





100% SUSTAINABLE COCOA BEANS



CALLEBAUT  
BELGIUM 1911

FINEST BELGIAN  
CHOCOLATE

RB1

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM  
**25 INTERNATIONAL CHOCOLATIERS**

**THE**  
CHOCOLATIER'S  
**SHOP**



**CALLEBAUT®**

BELGIUM 1911

**Lannoo**

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"Signature Series" bonbons  
by Janice Wong, crafted  
with unique moulds designed  
by Janice herself

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**“Years ago, I had a conversation with my father. He said to me, ‘when I die, son, don’t shed a tear for me because I have led the life of 3 men’.**

**Building a chocolate business is a beautiful thing. At the start, I didn’t realise it. But it truly is. It gives me pride when I tell people what I do. It has taken me on such a journey. I’ve met and hung out with a billionaire on his yacht. An ex-prime minister has been introduced to me (it should be the other way around, right?). I know of a number of Hollywood actors and famous sports stars who have eaten my chocolate. I’ve travelled to China, Japan, Malaysia, USA, Europe and Dubai. I’ve been on live TV, the Bake-Off Professionals, done other TV shows, radio and media demo events. All because of chocolate. And the adventure continues.**

**When I told my father I was starting a chocolate company, he asked me, ‘who on earth is going to buy your chocolate son?’ Well dad, I too have led the life of 3 men and it’s all because of chocolate.”**

# PREFACE

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Building a chocolate business is an incredible adventure. It can lead you into a roller-coaster-like journey (like what UK-based chocolatier, Stephen Trigg, experienced).

But let's face it: building a business takes time, bags of grit, and determination.

So how do you start a chocolate business?

And once set up, how do you grow it according to your own ambitions?

During our courses and training at Chocolate Academy™ centres around the world, we met many chefs and artisans who dreamed about turning their entrepreneurial ambitions into a reality. They all had as many questions as dreams.

Questions such as:

- » *Which financial resources do I need when I start – and where do I get them?*
- » *How do I build a brand?*
- » *How can I find customers?*
- » *Should I sell online or at a physical shop?*
- » *How do I know what will sell best?*
- » *How can I minimise risk?*
- » *Should I start alone or build a team?*

With this book, we wanted to offer you an as-complete-as-possible checklist to help you make informed decisions when starting and/or upscaling your business. And, as it goes with many things in life, there is no general right or wrong answer when making many decisions. It's all about choosing what works best for your business.

We asked chocolatiers from around the world what they struggled with most, which decisions they made and how those decisions worked out in the end. If there would be one general rule that applied to all chocolatier-entrepreneurs we interviewed, then it's probably this: some started with a roll-up-your-sleeves mentality; others seemed to have everything figured out. Yet, everyone learned, adapted, and improved along the way.

To say it in the words of one of the chefs, "keep chasing your dreams. And when something fails at a certain moment, which we all experienced, learn from it, get up and do better".

Wishing you loads of success in realising your dreams!

Minette Smith  
Callebaut Lead Creative Chef



# THE CONTRIBUTORS

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This book wouldn't have been possible without the valuable contributions of all artisans and chefs we interviewed. A big shoutout to all of them! Here's a small recap of who they are to get acquainted. In alphabetical order:



## 1 Lama Bassam Al-Ghrawi

BASSAM GHRAWI CONFECTIONERY – BEIRUT, LEBANON

With a craftsmanship legacy that dates back to 1891, this family business has its roots in hand-made dried fruits, malban and nougat products. In its mission to inspire innovation in each piece of artisanal chocolate, the company managed to successfully introduce their products to the western world. In 1930, chocolate became part of their collection of sweets. With over a century of experience and continuous growth throughout family generations, the Al-Ghrawi legacy lives in its factories, retail outlets, and facilities. The Al-Ghrawi family enterprise aims to keep sharing their creations all over the world today, and in the years to come.



## 2 Renata Arassiro

RENATA ARASSIRO CHOCOLATES – SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

Exploring her passion for chocolate and looking to create products with a unique personality — engineer-turned-Chef, Renata Arassiro, uses chocolate to bring her creative ideas to life. Combining Belgian chocolate of the highest quality with the vast ingredients Brazil has to

offer, Renata has made the cover of renowned magazines and participated in international competitions. Since the very beginning, she's been designing the colourful bonbons that have won the hearts of her clients. Today, she is known not only for her chocolate skills, but as the first ambassador for Barry Callebaut in Brazil and a teacher for gastronomy professionals.



## 3 Davide Comaschi

DAVIDE COMASCHI / DA VITTORIO – MILAN, ITALY

Today, he is at the forefront of the future of chocolate. In the past, Davide Comaschi was a child who began his chocolate journey thanks to the flavours in his mother's kitchen and his father's passion for art. With both his parents being photographers, and having been born and raised in Milan, Davide grew up surrounded by the world of fashion and design, and a burning love for good food. In his quest to make chocolates *"that can break the routines we are all in, and provide you with a moment of pleasure for all your senses"*, Davide crafted his signature creation: triangular bonbons. These continue to be his business' iconic product up until this day.



## 4 Fan Yu

NIBBO – SHANGHAI, CHINA

A chocolate concept designed as a museum of flavours. Inspired by his work in Australia and driven to bring a new chocolate experience to China, Fan created Nibbo. With the purpose of imparting knowledge in a market where the concept of artisan chocolate is unknown, Fan built a brand that celebrates the possibilities chocolate bars have to offer. To match the careful consideration behind his brand, his packaging design brings the concept to life — inspired by a museum's archives room, each chocolate wrapper becomes a collectable item, and each flavour represents a new approach to chocolate in the Chinese market.



## 5 Ryan L. Foote

CHOCOLATES BY RYAN L FOOTE – HONG KONG

Known for a career driven by artistic imagination, Ryan has built a portfolio that ranges from art, design, and set design to food and beverage. His background and constant curiosity have led him to combine his passions into multi-sensory food art events/art installations. Evolving from these art events, Ryan incorporated chocolate into his artwork and then into a thriving chocolate business. Using chocolate as a bridge to bring people into an artistic world, Ryan merges state-of-the-art 3D printing with the timeless character of cacao. The results of his creative ideas are geometric and organic-shaped bonbons that look like miniature edible works of art.





## 6 Calum Haggerty

COCO CHOCOLATIER – EDINBURGH, UK

With a degree in finance, Calum wasn't made for a white-collar career. "As a kid, I was already an entrepreneur, stocking up sweets in my locker and trying to sell them to other kids". After a few years of working for the fire service in Edinburgh, he decided to purchase an existing chocolate business and transformed it into the blooming COCO Chocolatier enterprise. Calum approaches the business from quite an untraditional perspective: he had no chocolatier skills, yet found himself a wonderful team. He approaches the enterprise as a conceptual thinker and business coach, getting the best of the talent he surrounds himself with. Redirecting his business into a gift-related chocolate enterprise seemed the right choice for him, independent from traditional brick-and-mortar sales.



## 7 Jitsk Heyninck

JITSK CHOCOLATES – ANTWERP, BELGIUM

Jitsk gained experience as a R&D chef and expert at mould maker, Chocolate World, in Antwerp. But his true passion and dreams lied in creating and working with chocolate itself. So, he started his own beautiful shop-and-atelier in a refurbished Belgian brewery amidst a collective of artisans and crafters, such as butchers, brewers and cheese-affineurs. As a thoroughbred artisan, he quickly developed his unique signature which revolves around maximising home-made, seasonal products. With a love for

natural produce, Jitsk sources top-class nuts, fruits and more from orchards and farms in Belgium, Italy, France and Spain, turning them into his unique pralines, pastes, fillings and marmalades. With an almost Nordic feel for purity, Jitsk is a rising star in the chocolate world.



## 8 Marco Infante

CASA INFANTE – NAPLES, ITALY

With the brand's idea of beautiful stories that are never born by chance, the Infante family shares their own legacy. Their goal is to carry the experience of three generations of artisans into their ice creams, pastries, and chocolates. After Leopoldo Infante opened his first pastry shop in the late 1800s, the business has been handed down from father to son with their original beliefs intact: high-quality ingredients and extraordinary goodness. Until this day, embodying the traits of Neapolitan tradition and the values that this family has built over time, Casa Infante lives on in the hands of the brothers Marco and Fabio Infante.



## 9 Jap Joy

FIDÉE – FOSHAN CITY, CHINA

To take chocolate lovers on a trip to nature, Jap Joy created FIDÉE with the sky, forest, flowers and land as the key elements of his chocolate concept. As an acclaimed package designer and lover of sweet treats, he ventured into the world of chocolate and began creating bonbons to offer along with his original package designs. The result was a western-inspired brand

name for a very traditional Asian market. FIDÉE was born as a business that combines original recipes sold in packaging with unique designs. The brand became a pioneer by offering a new concept for the whole of China to experience.



## 10 Justine Lannoo

GOÛT FOU – ZELE, BELGIUM

Justine has been a passionate chef at the Callebaut Chocolate Academy in Belgium for quite some years, sharing skills and insights with many professionals in the industry. But her entrepreneurial mindset drove her to start her own business. With hard work, lots of joy and great social skills, Justine kicked off Goût Fou (that translates literally into "crazy flavours"), with a great variety of bonbons with expressive flavours, a touch of humour, and premium quality. The business immediately got noticed by Gault&Millau, which led to an award for "Best Chocolatier in Belgium". The adagio, "quality is doing good when no one is watching", explains her attention to detail and dedication to the craft.



## 11 David Maenhout

CHOCOLATIER M – KNOKKE, BELGIUM

David Maenhout was probably the very first chocolatier pioneer in Belgium, intrigued by translating culinary experiences into his rich palette of chocolates. Born and raised in a beer-brewing family, he chose another path and created Chocolatier M. Originally, David ran the business all on his own, developing a unique style which inspired many others. A fond traveller, David's fascination for

local and exotic ingredients led him to incorporate them into his bonbons. He was also the first to collaborate with craftsmen around his hometown to offer products that would resonate amongst the locals. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that each of his bonbons is a flavour destination in itself. Over the years, he perfected his style, hired a team and expanded his business. Today, his creations have even reached Japanese department stores.



## 12 Håkan Mårtensson

HÅKAN CHOCOLATIER – BEACON, NY, USA

After enrolling in the Culinary Institute in Kristianstad (Sweden) at the age of 15 and discovering his passion for pastry and chocolate, Håkan began his journey as an artisan. Intending to use out-of-the-ordinary ingredients to excite the imagination, the chef left the comfort of his home country in 2008 and headed to the continental US, ready to take on the world. After a decade of dreams and obstacles, with his wife and young children by his side, he became a pioneer in the chocolate space – creating an offer with Nordic flavours and global influences, and a taste palette that is complex yet balanced.



## 13 Patrick Mertens & Inge Lijnen

CHOCOLADEHUIS BOON – HASSELT, BELGIUM

What happens when you put the talent of a master chocolatier and an advertisement creative together? You get BOON. Patrick Mertens and Inge Lijnen are each other's better halves in life. Together, they are the creative brain behind their

blooming chocolate business in Hasselt. Their approach? Inge's career in the advertising industry was about creating compelling ideas for brands and bringing them to life. Together with Patrick, she now does the same – but in chocolate. Far more real, way more impressive. Their chocolate craziness attracts the attention of press and many fans to their shop. With a keen eye for design, they've created a unique signature chocolate style.



## 14 Pablo and Jacobo Moreno

MALLORCA – MADRID, SPAIN

In 1931, Bernardino Moreno and his wife, María García, opened their very first pastry shop. Not long after, their pastries and sweets became the talk of the neighbourhood. Fast forward a few decades and Mallorca has become a multi-branch business that celebrates traditional sweet and savoury Spanish pastry culture, along with chocolates and well-known *bocadillos*. With slow yet steady growth as part of their work philosophy, the family business now includes coffee shops and has extended its reach internationally, winning the hearts of customers in Mexico and Japan. With a heartfelt disposition to carry on their legacy, the Moreno family continues to innovate and welcome loyal and new clients, inviting them to be part of their story.



## 15 Mariane Oliveira

MARY'S BRIGADEIRO – TORONTO, CANADA

A proud black-woman-owned business with the mission to spread joy through chocolate. Now, also with the higher purpose of becoming a safe employment space for immigrant women in Canada. She was born in Brazil but moved to Canada for love. In Toronto, Mariane Oliveira (Mary) began her journey as a chocolatier and entrepreneur. She leveraged the city's multicultural influence by offering a traditional Brazilian sweet: the *brigadeiro*. What started as small batches being sold among her close friends and family circle, the uniqueness and newness the brigadeiros offered spread throughout the city. Today, Mary stands as the creative mind and business genius behind the colourful chocolate shop that brightens up the streets of East End Toronto.



## 16 Mirosław Pelczar

M. PELCZAR CHOCOLATIER – KORCZYNA, POLAND

Mirosław Pelczar was a genuine pioneer at the time he started his confectioner's shop in Korczyna. He was one of the first in Poland to make handcrafted chocolates. Without much knowledge from Polish peers, he self-taught and developed his own recipes. *"The choice of profession was simple and obvious. There were no dilemmas because, in fact, I knew from childhood what I wanted to do"*. Mirosław acquired a passion for pastry and chocolate from his mother. Watching her make pastries awakened his vocation. The rest came with hard work, long days,

and self-study. Mirosław participated in countless professional competitions and got accoladed numerous times, "confectionery is my life. I have dedicated everything to it".



### 17 Sebastian Pettersson

SEB PETTERSSON – STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

A chef who turned his outspoken personality into a unique brand. Sebastian Pettersson always makes an unforgettable impression. Behind his inked body and tough appearance, you'll discover a humble, passionate, open-minded and friendly young man. Hardly 21, Sebastian made his smashing entry into the culinary world by participating and winning gold medals in the Culinary Olympics Jr. in 2016 and the World Culinary Cup in 2018. After working in pastry kitchens of Michelin-star restaurants, such as Oaxen Krog, Operakällaren and Ekstedt, Sebastian decided to start as a self-employed consultant; working part-time in coaching and competing in culinary competitions, and combining it with training, creative direction and food engineering of restaurants, pastry kitchens and pastry schools around the world.



### 18 Bernard Proot

DELREY – ANTWERP, BELGIUM

Being at the helm of DelRey since 1983, Bernard and his wife, Anne, have been transforming the Antwerp biscuits and chocolate scene into an international emblem for fine chocolaterie and pastries. The couple injected a dose

of exquisite artisanship and a sturdy growth model into their business – often based on their intuition and boldly balancing of different opportunities. In heart and soul, Bernard remains an artisan pastry chef and chocolatier, while Anne has an experienced nose for opportunities. Gifted with a sound business instinct and big dreams, they grew the brand into an internationally renowned icon with third-party outlets around Belgium, and 4 business outlets in Tokyo.



### 19 Julian Rose

JULIAN ROSE CONSULTING – OREGON, USA

If one would have to describe Julian Rose in a few words, the *enfant terrible* of the chocolate industry would probably come closest. With a curriculum that stretches from crazy product developments in chocolate and award-winning cannabis chocolate bars to teaching, Julian is ambivalent. Since his early childhood, pastry and chocolate flowed in his veins. From his involvement as head of the Chocolate Academy in Canada to his entrepreneurial stakes in different businesses, such as Moonstruck and Choc-Pro Chocolates, Julian has always been on the lookout for the next new opportunity.



### 20 Enric Rovira

ENRIC ROVIRA – BARCELONA, SPAIN

Raised and influenced by the world of a famous pastry shop owned by his parents, Enric Rovira took on the chocolate space in Barcelona. He imagined a new way to implement the job his father had taught him and became a trendsetter that combined chocolate with artistic design. Enric's tailor-made products have an edge that has defined his character since he opened his business with his cousin, Francesc Forrellat, in 1993. With three decades of experience in the chocolate world, and still faithful to his philosophy of elaborating high-quality products, Enric continues to fill Barcelona's chocolate scene with one-of-a-kind contemporary and customised designs.



### 21 Nikki Thakker

ÉNTISI – MUMBAI, INDIA

Her purpose was to introduce "fine chocolate" in the culture of her home country. Nikki has united her academic background in economics and her passion for chocolate to become an artisan chocolatier. She dedicates time to ideate and try each product herself, always aiming to seamlessly combine excellence and refined taste. At éntisi, Nikki ensures that each box of chocolates is a tribute to quality, creativity, and design. Every visit to their boutiques in Mumbai is a trip to discover something new. Sophistication, unique gift creations, handmade artistry, and exclusive style all come together in her products and stores.



## 22 Kirsten Tibballs

SAVOUR SCHOOL – MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Probably, the “queen of chocolate” needs little to no introduction. After struggling through health issues during her youth, Kirsten fell in love with chocolate during many travels in Europe. So much she decided to acquire chocolate skills to pass them on to different people around the world. With her online video training in pastry and chocolate, Kirsten became probably the most frequented reference on the planet. At Savour School in Brunswick, Kirsten also meets up with chocolatiers-to-be and artisans to teach them both, basic and advanced chocolate skills. It’s in her conversations with her many trainees where she developed a keen sense for failures and successes they may encounter on their entrepreneurial journey.



## 23 Stephen Trigg

LAUDEN CHOCOLATE – LEEDS, UK

A business born from chocolate lovers. Stephen Trigg and Sun, his wife, used to travel the world enjoying chocolates from all corners of the globe. Although enjoying great customer service and

experience in their city’s chocolateries, they were still missing that flavour punch they craved – Stephen and Sun began their journey as business owners and artisan chocolatiers following their motto: “It’s all about the chocolate!”. They turned their chocolate-making hobby into a successful business that managed to reach the skies – their chocolate creations have touched the taste buds of thousands of people in the UK, and travellers of British Airways, as they provided the airline with their on-flight chocolate assortment.



## 24 Olivier Willems

OLIVIER WILLEMS – OSTEND, BELGIUM

Ostend is called the “queen of the seaside” in Belgium. This vibrant fishermen’s town is known for its headstrong character and rough edge. This is the attitude that characterises Olivier Willems too, reflecting his roots on his chocolate work: bonbons reminiscent of the sea with their wavy shapes, or their rich palette of colours. Just like the sea looks different every time, Olivier Willems’ chocolates evolve. New herbs, new spices, new combinations. The influence of Ostend, the city by the sea, lets Olivier be constantly inspired by the environment in which he works. Top gastronomy ideas and daring dishes trigger him to push the boundaries, giving Willems the energy he needs to work hard every day.



## 25 Janice Wong

2AM DESSERT BAR / JANICE WONG PURE IMAGINATION / SOFTHAUS – SINGAPORE

Meet Asia’s most renowned food curator. Janice considers herself rather a creator of food experiences, and thinks outside more than one box. Accoladed “Asia’s Best Pastry Chef” by World’s 50 Best in 2014, she is an entrepreneur in heart and soul. An economics graduate, Janice got intrigued with food after doing a few farm visits in Australia. Only a few years after, she found herself captivated by chocolate and pastry, and made her way into the then-still very new pastry scene in Singapore. She opened the 2am: dessertbar, started her chocolate factory, launched her ice cream brand, Softhaus, and curated edible art experiences around the world.





Eric Rovira works on one of his artistic chocolate installations, inspired by the iconic science-fiction movie Star Wars



CHOCOLATIER



CHAPTER 1

# LEAD WITH THE “WHY”







**FOR THIS BOOK**, we interviewed many chocolatiers from around the world. When we asked them why they started their business and how they started it, the answers often led to similar experiences: "I discovered that chocolate is my passion. After acquiring the skills, I just started. First in a small garage. As I grew, I built my own production kitchen". Throughout their journey, many chocolatiers acquired better skills and better insights about their customers' needs and adapted their offerings accordingly.

If you're starting your chocolate journey today though, odds are that the marketplace is more crowded than 20 years ago. Starting today is quite different, so it will require a different approach. To lower your risks and increase your chances of success, you need to be well-armed and prepared to find your unique spot in the market.

As a starting chocolatier and entrepreneur, it's important to understand the "why" behind your business: your purpose. Why do you get up every morning? What is the driving force behind your hard work? Sure, making money is a pre-condition. But your "why" is way more relevant for customers to understand what they can find in your business or gain from your brand.

Knowing the reason behind the existence of your business will also guide you throughout the process of running this business. It will help you develop the right products that answer to your "why" and bring them to market in a unique way.

**"If you're going to do this to get rich, do something else. The first 10 years, we would definitely have been better off with our previous jobs. If that's your motivation, maybe don't start. You have to put a lot into it and not expect big luxuries, certainly not the first few years."**

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PATRICK MERTENS & INGE LIJNEN –  
CHOCOLADEHUIS BOON

# YOUR PURPOSE:

## WHY WOULD YOUR BUSINESS BE RELEVANT TO PEOPLE?

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Finding out the “why” can be a challenging starting point. But in today’s world, where many others compete in the same industry, it helps you gain clarity as you start or grow your chocolate business. What’s more, it helps you focus your plans and schedules, and develop the right products and experiences around this “why”.

To give you an example, PHIL KHOURY is a chocolatier and pastry chef at Harrods. He doesn’t just make chocolates or pastries. His products answer to “why” Harrods exists:

**“Harrods is all about creating a world of wonder for its customers. Things you’ve never seen or tasted before. Understanding that ‘why’ is crucial for us as chefs. It’s our guiding principle to create the products that already wow you from a first glimpse, and that overwhelm with taste and flavours you wouldn’t expect at first. Our world of wonder is also about bringing the best of the best. In practice, it guides us as chefs to source and pick top-class ingredients that elevate the product into an amazing experience.”**

It often happens that a company’s mission is mistaken with its purpose. To help you find your own, it’s good to have the difference in mind:

### PURPOSE

*The reason your business exists.*

### MISSION

*What your business is doing, and whom it’s doing it for.*

**“My vision is to give India a chocolate brand it can be proud of and introduce Indian chocolates to the world.”**

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NIKKI THAKKER – ÉNTISI

Take a look at how Ryan Foote, the entrepreneurial and creative brain behind Chocolates By Ryan L Foote, applied these concepts in real life.

Working as an artist on art installations at events, Ryan began exploring the combination of unexpected elements, such as food-centred artistic designs. These designs were the link between his passions: art, science and food.

Combined with his passions, Ryan’s background as a sculptor and designer helped him define his mission: inviting people to be part of the artistic world through the one thing everyone has a relationship with — food.

Parallel to his mission, he found his “why”, and was able to outline his purpose: creating unexpected experiences through beautiful designs that invite people to step into his creative world.

Like Ryan’s, your purpose and mission will (and should) be connected. Once found, they will help you discover what sets you apart from the competition.

**“At my core, I’m a creative person; chocolate is just how I manifest that creativity.”**

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ENRIC ROVIRA – ENRIC ROVIRA

## Questions you may ask yourself TO FIND YOUR “WHY”

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There are several models of questions that can help you find your purpose and the reason why your business exists. Here is a simple model of questions you can use:

- 1 What are you passionate about?**  
Think about the things that make you feel most fulfilled and energised. What activities or causes excite you?
- 2 What are your skills and strengths?**  
What do you do well? What unique skills do you have that others may not possess?
- 3 What problems or needs do you see in the world that you could address with your business?**  
What are the pain points of your potential customers or clients, and how could you help solve them?
- 4 What principles guide your life and your decision-making?**  
What do you stand for, and what is important to you?
- 5 What would be your positive impact on the world?**  
Examples could be: *“creating delights with a positive impact on the body and mind”, “making people enjoy sweet treats while reducing my footprint on the planet”, “bringing joy and happiness throughout my entire supply and production chain”.*

By reflecting on these questions and taking the time to clarify your purpose and why your business exists, you can develop a strong foundation for your brand and business model, and set yourself up for success as an entrepreneur.

# YOUR UNIQUENESS

## HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT?

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Your uniqueness is what sets you apart from the competition. In the world of business, this means companies succeed when they offer a product that solves a need or fills an empty market space. Knowing what makes you different will help you market your brand's value in the eyes of those who are paying for your products.

Your differentiating element can go beyond your products themselves. It could be found in any part of your brand, from your business model to your customer experience. Once you've found this uniqueness, it should be the centre of your brand identity, and also dictate the range of products you offer. If you're still looking for your uniqueness, try answering a consumer's most important question:

*Why should I pay (more) for this product?*

The answer to this question will be your differentiating factor, your business' biggest strength. To see it put into practice, think back to Chocolates By Ryan L Foote.

Ryan saw that some 3D-printed chocolate show pieces had gained the status of small works of art. These pieces intrigued people yet were still far away from them because of their status. So, he took the concept of these big chocolate sculptures and replicated it at a smaller scale. Ryan created something unique: beautiful miniature chocolate shapes to give as gifts or share in special occasions.

Ryan found his uniqueness by redefining an existing concept, turning his passion for art and design into high-end chocolate gifts that people could actually buy, share and enjoy. Up until today, his bonbons retain their unique value and represent the differentiating element his clients are happy to pay for.

### The "onliness" statement that helps you define your uniqueness

The "onliness" statement was first introduced by Marty Neumeier in his book *The Brand Gap*. It helps you to formulate your uniqueness in a concise way.

<b>WHAT?</b>	We are the only...	(describe what sets you apart)
<b>HOW?</b>	that...	(describe how you do business)
<b>WHO?</b>	for...	(describe your target group/s)
<b>WHERE?</b>	in...	(describe your geographic market)
<b>WHY?</b>	because...	(describe your purpose)
<b>WHEN?</b>	in times...	(describe your market environment and needs)

As mentioned earlier, a differentiating factor doesn't necessarily stem out of a business' products. Your uniqueness can be found in any part of your brand: your personal story and interests, your local environment, your way of working, how you deliver your product or even the customer experience you've created.

Wherever it may come from, remember your differentiating element is what makes you valuable in this world's competitive market. It will be the core of your entire business, the focus of your marketing efforts (Chapter 6), and what influences the products you create (Chapter 10).

The below example applies the onliness statement to MARY'S BRIGADEIRO and helps reconstruct the uniqueness of that business. To be closer to her partner, Mariane (Mary) Oliveira moved from Brazil to Canada. Here, the onliness statement shows Mary's brand extends beyond her skills to make great

brigadeiros. It shows there is an underlying purpose behind that business, a purpose that undoubtedly relates to her current success.

As you might have already noticed, the unique aspect of Mary's Brigadeiro did more than define her product assortment and the message of joy she spreads through her chocolate. Her uniqueness has shaped her entire customer experience. From her website to her physical shop, bright colours, warmth and friendliness take over. And when it comes to her staff training, they are all coached to express this brand experience in the way they serve customers too.

Even before you produce your first batch of chocolates, your uniqueness and purpose will help you design your brand and what you want your customers to experience through it. So, start your quest to find your uniqueness and let it help you get your business started!

		<b>The onliness statement to Mary's Brigadeiro</b>
<b>WHAT?</b>	We are the only...	black-woman-owned artisan brigadeiro business in Toronto
<b>HOW?</b>	that...	delights with the colours and flavours of Brazil
<b>WHO?</b>	for...	people who look for something different, tasty, new and exciting
<b>WHERE?</b>	in...	Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area
<b>WHY?</b>	because...	everyone deserves the joy that comes with good chocolate
<b>WHEN?</b>	in times...	when generosity and empathy can be hard to find



**“The brand stands for quality and freshness that evolve with trends — a culinary chocolate shop focused on progressive, culinary taste experiments. But we don’t follow all trends because sometimes it’s not feasible. And, anything we don’t make ourselves; we don’t offer. In the long run, I think that gives back more.”**

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OLIVIER WILLEMS – OLIVIER WILLEMS



Olivier Willems offers big gift boxes of up to 48 signature pralines, featuring culinary taste combinations



# YOUR OFFER

## WHAT WILL YOU CREATE, PRODUCE, AND SELL?

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Once you know why you're setting up your business and what makes it unique, it's time to approach your "what": your chocolate production as a piece of your brand puzzle.

This part of the process is about what you will be selling. Not only about the product or products themselves, but about what these stand for. Let's see what this looks like in reality.

Remember Ryan Foote? His chocolate designs are created either using modern sculpting techniques, 3D technology or custom-designed moulds. But "what" his brand offers is more than nice-looking chocolates, it's customised chocolate gifts with a *wowing* artistic appeal, completely tailored to his clients' needs. Chocolates By Ryan L Foote doesn't sell chocolates. It sells memorability.

By exploiting your differentiating element and building your product portfolio (Chapter 10) around it, you are not only impacting your chocolate creations, but giving a higher meaning to your business.

Below, you can find an overview\* of the typical products in a chocolate shop portfolio and some of their pros and cons.

Although the products mentioned above are the most often found in artisan chocolate businesses, don't be afraid to use your creative brainpower. You might come up with your own chocolate formats or hybrid shapes to make your offer unique. Think about Martin Diez' volcano. Martin invented a new type of bonbon that was featured thousands of times on Instagram. The volcano inspired chocolatiers to make their own versions and find ways to produce it in an efficient way that worked for them. Now, take the time to think back to your purpose and uniqueness. Both can inspire you to create confectionery products that help you stand out from the crowd.

Besides confectionery creations, many chocolatiers also expand their offer with products that serve as bridges between seasons. Think of ice cream or gelato during hot seasons, periods when confectionery sales tend to drop. Or think of a menu of hot chocolates for take-out, to boost your sales during the colder seasons.

Product category	Pros	Cons
<b>Truffles</b>	Popularity, variety, versatility	Shelf life, higher cost, temperature sensitivity
<b>Chocolate bars</b>	Popularity, variety, convenience	Higher competition, standardisation, ingredient quality
<b>Enrobed bonbons</b>	Versatility, aesthetics, packaging, quality, production convenience	Less investment, skills needed, shelf life
<b>Moulded bonbons</b>	Versatility, aesthetics, packaging, quality	Complexity, cost, shelf life
<b>Open bonbons</b>	Visual appeal, variety, convenience, texture experience	Delicacy, complexity, shelf life
<b>Chocolate mignardises</b>	Visual appeal, variety, convenience, shelf life	Shelf space, storage
<b>Chocolate dragées</b>	Variety, shelf life, snackable	Investment, competition
<b>Small seasonal pieces</b>	Focus, value	Skill, cost

\*You will find a detailed version of this table in Chapter 10 of this book, under the "Typical chocolate products" subtitle.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

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Before starting or growing your chocolate business, think about the reason “why” you want to start or continue one. The “why” is your business’ life purpose. As such, it should reveal why your company is relevant in this industry. You can take a look at how multinational brands express their purpose and find the inspiration you need.

As an example, think of Volvo, the car brand. Their purpose is to “make travel easier and safer for everyone”. This is why their entire brand exists. And it determines *what* the company produces: cars that are safe for individuals and families, protecting them from hazards on the road.

Just like with any brand in any type of industry, finding your “why” will drive the development of your entire business.

Next to the “why”, the “how” will be the way you decide to run this business. Next to your purpose and your uniqueness, the “how” will help you shape your customer experience: the way you want people to feel when in contact with your brand.

As a last element of this trifecta, you should also consider the “what”. Your “what” is the mix or assortment of products and services you’ll develop to be part of your offer. Your products should also embody your purpose and your uniqueness.

What does “leading with why” look like in real life? See how chocolatiers from around the world found their purpose and uniqueness and turned it into chocolate products.

### Your purpose

It might be that your differentiating factor has been with you since the moment you thought about starting an artisan chocolate business. It might also be the case that you’re struggling to find the purpose of your brand-new (or existing) company. Whichever the case, it might be of help seeing how other chocolatiers from across the globe worked to find their purpose — or bumped into it unexpectedly!

MARIANE, the owner of Mary’s Brigadeiro, started small. She produced everything by hand and sold her first micro-scale batches of products among her partner’s family and friends in Canada. Regardless of the scale at which she began her entrepreneurial journey; she knew the reason why she had started her business:

**“I think of what exactly my business is leaving to the world, and what’s the impact it’s having right now. When you open something, you have a purpose in mind. Making chocolates, shipments of happiness,**

**it’s a purpose. But as time goes by, the purpose and mission can change. So now, one of the things I can see is how the business is impacting women’s lives. Women who come here with nothing, to start, to grow back again their confidence.”**

Another impressive chocolatier and creative mind at the helm of her own business is JANICE WONG. Inspired by late-night food offers, she crafted a unique concept for Singapore’s market. She created an experience where cocktails and drinks are not the only thing served long after dinner time, and opened the doors of 2am: dessertbar. Today, she is also the proud owner of Janice Wong Pure Imagination chocolates and her signature ice cream shop, Softhaus. As a chocolate entrepreneur who has brought to life chocolate businesses in different formats, she feels strongly about the importance of being consistent with the reason behind the existence of your business:



**“We have grown, but even with much bigger sales of our products now, we still produce everything by hand. That is one of the most important aspects of our business. Our whole business is based on artisanal chocolate, and I want to be perceived as such.”**

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MIROSLAW PELCZAR – M. PELCZAR CHOCOLATIER

**“When you make a brand, it’s always about the philosophy, the vital part. You need to make sure that you don’t change every month, you know, stick to it. Stick to that one thing that you believe in.”**

Challenge yourself to find the reason your business exists. [KIRSTEN TIBBALLS](#) is the creator of Savour School in Australia. Known as the “queen of chocolate” and an international influencer, Kirsten reminds you to make your chocolate dream come true by following a practical step-one:

**“The important thing at the start is to pick a style and a mission statement for your business, and to follow that through, from your product to your packaging. I think that everybody should have an open mind going into it and think of their mission statement and what they’re wanting to sell as a full picture to their consumers.”**

As a chocolatier or entrepreneur, once you’ve uncovered what drives you to own your chocolate business, you will be a step closer to pinpointing that one thing that makes you stand out from the rest: your uniqueness.