

# Contemporary Class

by theauthenticproject | Feb 25, 2019 | BUSINESSES, INTERVIEWS, PEOPLE, Sticky | 0 comments



KS – Katie Silcox

BS – Beth Silcox

### **If you had to describe Contemporary Class in a single tweet what would it be?**

KS: A new online travel magazine, for a new class of traveller. This new, *contemporary class* of traveller, is not defined by 'category', instead, they enjoy travel their own way; sometimes in luxury, sometimes economy, sometimes somewhere in between.

### **What was your inspiration for starting the magazine?**

KS: Travel has been my passion for, well, as far back as I can remember. I remember at a young age declaring that I wanted to be a travel journalist – at the time the TV show 'Wish You Were Here' (remember it?) was my inspiration. I followed my passion and have indeed, worked in travel media and journalism for the last 10 years, including in-house with some inspiring travel publications such as Lonely Planet and Condé Nast Traveller. About a year and a half ago I took the leap to become freelance, and while travel is still very much a part of the work I am commissioned to do, being freelance has also broadened my experience horizons; I now work with GQ Middle East and in corporate communications. I love the work I do now and am gaining so much additional experience – but I couldn't give up travel. And so, [contemporayclass.com](http://contemporayclass.com) was born.

BS: Quite the opposite to Katie, there was never one thing that I wanted to do – variety is the spice of my life and I craved a little of everything. My personality and outlook on life are that of a multi-hyphenate which has led to a career(s) in PR, events, marketing, branding and more; in industries including finance, sports, media and indeed travel. I've organised marketing events for Nike and been a PA at an uber corporate Hedge Fund – you can't get much more polar opposite than that. I am creative, an ideas generator and have a curiosity for learning new things. I've always had a sense that there's more to life than the 9-5 and to me, that means working on a project that stimulates me. Ultimately, we realised the potential in combining my generalism and Katie's specialism in travel. By joining forces, we knew we were destined to create something pretty special.

## **What does Contemporary Class offer its readers?**

KS: We produce the kind of travel inspiration that, if we didn't produce and edit it, we would love to read. By this, I mean that we've identified that our target audience (mid-millennial to mid-Gen X), no longer tend to travel in just one way. We and most of our friends and colleagues will mix their travel experiences up; sometimes flying business class, for example, and other times choosing economy. Sometimes staying in a 5\* hotel, and sometimes choosing a secluded beach hut. Sometimes dining in some of the world's best restaurants, and other times devouring delicious street food for pennies.

BS: Whilst the magazine is at the heart of our offering, Contemporary Class is also home to a boutique online store (<https://contemporaryclass.com/shop>) bringing together items that we love to pack and take away with us, and unique products that we have sourced directly from the maker in countries such as India and Kenya. We also put our wealth of previous experience to good use providing media services and consultation to hotels, tourist boards and brands.

## **Since starting the company, what have been your biggest challenges and how have you overcome them?**

KS: For me, it's running the website alongside all my other freelance commitments. Often I'll work a 9-5 day for other companies, then a 6-midnight evening on [contemporaryclass.com](https://contemporaryclass.com). But, as I mentioned earlier, travel media is my passion, so I really don't mind doing it.

BS: Patience is a challenge for me. I get excited and carried away with ideas and want to work on the magazine 24/7 but alas, the day job gets in the way. Luckily, my business mind also includes a stroke of realism and I'm aware that building a business can be a real slog. Thankfully for us, it's a labour of love. On a more practical note, having not built a business from scratch before, getting to grips with the formalities of business can be a challenge too – setting up officially as a company, doing taxes, all the fun stuff! I'd recommend Otegha Uwagba's [Little Black Book](#).

## **How has it been running a business as sisters?**

KS: I've loved it, and it's definitely brought us closer as we now speak almost every day – even though we live in different countries! We're lucky that we seem to have the same vision for what we want to achieve, which helps. But I also feel that if we didn't agree on something important, we'd be able to talk about it in a more genuine way than you would with a colleague you don't know so well.

BS: Agreed! I lived abroad for over three years and almost as soon as I moved to London, Katie packed up and moved to India (no offence taken!). Contemporary Class keeps us well connected, despite the distance. As sisters, we are very aware of each other's strengths, weaknesses and skill sets and while many of them overlap, it's truly understanding our differences that has benefited the business most.



**What tips would you give people wanting to start their own magazine?**

KS: Be prepared to give it the time it needs. There's one thing to be said for just jumping in and doing it (which interestingly is usually more my style for everything in life), but we spent a lot of time getting this right before we launched – at the time it was just the two of us so countless hours went into designing the website, learning the processes, as well as writing and uploading the content. It's also important to keep learning as you go – we're both keen to do so, which in turn actually often ends up in creating even more work for ourselves. The more you learn, the more opportunities you realise you still have to execute.

BS: Define clear goals, understand your audience, analyse and reflect as you go, be aware of limitations within your industry/niche but most importantly, dream big and really go for it.

**What do you enjoy most about running the magazine? (best part)**

KS: Getting to share my travel experiences with a like-minded audience, in a creative way. I also love looking at our analytics and watching them grow!

BS: Connecting with others via a shared passion for travel and collaborating with fellow travellers/creatives. **Six inspiring women travel the world for work, rest and play** that we published on 'International Women's Day' was a real highlight of an article to work on. It's also a pleasure to work to our own vision as opposed to an employer's brief – I love design so bringing our branding to life and building the website from scratch has been very satisfying.

### **What do you enjoy least? (worst part)**

KS: Honestly, as this is my passion, I really don't have anything that stands out as a dislike.

BS: I get frustrated that I can't work on the mag 24/7 but I try to channel that energy into focusing on our long term goals.

### **You're both on the road a lot, what's the reality of being away so much like?**

KS: I'm very used to it now. I've lived and worked in 4 countries over the last 8 years so being 'away' is my normal and home is an abstract concept, dependent on where I happen to be! As for travelling from wherever my current base may be, I hate the 'getting to the airport and getting through security bit' – but taking the airplane itself has become like taking a train used to feel to me- just a means to an end.

BS: I'm a little more grounded and in one place than Katie at the moment. I used to travel a hell of a lot and found living out of a suitcase and lack of routine quite tiring. In reality, I'd like a halfway house which is how I see the future as we progress Contemporary Class.

### **What are your top 3 travel tips?**

KS: Confidence when travelling solo, it will make ALL the difference to your trip. I've written about it here: <https://contemporaryclass.com/content/explore/solo-travel>

Be flexible, and patient. Things won't always go the way you expected but that's often half the fun. Some of the best experiences I've had it when things didn't go the way I'd planned. For example, finding myself lost (it happens!) has often led me to find some of the best places.

A practical one; pack what you think you need, then half it. I need to learn to listen to my advice on this one; I'm an over-packer and always end up not using at least half of what I take with me.

BS: Look up – don't get stuck in your phone, your map, your camera, your tick-list.

Interact with locals – it will change your experience and help you see your destination in a new light. For that reason, we actually have a wealth of [Insider's Guide's](#) on the site as local recommendation is hard to beat!

Follow the path less travelled. Metaphorically it's my favourite piece of life advice so why not take it literally when I travel?

**As ladies who have had experience of the uncertain freelance lifestyle, what tips would you give to freelancers wanting to stay motivated and inspired in periods when they lack motivation?**

KS: To answer this honestly, I'd have to tell you that I haven't really lost motivation because I love what I do. That said, I do often find something as simple as changing your location – heading to a local cafe to work, for example – can give you some added inspiration.

BS: I'm still full time in a 'day job' but I know there are many 'side hustlers' out there whose motivation comes in fits and starts. Firstly I'd recommend always focusing on the bigger picture; remembering what you're working towards. As with any end goal, breaking it down into smaller chunks helps. For me, that means setting weekly and monthly to-do lists to stay on target. Some days I'll only have time to tick off a few smaller jobs on my commute and at other times I'll be able to dedicate chunks of time to tackle the big tasks. Either way, you're chipping away bit by bit and making progress.

**Practically speaking, what was the process of setting up your company like?**

KS: Much more complex than expected; having to negotiate Companies House, company earning, tax returns, etc. Not the most fun, or glamorous, part of the business!

BS: While Contemporary Class is an enjoyable venture for us and our priority is on reader experience, we are aware that the difference between a business and a hobby is profit so it's important to be strategic and consider revenue streams & growth from the outset.

**What have you learnt about setting up a business?**

KS: Patience, for all of the above! It doesn't always seem easy, but you will get there, and it is worth it in the end.

BS: For me, it's been important to streamline ideas, to consider our priorities and understand what's achievable stage by stage. We have big ambitions but know the importance of putting in the groundwork

in order to fulfil them.

### **What have you learnt about yourselves during the process of setting up Contemporary Class?**

KS: That I have more dedication than I perhaps thought. My work has always been intense, as a photo editor for travel magazines I would sometimes find myself waking up at 3 AM to check Whatsapp images from a shoot location on the other side of the world. But doing things as, and for, your own business is even more intense – if that's possible!

BS: I've often had people criticize my multi-hyphenate ways but I've learnt how to channel it to my advantage. It's ok if others don't understand the method in your madness and it's important to follow your own path.

### **How do you approach the places you visit?**

KS: With an open mind, and with a view to taking it slow – getting to know people and places, not just ticking boxes.

BS: With gratitude and excitement. I anticipate every trip like a kid at Christmas – even if I've been before. I never take travel for granted, there's always something new to uncover and I'm sure to appreciate the little things like subtleties in the architecture or variations on local customs.

### **Favourite place you've visited?**

KS: This is such a tough question! I could give you so many answers to this, which completely negates the question. I lived and worked in India for 3 years, so I suppose I have a strong affinity there through getting to know the country more intimately; forming strong friendships with locals and therefore getting to really understand the culture. Other stand out places that I've only visited for a shorter time would include Harar in Ethiopia, Jebel Akhdar in Oman (in fact, I love all areas in Oman), Sri Lanka's south coast, and New York. All for very different reasons!

BS: I loved Malaysia. Far less touristy than their South-East Asia neighbours with so much culture to uncover and the locals couldn't have been more welcoming. I'm returning in a few months and I can't wait. Virgin Gorda in the BVI's was pretty special. I went for work in a previous job so didn't really get to enjoy all that was on offer, but to touch down in one of the far corners of the world that relatively few people get to visit felt like a real privilege. New York is on my favourites list as well – I'm a city chick at heart and naturally love the variety and creativity. Like Katie, it's near impossible to pinpoint just one!