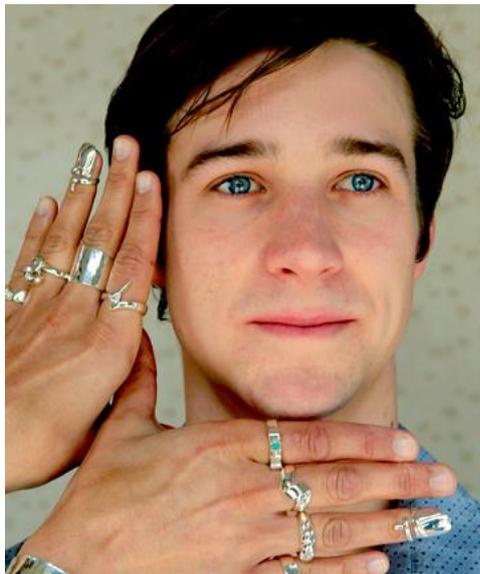


## Jeweller rings the changes

### Online venture reflects changing face of retail

MICHELLE SUTTON



**ALL THAT GLITTERS:** Nelson goldsmith Benjamin Clark with examples of his work. He is starting his own business after starting as an apprentice with Jens Hansen seven years ago.

### Relevant offers

Twenty-three-year-old Benjamin Clark is putting his golden touch to the test.

The gold and silver smith is launching his own online jewellery business, specialising in custom-made pieces, within the next month.

The new venture, Benjamin Black Goldsmith, is part of a trend of businesses operating in Nelson without a shop front or physical presence. It follows business consultant Laura McIntrye saying the number of customers getting a website or using social media had doubled every year, with hundreds of businesses having an online presence since she started in 2005.

Mr Clark started working for Jens Hansen in Nelson when he was just 16-years-old, where he completed his four-year apprentice, but said his business would have unlikely started had he been forced to follow the traditional route and open a physical store.

“I don’t think I would have been able to. The overheads are just too high and the store front mainly only attracts a lot of repairs, rather than new orders.”

The former Waimea College planned to generate orders for custom-made jewellery by his website, [benjaminblack.co.nz](http://benjaminblack.co.nz), blog and social media presence, which had already proved a success - he clinched two orders within a day of launching his Facebook page last month.

His [Facebook page](#) displayed pictures of jewellery designs, then was used to finalise the product order, he said.

“I made these fingernail rings then I put the pictures on facebook and used it to communicate with this American woman which led to two ring orders.

“The inquiry happened overnight so I don’t really see it as a big problem that I don’t have a store.”

The young jeweller is starting the joint venture with his partner, Amy Cunningham who was helping to create a digital media presence to generate business. The website would be launched within the next month.

“I have started [writing a blog](#) and it’s got a following already,” Mr Clark said.

He hoped to take on an apprentice jeweller within the next year, giving someone else the same start he had benefited from.

“Part of the motivation for starting this business is to bring on someone else and train them up as a jeweller, allowing someone to benefit like I did.’