

## Ep #278: E-commerce, Retail, and Fairley Fancy: Is This Really the End of Interior Design This Time? (Part 4)



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Tobi Fairley**

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 278.

Welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. A show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth and joy, here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey friends, welcome to part four of my series on Is This the End of Interior Design This Time. And this one is about ecommerce, and in particular my new ecommerce shop called Fairley Fancy that I opened June 1<sup>st</sup> with my daughter. So you've been waiting on this episode for a minute. I promised a deeper dive into ecommerce way back in April or May when we were getting ready to launch. And then I got so busy with launching the site and all the things and getting Ellison ready for college that I'm finally getting you all the details today so yay.

First of all, let me say, it has always been true about everything that we do that is worth doing and this ecommerce shop is no different and that is that this undertaking has been way bigger and way harder than I had anticipated, imagined or prepared myself for. In fact, I was moving so fast in the process of developing this new arm of my business that I didn't really stop and think about how big of an undertaking it was this time, which is sort of funny in hindsight because I have gotten so good over the years of planning and knowing what I'm taking on but I just leapt into this one and I'll tell you more about that in a few minutes.

So let me back up just a bit and get you kind of up to speed on how this all came to be. So I've been planning to create an ecommerce shop for a while, for several years to sell my Woodbridge line, other product lines I have, all that kind of stuff, home decor and interior design stuff. And I just haven't gotten around to it until now because I was really busy doing other things.

And so last fall, I was at High Point Market and I was chatting with the team at Woodbridge and hearing about the big success that some other licensing

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partners were having with their online stores and it blew my mind. We're talking, they were making to the tune of several hundred thousands of dollars in sales in a year or more. And so that quickly lit a fire under me to finally get my shop off the ground because I was the first licensing agreement at Woodbridge. But back then, which, you all, has been, gosh, almost 10 years ago now, things weren't where they are today in ecommerce.

Shopify wasn't the way it is today. It wasn't easy to get things up. So we had talked about creating something back then, but we would have had to build it and design it and all the things. And so it kind of just got put on the back burner until now. So around that same time as last fall, when I was really deciding, let's go, we need to get this up. My daughter was finishing the first half of her senior year of high school. And we were talking about what she really wanted to study in college and do as a future career.

So at 18, most of us don't know but she does know that she doesn't want to be a career student like me. I got three degrees in a row before I got a job. She's like, "I want to be a creative. I want to be an adult. I want to work, get me out in the world, but I do want a college degree." So she has always been creative. She knew she wanted to work in a creative field. And then over the years she has considered a lot of different things kind of in that realm. At one point she thought she would be a makeup artist. She's thought about going to esthetician or cosmetology school.

And then most recently, she was strongly considering being a graphic designer because she loves graphic design. She designed multiple t-shirts for her school and moms, the school moms who had football player and volleyball player children who wanted a t-shirt with their number and their name. And she's done all the fun stuff with graphic design.

And then she also has really loved the idea for a long time of being in the social media space, a social media influencer, the marketing space. And so that's where graphic design was going to be very helpful if she was going to be in that kind of a career or space that she could use a graphic design

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degree and then maybe even get a marketing minor. So that's what she was thinking for a long time, but if we are being perfectly and completely honest, what she has really wanted the whole time, her real dream is to own a clothing boutique, which, by the way, she now does.

She is now part owner of Fairley Fancy and we have apparel all in the shop. It is amazing. It is so much fun. I'm going to tell you more about that in a bit. So last fall this started coming to the surface about what she really wanted to do, if she was being honest with herself, what her real dream was. And it was the same time that I was imagining this home decor ecommerce shop, home decor and gift.

And so we decided to pull the trigger and head to apparel market in January, which was about six months ago, six or seven months ago and see what we thought about 'easing into' the apparel business, which is hilarious now. Because when have I ever eased into anything ever in my life? I am an Enneagram 8, you all. And the tagline for Enneagram 8 says if it's worth doing, it's worth overdoing. And I'm not kidding a single bit. So we went to market.

We figured out that with a lot of the lines we wanted to carry, we needed to have a brick and mortar component, a brick and mortar location of our store. And that wasn't just for apparel. There were a few other lines and gift lines and things we wanted to carry that require it too, but especially for apparel. And so if we wanted apparel with the home decor and with the gift, we were going to need a location. Now, I have done the retail thing before. I have done it in Little Rock, it is very expensive.

I swore when I got out of it 14 years ago, I'd never get back into it, but things changed kind of. And I'm going to tell you the kind of part and how I mitigated some of that expense in a few minutes.

So literally in the flash of lunchtime at the Dallas market, having some subpar lunch in the corner at a table, my mom was there with us. And Ellison and my mom and I decided that we could put a shop in this vintage

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gas station in the town where my mom lives, which is about 35 or 40 minutes from where I live and turn it into our shop. Because she had just recently purchased this gas station and two little cottages across the street from her house. So this is not quite in progress yet, well, it sort of is.

The gas station is happening, but the store is open. So I'm going to connect those dots for you in a second but the store is not at the gas station. It's going to be soon. We are waiting for the architect. We are working on the plans. It is going to be so fabulous. And yeah, just like the three other things that I've already told you in this podcast, I will tell you more in a minute on that.

Okay, so mom had purchased those properties. We were going to turn them into Airbnbs, we thought. But when this idea, this question came up over lunch, where could we put the shop? We all immediately knew it would be amazing in the gas station. So this was important and fabulous for a few reasons and also sort of ironic. So let me tell you what I mean.

About 25 years ago, my parents bought a historic home built in the 40s, one block off the court square in this small town that was originally owned by a family that owned the local lumber mill. And originally back then, mom and I wanted to make it an event venue and/or a shop. But 25 years ago, when there was no internet like we have today, there was no social media, there was no Shopify, of course. I didn't have 80,000 followers on Instagram that I could sell to across the globe.

It wasn't really feasible. We wanted to and it would seem fun but to get foot traffic there, to get the word out for people to know about us, to have enough people to help support this type of business in a small town was going to be very difficult, if not impossible. So my parents ended up moving into that home years ago, probably 20 years ago at least, and it's amazing. And they've been living there all this time.

Now, fast forward to last year when these properties across the street were coming up and the people who owned it, of course, were neighbors and

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friends and said, "Hey, would you want to buy these?" And of course, she snatched them up immediately because she didn't want a convenience store or something else going in right across the street. And when we're talking small towns, real estate is not expensive, it's just not. So she grabbed those, didn't know what she was going to do with them.

And then later we were having these conversations about what we might do with them. And so imagine now 20 something years later, after her moving to this little space, considering whether we could do a shop just across the street, 50 paces from where we couldn't do it 20 something years ago. We now have the internet. We now have all of the ecommerce and Shopify technology. We have all the things that we need so that we could totally make a brick and mortar store in a tiny town work because really all you need is an online presence. Most people buy online anyway.

Some people want to come in and see and we love when people come in and shop, but really it's a place, it's a home base to have your inventory, to do reels and TikToks, to do all your social media, to show people what you have. But the opportunity is really selling things online, because how many of us love shopping online. I buy almost everything online and you probably do too. But it's so interesting to think about how we couldn't have done this 25 years ago so it was ultimately our goal.

And I wanted to make it happen back then, but instead I decided to move myself and my business to Little Rock for a larger population, a larger pool of clients. Because I was going to have to really work building a brand and a retail business way before we could have even imagined what social media would be and it didn't exist. And we certainly couldn't have imagined the capabilities. So a lot of things have changed in 25 years, tons.

Okay, so that moves us to now and deciding on the fly while eating this crappy lunch in the corner of the Dallas Market Center that the Center Street Station, as we call it, would become our home base for Fairley Fancy, so fun. And as you can probably start to see, this is where my

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underestimation of what was involved to launch my shop sort of went off the rails a bit but I'm not sad about it.

So what was going to be me getting some of our products on Shopify and slowly building out a site for my Woodbridge collection and a few other things quickly morphed into, we are opening a shop with a physical, albeit tiny location at the moment. And even needed a separate location because we couldn't get the station ready for our spring opening, which we thought would be May or April, April or May, which ended up being June. But that required me to add to my to-do list, get the site up, get all the products curated, get some of them purchased.

Create relationships with lots of companies that do drop shipping of home products, buy inventory for the apparel and gift and fund all of this. And make it happen, pull it all off in less than six months while running my already very busy business, having a child graduate from high school and get her ready for college and sorority rush. That's it, that's all I've been doing, you all, that's it. But it's my favorite kind of challenge and it's my favorite thing to do to have an idea, a seed of an idea and build it into something amazing.

So besides being an Enneagram 8, in human design I happen to be a manifesting generator. And manifesting generators or man gens, which is easier to say, we love to build and create things. We thrive on deadlines and challenges like this. If it's something that lights us up, we will literally leave every ounce of blood, sweat and tears on the mat to pull something off like this. We will move mountains, we will do all the things, that is what we do.

And so that is what happened, and there was a ton of sweat and also some tears. I don't recall any blood but there may have been some. Actually, now that I remember it, my mom did cut her finger one day when we were opening boxes and bled all over a dress that we accidentally mailed to someone. It won't happen again, you all. But yeah, it has been a whirlwind of a year so far. And I don't remember working this hard since I launched

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my business back at age 27. Now, I'm 51 today and it's a lot different than 27.

So building a retail store and design business at 27 kicked my ass, it kicked it way harder at 51 in a lot of ways, but it has been one of the most fun things that I have done to date, I absolutely have to say so. And I love, have loved almost every single moment and continue to love it really, it is so much fun, even the moments that were hard. Even the ones that I kind of didn't love, I certainly didn't hate, but it has been so fun. And it has been fun to do this alongside my daughter. And then, of course, if we're anywhere doing anything, my mom is right in the mix.

So I kind of forgot actually how much I love being a shop owner. I don't know how I forgot this, I think just because it was hard before. And we always say that it's kind of like childbirth, things are really hard and then over time you forget them. But pretty much every creative's dream is to be a shop owner. And for years I swore not only would I not do it again, I really discouraged other people from doing it. But I'm learning so much that, yeah, it's still hard and yes, it's still expensive and yes, it's still a lot of work.

But there are a lot of things, including technology, social media, Shopify, integrations of Shopify with things that make life way easier than it was 14 years ago when I closed my shop. So I forgot how much I love being a shop owner and I have never had the opportunity to build something with my daughter, which is so fun. And I have to say that I might be enjoying more, as much as or more than Ellison, the buying and the selling of all the clothes. My girl is definitely a chip off her old mama and we are going to give this everything we have to make it work.

And let me tell you, it is a ton of work and it's expensive but it's hell of fun. And we have laughed, we have argued, we have cried, we have sold. And we have had so much fun connecting with so many of the people that we love that are our customers already, which we so appreciate.



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So some of you may remember way back in January or even December, I told you that my word of the year this year is play. And I'm committed to making work feel like play. And when I'm building something new like I am now, even when it's hard as hell, it can still feel like play at times. So back to this ecommerce concept, I promise I'm going to give you the takeaways in this episode too, not just my story but I think the story is relevant, so stick with me. And then we're going to circle back to some of the things you need to know if you want to do this yourself.

But how do I run all these things, wear all these hats, also make it feel like play and fun, which it doesn't always feel like for sure, and how do I envision this as part of my future? Well, that's what we're going to continue to get into. So I have missed telling you quite yet very much about the vintage gas station.

So let's first circle back to that because we're working with an architect to do the design. Because as you designers would know, there are a lot of requirements for meeting code for a commercial space like this, like ADA requirements, ramps, bathrooms, among other things that have to be handled appropriately for a new building or a completely renovated building, which is what we are doing. We're taking something that was built back in the late 30s or early 40s, I think, right around the time of my mom's house.

I will know that soon, I'm getting all those details, but it was definitely in that time period and it has seen a lot, it has been through a fire among other things. And we have, for the most part since the spring, been just waiting in the queue for the architect to have time to get to our project because thankfully for them they are swamped and we have been willing to wait. So we are just getting started on that process. I'm going to bring you all along with us on that, on our social media. But the details of the buildout and the planning and all of that should actually go pretty fast. We're not doing a lot.

We do have to meet code, of course, and we want to, but the station's pretty simple. We're keeping it simple. And we hope to start construction

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later this fall and be in this space sometime early next spring. So I'm hoping for March, which I'm sure means April or May, which will be almost a year in to having the shop open, but that will be totally okay. It's going to be worth the wait. It's going to be so cute.

So in the meantime, we still had to have a location, a brick and mortar to house Fairley Fancy. And so my parents had another small property which is a little white house probably built in the 60s or 70s, if I had to guess, could be a little newer than that. I might be wrong. But they've been using it for a while since the 90s as an office building. And so one side of it is a law office. The other side is our adorable temporary location of Fairley Fancy. And so we're operating there until we can get the new and permanent location up sometime next year.

So let me see, where else did I say I would come back to? I told you how we started. I told you why we started. I told you how we got into apparel and gift and where our location is. Okay yes, and why that location in Sheridan, I also forgot to mention this. So this is one of the amazing perks about going into a small town, now that we have the internet and social media behind us.

And that is because we have been able to get a yes to get access to every single line in the apparel market or the home market or the gift market that we've wanted, that typically are zip code protected. And would have been had we opened in Little Rock, we would have gotten no's to most of those lines but because there is not a mid-range, mid to high end, for some of you you'll think that we're very high end, for some of you will think we're moderate price. But that kind of mid to high end type of shop in the town we went into.

So many of the lines that are proprietary, that are zip code protected were available to us because nobody was dying in this market to carry these lines, but it makes sense for us. They're the ones we wanted. It was what we were excited about. A lot of them were things my daughter was excited about. And we know that the bulk of our sales will be in the online space.

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And we're a fun, super fun actually, especially when we get this adorable vintage gas station open, a super fun destination to come through from a lot of surrounding markets.

So Little Rock's only 35 minutes away. Hot Springs, where we have the horse races and other things, is about an hour or less away. And a lot of people come literally right in front of our shop on that highway that they're going to drive from the east part of Arkansas to go to Hot Springs. So they're going to literally have to pass us. And we're going to dare them not to come in and shop with us because we are so cute.

So it was a big deal for my daughter to get the lines that she really wanted. They were part of her dream. There were some in particular that she was like, "If I'm going to do this, I want these lines to be part of what we carry." And we have those and we're so excited about that. So thanks to 2023, thanks to the internet, thanks to social media and Shopify we can be located just about anywhere we want and do business. And it's been so fun to see who is buying our products, you all, especially the clothing.

So we've been open for, as I'm recording this, about six or seven weeks. And we have been shipping multiple times to multiple people in Houston, all over Georgia, lots of people across North Carolina, Dallas, different parts of New York City, some in California and on and on and on. It is so fun to see who is finding us, who is shopping with us. And they're finding us from social media and from social media advertising. So that is that love hate relationship we sometimes have with the internet, the hate part I get because it's a lot to keep up with.

But the love part is that thanks to the internet and social media we can do things like have this venture and have the opportunity to sell to people all over the country, which is really, really fun and sometimes even unbelievable. It is so fun to wake up. The first thing Ellison and I do, if we didn't see them before we went to bed, is to wake up and open our email and see what kind of sales came in and where they were from, which is so fun.

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So in some future episodes, I'll tell you more about what I'm doing and thinking and all the things that will go into being this shop owner in this small town. I'm even considering either moving there or having a home there, shocker, I know. But I'm ready for a new house project, maybe two. I may end up with a condo here and a house there. But I've been in this house for 10 years, 10 years is a long time for me to stay in a house. It's been remodeled for over seven, that's a long time ago for me to have my own exciting project.

And I'm just kind of itching to get my hands on another project. And that probably comes with empty nesting. It probably comes with all the other change that's happening at this point in my life. I'm just over 50. My child's leaving the nest. So time to reinvent myself as I always do. So that can be a whole other episode or multiple of them in the future.

But this new little venture is lighting me up. It's helping me think differently. It's helping make empty nesting not boring, not sad because I will be an empty nester in the next three weeks or so after recording this. But I have more to do than I could possibly imagine. And I'm just not going to have a lot of time for sitting around and being sad.

And one of my coaches said, "What an amazing project for empty nest time in your life. What an amazing thing to build something new instead of just sitting in kind of that place of feeling like everything is old or everything is over." And I absolutely agree with her. So if I'm too busy buying and selling merchandise, merchandising and displaying them, pricing it, doing all the social media, all the stuff that will be a labor of love and continue, it is already and will continue to be for this shop, that's going to keep me super busy as I become the next version of myself, and as my life changes.

Okay, so now let's talk to the parts that you're here for probably, if you're interested in having your own ecommerce shop. And let's start with what was hard because I have talked a lot about what makes this easier now. But what has really been hard has been the amount of time and money that it takes to make this happen.

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So let's start with time because it has far exceeded what I imagined, the amount of time it takes to do something like this. And I have learned that that is not going to let up any time soon. It's not just a big push to get something launched the way it is sometimes with a course or a program or something like that. It's really a big push to get it open so that then the work can start. And if I'm being honest, that's probably true for anything you build, including a course.

But it's especially true with ecommerce because you have to have new product, new things and social media presence all the time as in seven days a week and I'm okay with that. I love, love, love working hard, especially if it's something that's lighting me up. So remember, I'm that manifesting generator. It's what I do, we build stuff, we create things. But let's still be honest, it is hours and hours and hours and hours and hours of time. And it's been essentially kind of a side gig or a second gig on top of the other things I have to do. And so that has absolutely been a lot.

There was a point from early April till mid-May that I was really questioning myself and asking what I had gotten myself into. And I was really trying to pull all of this off that I was pulling off, launch the new store, get my daughter graduated from high school, keep the main part of my business going. My daughter had Prom, she had graduation. We went to High Point Market. I spoke multiple times at High Point Market and at the Short Term Rentals conference.

And you all, I did pull it all off and hardly any balls were dropped, but damn it was a lot for a minute. So don't think that just because something is fun or has potential as a revenue stream that it isn't hard as hell and that it isn't just as hard as the first time you built your original design business or whatever you've been doing for the last period of time because it is. It is the same thing, even if it is in a different category or a slightly different adjacent business, it is still very hard. It is still very time consuming. It is still a lot of work.

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And I know a lot of you are already taking my three part workshop right now about revenue streams. If you aren't, you can still sign up by the way. But I want to remind you again that just because I'm teaching you several ways to make money and have more options and offers doesn't mean that any of this is easy or that there's a shortcut. Or that you don't have to invest time and money to make something work whether it's a course or an ecommerce shop or some other offer that you have. It is all hard.

So if you're looking for quick and easy, I'm not sure that even exists. You can create new ways to make money that give you options, of course. And that's one of the things we're doing here besides building a dream, creating another option for making money, helping balance your cash flow once they're all up and running. But there's that period of time in the beginning where you're putting more cash out than you're bringing in or you're putting more time out than you're bringing in money and we often underestimate that.

And there are many ways that I teach you, selling courses and things that use your intellectual property that I do have to tell you are way easier and way less expensive than taking on something like ecommerce at the level that I have taken on, including with the physical shop. But I don't usually do things because they're easy. I don't usually do things just for the money. I do things because they light me up and as I have said multiple times today already, it is so much fun. It's just not cheap or easy.

And though I will give this everything that I have, especially now that it's not just my baby or my dream, but my daughter's dream, that is maybe even more sacred to me, that it's her dream. So I feel this obligation to make it work and I'm going to and we are going to. And my mom is still working in the business with me and she and I love this work and the shop and the steaming and unpacking and pricing and visiting with customers. We love everything about it.

So I have the absolute joy of working with her as well. So when Ellison's away at college, and we'll be doing more of the social media and helping us

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on buying trips and doing backend work that she can do in Shopify when she has time around her college. Mom and I are the ones that will be in the day-to-day of this over these next few years as we build it. So that it's something that can hopefully support Ellison when she's ready to get out of college because she is studying apparel merchandising now and her degree is really all about this work.

But let's just be clear, I've said it multiple times and I want to keep saying it to you, we are working hard and I mean hard. Ellison is 18, I'm 51, mom's 75. And we are working like mom and I did back when we launched my first retail store way back in 99, which was my dream. And mom was there with me, toiling and sweating and doing everything with me every step of the way just like she is now. But it's hard work, it was then, it is today.

And we do have technology that helps make things easier to sell, but you still have to order everything. You still have to pay for everything. You still have to unbox everything. You still have to price everything. You still have to clean everything. You still have to deal with damages. You still have all of the to-do list. But what a privilege it is to work this hard on something that you dream of with the people you care most about in the world. I mean, wow, that just really, it lights me up at a different level.

My mom had the joy of doing that with me and now I have the joy of doing that with my daughter, with my mom still along with us. And it is amazing.

Okay, so let's also talk about the cost or the expense because I said it's very time consuming and it's very expensive. It really is pretty extensive when you think about what it takes to launch something at the level I'm launching it. So to date I have probably spent close to six figures, so close to \$100,000 getting this business up and running. And there is ongoing inventory cost of the apparel and the gift that we carry in the store, not an extensive cost to the home décor that we're able to drop ship, but that's a whole other thing. And we're going to talk about that in a second.

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Well, let's just talk about it now. So, many vendors are moving away from drop shipping. They were doing it for a while, especially during COVID because they needed the business and it's a lot for them to do as well, it's a lot of work. So it's not like stores are just out there dying to open you up with a drop ship account if you're just going to dip your toe in the water. They're really looking for serious businesses and you have to really prove that you are a serious business. That's why a lot of them require you to have an investment and some inventory on the front end.

You can't just have a little tab on your website that you're going to pop a few things in here and there and see if anybody wants it. It is serious. Most of these vendors want to see that you have a business plan, a marketing plan, an advertising plan. We've had to turn our advertising plan into people. They're interested in you if you want to be an actual player in the ecommerce space. And again, that's not just being a decorator or a designer who wants a few things in your online shop, but truly becoming a brand, a presence in that online space.

So if you dream of ecommerce in a legit way, then those vendors are going to be important to you and can be great partners for you. But if you're thinking, I'll just go set up a few accounts with these people and test the waters and dip my toe in. They're going to say no to that a lot of the time.

Okay, and then next, really the name of the game, if you want to have success long term in this business is being unique. And what do we mean by that? Because that's a word a lot of times that gets overused. And so it can mean a few things. It can start with just you curating your own selection of products that are a little bit different than what they've seen from say drop ship vendors or some inventory that you stock.

But long term, you're not going to win at that game because there's too many other players out there like One Kings Lane and Perigold and Kathy Kuo and I mean Amazon really even carries some of the things that a lot of us will carry. And if all of the other big brands, big ecommerce that started way before you are carrying the same stuff and they are big businesses



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with a lot of deep pockets, a lot of them have even venture capitalists backing them. They can offer discounts and perks and free shipping and things that you as a small business won't be able to compete with.

And so just sort of thinking that you'll be unique enough in the curation of products or the products and vendors that you find is not going to be enough. So you're going to have to get really creative with how you start to customize product or even develop product, which we are in the process of doing right now. To give your customers a reason to come to you over other options that they have because you have things that truly cannot be purchased anywhere else.

Which means for us, phase one was just getting the doors open, getting the shop online, getting the initial collection of product up, planting our stake in the ground and starting to get followers, which we've been doing really well. And we're so excited. We're so happy that we have over 2,000 people already following us on Instagram. We have people shopping from all over the country as we said, but that's just phase one. That's just the minimum.

And for that phase, being in the apparel sector or segment actually helped us start off with a pretty good bang and hit over five figures right out of the gate in our first month. Because a lot of people can spend \$50 to \$300 on something like a top or a dress on a regular basis. Where they're not going to be buying a \$5,000 sofa or \$3,000 worth of artwork or a \$6,000 dining room table and chairs on an everyday basis. So that's ultimately where we want to go. And we know they will be buying that from us, they're starting to and we're having some sales there.

But that part takes time, especially when you're competing with other brands already in existence on the market that people are used to shopping with, that they've heard of because they haven't heard of you. So that part of building the long term loyal shoppers from us for our products will take time and it takes creativity and it takes a good eye. It takes a willingness to invest time and money, offering things that other places don't.

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So for example, when we can take all of my Woodbridge product but put different fabrics on them that we will curate for the buyer, then they're not just buying that same cane chair, that is my design at another site that puts it in the neutral linen, that it comes from directly from Woodbridge. They're going to be able to come on our site and buy it in a bright green or cobalt velvet. And so we are going to do that, make that available for them.

But we have to invest the time, the money, figure out the fabric situation, send two POs every time they order, send one to get the fabric over to Woodbridge. There's more to it on the backend. So from the consumer side, it will look like, yeah, I just bought that chair, it comes in blue, but it doesn't really come in blue. It only comes in blue because we made it come in blue. And it takes extra steps for us on the backend to really pull that off.

And that is the name of the game when it comes to ecommerce, you have to have stuff that is unique. You have to invest time, energy and money to create things other people don't offer. And we are even developing product from scratch that is not a licensing deal, that is not on somebody else's dime but is on my dime that we are creating that you cannot get anywhere else. And I can't wait to show you that stuff really soon.

So again, the name of the game in ecommerce, putting in a lot of time, putting in a lot of money and having new product all the time, every single month that you go live on and promote on social media, something people haven't seen before or ways to customize that they can't get somewhere else. And that in and of itself, you all, is a full-time job.

The other name of the game is really just the daily promotions multiple times a day. So in our design businesses we can think I should go on social media daily. But if I get a post up two or three days a week, it's good, not in ecommerce. If you're not promoting, you're not selling.

So it's not just putting a few things in a shop and hoping someone finds your website. It's working the system, working the social media, curating the product, finding new vendors, all the things that it takes to have a

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unique curation and then promoting it every single day, multiple times a day. And not just an image, but you, you going live, you showing it, you talking about it, you telling how things look or feel or fit or sit depending on what it is you're selling. You've got to build that trust with your customer. And this is just the beginning for us, you all.

All the work that I've described that really at some point in the spring, I was thinking what the heck have I gotten myself into. Is just the beginning, because now it's time to see how long it takes me to build this into multiple six figures or even seven figures. And that's not to just be like, I've got to make everything a \$1 million business. It is expensive to run ecommerce. If you want to be profitable, you have to have enough money to pay for your inventory, to pay for your advertising, to pay for your help.

And so it is not a teeny baby business doing it at the level we are, where you can just kind of do it out of your garage, and then an hour or two a week on the side and make another nice income stream. It is a whole other business and a whole other brand. And it's something I'm thrilled to build with my daughter for her future but it is a whole other undertaking.

And a lot of it in the social media space is about visibility. And so many of you don't even like doing social media for your design business, much less doing it multiple times a day for an ecommerce business. Where you're going live and wearing the clothes or showing the pillows or talking about the trays or the product or the candles or the thing that you are going to be responsible for helping other people learn about, see and want to buy from you. And you all, that's a very heavy lift. It is a lot to do, but it is what you have to do if you want to have sales.

And I heard this from all my friends who were doing ecommerce the right way. I heard early on even with that other business who has a licensing agreement with Woodbridge, who's selling the heck out of her furniture. She said, "If you're posting things, you're selling things, and if you aren't posting things, you likely aren't selling things." And I've found that to be

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1,000% true, which is why, because you get your launch, your shop launched, that's just step one.

The workload really doesn't go down after that, it may even increase because it's not just about having a place for people to shop that's live. It's about working the business, building the clientele, building a trust with the clientele who want what you're selling. And that sounds familiar. It's just not that different than what is required of us to build a very successful interior design business or any other business.

So it's great to have ways to be part of someone's home or space by selling them pieces like a lamp or even a dress for their wardrobe that you don't have to sell a whole room or a whole home, which can be a bigger sale sometimes for us in design. But you also have a lot of competition online. So how will this fit into your business model? Is it a good fit? Do you have time to do it and money to do it properly and to get it off the ground? And if so, will it be a nice combination or complement to the other things that you're already doing? Because it is not a magic bullet.

It is not a dream business, even though it's super fun. It doesn't support itself. It is not cheap. It is a baby that needs coddling and watering and feeding and all the things. But if you love it and you're willing to do it, then it could be a fit for you. So thinking about who are those ideal clients for my shop, what do they want? How can I get it to them? How do I show them that they want it without having every piece of inventory in person in a shop that I can show them? How do I get creative for selling? There are ways to do all of those things.

A lot of the how I talk more about in my revenue stream series that we're selling right now, but I wanted you to know all the what. So if you're willing to do the hard work then go for it but it is a lot. And you're like, "I get it, Tobi, I heard you say that 17 other times today." But I underestimated it. And I know I've done this before. I know what it takes and I still underestimated it. And so I want you to go in with both eyes open.

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Ultimately, I feel like our ecommerce journey is a step really just on the path of our own product lines that we produce ourselves, not with licensing agreements. We love our licensing agreements too. We're not getting rid of those, but it's a way to get us in the product space and getting us in front of customers and building that brand so that we then can start manufacturing some things that we make all the money on. But we also, when you manufacture things, you have the design expense.

You have the creation and inventory expense, the production expense, which is the creation piece, getting it made somewhere, paying for that. And then the inventory piece, which is expensive and there's creative and all kinds of things that you're going to need consultants on and legal on. And so the ecommerce was a way for us to go out and say, "People have been asking for years how to get more of my brand and our brand. Let's go build a loyal following who's buying the things that we can put together. And then start selling them the things that we have created."

And ultimately that is really how I can see a good way to tap into my large social media following. Why not monetize first by selling them products that we have or can get access to like our license agreements products or great vendor partners we already have before we jump in with both feet into making things and hope people want them and like them.

Now, as always, I will keep you posted on the progress. If you're taking that three part revenue workshop series from me, you're going to get even more details on the how's and the what's of the process. If you haven't joined that already, you still can. We've had one session so far, got two more to go. You can head to [tobifairley.com/revenuestreams](http://tobifairley.com/revenuestreams) and sign up for that.

You'll get the recording of the first session and any of the other ones that you miss along the way, if you're hearing this later, even if the whole thing is over and they're all recorded. It's still going to be very valuable to you so you can buy it after it has happened. If you're thinking about additional revenue streams like courses or designer for the day, or ecommerce or

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short term rentals, those are all the things we're talking about in that program.

And so if ecommerce is the one that most excites you. We're going to go deeper into that topic in an upcoming session as part of the three part series. So a lot of people are going to watch the recordings, that's great and amazing. But if you can come in there and interact with me, all the better because I can answer your specific questions. It's just 297, head to [tobifairly.com/revenuestreams](https://tobifairly.com/revenuestreams).

But I hope in the meantime you loved hearing so much more about this process of ecommerce, how I got into the business, why I got into the business, what it looks like, how much time and money it takes. And I'm going to be bringing you more and more on this story in the coming months. I can't wait to bring you into the world of some of the people I've worked with, like my ecommerce consultant Christopher, who is amazing and you all, he literally fell into my lap thanks to another online internet friend but what a Godsend.

I probably wouldn't have this launched by this time next year had he and his team not been there helping me every step of the way. So we're definitely going to bring him on the show soon. And we'll talk about what really else goes into building something like this at a level that is really building a brand. So I have a brand that's strong and wonderful. This is an extension or a sister brand that we're also building. So it's not just Tobi Fairley Home, which I could have done.

But because it's with my daughter, she's like, "Yeah, we're not just doing Tobi Fairley Home. I'm not your employee, I'm your partner." So she came up with the idea, Fairley Fancy, which I loved. And we're building this sister brand and there's a lot that goes into building a brand. I've been building one for 25 years. This one's at square number one, sort of, I mean, it gets the benefit of the association and extension of my Tobi Fairley brand but we're really at the beginning of that process.

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So I'll bring you into that world with Christopher, not only the how to of the Shopify stuff that he's a genius about, but what it looks like to build a brand because he has helped build many brands, many of whom you have heard, that are phenomenal. So stay tuned for that in the future. And on also just watching and waiting to see what the heck I'm going to do with this empty nest part of my life.

I keep asking myself if I'm having a midlife crisis. I don't think it's a crisis. It's more like again, a midlife reinvention, which I kind of already knew I was on since I hit 50. But what's it going to look like? Am I going to sell my house? Maybe. Am I going to move to a condo? Maybe. Am I going to move to a small town? Maybe. Am I going to have one of each? Maybe. But I'm going to bring you along as I do this. And you know I love nothing more than a good project.

So whatever I do and wherever I go, I'm sure there will be renovation and decoration involved because that's the only way I like to do it. So yeah, get ready to come along for the ride for not only the shop gas station renovation, but maybe a new home for me and the hubs, probably downsized. Yeah, how much space do two people really need? That's the question that I have that I probably will give myself a couple of months at least to see what it's like to adjust with our kiddo out of the house and see where we want to go next.

And settle into running this new shop in my real life when sort of the new has a little bit worn off and to see what really this version looks like. So I've got a few other things up my sleeve. I'll definitely share those with you too, but in the meantime, I'll see you next week as I always do right here, same time, same place.

We're going to talk to in the next couple of weeks some other people that are doing phenomenal things with brand building, with business building. And one is in the area of course content, one is a brick and mortar kitchen design store. And she has some really insightful things to say about how to make money, how to make money in an economic downturn and really why

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selling is the most important thing you can do and be good at in a business like interior design or ecommerce or kitchen design or any other thing. So stay tuned for those, you know they're going to be valuable.

I'm always here bringing you the best I can and pouring my heart and soul into everything we do. So I'll see you back next week, bye for now.

Thank you for listening to *The Design You Podcast*. And if you want to discover a new path to success in the interior design industry, then join me for my three part training called How to Create Additional Revenue Streams. In this training I'll teach you the strategies to launch innovative income streams and free you from the limitations of traditional design services. Don't miss this opportunity to revolutionize your business and thrive in today's competitive landscape. Grab the training series now to prepare you and your business for today and beyond. Go to [tobifairley.com/revenuestreams](http://tobifairley.com/revenuestreams).