

FEATURE

# Spare time is money

Social media makes it easier than ever to turn creative pursuits into a nice little earner, writes **Sue White**.

As a 23-year-old heavily into fashion, it's no surprise that Amy Woodhead spends time off from her job as an events and marketing manager scouring Sydney markets for the next big thing. But what might be surprising is that she's not sourcing outfits solely for her own wardrobe. Instead, Woodhead is scouting talent for styleXpose, her side business that runs fashion events promoting up-and-coming Australian designers and selling their work online.

"I love both jobs," Woodhead says. "Working in two industries makes life more interesting."

But while Woodhead's position might sound unique, her work situation is part of a growing movement, trendsetting experts say. Thanks in part to technology that allows every wannabe entrepreneur to sell a product, service or space online, "sellsumers" are now more common than ever.

"Sellsumers are part of a wider movement that changes old-school consumption where firms sell things and consumers buy things," says the global head of research at Trendwatching.com, Henry Mason. "The distinction between the two [is] becoming more blurred; consumers are now becoming producers as well."

While plenty of us dream of quitting our day job, sellsumers aren't in it to be the next Mark Zuckerberg. Instead, many, quite happy with the secure pay of full-time work, simply enjoy using spare time to indulge creativity, explore a hobby or passion in a commercial manner, or make a bit more cash.

"People are more open than ever to making a bit of extra cash on the side," Mason says.



Passion project ... Amy Woodhead makes every second count. Photo: Wolter Peeters

Although eBay started the online selling boom, social media has changed it for good.

"Social networks lower the barrier for individual consumers, or mini or part-time entrepreneurs, to market their product," Mason says.

With so many ways to tap into the

online selling trend, eBay entrepreneurs now seem a little "early millennium". Today, airbnb.com allows home owners in more than 192 countries to monetise their spare room or apartment by renting them out; Etsy.com, a source of all things handmade and vintage,

boasts more than 20 million members and 800,000 stores; and newer twists include sites such as parkatmyhouse.com, which matches parking spaces to those who need them.

The income from these side projects is usually far from the main motivation. "It's more about supplementing your income and maximising lifestyle. [Selling on the side] is now almost a status boost; it can be an expression of identity," Mason says.

Just how employers feel about their full-timers spending evenings on a passion project or side business varies. Some companies are starting to use consumers' desire to participate to their advantage.

"In China, VANCL, a mainstream fashion site, allows customers to upload photos of themselves wearing the products, highlight potential combinations and styles, and receive a 10 per cent cut of the sales generated from their pages," Mason says.

In Australia, in Woodhead's case, styleXpose led to her landing her current full-time job. "My bosses definitely support it," she says. "When I met them they were very impressed by what I was doing. They loved my passion and thought they'd like me to bring that to their business, so offered me a job."

Although her employers are supportive and styleXpose is growing every year (it's now four years old), Woodhead suffers from perhaps the only downside most sellsumers face: lack of time.

"I have jobs to do for styleXpose before and after work, and on Saturdays I'm usually meeting with sponsors, going to markets or finding new designers," she says. "But every year it gets a bit easier."

See [trendwatching.com](http://trendwatching.com).