

Interview with an internet entrepreneur, Theo Barker, on being a successful “amateur”.
Optional activity:

While you listen, decide which of the following sentences are true or false.

Sentence	True or false?
1. Theo began his businesses because he knew it would be a great success	
2. Five years ago Theo was studying	
3. When asked if he makes a lot of money, Theo implies that he is satisfied with what he earns.	
4. Theo thinks that the organiser of the music festival has the wrong attitude	
5. According to Theo a good product is the most important thing.	
6. Theo comes from an impoverished background.	

Q= radio interviewer

A. = Theo Barker

Q. Theo, you have set up a number of successful internet-based businesses over the last five years. You began working from your university dorm.

A: Yeah...I was just messing about really, at first.

Q. It was for fun?

A. Sure, yeah, exactly. I didn't know five years ago that I'd be here today. The thought never crossed my mind.

Q. Would you still describe yourself as an amateur?

A. Not in the negative sense, obviously, but in the sense that I love what I do, then, yeah.

Q. But you do make money?

A. I can't complain!

Q. Why do you think it's the net that has created so many successful amateurs?

A. Well, first of all, I'm not sure I agree with you that it has created all the successful amateurs...I mean, there are lots of other examples of people who love what they do and make money out of it. I'm thinking of someone like Michael Eavis, for example – the guy who runs the Glastonbury festival. I don't know how much money he makes from what he does, but that's not the important thing - most of the year he's a farmer, but each year he runs this enormous music festival on the site of his farm. Actually, he doesn't even do it every year, sometimes he just thinks “No, can't be bothered this year.” (Laughs) You know, I think that's genius. Love that attitude. He's only one example, but there are lots of others – people who run record labels, or have restaurants, or make cheese! (laughs).

Q. Do you think it's important to love what you do?

A. Yeah, absolutely. There has to be passion for the product.

Q. So it's the product that's important?

A. Again yeah – get the product right and everything else is simple. The marketing will look after itself. This is why the net has produced so many successful amateurs – the marketing is done by “word of mouth” so to speak, people just tell each other about a site that's cool, especially through networking sites like MySpace and Facebook.

Q. Marketing isn't important?

A. Well, of course it is, I'm sure there are marketing amateurs out there too – people who love what they do! But I firmly believe that you can't market a poor product. That's essential.

Q. Your father was a successful businessman too, and you studied at Cambridge. Does having such a background help?

A. I'm from a wealthy family, yeah, I've never denied it. That helps, obviously. It's given me time, time above all is the most important thing, time to experiment and make mistakes and not have to worry too much. But that's not a key thing in the rise of the amateur.

Q. Are you sure?

A. Yeah, I am. “Love not money”...that's my motto! (Laughs)

 Q. Thanks.

Answer key: 1. F; 2. T; 3. T; 4. F; 5. T; 6. F.