

LASHME WHIT

If you get that funny feeling in your stomach whenever you think of trying your latest brilliant idea, you are not alone. Read my interview with 23-year-old Lash Me Whit CEO Whitney Cumbo for your September dose of motivation.

MY STEP OUT ON FAITH

Why did you launch Lash Me Whit?

I started my lash business because I was a full-time college student and working a 9-5 didn't work into my class and study schedules. I quit my job and didn't know what I was going to do. I had never been good at doing hair or makeup but decided to spend my rent money on taking a lash class. My mom said I was crazy. By stepping out on faith and believing in myself that \$750 investment has tripled hundreds of times.

Once Lash Me Whit was up and running, people would drive all the way to the city to get glamed up because there were not a lot of beauty specialists in DeKalb. I brought my services to a small college town one block away from campus and the rest is history.

What would you say to that high school or college student who is interested in starting a similar business but thinks 'everyone is doing that'?

I would say believe in yourself and stay consistent. The #1 reason a business does not flourish is because owners give up. You're going to run into a million road blocks. The business industry is a lot like a video game – you have to knock down obstacles to progress to the next highest level.

More and more people are becoming their own bosses while maintaining their 9-to-5. How did you navigate being a full-time college student and working your business full-time?

Handling college with a full business was hard. I had to learn balance and time management. I had to prioritize. My business made good money but that was for 'right now'. School was to secure my future. So many times I picked school over money. One main key I want people to take away is the importance of self care. I was in my prime – a senior in college and my business was so popular that I had girls wanting to take my class from different states. Monday through Thursday, I went to school an hour and a half away from Chicago. Thursday's after my night class got out at 8:40 p.m. I would drive to Chicago and do Thursday night clients until Saturday. Originally Sunday was my only off day. When I started holding 8-hour lash classes on Sundays, I had no off days and no off time. Yes, it paid off financially but I sacrificed my body and my health and ended up in a hospital bed from burning myself out. Nothing in this world is worth your health. So please make time for yourself.

Are you motivated by money or your passion for your business?

Neither. I'm motivated by my family. I'm motivated by having financial security in my future. Also, I'm motivated by my struggles. I have gone through so many struggles. I found out I had Multiple Sclerosis (MS) two months after I took that lash class. I have to live with that forever. That pushes me so hard even though the #1 side effect is chronic fatigue. I never let it stop me. One month after college graduation I broke my neck in a car crash – my biggest battle so far. At

one point I let it get me down, but now more than ever I'm motivated and determined to get back to the person who was so passionate about business and my future.

Five tips to take with you every day

- * You are the face of your brand – always be professional
- * Build your brand off quality
- * If you're only in your business for the money, it won't succeed
- * Always be genuine with everything that you do
- * Never give up

Whitney Cumbo, CEO / Master Lash Tech Lash Me Whit Instagram: @bossywhit

MOTIF SNEAKERS

I'm always fascinated by how people come into their chosen career paths. Some seem to be born knowing what they want to be when they grow up. And others find their passions unintentionally. Scroll down to read the story of Chicago-native Yohance Lacour, the founder and CEO of Love Leathers, Motif Sneakers, and the Creator of Clutches, Cocktails and Conversations with Yohance.

How I changed my life – one stitch at a time

Tell us a little about yourself.

I'm from the Southside of Chicago (born and raised). An artist at heart, I've always looked for different means of self-expression. As a child, I was both an avid reader and had a keen sense of fashion, so I naturally took to writing and designing. Today, I'm excited to be using both with my greeting card line, Love Leathers. It's also a thrill to be launching a sneaker line, Motif Sneakers, where I'm able to satisfy my love for fashion.

You have two very distinct businesses but both surround the use of leather. How did you become interested in expressing your creativity with leather?

I've probably always had an appreciation for gorgeous grains of leather, but my interest in working with it came from a most unlikely place. I did some time in federal prison and wound up being placed in a facility that offered leatherwork through a hobby craft program. It started out as an escape from the reality of confinement – something therapeutic – but before I knew it, I fell in love with it.

When I came home in 2017, I launched Love Leathers and started working as an instructor at the Chicago School of Shoemaking, where I began teaching sneaker making classes. Before long, people started taking to my designs and the school's founder offered to act as an incubator to help me launch my own line and that is how Motif Sneakers was born.

Why cards through Love Leather Cards? Where'd the name come from?

As you can imagine, mail is a really big deal in prison, being it's our primary means of contact with the outside world. I began creating these leather cards for guys to have something special and unique to send to their loved ones. At some point, one of my buddies sent one to an aunt and the next time they spoke, she asked for one to gift a friend with. That's when I realized I had a viable product to sell to the free world, and started thinking about branding. So the name Love Leathers was just a natural, but catchy play on love letters and my use of leather.

What are some of the things you've constructed with leather? Anything crazy or out of the ordinary?

I haven't gotten nearly as crazy with leather as I plan to, but some of my handbags have been pretty out of the ordinary. I have a thing for geometric shapes, so I've created a diamond shaped purse, a cone shaped wristlet, and I'm currently working on a ball bag that will double as a globe. When I get some more time, I have an idea for a leather hammock that I'm really excited about.

Do you teach classes or host workshops?

I teach classes in basic leatherwork, as well as, sneaker making. As a matter of fact, I just worked out a deal to be able to offer a signature class of my own, similar to the sip and paint classes that have become such a craze. I'm calling it Clutches, Cocktails and Conversations with Yohance. My classes are also available for anyone interested in bringing one to their home or place of business.

Where do you see your company(s) in 5-10 years?

In 5-10 years, I'd like Motif Sneakers to be in the same conversation as the current industry leaders for designer sneakers – Balenciaga, Louboutin, and Prada. Personally, I'd also like to offer classes for larger audiences interested in creating luxury leather goods.

What would you tell someone interested in a similar career choice?

I'd tell someone with similar interests to study the craft from multiple angles. There are countless expert craftsmen, so learning from just one would be limiting. Study as many different techniques as you can and think outside the box so as to find your own personal style and approach. And above all ... never give up!

Where can the public find you?

Instagram
@yohancelacour
@motifsneakers
@loveleathercards

Facebook
Yohance Lacour
Love Leather Cards

Websites

www.loveleathercards.com
www.motifsneakers.com

Thank you so much Yohance for sitting down with us. Leather hammock you say? I can't wait for that.

CROWNED CURLIES

*Some people work just to survive, and others work to help others and positively contribute to society. The creativity of the new business owners of today never ceases to surprise me. From hair care and sneaker lines, to mental health awareness organizations and cleaning services, the intrigue is endless. Scroll down to read my interview with **Alexis Washington, part owner of Crowned Curlies – Natural Hair Care for All.***

Boosting confidence one shampoo at a time!

Why did you start Crowned Curlies? What need(s) did you see in your industry and how does your company close that gap.

I started Crowned Curlies with my partner and friend Dominique Brown in 2015. We collectively wanted to start something that would impact the world. Both being mothers, we saw kids struggling with depression, mental illnesses, confidence issues and suicide taking over the younger generations, so we started thinking of something we could do to grasp kids at a young age and help boost confidence and self-esteem.

After doing some pondering, we thought that starting a hair care company would be the answer because when your hair looks good, you feel good which, in turn is a confidence builder.

Dominique lives in a predominantly white area of Iowa, and wanted to show her child that it's ok to rock your natural hair; it's ok to love your links and coils; and even though you may look different it's ok to be who you are.

What would you say to that high school or college student who is interested in starting a similar business but thinks 'everyone is doing that'?

Everybody probably is doing 'it' but no one can do it like you can. God gives us gifts that are uniquely and specifically designed for each of us. So even if everyone is selling hair for example, maybe what makes you stand out from the rest is that your hair helps boost the confidence of women suffering from alopecia. Never get caught up in the trick that everyone else is doing it. This is something that I have to remind myself too.

More and more people are becoming their own bosses while maintaining their 9-to-5. How do you navigate?

Honestly the navigation is complicated but can be done. I have to schedule everything. I take lunch breaks at work to mail packages, and return phone calls and emails. I set aside two hours a day to strictly work on the business, on top of being a mom and finding time to work out. But I believe if you want your dreams to come true bad enough you, you will make it work. I thank God for putting on me what He believes I can handle.

What's your most popular product?

The Lemon Cookie Leave-In is very popular.

Where can the public find you and your products?

We can be found at www.crownedcurlies.com and on Facebook and Instagram @crownedcurlies or by email at info@crownedcurlies.com.