual – plus providing a better life for that client. What I hadn't considered before was just how much what I do (or graphic design does in general) to influence the culture of the country.

As graphic designers have such a visual presence everywhere it is only natural that their designs will have an impact on everyday lives and in fact society itself. It's important then that all graphic designers take their roles very seriously and as such create socially responsible designs.

Wherever possible designs should provide positive messages to their audience and take into account social and cultural trends, ethics, sustainability and impact on their environment.

Without ever really giving it any specific consideration, I have always taken these things into account when working on designs – or with clients in general. I incorporate positive images and messages that include minorities and women wherever possible. I take every opportunity to encourage clients to be environmentally aware and factor that into their marketing message. I particularly seek out opportunities to work with and help individuals that are from a minority, are a mum or a young person or have a business or business idea for something that I think will have particular value to the people of the UK or even the world.

I've included some examples below of recent work I've done with clients that I think has specifically had a cultural benefit:

### **7.1 Examples of previous cultural benefit**

- 7.2 Babybliss – by helping Kate to market her company 'Babybliss' she was able to reach more Mums who, having then learnt of her services brought their children to her classes. Those children then had an early introduction to swimming – many of which were then able to swim from a very early age. Swimming has a huge benefit in terms of increased physical and mental development which will almost certainly benefit them during their growth, future education and into adulthood. The company and their designs promote the benefits of

early childhood development and bonding between a parent and baby. They also encourage Dads and Grandparents to be involved more. Images used included Mums and Dads of all ages and many nationalities.

**7.3 Spectrum Holidays** – Malcolm and Sophia approached me wanting support with the start-up of their business to provide holidays for families with a child on the autism spectrum. Holidays can be an incredible challenge (sometimes almost impossible) for these families. I was incredibly happy to be able to help them with something so valuable. I put together a package for them, which included a significant discount, to help them develop this business. This included all graphic design work – I designed their logo, their social media imagery, website, leaflet and more. Their initial package with me was for 12 months – despite their package having since expired I am continuing to support them as I see incredible value in what they are offering and I want to be a part of ensuring that this business reaches its full potential. They have already had an enormous response to Spectrum – they have accommodation partners around the UK and are fully booked for next year. They are currently seeking further finance to enable them to purchase more accommodation. They are now also developing a new company called Spectrum Toybox which I am also helping them with – this company is to offer sensory toys and support items for children with autism. Without assistance, there is a good chance that Malcolm and Sophia would not have gotten Spectrum Holidays off the ground. The company offers huge benefit to the many families who use their services as well as raising awareness nationally about Autism and Spectrum disorders. Images used and marketing messages are inclusive of all within society.

**7.4 DecCreate** – Michelle Bunce is a decorator local to the Reading area. In her consultation with me she mentioned how she tries to keep all her work as environmentally friendly as possible. I encouraged her to use this as a USP for her business. As such I designed a logo that demonstrates that DecCreate is a business committed to being environmentally friendly and using environmentally friendly products. This is also communicated through her other marketing which promotes being environmentally aware.

**7.5 Underwood Baby Academy** – Sally Underwood has been a midwife for her entire career. As she was reaching retirement age, she was keen to start her own business and wanted to offer private antenatal classes that would in some way offer additional support to pregnant women. Through discussion with her I proposed that she could take the idea significantly further and offer a full range of services and

classes for pregnant women and those with young babies. UBA is now successfully up and running and providing significant support to the Mums in the Windsor area with a range of free and paid for services, classes and workshops. Had I simply created her logo and business cards as requested she perhaps would have only been offering the antenatal classes she originally discussed with me and the women she now works with would not be receiving the support they now are. UBA promotes support and empowerment of Mums (of all ages, ethnicities & sexual orientation) as well as raising awareness of the struggles that Mums face. They actively encourage and support breastfeeding while ensuring that those who cannot or choose not to breastfeed are not in any way excluded. As I guided them in their marketing, I encouraged the use of imaging and text messaging that would enable these messages to come across. Images and marketing communications all have been designed to promote a message of empowerment to Mums and are inclusive of all members of society including same sex couples.

**7.6 Happy Mama** – This is a current client I am working with to help her to start her business. Kelly came to me with the general idea of creating some kind of ‘hub’ that would bring the local community of Mums together. She already has toddler and preschool dance classes that she runs but wanted to do more to work with the community and provide a haven that would support and empower Mums. She already had a name for the company but wasn’t sure how to go about getting the company started. After numerous meetings, we had the full concept of Happy Mama defined. Happy Mama will offer both an online and physical ‘hub’ to support Mums of young babies and children through classes, workshops and social events. The physical ‘hub’ will provide them with a space to meet and enjoy the company of other like-minded parents. It will provide them with a supportive place to work, relax, even to educate themselves and to take classes either for themselves or to bond with their babies. The online hub will work on a membership basis and will offer video tutorials, virtual classes, monitored chat between parents, advice and support and educational classes – such as paediatric first aid. Happy Mama will be of enormous benefit to the Mums that use their services. Marketing will promote a message of the importance of empowering women and supporting Mums regardless of their ethnicity, age or sexual orientation. It will also promote the importance of family and bonding with young children.

**7.7 The Writers Showcase** - This is another current client that I am working with to help him to start his business. Graham originally approached me with an idea that he would like to have a website that

would enable authors to list the first few chapters of their book to give them a better chance of being 'discovered'. I suggested to Graham that he could take this idea a step further and as an experienced author himself he could offer packages of support for new and aspiring authors to teach them how to write/improve their writing. It could also include elements to teach them how to better promote themselves and become more 'well known'. His website is nearly complete. Marketing will promote individual authors as well as the company in general. It will promote inclusivity in society and the benefits of reading in general.

## **8.0 Marketing**

Once the Canadian business is ready to launch, the marketing activity will be multi-faceted and in line with a robust marketing strategy that focusses marketing efforts to target all types of potential clients. This will include:

- Promotion through a robust social media campaign with a focus on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn
- Google AdWords Campaign
- Leaflets and business cards (once resident in Canada)
- Networking events (once resident in Canada)
- A fantastic website showcasing all services with all SEO in place.

## **9.0 Goals**

### **9.1 Prior to reaching Canada**

- Website designed and live
- Initial marketing campaign launched and underway
- First contracts from Canadian residents secured

### **9.2 Within 3 months of residing in Canada**

- Settled in within Canada with business well established, new phone numbers etc all set up
- Marketing campaign increased to promote services to the local area as well as further afield
- Steady income now coming in and continuing to rise from Canadian clients

### **9.3 Within 12 months of residing in Canada**

- Sufficient income to employ local person to assist with administration
- Sufficient income from Canadian clients to stop all marketing efforts in the UK

#### **9.4 Within 18 months of residing in Canada**

- Sandcress Canada to be well established in the local area with local businesses aware of the support available to them. Starting to expand services to other areas within Canada.