

From \$2k-\$20k: How Ash Bush 10x'd her shop sales in 30 days

—

Shanna Skidmore:

Oh my goodness, Ashley, I am so excited to have you sharing your blueprint story today. It's so good to have a shop owner's perspective, and I just think people are going to love everything that you're sharing. But before all that, for those who don't know you, will you just share who you are, what you do, and how long you've been in business?

Ash Bush:

Yes. So I own a calligraphy pen shop. I'm a calligrapher. I also work on wedding goods. That's kind of how I got to where I am. But I mostly spend my time operating the shop. So I sell calligraphy pens, accessories, notepads, calligraphy kits, just anything to do with lettering. And how long have I been in business? Since 2014, so what is that, seven years?

Shanna Skidmore:

Doing the math, five years, about five years.

Ash Bush:

I went to art school, so math is hard.

Shanna Skidmore:

Okay. Ashbush.com. So everybody can go there.

Ash Bush:

Yes.

Shanna Skidmore:

Yes. Okay. Did you start with paper goods only, and calligraphy paper goods?

Ash Bush:

Yes.

Shanna Skidmore:

When did you move into the shop side?

Ash Bush:

Oh, yeah. So that was totally unplanned, really organic. I have a degree in graphic design, so I was in the art world already, and I got into the lettering typography side and was working on

wedding stuff. And then for Christmas, actually, my husband made me a calligraphy pen. He turned it on the lathe out of wood, and I posted it to Instagram. I mean, I had 500 followers or something. And someone was like, "Oh, that's cool. Could you make me one?" I was like, "Oh. Yeah, probably." So we made one and then it just kind of snowballed. I always thought that... I guess I never seriously considered it as a part of my business. I thought it was like, "Oh, this is just something I'm doing," but I kept focusing on paper goods and the wedding stuff, thinking that was where it was going to be going for me. And so I never really took the time to really think about what I was doing.

Shanna Skidmore:

Tell us when all that changed.

Ash Bush:

So that changed when I was going through the Blueprint Model. Yeah. I don't remember what section it is, but it's the-

Shanna Skidmore:

Is it two, week two, I think? Yeah.

Ash Bush:

Where we go through... Well, I was going through my numbers.

Shanna Skidmore:

Yeah. The 80/20 rule, all that?

Ash Bush:

Yes.

Shanna Skidmore:

It think it's week two. Yeah.

Ash Bush:

And I thought I had a pretty good grasp on my numbers. I wasn't clueless. And I got to the 80/20 rule and I was like, "There's no way that's true." I was just like, "It's probably 50/50." I really viewed my business as I'm doing wedding... I had my toe kind of dipped in everything. I was just all over the place, but I really was wedding, paper goods, that's going to be it for me just because one project maybe had a bigger number than one sale in my shop. So I think I was a little bit disillusioned by that big number. And so I thought, "Oh, okay, this is going to be the moneymaker for me." And then so I sat down, I crunched my numbers, and I was shocked. It was 90/10, my numbers. It was crazy. I was like, "You have got to be kidding me." And the wedding paper goods were only 10% of my business.

Shanna Skidmore:

Yeah, and taking 90% of your time.

Ash Bush:

Yes, I'm spending all my time doing calligraphy for envelopes, and designing, and all that stuff. And I was probably spending 15, 20% of my time on the shop and it was making me all of my money. I felt so dumb.

Shanna Skidmore:

I remember it was mind-blowing.

Ash Bush:

It was.

Shanna Skidmore:

"I do not think this is true," and, "Oh, my goodness." So what did you do? I mean, did you just start chopping things? I mean, what did you do?

Ash Bush:

Yeah. It was a shift. It took a while for me to kind of shift my thinking, because I felt I had a little bit of a direction I was going in. Honestly, I thought the calligraphy pen stuff was just going to fall to the wayside eventually. And so I had to really sit and think, "I gotta rework everything." So I cut way back on paper goods and gave myself a limit to how many I would take. And I really started to kind of fine tune my products. Probably the biggest change was how much time I spent, because I wasn't giving my shop the kind of time it deserved. And I mean, it was already making me more money than I'd even realized. But when I shifted to spending the right time on the right things, it was just like the wheels started turning and everything just kind of took off from there.

Shanna Skidmore:

I love how you said spending the right time on the right things. Yes. Okay. You don't have to share your numbers, but would you be willing to share your percentages of what your monthly sales increased by? I mean, was it double, triple?

Ash Bush:

It was much more than that. So I was probably making a couple to a few thousand a month before. Once I started really implementing a thoughtful strategy, and spending time on the right things, and researching my product, and marketing, because I had a new client now. Who I thought I was targeting before was totally different now. So once I got that all down, I went

from a couple thousand a month, I started having \$20,000 worth of sales in a month. And this was a pretty fast change. This wasn't years. This was within months. It was crazy.

Shanna Skidmore:

I mean, this is... It's amazing. I mean, I'm just so glad we're sharing this story because when this happens, I think it feels like a dramatic story, but this is happening when you put the right time into the right things. And I think so often... I love how you said, we think that big ticket items are the most profitable, but that's not always the way that it is.

Ash Bush:

No. And it's funny because I looked at it on the surface like that. Because a wedding client could be one to two thousand dollars for a project. So I'm thinking that's where it's going to be. But when I went and looked at my shop, I mean, I have these little pen pillows, they're little tiny rests for my pens. They're the cheapest thing in my shop. They're only \$3. And I was like, "This is a... That's the thing that I sell the most of, and it's thousands and thousands go out the door. And I was just oblivious because I got fooled by the big number, thinking that that's where it was all going to come from.

Shanna Skidmore:

Yeah. I literally remember hearing and I was just so pumped up just talking to you because it's an incredible story, and it's an incredible transformation. I mean, would you say though, I know we didn't talk about this before, but I would be interested because so much of your time was going to doing the custom work, the calligraphy, all that, and now you've shifted it to your shop. Do you feel there's a good balance there? Do you feel you've - because it had such little time before, that you were able to kind of start with it being more structured? Does that make sense?

Ash Bush:

Yeah. Yeah. My shop, just giving it time, it's really, really evolved. I mean, things change and markets change, and things go up and down, but it's turned into something that I would have never imagined it to be. I mean, even some of the products that I've created now, like thinking back those couple of years ago, when I started the Blueprint Model and where I thought I was and where I've thought I was headed is just so crazy different.

Shanna Skidmore:

Yeah. But good, and amazing.

Ash Bush:

Yes, it is.

Shanna Skidmore:

Everything you make is so incredible. I love your story so much.

Ash Bush:

Thanks.

Shanna Skidmore:

Okay. So we always end these interviews and it's my favorite question. Love everything you shared but what would you say in all that, or just could be something completely different, the best thing that you've learned about money?

Ash Bush:

The best thing that I have learned about money, get out of debt. For me, it was like, "I can't let money run my life and make the decisions for me." Being a creative, going through the Blueprint Model, I was learning what motivates me. And money's not a motivator for me. It's creativity and flexibility and stuff. So for me to experience success, I can't have money driving the wheel. My bills can't be who's calling the shots on things. So it was really important for us to get out of debt, or to minimize it as much as we could so that there was the flexibility to start a business, where you got to have months where you're maybe not making anything. And then I had the freedom to be creative and it felt more genuine. And that's when I felt my products kind of taking off because I was really making stuff that I loved, instead of kind of forcing it because I felt like I needed to pay the bills.

Shanna Skidmore:

Yeah. I think that's so good. I feel the exact same way. I feel like debt can chain you, and it creates pressure, and if you're trying to start a business, you want to minimize the pressure. So I love that. Thank you so much for sharing your story. You're amazing. I think this is going to motivate so many people, hopefully, to look at where they're spending their time versus what's making them the most money, and such a good story. Thank you so much for hanging out.

Ash Bush:

Yeah. You're welcome. Thanks for having me.