

Entrepreneurs: Bringing an Idea to Life

What is the name of the company you own?

Two Sparrows Learning Systems and is owned and operated by myself and my husband.

What does this company do?

We specialize in manufacturing a line of early learning crayons, Effortless Art Crayons, and an accessible pen grip called Dex. We also have an online product marketplace where we sell other educational and therapeutic products. We concentrate on products that help fulfill a learning need for children. Finally, we offer product design and development services.

How did you start the company?

Our company launched in 2017 after I concluded a research and development project to create and launch the Effortless Art Crayons through my work at Gannon University. Once the crayons were designed and initial prototypes were made, my husband and I realized that we may have a product that could help a lot of people. We decided to take a leap and start a business with our focus starting off to sell the crayons. After two years, we knew we had something as response from our customers and the community was positive. After meeting many other entrepreneurs and therapists who, just like us, had created their own products and were looking for a sales channel, we decided to expand our company and launched our online store, the Two Sparrows Marketplace. We continuously gathered more and more products to sell in the store and helped these businesses to grow and expand their reach. Through this process we added our design and development services and have since helped to create and launch several new products into the market. What started with a crayon has now grown into a multi-factored business.

What is the nature of your position at your organization? Describe your day to day work related tasks and activities.

My official title is President and owner. My main responsibilities are to help lead the strategic direction of the company and then everything else in between! Because we are a smaller company, it is all hands-on deck. My husband, Jason, who is the vice-president, and I share most responsibilities. We work on the crayons together, I manage the marketplace, and my husband manages our design services. My husband and I make the crayons together – it is a family event! I pack out every single set we sell and manage the process from manufacturing to delivery. We work together through the development of new products. We create and produce all our own social media content and email marketing, we are the customer service, marketing, and PR arms of our company.

What are the bests things about starting and owning your own company?

The very best thing is that I have the opportunity to take an idea and bring it to life! Owning a company and being directly involved in the day to day is a very creative and energizing experience. I have full ownership and control and have the final say on the creative direction of our brand. I also feel very fulfilled as our products are ones that can make a direct impact on the lives of children and indirectly impact parents, teachers, and therapists. I love that because I had the confidence and determination to take my idea and make it a reality, my product can help others and I can expand my reach of influence.

What challenges do you face?

The biggest challenges are that my husband and I are only two people and running a company takes so much time and energy and is way more than a two-person job! We would like to be able to really scale it and grow it

bigger but can be constrained at times by simply a lack of resources.

What is your educational background? How has this helped support the development of your company?

My background is in education. I taught as an elementary and special education teacher for 10 years before I transitioned into higher education. I now am an assistant professor in the School of Education at Gannon University. My background and experience directly contributed to the development of our Effortless Art Crayons! The idea for the crayons was born out of a need I saw with my former students that wasn't being met with current products. My educational background also helps me relate and understand the needs of our customers, many of whom are occupational therapists, parents, and other special education teachers.

What qualities are important for you to hold as you run your company? What qualities do you look for when hiring?

As the president and owner of my company, I need to be focused, determined, and have perseverance. Even though I am the head of my company, I have to make sure I remain flexible and open to other's ideas, as sometimes the very best ideas are ones that are born from the intersection and collaboration of many different points of view. I am always on the lookout for people to join our company who are "hungry," and who are driven to be successful. I need



Nancy Morris



TWO SPARROWS
Learning Systems

someone who is self-directed, innovative, and motivated.

What would people be surprised to learn about me?

I am an introvert and naturally shy. I may come across as a very extroverted person on our social media, but truly, I can be very quiet until you get to know me. I usually prefer to stay in and spend time with my family.



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