



T-shirt eGuide

written by Kalilah Wright

**Tips you
should
know
before
starting a
t-shirt
company.**

COPYRIGHT

© THE TEE CLASS, LLC

T-SHIRT eGUIDE

THETEECLASS.COM

Copyright © 2020 by Kalilah Wright of www.ownerofmess.com

All Rights Reserved.

You are welcome to print a copy of this document for your personal use. Other than that, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the author. Requests to the author and publisher for permission should be addressed to the following email: owner@ownerofmess.com

Limitation of liability/disclaimer of warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this guide and workbook, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this document and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for particular purpose.

No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, promoters, or written sales materials.

The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Due to the dynamic nature of the Internet, certain links and website information contained in this publication may have changed. The author and publisher make no representations to the current accuracy of the web information shared.



contents

CREATIVITY

- 03** Foreword- the history before the t-shirt company.
- 04** Introduction- birth of the t-shirt business, how I transitioned into the field.
- 05** Less is More- creativity isn't needed to start a great t-shirt company.

COMMITMENT

- 05** Know yourself- why are you starting a t-shirt company?
- 05** Competition- if you are afraid of competition, this may not be for you.
- 07** Don't get lost- there are many things that will distract you, stay the course.

MARKET

- 07** Marketing is key- this is where the money is, pay attention.
- 10** Checklist- figure out if this is for you.



Foreword

MY JOURNEY

I don't think when I embarked on this journey that I had an idea of how big of an impact my career in t-shirt design would have on my life. I just wanted to design a couple of shirts, make some money and be on my way. Now, I am a full-time entrepreneur working for myself for the past 3 years. I am an architect and designer by trade. I have a Masters in Architecture from Morgan State University and a Bachelors in Art and Design from Pennsylvania State University. I was born in Jamaica W.I., raised in Brooklyn, New York. I migrated to the United States at the age of 4 and I have always been design driven. I remember the days in third grade, in Ms. Spain's art class when I discovered I could draw. It was an assignment where we had to draw a fish. I focused on the details and added shadows and used the graphite in the pencil to detail the head and skeletal cage of its spinal column. The teacher and all the students were so impressed. I discovered I had a talent. I adapted a love for art and decided to explore my love by attending Arts and Design High School; where I was first introduced to Architecture. Once I discovered the profession, I wanted to do nothing else but be an architect. Most of the young girls ventured into fashion design, but I loved wearing a construction hat and being one of the only women on a construction site. My love of art then turned to a love of architecture and I was committed to becoming a licensed architect. Architecture led me to Baltimore, Maryland in which I have worked for many prestigious design firms. I never lost my love for fashion and art, which eventually lead me to venture into retail architecture. In 2013, I landed my dream job of being an architect for sports retail company, Under Armour. I was excited to merge the two things I loved the most, fashion and architecture. I was responsible for store planning

and design. As a new store was being built, I would help a team to design the interior and exterior of the store.

In 2015, Baltimore's uprising occurred. An African American man, Freddie Gray, was detained by police and suffered injuries in which he later succumbed to. This caused riots throughout Baltimore. As the city was in an uproar, I too was going through personal struggles in which I wanted to be vocal and scream, but felt like my voice was being silenced. The birth of my company happened during this time. I created a t-shirt company that gave a voice to the voiceless, Mess in a Bottle.

Intro to tees.

I started my company with less than \$500 and I am convinced you too can do the same. In the age of social media and the internet, everyone should

have some sort of side hustle and business. I'm sure like me, you are probably diving into this t-shirt business to just see where it will go.

When I started, I had no idea what would come of it. Who would of known I would leave my 6-figure salary, dream job as an architect, to now pursue my real dream of being an entrepreneurship. I would of never predicted that one year after officially launching my tee company that I would quit my full-time job and be featured on The Harry Show, a national television show, with Mark Cuban of Shark Tank. I believe the Universe will always place you where you are supposed to be and where you need to be, in that particular time. My trials and tribulations, love hate relationship with architecture, has aided me in my journey of owning my own t-shirt company. Please don't think you can replicate my process or walk the same path as me. Everyone has their own process, so trust yours.



Less is More.

Creativity isn't needed to start a t-shirt company. Hard work and dedication is. Repeat after me, you don't have to be creative to start a t-shirt company. Not all good ideas are creative and not all creative things are good ideas. I've seen many amazing companies with the simplest designs, blossom into large, profitable, brands. You too, can do the same. Don't get caught up thinking you have to have the best designed items to make your brand explode.

"Less is More." -Mies van der Rohe

Most of all, you must be a dreamer. Have an idea that works, make sure your designs are clear, concise and that they make sense. You've got to give your audience a reason to stop scrolling. What is it about your brand that will differentiate yourself from others in your industry? The answers to these questions are not about creativity and the best designs, it's about creating something aesthetically appealing that will talk to your target market and something that they would love and directly identify and connect with. Assess if you want to outsource your designs by hiring a graphic designer or if you'd like to tackle this yourself. It's not as simple as "putting words on a shirt". There is a math and science behind this; the font, colors and position of the graphic matter. I recommend using a professional to design your tees if you are not a designer. Nothing is harder to sell than a bad designed t-shirt.

Know you!

Are you really built for this? Don't let this be ANOTHER thing you start to then ultimately put down in a corner. "No one puts Baby in a corner." I know too many that have purchased equipment,

invested their hard earned money and when its time to launch, they freeze and ultimately, QUIT. Be sure to think about the different ways you can generate income that is true to you as an individual. If you do not want to do the legwork, maybe you stick to drop shipping and outsourcing your tees. When starting a t-shirt company, if you are anything like me, you are starting with almost nothing. So for the first two years, I was the marketing team, creator, designer, shipper, customer service rep, production team and the direct supervisor, I wore all the hats. Know yourself before embarking on this journey. Be sure you create a t-shirt company that you can sustain and grow and not one you'll put in a corner after 5-minutes.

Competition is healthy.

Don't be afraid of the competition. Your hands will get dirty and that's OK.

Often people complain that the industry is saturated. We get it, t-shirts are everywhere, but that won't stop you from eating, if you want to eat. Focus on building a core audience and following that love your products. Build your brand and give the people what they want. Excitement and anticipation is what will drive your sales.

Competition is everywhere and it's inevitable to be thrown into comparing your numbers, figuring out if your on track and how to make sure you are serving your core audience. You will be competing against companies that sell high-end graphic tees for \$300+ to low-end popular stores that sell tees for a bargain of \$10- \$15. Where do you fall in this market? How do you stand out? That's how you leverage with competition.



show
my
beard
some
love.

Don't get lost.

It's easy for us to blend ideas or for you to gravitate towards what's working for someone else and say HEY, I want to do that! But what works for them may not work for you. Remember what I said about knowing yourself. Go back to that and really stay true to your brand and what you are designing. I'll go back to when I first started on this tee journey. I knew I wanted to create a brand with MESSAGES and it all made sense. I did not write out a formal business plan, but I knew the direction in which I wanted my brand to evolve. About a year in, I was still hearing crickets. My following was not growing rapidly, I didn't even have the sauce to get lost in. I was slowly building, but it felt like it wasn't going fast enough. So I took to social media and I saw that graphic tees were popping and I decided to try my hand. I created a graphic t-shirt about pop culture and it sold! It sold well actually. My audience started demanding more from me like that but the concept was short lived. Once the icon I was idolizing on my shirts weren't "popping" anymore, that design was DEAD. I knew that the instant gratification and sales were short lived. Plus, in this market, I had more competition. I remember the day I sat down in front of my laptop and made conscious decision to stop diverting off track and not get lost in the sauce. Though these graphic tees worked and sold, it did not embody my original messaging and I had to take a moment to STOP and reassess. It's easy to get lost and gravitate toward things that you think will work for your t-shirt company, but remember to stay true to your brand and to not be diverted by short term wins if you're positioning yourself to win the long-term race.

The is nothing wrong with revisiting your t-shirt

designs and even shifting if things are not selling, but, you should have a very clear vision of where you want your brand to go.

Marketing is key.

Most people think starting a t-shirt company is a piece of cake! That you create a mock-up design and put it in your website and then BOOM! SALES! Wronggggg! There's so much you need to know about social media marketing, strategizing, when to launch a product, how to curate your Instagram page, which platform is best for you and your brand. There are so many questions that need answering before starting. This is where research and prelaunch data comes into play. So I hope right after you read this guide, you begin to do your research and start making some decisions before launching. Remember the days when party promoters would put fliers on your car window after a party ends to promote the next party. Things are a little different with social media but a lot of it is the same. You still need a street team telling everyone about your brand (influencers) and you need a good email list to follow up after the purchase is made. So though we aren't doing many cold calls or knocking on doors, social media is the same in which you are cold calling and acquiring customers who probably know nothing about your brand. You want to go beyond friends and family and dig deep into finding your core audience and selling to them. Marketing is key to selling your product. When I first started to push my MESSAGE tees, I would go to conferences, assess the big names, pick 5-8 people I would give promotional items to, hoping they would post and reshare. This

is what happened with writer and producer, Lena Waithe. I'm 2016 I attended a Blavity Conference in Chicago and Lena Waithe was on stage speaking to the crowd. As the event ended, I positioned myself to be off to the side and gift her with my products and had a pitch ready to tell her about who I was and what I did and what my brand represented. She loved the item she received and several months later, Waithe wore my t-shirt on the red carpet of the BET AWARDS. I was floored! My t-shirt made it onto the red carpet and large publications voted her as best dressed and the pictures of her wearing my t-shirt was shared over and over and over again. This is marketing and it all started with me waiting and gifting her a shirt. Don't let small opportunities like this pass you by. Position yourself to market in a place that cost you nothing.

Now the excitement has hit you and you're ready to start, let's cover some basics...





What you need to start a t-shirt company?

1. KNOW YOUR NICHE AND TARGET MARKET.

Who have you decided to sell to? Do you have a specific market you would like to target? Write down who they are and create an customer avatar for individuals in this market. Choosing a niche is absolutely vital for success in the over-saturated t-shirt industry.

2. ARE YOU MORE OF A DIY OR WILL YOU OUTSOURCE?

Are you going to thug it out, learn the tricks to the trade or would you rather outsource this work and pay someone. The faster you make this decision the better. Choose wisely.

3. HOW WILL YOU PRINT YOUR SHIRT?

There are several different options to print your t-shirts. Educate yourself and figure out the best printing method for you.

4. HOW WILL YOU MARKET YOUR PRODUCTS?

If you have limited funds to start your t-shirt company, social media is a great free way to market and sell your products, but there's a lot you need to know about branding, marketing and selling online.

5. WHERE WILL YOU SET UP SHOP TO SELL YOUR TEES?

Have you thought about what platform will host your t-shirt company? A creative marketplace, wholesaling your items, or vendor events are great places to test your products before diving into eCommerce.

Now that the excitement has hit you and you're ready to start, let's cover some basics...

- ✗ choose a niche
- ✗ create your designs
- ✗ source a good t-shirt
- ✗ develop a strong brand
- ✗ create your designs
- ✗ launch your tees!

The hard work is just starting. Check out my tee courses to help you on your journey to launch a successful t-shirt company. www.theteeclasse.com