

Get inspired

HOW I DID IT...

CHARLIE STOCKWELL, 34, DESIGNER AT WARR'S HARLEY-DAVIDSON, LONDON

My art teacher helped me decide my career path as a kid. I studied graphic design and I always thought I'd do it at college, but she put me off. No matter how good I thought my art was, she pressured me to change it. I thought that art should be free, and that if I changed it, it wouldn't still be mine. That wasn't what I was about. **I was already a Saturday boy at the Warr's Harley-Davidson dealership at the time,** making tea and sweeping the floor. When I finished my A-Levels, I asked for a full-time position. I've been there ever since.

The only other job I've had was sitting in a basement of a Thai restaurant squeezing sausages with Thai ladies from midnight until six in the morning. Honestly, I did it just to impress a girl. Her family owned it, and I was doing whatever I could to get her to date me.

My brother used to just sit at home all day and play Football Manager.

For two years, that's all he did. That, and tell us he wanted to be a football coach. My mum was really worried that he'd never make it, but she didn't push him to do anything he didn't want to. Now he's a top coach at Fulham and has his own academy.

I have to make every person I work for feel like they're my one and only customer. And when you've got 15 to 20 projects a year, that's tricky. I give them 24-hour access to me no matter where in the world I am.

Come to me with £50,000 and we can do business.

The weirdest request? A guy who asked for a motorbike made out of silk and rocks. Or the guy that wanted his bike to take inspiration from a cigar. Or the one that wanted his to look like a panther.

I'm forbidden to tell you what footballers I've made motorbikes for. I've done a lot, but their clubs make them sign contracts that state they can never ride one.

I need organised chaos to work effectively. If it was clinically clean in my workshop, it would distract me. I need music playing, people walking in and out and being among it to work productively. I hate the quiet.

If you want to work for me, you need to have common sense. A lot of this means working on the spot and solving problems. The technical knowledge will only come with experience so don't turn up if you're not willing to pay attention to everyone around you.

Chilli is our tiny chihuahua. It's definitely not a biker's dog.

I urge you to watch a documentary called Britten: Backyard Visionary. It's about a guy from New Zealand called John Britten who built a bike and took it to a Daytona race in the US. He designed it all himself, and built it all by hand because he lived in such a remote part of the world. I've watched it over and over again. Anybody would get inspired by seeing a man put his heart and soul into a project like that.

Forget Route 66. Every man needs to take a road trip on the Stelvio Pass in Italy once in their lives. The scenery is one thing, but the roads are sublime. When you reach the top, you can look down and see these winding roads that look like a plate of spaghetti.

Getting kidnapped in Thailand was perhaps the most frightening thing to happen to me. If you head over there and you see a light blue Toyota Hiace taxi with fluorescent green Fido Dido and Mickey Mouse stickers on the back, do not get in it.

I spend a lot of time in Stockholm. My girlfriend lives there. Man, you've gotta go. Get yourself a barbecue, some mates and a cool box filled with beers, and find a patch of greenery near the water to just chill out on. In the summer, the sun comes up at 3am. It's better than any bar.

I'm up at 5am every day. I need to chill out and gather my thoughts before the chaos of my day. You need at least an hour like that to help a day of creativity.

Success is an achievement that I know makes my parents proud.

Charlie works at King's Road Customs at Warr's Harley-Davidson dealership, London

