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Your Start-Up Life: Spreading Positivity With Nelly Furtado

Your Start-Up Life is a business advice column by [Rana Florida](#), CEO of the [Creative Class Group](#). In addition to answering readers' questions she features [conversations](#) with successful entrepreneurs, creative thinkers and innovative leaders. Send your questions about work, life and play to rana@creativeclass.com

Multi-platinum-selling singer, songwriter, producer, dancer, and actress [Nelly Furtado's](#) career took off in 2001, shortly after she released her debut album [Whoa, Nelly!](#) The album went on to sell some six million copies worldwide and the hit "I'm Like a Bird" was one of the most successful singles, launching her career far into the sky. I had the pleasure of dining with Furtado and found her to be a down-to-earth free spirit, even though she has won more than 50 international prizes and honors, including a Grammy, Latin Grammy and 10 Juno Awards. Active in a number of philanthropies, in 2011, she announced that she was donating \$1,000,000 to the [Free the Children](#) charity.

Furtado took a moment out from preparing for her [Spirit Indestructible world tour](#) to chat with me about creativity, chemistry, failure and the joy of spreading positivity.



Caption: Nelly Furtado celebrating her album release.

Q. What was your first job and what lessons did you take away?

A. One of my first jobs was working as a chamber maid at a small motel for snowbirds on the west coast of Canada, where I grew up. My mother hired me -- I was 12. It taught me a real sense of following through on a task, the accomplishment of a job well done, and an early lesson in financial management. I can also tuck bed corners really well.

Q. How do you find the right business partners and collaborators?

A. I have trusted fate, destiny and most of all my own intuition in choosing the people I work with. If I don't feel a creative, positive connection, it just doesn't happen. If it does, it's already happening before it's happened. It just clicks.

Q. How important is creativity to your work?

A. Creativity is the juice that keeps me alive. My main goal in life is to stay passionate -- whether that means honoring the muse, surrendering to the moment, leaving yourself open to

spontaneity -- whatever it takes -- you need to live and feel in order to be creative, and relish your high moments and your low moments.

Q. When do you know it's time to walk away from a project that you've invested time and money into?

A. If the momentum is lost, the chemistry soured, or the relationship broken beyond repair, I usually walk away. If you are not having fun anymore, it's simply not worth it.

Q. What is the best business advice you ever received?

A. Don't be afraid to show your personality, individuality and confidence. Face-to-face self-marketing can be very powerful. It can also be an expression of creativity.

Q. With the proliferation of technology, do you think it's easier or harder for a young artist to breakthrough today?

A. I think it's quite a difficult climate for young artists, as the music business has less bounty nowadays. Yet a smart, well-informed musician, who is very passionate about music, can still make a decent living with hard work and dedication.

Q. How do you face criticism or failure?

A. I always remember that to be critiqued is part of being human; no one can escape it; it's the price you pay for putting your vulnerability on display as a creative person. Failure is very important, as it is inevitability in life. Incredible growth, self-realization and reflection comes from failure.

Q. How involved in every other part of the music business are you? I.e., marketing, design, social media, etc.?

A. I have my own imprint, Nelstar records. I released my Spanish album on it, and we are about to release an album by an amazing singer-songwriter, [Dylan Murray](#). In my own work, I love creative control. It's the purest form of expression. I demand it.

Q. Where do you get your inspiration to develop new work?

A. I love challenging myself. I like conquering new musical territory for myself. It's my hobby/obsession. I'm also newly inspired as an ambassador for [Free The Children](#). I've been travelling to rural Kenya learning about education for girls. It's given new meaning to my music and my role as someone with a platform to spread positivity.

Q. As a young mother, what advice would you give to women juggling careers and families?

A. I would say: "Remember that you are setting an example by your work ethic;" "Throw guilt down the drain as it is a useless emotion"; and "Be the best mom you can possibly be."

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