

What i See

What I See Features... Sarah Wood, COO of Unruly Media



Unruly is a global platform for social video marketing. They help the biggest brands and their agencies get their videos watched, tracked and shared across the open web.

Inspiration

I often take inspiration from people who mash up ideas, who come from different arenas... Ultimately, my two co-founders, Matt and Scott, are my inspiration on a day-to-day basis, because they're so patient and so thoughtful, and just wonderful to be around over a long period of time.

What did you want to be when you were young?

I've always found it difficult to choose, in terms of thinking of future careers. I've always found it hard to think about what I wanted to be and settle on one thing definitively... I ended up having a lot of ideas that were always changing. And then I ended up becoming an academic- so none of those ideas happened!

What advice would you give to your younger self?

If I could go back and talk to my teenage self in particular, I think I would say **'for goodness sake stop worrying!'** And then I would say to myself, actually, you are a worrier: **so if you're going to worry, let's worry the big stuff.** And I would **use that worry to be more ambitious**, rather than using it as an excuse for not doing things. Because there's no harm in trying, and there's no shame in failing. **Coming to terms with failure at an early age is a very important learning experience.** The longer you wait to fail, the harder it becomes, the more of a block it becomes, and the more difficult it makes risk taking.

Taking Risks

When I think of the biggest risk I've ever taken, I think of my decision to leave academia and start up a company. This was a huge risk, for several reasons. One reason being, no one leaves academia! It's one of those professions that when you have a tenured post, and when you're settled and have your books published... it feels like a very safe existence. For a lot of people that's precisely what attracts them to academia in the first place. So, deciding to leave that was a huge risk. The other reason it was a huge risk is that I was setting up Unruly with my husband. My husband had a huge amount of respect for me as an academic. He knew me as a successful academic, who was always having interesting ideas on American Literature, and we'd have great conversations and I was very successful in my own field. But I realised it was a big risk coming together, because what if I was rubbish, what if I was the worst partner he'd ever had? I was worried that would have a big personal impact that could actually affect the fabric of our whole relationship. But it had to be done, and I don't regret it.

What's the best advice you've been given?

When we started Unruly, my dad said to me 'just make sure you take the kids along with you- you're going to be so excited about this project, but don't leave the kids behind.'

One very powerful piece of advice was from my university professor, who [the night before my final exam] scrawled a note and put it my pigeonhole. It just said '**courage**'. When things are hard or I'm struggling, I often remember that. Other good advice is that advice is overrated; **you must have the courage to make your own decisions**. It's great to listen to different perspectives, and take them on board, but with an understanding that people come with their own experiences; their own successes; their own value systems. **Ultimately, it's up to the individual to make the call.**

What does it mean to be a woman?

One thing I would say about being a woman is: difficult choices. It just feels that difficult choices have to be made, and certainly in the developed world, [where] we're very fortunate to have these choices to make... I often think about sacrifice, the sacrifices we make for our children... **It's a double edged sword: sacrificing too much for your children lays a burden of expectation on your children.**

What do you see when you look in the mirror?

When I look in the mirror I often see a smiling face. I think it's really important to smile at yourself. It buoys me: **if you can look at yourself in the mirror and smile, you're going to have a better day: positivity is so important.**