

CASE STUDY

Raven + Lily triple bottom line results

4x

increase in YoY sales

150%

sales growth from 2012-2014

800+

at-risk women employed globally



Triple Bottom Line Results

How profit, people and planet come together through ecommerce

Most ecommerce businesses focus on a single bottom line. Kirsten Dickerson, founder and CEO of socially-conscious lifestyle brand Raven + Lily, is responsible for three. “People, profit and planet are equally important to us,” she said. “We want to be profitable because the more profitable we are, the more positive impact we have on the other two, people and planet.”

During a 2007 trip to India, Dickerson noticed a growing trend of training marginalized women in design skills. A former art director and wardrobe stylist, she saw an opportunity to combine her interests in fashion and humanitarianism to alleviate poverty in a sustainable way. The next year she started Raven + Lily as a nonprofit to empower at-risk artisans.

By 2011, they had established relationships with women in India and Africa that were doing an excellent job of fulfilling orders and creating products that consumers wanted to buy. Dickerson realized that to scale and grow, both on her end and for the women she worked with, Raven + Lily needed to be a for-profit social enterprise. Once they switched models, the first order of business was building a great website to showcase the brand, share their story and support their mission.



In two years, we've seen a 150% increase in online sales. We had a big vision, and Bigcommerce has not only supported us, they've grown with us.

Kirsten Dickerson,
Founder & CEO

The Story Behind the Store

Combining rapid growth with beautiful results

“We needed something that would be powerful because we had a big vision and wanted to grow and become a bigger company,” said Dickerson. “We wanted somebody that could grow with us, and Bigcommerce had that to offer.”

During a period of rapid growth, Raven + Lily was able to easily create a useful and beautiful store on the Bigcommerce platform with in-house design and resources. The result—from 2012 to 2014, they saw 150% growth in their ecommerce sales.

“We’ve been able to take the base template and then tweak it and make it unique in house,” she said. “Everything from our logo to the textures to the fonts and background we use on our store—that was all very thought through in what we wanted to say to our customers.”

As the company has matured, they’ve added multiple third-party apps to help them scale the business. A few of their favorites include Stitch Labs, SearchSpring, ShipStation and MailChimp. They also use Google Analytics to quantify their ROI and fine-tune their strategy.

“Profit margins through our website sales are the best,” said Dickerson. “There’s only so much I can say on the tags that people receive from Raven + Lily or in a conversation... There’s a story associated with every product, and our store has been an incredible way to showcase that.”

Great Design for a Good Cause

Selling more, expanding partnerships and giving back

In addition to creating sustainable jobs for the women they support, Raven + Lily is dedicated to selling products that reflect the beauty and culture of those artisans. Each piece needs to stand on its own based on its craftsmanship and design, appealing to the consumer without just relying on the story behind it. Their online store is key in creating an overall aesthetic that brings the brand to life and drives revenue.



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Kirsten Dickerson,
Founder and CEO

“We’re not allowed to have any pity sales at Raven + Lily,” Dickerson said. “People have to go to our store, see the jewelry or the apparel or the gifts, and want to buy it because they like the design.”

To add even more depth to their product line, Raven + Lily recently brought in Courtney Rafter, a former designer at Free People, who has expertise in embroidery and embellishment as well as scaling international production. The success they’ve achieved online has also led to an expansion of their current partnerships and the planned launch of several new apparel collections in the next year.

“We’re currently helping to employ 800 women,” said Dickerson. “Because of these new partnerships in the fall and next spring that focus on fashion, that will actually double. So we’ll be close to 2,000 women by the end of 2015.”



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From Clicks to Bricks

Building a brand online and expanding offline

Raven + Lily celebrated another major milestone this spring: opening their first retail location in Austin, TX.

“People love to see our products in person,” said Dickerson. “When they can reference the fuller story on our website and then hold the product in person, there’s something really powerful about that.”

Starting as an ecommerce store “gave us the ability to learn what was and wasn’t working without the huge learning curve that would financially cost us,” she said. “We felt that it was time to move into the brick-and-mortar model because we could launch a store knowing there were already people excited about our brand.”

The flagship store has been a huge success, with over 200 people attending the launch party and coverage in both national and local press. In addition to the positive PR, they continue to see a large percentage of sales coming from repeat customers and word-of-mouth referrals.

Growing your high-volume or established business?

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