



The Search For Our Prime Directive:

Paul Briske Reflects on his Career, Experience, and Entrepreneurial Journey...

Ink By Geeks, For Geeks!

Adelaide's pop-culture tattoo studio specialising in colourful geeky tattoos inspired by comics, manga, anime, movies, tv and all your favourite nostalgia.

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Two years ago we opened *Infinite Worlds Tattoo and Design*, with a focus on pop-culture, anime, cartoons, video games, and comics. That's the sort of experience you get when walking into the space— it's not what you'd expect, and has made us the nerdiest tattoo studio in South Australia.

Expression of creativity is an evolving thing for an artist. Taking art classes as a kid, drawing my own comics that evolved into self published web series, and eventually pursuing fine art at UniSA each contributed to honing my craft... but also developed my ability to *share* meaning with others through illustration.

In 2015 I began my tattoo apprenticeship, during which I met Kacey and we eventually founded *Infinite Worlds* together. The amalgam of popular culture, art, and entrepreneurship that is a professional tattoo artist is surreal, and I can say with certainty the last two years have been the most fun, rewarding, and productive of my career.

Where your typical tattoo shop has dark colors, skulls, and heavy metal blasting in the background— *Infinite Worlds* studio's walls are white, pink, and blue.

The most intense situation of my career is what led to Kacey and I leaving the studio where we both worked, to open our own shop. We were depressed, we hated our bizarre working conditions, and were growing tired of our boss not valuing the asset and opportunity artists can leverage for the business.

The boiling point was reached, and we left— rather being our own bosses than work for someone else and potentially have the same problems happen again. Since then, everything we do is aimed at providing a unique and enjoyable experience for our customers. This has worked out pretty well for the business, but also let us build something we actually care about.

That air cover as an owner/artist allows me to work without friction, and eliminates a lot of wasted energy or time. That's one of the benefits of having such a niched and focused studio, the customer's experience is aligned with their own interests. Approaching every new task and project with 100% enthusiasm and optimism lets me move with confidence, remain adaptive, and most importantly *attentive*. We're real geeks, just like our customers. We have a welcoming atmosphere and a brand that understands your tattoo is going to be something really special.

My hope is that enthusiasm rubs off, and people can melt away any hesitation they might bring in with them. Like I said, our space is unexpected for a tattoo studio, and we want it to represent what our customers love most. For that reason, it's always a place where you can engage with us on any topic, and share what excites you.

I want *Infinite Worlds* to be the first words people think of when talking about geeky tattoos.

When challenge is your motivation, it just feels right. Obviously keeping the business healthy and on its feet moving forward is a necessity, but it's

not the driving factor in each of my actions. Having the opportunity every day to perform at my peak ability, and create a new awesome piece of tattoo art is the fuel that keeps the rest of the engine running.

That constant movement has been a big inspiration with the physicality of the business too. Where your typical tattoo shop has dark colors, skulls, and heavy metal blasting in the background— *Infinite Worlds* studio's walls are white, pink, and blue.

We care about the same stuff our customers do.

We display action figures, have arcade cabinets, play synth wave and video game soundtracks... and when you'd think twice about walking into a traditional tattoo studio for a Pokémon tattoo, we will ask *why* that *Pokémon* is your favorite.

The experience really doesn't stop with the tattoo. In fact, tattooing arguably isn't even the headlining act. The studio is clearly a haven for geeks and all of nerdism, and we've spend a lot of effort to make sure it's always a comfortable atmosphere. But our greatest advantage is that both myself and Kacey are 100% geeks. We care about the same stuff our customers do, so the background and memories concerning the subject matter for a piece end up contributing to the process. We were also each established artists in our respective fields *before* we started tattooing. That does give us an edge up, since we're comfortable and proficient at a range of other artistic mediums and techniques. So your stylistic requests can be met and exceeded with ease.

Support the community that supports us.

After all, anime, video games, fantasy, and comics have hosted some of the most outstanding and celebrated art in modern history.

Geeky tattoos are nothing new, and while there are plenty of artists across the state that do similar work, *Infinite Worlds* is the only studio that specializes in it. For the moment at least, within the tattoo industry in Australia we are unique.

There is another geek tattoo studio in Sydney we keep friendly with, and we make a point to engage and contribute to other nerd and pop culture oriented businesses in the area. Connecting a bridge through the

creativity and imagination that interest us is the best way we can support the community that supports us.

Growing and building a presence within that community at scale has always been one of our goals, not just as a tattoo studio but *Infinite Worlds* as a brand that represents and supports the geek culture we love!

Right now we're focusing on Facebook and Instagram, where the former is robust enough to engage with people on an individual level, organize appointments, and reach out to clients. Because we're *not* a typical tattoo shop, our content aims to entertain and bring people together. This means documenting what we're doing in the studio at any given time, polls, and a bunch of other fun stuff that we don't always have the time for.

Essentially our target audience is geeks and nerds like us, which means anyone from 18 to 40. Conversations can go from pop-culture conventions, to video games, or even just an old TV show someone loves from their childhood.

Optimism and positivity comes from perspective.

We geeks are everywhere it seems. Building an audience that helps to promote itself, and eventual the studio, is an endeavor. We look at the local niched business community and how other industries navigate the nerd sector. One of our neighbors is the *Brainbackr* Boardgame Bar and Cafe. They've forged a tremendously positive community, and support many different subcultures within their space... hosting regular RPG nights, LGBTQIA+ events, and a select few featured products.

A lot of what our contemporary peers do right, I feel is founded on a dedication to service. Treating people kindly, and making sure that any patron of the studio has a fantastic experience is a core element of how I do business. If that positive intent can make its way into every action, choice, and decision, then I think we'll continue on course.

That optimism and positivity comes from perspective. Watershed moments can define and add clarity to your path, part of the reason why these last couple years since opening *Infinite Worlds* have been so great is because I know it's what I've been meant to do.

Not too long ago I was working a sales job, and had more or less given up on art. This was before I decided to go back to University. My Dad was diagnosed with cancer, and I started to reorganize my own priorities...

mainly using the 'life is short' method. So I enrolled within the fine arts program as a way to force myself to place art at the center of my life again.

I didn't really enjoy university that much, but it did get me working on my art again. I learned a greater range of art styles, techniques, and artists which is knowledge I continue to draw from regularly.

Being able to keep art central to my life, and incorporate that into my work, goes a long way to succeeding through stressful events. For instance, tattooing at *AVCon* the past two years has been a big project. Organizing multiple aspects simultaneously was a must— dealing with equipment transport, insurance, bookings, structuring client visits, producing the merchandise to sell, renting additional equipment, and of course advertising.

Thankfully we worked together to get our merch sorted well enough in advance this past year. Our products like sticker packs and the like can be tedious and time consuming to prep, but they sell well and have a tremendous response from customers, so it's worth it.

Part of 'dedication to service' being a core element in my business dealings comes in handy for large venues like conventions. Organizing all of that equipment requires *a lot* of communication, which I tend to keep on top of quite well... even during events it's rare for me to take longer than a day to respond to e-mail.

Our advertising model also takes advantage of our exceptional communication. When we successfully convert a lead and get someone interested in working with us... that means we need to talk about how they can get an awesome tattoo about something they hold dear. Obviously, this requires constant communication, and keeping individual conversations going throughout the project.

The way I look at it is using the unattainable triangle or venn-diagram of Quality, Speed, and Price. No matter what the business transaction, or client, two of these elements are going to be within your strengths. My view is that exceptional communication is the only tool that can make up for that missing third.

If you can keep your clients up to date with projects, be transparent by letting them know where you're at, and assure them of how important *their* project is to you... it's manageable to keep things moving smoothly. Most people get angry or frustrated when they're left in the dark. Likewise, when they're regularly and effectively informed, they become much more calm and understanding.

One of these days I'd like to write my own detective novel.

Whenever things get negative, you can count on a communication breakdown as at least part of the culprit.

Mitigating stress and having a healthy level of energy to pour into a business, not just during peak events or projects, is a necessity. I think this is extra important for any profession that also requires creativity, art, or being on the cutting edge of popular culture.

To relax I find listening to music to be a great way to wind down and work easier. Browsing through YouTube is also a part of my decompression regimen, as watching clips from movies and TV can be both inspirational and entertaining. The platform is also a great place for me to keep up to date with pop-culture, stay informed, or engage with the stuff that I'm interested in just for personal enjoyment.

Similarly Instagram is a fantastic tool for exploration fo new artists and styles. I've developed a habit of saving posts I find particularly inspirational, or if I see something I might find useful one day.

A bit farther from running an art related business, and working as a full time artist... I've recently gotten back into life theatre, which is something I've taken a six year hiatus from. I also love baseball, which is something no one expects!

I read a lot of hardboiled detective fiction, my favorite author being Raymond Chandler. One of these days I'd like to write my own detective novel.

One of the things I wish someone would have told the younger Paul, is not to fear specializing. Embracing a niche has allowed me to cut out the work that wasn't going to be missed anyway, and lets me have a greater artistic integrity... meaning I'm happier, and it shows in my work.

When I first started tattooing I felt held back to some extent, because my thinking was *"I'm already an established artist, capable of doing more than I'm being given"*. I was stuck doing the work that was given to me, and wasn't nurtured to pursue the challenge of following my specialty. Retrospectively, had I followed that path, I would have been much more successful earlier on.