



Luke Graner
Graner Media

Bismarck, N.D.
www.lukegraner.com



By City Magazine Staff

Young Entrepreneur Success Story

RECOGNIZING ENTREPRENEURS UNDER 30 WHO ARE CULTIVATING
THE SPIRIT OF INNOVATION IN NORTH DAKOTA

“An Entrepreneur by Design”

Luke Graner strikes us as a twenty-first century Renaissance man: an artist, a musician, an entrepreneur and a stay-at-home dad. A college football player who grew up in Minot, Graner took “the road less traveled” by obtaining a bachelors degree in design from Minnesota State University, Moorhead. He explained, “My good friend, Neal Peterson, was in an art class where they did a bunch of cool graphics projects, and he suggested I take the class, so I tried it out and I was convinced.”

Graner, his wife (Jacey) and their three young sons (Jaxon, Hudson and Kingston), live in Bismarck.

Tell us about Graner Media.

Right now the business is just me, a Mac and a screen printing studio, but I work closely with a few great agencies and I have some very creative and resourceful friends and family. I have eight years of experience working on projects ranging from large-scale advertising campaigns to developing backyard games. I provide creative services for a variety of musicians, artists, filmmakers and other agencies. Those services include creative concepts, graphic design, screen printing, music performance and a/v production. I work across many platforms so “Graner Media” seemed like an appropriate name for my business.

How did you begin the company?

I took a printmaking class in college and started screen printing shirts for my band, Curious Yello. My friends, the Charlz Newman Band, needed some shirts too so I built a light table, bought some screens and started printing out of my garage. I ended up creating their website and print media and I guess that's when the business was hatched.

What is it about your business that you are most proud of?

I really enjoy everything I do no matter what the project is, but I am most proud of providing agency-quality work for other artists who can't afford an advertising or marketing agency.

Did you have any early challenges or doubts that might have stopped you?

I started the business while finishing college and it continued to grow while I worked full-time. There was some doubt that I could take it beyond the spare time, free-lance gig and turn it into a legitimate business. The biggest challenge was probably taking our kids out of daycare and working from home as a stay-at-home dad. When I left my full-time job, our boys were four, twenty months and three months old, so it was definitely a challenge.

Is there an interesting success story that you can share?

Mike Mabin at Agency MABU gave me my start in Bismarck as an intern about five years ago. I landed my first full-time job with another agency because of that experience and, after three years, I decided to work at home. Eventually, I started free-lancing for MABU again and, shortly after that, the agency landed a project with the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. I provided a creative concept for review (one of three), and it was selected. Over the course of the next few months, we were able to provide the Museum with a great campaign all while I worked from home. It's pretty cool to know that an agency in Bismarck, N.D., can land a project for a client like the Smithsonian.

What do you think is the key to your success?

I believe that it is most important to first successfully communicate the message of the client and second to do it creatively and efficiently. By focusing on the client I am able to provide very creative solutions without any fluff or wasted time. Also, this mindset has helped me develop my own artistic style—and people appreciate originality.

What is your advice for other young entrepreneurs?

Be honest, listen to whoever is speaking and believe in yourself.

Who are your role models? Who are the people who helped you along the way?

I've been blessed with a great family, teachers, coaches and friends. My creative role model would definitely be my dad. Not only is he creative, but he also brings out the creativity in others, which is so cool.

About the Y.E.S.S. Awards

City Magazine and Dickinson State University's Strom Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation's Young Entrepreneur Success Story (Y.E.S.S.) Award winner will be announced each issue. We will profile individuals who personify the entrepreneurial spirit of our state and offer advice to others facing similar challenges as our featured entrepreneur. Experts tell us there is a strong correlation between innovation, entrepreneurial activity, and a region's economic vitality. Creative young adults are key to North Dakota's economic future. If you know of an entrepreneur under 30 who is making a difference, we invite your nominations. Email us at *City Magazine*, thecitymagazine@unitedprinting.com, or call us at 701-223-0505.

What is your favorite part of the day?

I enjoy the part of the day when my kids are bugging me to quit working so I send out one final e-mail attachment and shut down the computer so I can wrestle some toddlers.

Where do you see your company in the future?

Our success will be measured by how we can positively impact our clients, our community and our world. No boundaries and no limits. *em*

Our Advice:
Balancing a home-based business with family duties can be tough, as Graner noted in our profile. It's critical that entrepreneurs who work from home have the ability to vigilantly manage their time. Creating boundaries between home duties and work duties by setting up an area in the home that is just for work is helpful. The downside to a busy home-based business may be that the laundry doesn't get done, but the positives can include more time with your family, a relaxed environment, less stress and avoiding the rush-hour commute.

