



# Caroline, Lil'Town

By Marie-Helene Westholm-Knebel,  
for OUTSIDE THE BOX  
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**Welcome on OUTSIDE THE BOX, and thank you for answering our questions, Caroline! Can you please tell us a little more about yourself and your professional journey?**

My name is Caroline, I am 45 and I live in a little village next to Bordeaux. Lil'Town is an adventure I started on my own as a micro-enterprise a few months ago.

To be honest, I am originally a PhD engineer in the food-processing industry. Nothing to do with what I am doing now! However I had to re-think my plans and my entire life after an accident at work, and I discovered new opportunities in the digital sphere.

So, after a professional retraining I worked for ten years to design websites for large scale companies as part of an open source business, and I developed a comprehensive expertise in web management: website, SEO, social networks...all these years nurtured me with new and exciting knowledge.



## What can you tell us about Lil'Town, and what triggered you to launch this project?

In a few words, the aim of Lil'Town is to highlight the work of fashion designers and promote hand-crafted skills, eco-responsible values and the pleasure of a job well done.

The trigger? I worked for a while for a successful marketplace which unfortunately had to close as it could not manage its own success. The business was bought by Etsy, and they had to let a lot of creators go without providing them with proper back-up options.

My challenge since Lil'Town is up and running is to get their work known and to develop a valuable community that evolves around the same values of commitment, authenticity and sustainability.

## How do you get in touch with the different artists and creators you highlight on your site: do you have any specific criteria, especially some sustainability ones, to proceed?

Lil'Town is still very young but we've been through various steps already. I first met the artists on Facebook groups or from word of mouth. Then many found us via social media and we had to put a filter in place to make sure we do not accept those who do not respect our values.

At last, I am now working on a charter of best practices to be applied by the artists, to make sure they commit to the community's course of action and code of conduct. I believe this is an essential step to make sure the site grows along the right lines and becomes credible and relevant.

## Why did you focus on the development of an ethical and sustainable e-commerce especially?

I did enjoy creating websites, but with time I fell that working in a digital service company was not the right thing for me. I wanted to focus on my own development, to try new things and find in my work the passion I experienced at the beginning.

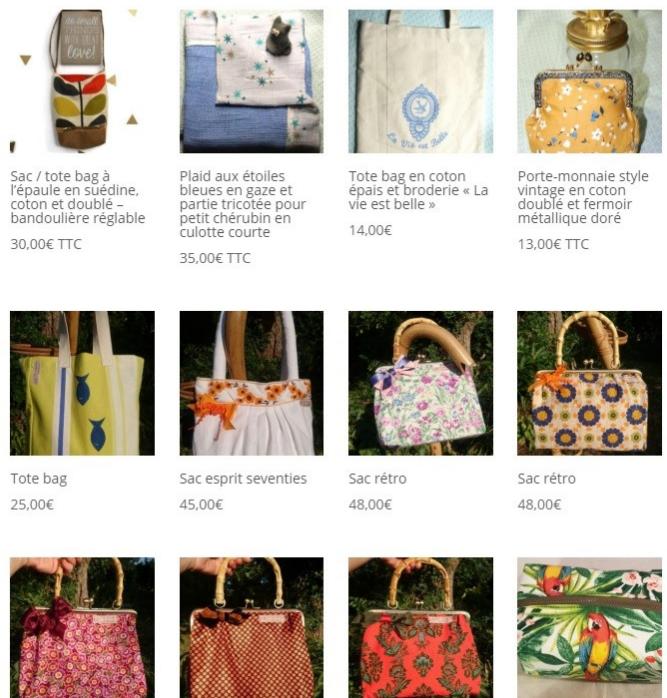
I wanted to create, innovate, manage and carry on projects. I had the desire to fight for values that seemed to me more and more important over time.

I also juggled between my work and my true passion: creating objects. Next to my work I would for instance spend my evenings creating jewellery and accessories for people around me.

I just did not want to do basic jewels: I wanted to see fashion and creation from a different perspective and take into account critical aspects in my work, for example my passion for home-made items, health- and environment-friendly materials, eco-responsibility, recycling, zero-waste...

*Lil'Town*

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The “fast fashion” industry is quite ruthless, and the work of big global brands generally go against the principles of sustainability by promoting rapid production and consumption of clothing and accessories.

### What would you advise consumers to change that?

The timing is right : I just wrote a blog post on this topic ([available here in French](#)).  
In a few words: don't follow trends but create your own image instead.

I plan to write an entire series of blog posts about this topic and include advice from my personal experience. A friend of mine, who is also called Caroline by the way, proposed to participate and will also write some articles as guest on my blog. She is the archetype of an “eco-responsible fashionista”.

And she shares my vision of the ideal closet: a few but timeless central pieces and well-thought-through accessories that represent who you are and that can transform an outfit based on the circumstances.

No need for a fierce consumerism but instead, buy smart and adapt your basics to the theme of the day!

### What has been the hardest part when launching Lil'Town ?

The hardest for me has been to promote the platform and its values. Finding new designers goes actually quite well and pretty naturally. But it is not that simple to justify ethical choices unfortunately, for example I need to explain that “feeling pretty” is nice but that it should not compromise the life of children in Asia, and it can be hard. This is why I am attending a training in digital marketing and working on different projects along this line.

Money is also the sinews of war, one needs some to get known. Unfortunately, regular investors are generally not keen to support digital projects, especially those commercial ones such as ethical fashion. For this reason, I consider starting a crowdfunding campaign after the summer. I do believe a lot more in small investments from committed people rather than from impersonal banks.

**We know each other as we are both part of Live Mentor (a French, online-based academia which provides specialized courses in digital marketing, social media platforms, copywriting...).**

### What does this training provide you with as an entrepreneur? What advice would you give to those who would want to launch a project, especially if specialized in sustainability?

Live Mentor totally changed my understanding of entrepreneurship. When I started Lil'Town, I was very stressed, after all I did plunged in this adventure all by myself! I was mostly worried by the commercial aspects, with this stupid impostor's syndrome stuck in my mind.





Even though I had managed projects for large companies for years before, I could not hide behind the company that employed me anymore. Being an entrepreneur is a very frontal experience.

But thanks to Live Mentor I managed to “desacralize” sales principles, but also to understand that I didn’t have to play the merchant but instead take ownership of my project and talk about it heartfully.

I would advise to communicate well, not to become too perfectionist, and accept to launch the project without waiting to become an expert in the field. Without any doubt, these are the first advice I would give to any new entrepreneur. Move on one step after the other, and do not fear to fail.

#### **Do you want to share anything else with the readers of OUTSIDE THE BOX?**

Do not be afraid to recreate yourself, this is key as an entrepreneur. Continuously recycle your project and let it evolve. I have now met many entrepreneurs, and after a few months all our projects had evolved, and they still do.

A business, it is like a “baby”, but it is also a “living thing”: it grows, it changes, it is sometimes sick, but it also carries a lot of joy and victories. So do not hesitate to jump in and keep up: it is really worth it.

*Retrouvez aussi Caroline et [Lil'Town](#) sur [Instagram](#) et [Facebook](#).*